

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

It is funny the way devices seem to spawn other devices. Desktops spawn laptops. Laptops spawn netbooks. One ereader spawns others. A telescope spawns binoculars. I wonder what binoculars spawn?

We were at Office Depot last week. I decided to stay in the car and read while Joe got his family newsletter. He had been gone only a few minutes when honkings came from high up. I whirled and stared at the flight of big birds passing over my head, knowing that the passage of the Canadas meant fall is at hand.

The geese have begun to fly south. Fall is definitely here. It is always bittersweet when the geese start leaving. I have begun preparing for winter. I can't say I'll miss the summer heat but I don't look forward to ice either.

— Lisa

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The 58th Running of the Yonkers Trot (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **July 7, 2012** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. Archangel won handily, after the favorite Googoo Gaagaa broke stride twice and came in last.

The 87th Running of the Hambletonian (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 4, 2012** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Market Share won (while Archangel came in fourth)

The 120th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **October 7, 2012** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky. My MVP won; Archangel had won his heat but didn't finish in the money in the runoff.

The 57th Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 3, 2012** at Tioga Downs in Nichols, New York. Dynamic Youth won in an upset victory.

The 67th Running of the Little Brown Jug (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 20, 2012** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio. Michael's Power won; Dynamic Youth was not eligible to enter.

The 56th Running of the Messenger Stakes (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be **November 10, 2012** at Yonkers Raceway.

The Breeders' Cup World Championships will be **November 2-3, 2012** at Santa Anita Park.

Lisa's Birthday is **October 30, 2012**

Our Sixteenth Anniversary is **November 22, 2012**

Printed on October 12, 2012

Deadline is **December 1, 2012**

Reviewer's Notes

I got an email from Amazon.com recommending some science fiction and fantasy that I would actually have to pay for. As I have a deplorable habit of going for the same old same old, perhaps I should look into this. However, I did pick up John G. "Jack Campbell" Hemry's new book when we went to the Futurity.

Another piece of old-age reminder: the last employee at the Air Pollution Control District who was there when I was hired is retiring. In a little over two years I should be eligible to retire with full benefits. And thanks to their keeping in place the requirements I got when I was hired, I will get Social Security and not have to face a deduction.

I understand the 2020 New Zealand WorldCon bid is very promising.

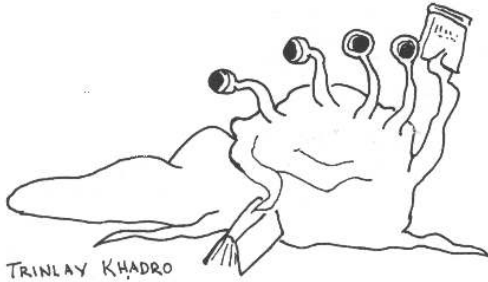
But then, I should have known about old age when we all went to the Cincinnati museum complex and the ticket taker looked at us and gave us all the senior discount. No, I am not going to pay them back.

Thanks to all the people who sent their condolences over Delenn.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Why did I get an iPad when I have a huge plumbing bill? Well, the plumber wants cash, Best Buy has long-term credit. I got a middle-level iPad, an iPad 2 with 16GB memory. There are enough service bills that I passed over the 4G Cellular service. It does handle Kindle files nicely enough, though the Kindle itself is a little easier to hold. I also got Lisa a Lenovo tablet that is about the size of her Kobo.

In other Kindle news, John Maddox Roberts's *SPQR* books are now available for the Kindle, and perhaps even more to the point, *Hannibal's Children* (2003; reviewed *Alexiad* V. 1 #4) and *The Seven Hills* (2005; reviewed *Alexiad* V. 4 #2) are available, for \$4.99 each. If sales are good enough perhaps Roberts can release the third book in this format and we can see the final confrontation of M. Scipio and T. Norbanus over their Carthaginian prey.

Sir Ran Fiennes (Sir Ranulph Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennes, Bt., O.B.E.) is planning a dramatic crossing of Antarctica in the winter. He will ski with a partner, but they will be followed by two motor-drawn sledges with one pulling a sleeping hut. The expedition will leave the Pacific coast of Antarctica on **March 21, 2013**, bound for McMurdo Sound.

Incidentally, Fiennes reached the peak of Mount Everest on **May 20, 2009**, making him the first person to have traversed both poles and climbed Everest, a "Three-Poler", as well as being the oldest Briton to summit the mountain. And did I mention that the departure date is two weeks after his 69th birthday?

<http://www.thecoldestjourney.org/home/expedition/>

John Carter reports that Thuria has transited the face of the Sun . . . er, that is, the Curiosity Mars Rover has photographed a transit of the sun by Phobos on **September 13, 2012**. The satellite is not of sufficient size to completely eclipse the Sun. Such passages are fairly common, and come in bunches of about half a dozen within a few sols, due to the low inclination of the satellite's orbit. Its low orbit prevents the satellite from being seen outside of the band from seventy degrees north to south latitude. Deimos also will transit the Sun about once or twice a year, from any point between 82.7 degrees north and south latitude.

How To Be a Politician Department: Robert Heinlein's guide to political organizing, *Take Back Your Government* (1992, 2012; NHOL G.049) is now available again with an introduction from Heinlein biographer William H. Patterson (Phoenix Pick; ISBN 978-1-61242-061-5; \$19.99; Amazon Digital Services; ISBN 879-1-61242-062-2; \$7.99). Lisa read the original edition after volunteering for work with her local elections and observed that much of the information in it was still useful.

"Wenn Abenteuer einen Namen hat, muß es Indiana Jones sein! . . ." The Ahnenerbe expeditions of Ernst Schäfer (as recorded in Christopher Hale's *Himmeler's Crusade* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #4)) brought back a Buddhist statue. Of course, what they probably liked was the swastika the figure was holding. Now the "Iron Man" statue has been proven to have been carved from a meteorite that fell to Earth about 10,000 years ago.

The destroyer ARM *Cuithahuac* was decommissioned on 16 de julio 2001, ending sixty years of service of the *Fletcher* class of destroyers. As USS *John Rogers* (DD-574) she served in the Third and Fifth Fleets in the Pacific. She had been launched May 7, 1942 and commissioned February 9, 1943. Attempts were made to preserve her, but in vain (too many people each needing compensation) and she was scrapped in 2011.

The Mexican Navy has continued to receive support from the US. Among the former US ships transferred to them is the ARM *Hermenegildo Galeana*, a frigate (which is what destroyer escorts were redesignated). She was formerly USS *Bronstein* (FF-1037), named after Dr. Ben Richard Bronstein, a naval surgeon killed while serving on the USS *Jacob Jones* (DD-130) on February 28, 1942 off the coast of New Jersey. A previous ship had been named after the doctor, DE-189. Was the doctor related to Trotsky?

OBITS

I was saddened by the **August 23** death of **Josepha Sherman**. Her "Dancer's Fire", which appeared in the anthology *Horse Fantastic* is among the top short stories about horses. This is a sharp loss to horse fandom. I remember stumbling on *Horse Fantastic* and not letting go. "Dancer's Fire" was the best story in the collection.

—Lisa

Neil Armstrong

The first man to step onto the moon died **August 25**. When I heard the news I wept inside. So much incredible living history gone.

—Lisa

MONARCHIST NEWS

All the news has been about that fun-loving lad Prince Henry Charles Albert David of Wales, better known as **Prince Harry**. The Taliban has announced they will kill him. (It

has been reported that the attack that destroyed six Harrier attack planes of the U.S. Marine Squadron VMA-211 "Wake Island Avengers" was aimed at the prince.) He's safer than with the wowsers. If it was good enough for Edward VII, George IV, Charles II, and Henry V, it's good enough for Harry!

A RAUCHY STORY

by Joe

As you know, Bob, back in June we went to the Rauch Planetarium at the University of Louisville to see the transit of Venus. (See *Alexiad* V. 11 #3 for the report.) Now, it seems, Carson Napier has astrally projected himself to get Grant a reward.

There was a drawing sponsored by *Astronomy Magazine* and the planetarium for a telescope. Grant won it.

He had to have a statement notarized avowing that neither he nor any of his immediate family worked for the publisher that was giving away the telescope. This was at least easier than the frantic quest by Lisa's family to get her mother's birth certificate corrected prior to her retirement.

He is now the proud owner of a Celestron SkyProdigy 130. The telescope is a Newtonian reflector with an aperture of 130 mm, a focal length of 650 mm, and a maximum magnification of 307x. It has a computerized hand control.

We were invited to the presentation, which was at the Planetarium on September 23. There wasn't a whole lot to it; the president of the Astronomical Society was there with a big box. We opened the box up, took out a lot of smaller boxes, put the telescope together, then put it back in the boxes and loaded them into the car.

Later that week we took the telescope to Dale's & Tammi's. We have to learn how to use it, and how to transport it and Grant to Hopkinsville for the Monday, August 21, 2017 solar eclipse (Saros 145), where first contact will be at 11:56 AM CDT, totality will begin at 1:24 PM CDT and last 2 minutes and 40 seconds, with fourth contact beng at 2:51 PM CDT (per the iPad app for Eclipses).

Sunrise will be at 6:12 AM CDT and sunset at 7:35 PM CDT. The new moon will be at 1:31 PM, The Sun will be at his maximum altitude ("Solar Noon") at 12:53 PM.

(Mike Glyer has wondered about a NASFiC bid for the eclipse weekend. The only big town in the area of totality is Nashville, which is not known for working well with cons, and in any case is on the edge of the path.)

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

FROM BAUHAUS TO THE TOP

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
 “The Top” (1953, 1962)
 by George Sumner Albee

... I can remember what brave plans young architects at Yale and Harvard had for the common man in the early 1950s. That was the term they used, *the common man*. They had a vague notion that the common man was a workingman, and not an advertising account executive, but beyond that it was all Trilby and Dickens. They were designing things for the common man down to truly minute details, such as lamp switches. The new liberated common man would live as the Cultivated Ascetic. He would be modeled on the B.A.-degree Greenwich Village bohemian of the late 1940s — dark wool Hudson Bay shirts, tweed jackets, flannel pants, briarwood pipes, sandals & simplicity — except that he would live in an enormous hive of glass and steel, i.e., an International Style housing project with elevators, instead of a fourth-floor walkup in a brownstone.

— Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (1981), Page 59

The advertising account executive, of course, was the man in the gray flannel suit who left his nine-to-five job, got into his huge gas-guzzling car with tail fins, drove to a tacky tacky box in a suburb of identical tacky tacky boxes, and said “Honey, I’m home!” to his wife, who had spent the entire day in cocktail dress, pearls, and high heels, vacuuming the floor, and who now presented him with a martini on a tray, while their boy and girl came bubbling out of their rooms babbling about their day’s schoolwork. Those were the days.

Or other things. Such as the advertising account executive described in “The Top”.

George Sumner Albee is better known by his progeny. His son Edward Albee wrote the play “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolff?” The father wrote the screenplay for “The Next Voice You Hear” (1950), the movie about what happens when God preempts all channels for a special announcement.

“The Top” is about an advertising executive. Now the story is not connected to “Gravy Planet” (*Galaxy*, June-August 1952), *The Space Merchants* (1953, 2011); Pohl had begun writing about advertising, based on his postwar days as an advertising copywriter, in 1948, and had begun again on a manuscript in 1951, when Kornbluth showed up and contributed his own perspective. So Albee did not take off this idea by these pulp hacks.

The story begins with its point of view character (he does not even carry out enough action to be considered a “protagonist”), copywriter Jonathan Gerber getting a memorandum summoning him to a meeting with his superior. He has a flashback to when

he began work with the company.

Gerber does not quite seem to understand what the company, Allied, does. Albee seems to have been predictive, perhaps unwittingly. Allied does not manufacture finished goods; rather it manufactures components and parts. As Gerber’s vague but grandiloquent boss L. Lester Leath expresses this, “... Allied creates and develops semi-finished materials which enable small manufacturers, under the free-enterprise system, to enrich or otherwise improve certain items for the ultimate benefit of the consumer”. The somewhat distancing part of this is that these semi-finished materials are designated by arbitrary alphabetic codes, “from Aab, an adulterant for milk-shakes, to Zyz, which were rotors for tractor magnetos.” So a soda shop might order so many bags of Aab to flavor or preserve its product, while a farm equipment repair place would get some cartons of Zyz for fixing up machinery. The company is a combination of do-it-yourself store and general parts supplier.

What Gerber does is the satirical perception of the advertising industry, follies of the ad men as it were, writing puff pieces making vacuous comparisons of Allied to various ennobling, uplifting, positive concepts. For this he makes a good salary with stock options (which, however, do not vest until retirement). He started at \$10,000 a year, which in current values is \$87,500. That’s good money.

While there are no “gray flannel suits” here, there are enough imageries of corporatism for corporations sake to entertain the contemporary reader and bemuse the modern one. Thus, for example, no one ever dies at Allied, even though there is a small medical clinic, and Gerber sees another employee collapse and die. Those who die are discreetly removed and listed as having passed away in other locations.

Working at Allied is inexplicably stressful. One repeated point is that higher-ranked executives are all bald. Gerber himself notes that he has lost his hair.

If he drives home in a huge gas-guzzling car with tail fins to a tacky tacky box where a wife who has spent the day vacuuming while wearing pearls, a cocktail dress, and high heels is waiting with a martini on a tray, there’s no mention of it, and indeed, apparently, Allied employees have no life outside the corporation.

The headquarters is a physical manifestation of the structure of management; it’s a pyramid, with higher-ranking employees on higher floors, all the way up to the penthouse office of the never-seen (except in the corporate internal magazine) president. It’s also windowless, which sounds like the ultimate triumph of the architects lampooned by Wolfe in *From Bauhaus to Our House*. Presumably there is never a power failure.

The meeting in question begins with a grant of privilege. Along with the memorandum summoning him to meet with his superior, Gerber receives a pass that allows him access to the top floors of the building. He is told to tour the fourteenth floor, where the grandiose offices of the advisory board are located.

They seem a rather eccentric lot, with the

eccentricity of CEOs with very large salaries and generous benefit packages. One is a fishing fanatic, another plays soldier, and so on. Their supervision is minimal, apparently, as none is there and they only visit the headquarters occasionally.

Having learned the nature of his higher management, Gerber returns to his own supervisor’s office, where he learns why he was summoned. Leath is dying. He delivers a final speech in his usual vague and grandiose fashion, tells Gerber to go to the fifteenth floor, the President’s office, and then dies.

The President’s office is not accessible by elevator. If the President comes in (and the elevator operator [talk about SF being about the present] says that he too has never seen the man) he has to walk up the stairs. Gerber walks up the stairs, puts his pass in to unlock the door and finds ...

A dark room with various litter, the engines and cables of the elevators, and nothing else. He looks out the small windows, seemingly the only ones in the building, notes that it’s winter out there, though how he got in to work that morning without noticing that is an interesting question, and finally gives up and leaves.

There’s no one in charge — the ultimate parody of corporate America.

After having seen corporate failures from Enron on back, there are some companies that one thinks would be improved for having no one in charge. The satire is that of someone imposed upon by incomprehensible policies of no clear origin; the corporate image found in Scott Adams’s “Dilbert” and John Zakour’s and Scott Roberts’s “Working Daze”. Many of these policies are the result of “no one in charge” — that is to say, a conflict among diverse mandates imposed by different entities.

In 1962, journalist and social critic Vance Packard brought out *The Pyramid Climbers*, describing in fact what Albee describes in fiction. He discussed the mores and ways of the rising corporate executive. Packard was part of a greater critique of consumerist society, having previously written *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), describing how advertisers used psychological manipulation and cueing to entice consumers to buy products and services they would not otherwise do so. This was in keeping with John Kenneth Galbraith’s *The New Industrial State* (1967) — or, for that matter, *The Space Merchants*. Packard and Galbraith explain why Enron was so successful, because as such a large and powerful corporation, it could manipulate the market and the consumers to consume its goods without regard to the ability of the management, the honesty of the operations, and the like. Uh, right.

The portrayal of business operations set forth here is all too much of its time. One could not imagine an employee of Allied sleeping under his desk, as workers at (say) Amazon.com were known to have done. The shift in social values has extended into the business world, where the gray flannel suit went to Goodwill, the finned car was turned in for a Lexus or a Prius, and the vacuuming is being done by the

husband because the wife has put the pearls in the jewelry box, the cocktail dress on a hanger in the closet, and the high heels on the floor, and gone out jogging in sweats and running shoes. Wolfe described how the Common Man failed to be the idealized lower-grade Village Bohemian of the designers' dreams; the change was not all just there.

Works that address so incisively the concerns of one place and time have the fate of becoming incomprehensible when the circumstances they address change or even cease to exist. The answers that the young architects of the Ivy League had for the *common man* were ignored by their intended users, as Wolfe points out. Similarly, the concerns of Packard, Galbraith, Albee, and their like (even Pohl & Kornbluth) were not always well-informed then, and have not endured well as descriptions of later situations.

The absolute and inexorable power of advertising, for example. The "Bert & Harry" advertisements for Piels Beer were well done, amusing, and noteworthy. They were done by the advertising agency Young & Rubicam. Then people bought the beer itself — and didn't like it so they didn't buy it again. After a decline (exacerbated by overexpansion) the owners sold out and Piels is now a brand owned and distributed by Pabst.

Science Fiction often incisively extrapolates views of its era, standing athwart the path of history yelling "Stop!". The path of history does not always go in a straight line, or an upward-swooping curve, or even a plunge into the depths. At that, no other writing does much in the way of acknowledging change as a factor of society.



WHAT YOU PAY

Commentary by Joseph T Major

<http://hundredzeros.com/>

<http://www.amazon.com/kindle-eBooks/>

Susan Baugh had a recommendation for people with e-readers. Hundred Zeros is a website that links to whatever is free on Amazon, so readers can get their fix without having to pay more for it. So I gave it a try and here are some of the results . . .

The Long Journey Home: Volume I: The

Journey Begins by Duke Davis (2011). Is there some genetic selection that makes violent people resistant to world-ending plagues that kill 99+% of humanity? This is the *first* volume of a long series about a Navy SEAL sailing to the U.S. from a naval base in the Gulf, running into various people along the way most of whom get killed, either trying to kill him or being on his side and the enemy gets them. I suppose *Mad Max* fans will find this an interesting story.

The Lost Girls by Jason Halstead (2011). There is an interesting concept here, about human cyborging, but the plot seems to consist of the narrator (well, narratrix, to be picky and old-fashioned) getting shot again and again and going deeper into indenture to her employer to pay for the patching-up and augmentation. Also, there is a nagging backstory item about a portal to fairyland that never gets developed and seems pointless.

The Imperial Lance: The True Story of Japan's Victory in the Second World War by Dan Haymond and Liam Sands (2005). Somebody has too many wargames. The authors have the *Kido Butai* being sent to Europe in the summer of 1940, after a desperate alliance with Britain, where they destroy the German invasion fleet and much of the Luftwaffe. This seems a bit excessive, and the PoD (a Japanese officer who is the son of a Romanov grand duke and a Japanese noblewoman) a little out of keeping. Nice combat story if you don't examine it too closely. I can just imagine Fletcher Pratt and John Campbell and the guys playing it out with the little wooden ship models by Pratt's naval wargame rules in their rented hall.

The War of the Worlds: Aftermath by Tony Wright (2010). Specifically, of the anonymous Narrator of Wells's book. Whereas it seems Britain has its own version of the laboratory in *Independence Day*. And Wright throws in a lot of other things, including Cybermen, Sherlock Holmes (referred to as "the Detective"), a Martian-technology submarine called the *Nautilus*, and so on. Has this guy heard of *Sherlock Holmes's War of the Worlds* (1975; retitled *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The War of the Worlds* (2009)), *War of the Worlds: Global Dispatches* (1996), *The Space Machine* (1976), *The Second War of the Worlds* (1980), or even *Edison's Conquest of Mars* (1898)?

There are a lot of *Sexy Emo Vampires™*, but a new trend has appeared in the form of "Gray" works about submission. And just plain old ordinary romances. A number of the works are "teasers" — Volume One of the series, where Volume Two and so on are for sale at \$3.99 or whatever. Also, books will be offered free for a limited time.

As I've been saying, the positive result of the digital revolution is that anything can get published. The negative side is that anything can get published.

If your interests are "fringe", you can find

something. There are a lot of AH books in ebook format that don't get to Uchronia, and some of them explore different ventures. And so on with other fields.

The problem of so many self-published books is editing, or rather the lack thereof. Not just the lack of editing that hits publisher-published books these days, but beyond that; the lack of justification against a different perspective, for example. And, worse yet, a lack of simple copyediting.

Uchronia

<http://www.uchronia.net/>

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

Review by Joseph T Major of

PIRATES OF MARS

by Chris Gerrib

(Hadley Rille Books; 2012;

ISBN 978-0-9839531-3-5; \$16.00)

hadleyrillebooks.com

But there's no copyright page (!), so I can't be sure about the date.

As you might guess, this is a book about stealing merchant ships. The difference is that the ships are space ships, heading to Mars but not quite getting where they were supposed to go. The circumstances are more that of the Somali pirating of the time of writing than of the classic "aar-aar" buccaneers of the Caribbean; with the pirates brokering the ransom of the ship and crew over, well, the internet. Through somewhat dubious lawyers, too. And there are other considerations.

The book somehow seemed less than the total of its parts. Giving the point of view of the "pirates" showed a certain maturity of view; they weren't just evil, but the boss was power-hungry and the others were just hungry.

And the rescuers having to put together things on a shoestring and improvise made for a nice touch. They weren't broadshouldered pure-hearted tough guys and gals, just underpaid workers trying to do what they were supposed to do in the face of top-level indifference.

Nothing went off according to plan, which is how it really goes. Only . . . the tech seemed a little too fuzzy, and the characters a little hard to sort out at first.

It was a nice read over dinner, anyhow.

THE CASE OF JOHN DEXTER WARD

Review by Joseph T Major of

BLACKWOOD

by Gwenda Bond

(Strange Chemistry Books; 2012;

ISBN 978-1-908844-07-1; \$9.99)

www.strangechemistrybooks

. . . As I told you long ago, do not call up That which you can not put downe; either from dead Saltes or out of y^e Spheres beyond.

— "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward"

Some people just won't take good advice. Miranda has problems. Being trapped on

Roanoke Island, North Carolina, because you'll go mad if you leave is no fun, particularly when your dad is a helpless alcoholic. Almost as nice as having to be sent away because you hear voices as long as you're there. That's Phillips's problem. (He was sent to a boarding school in Kentucky; write what you know, Gwenda Bond lives in Lexington.) Talk about star-crossed lovers!

And then, the star-crossed lovers have to get together. Something about the mysterious disappearance of as many residents of the island as there were in the original colony. Oh, and Miranda's alcoholic dad, who disappeared from the morgue after he was found dead.

Then, all the disappeared people return. Even the murdered man, who seems to have found that death got him to straighten up and get his, er, life turned around. As Mr. J put it, "I've been dead once already, it's been very liberating. You should think of it as therapy!" This would call for the combined efforts of Agents Mulder, Scully, and Cooper, and G-Men do show up.

Add to that the disturbing secret history of the reason for the colony in the first place. It seems that Dr. John Dee decided that the New World would be the perfect place for his plan to create a new immortal man, and when things didn't quite go as planned, he had a backup in mind. Which included a personal backup, so to speak. (Alas, it looks as if Miranda and Phillips never quite get around to wondering if it were based on something the Doctor found in the *Al-Azif*, or: *Y^e Booke of Y^e Arab*.) Someone did indeed call up That which he could not put downe.

Then there was this strange artifact that Miranda found while looking in the closet for some of her mother's things . . . the mother whose mother had gone mad when she tried to leave Roanoke Island. Bad omens indeed. It had some strange results.

The young lovers have to face together a very old opponent, along with all the mundane problems of their lives, and the confrontation has left Miranda marked . . .

IN THE MIDDLE OF BATS . . .

Review by Joseph T Major of

WAYNE OF GOTHAM

by Tracy Hickman

(It Books (HarperCollins); 2012;

ISBN 978-0-06-207420-1; \$26.99;

HarperCollins Publishers (Kindle); \$9.99)

This is an annoyingly incomplete book. Hickman throws in several plot threads that are not so much completed as they are taken for granted. His (yes, he is a guy) plot is one of the variant Batman ones, where Batman has retired after a personal crisis. Something like the gap between *The Dark Knight* and *The Dark Knight Returns*, but without the official rejection.

His return is in the midst of an unusual crisis in that a number of Gothamites have begun to display false memories. Thus, in our opening chapters, Commissioner Gordon is trying to shoot Batman in revenge for Batman's having killed his daughter, Barbara — even though,

following the plot of *The Killing Joke* (1988) in backstory, Barbara had been shot and rendered paraplegic by the Joker and is now safely out of the way. One thinks of the setup for Jacqueline Carey's *Kushiel's Mercy* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #4), except that such pseudo-memories would be harder to sustain nowadays.

Balancing this off is the personal backstory; Hickman tells of the last days of Thomas and Martha Wayne, Bruce's parents, and the unusual circumstances that haunted their lives. Add to that the somewhat troubling relationship that develops between Bruce Wayne and Alfred Pennyfeather, promoted from butler to executive assistant, and a serious problem is to hand.

Hickman stirs in ancient vigilantes and the consideration that their vigilantism might have mutually fatal consequences, a strange apparent resurrection, and some well-known opponents with new problems. I mean, what could drive Harley Quinn and the Joker even crazier? That would be big trouble.

Hickman is to be commended for his awareness of technological advance. And not just one-sided, either, when the Joker announces that the body count and the electronic ID count do not quite match, and that's not funny . . .

The conclusion leads to some life-shattering events. It echoes plots from some of the graphic novels out there. Hickman, however, does not quite seem to have the "feel" of the situation down right, for all the depth of his realization. The book is written as if it were the middle volume of a trilogy, with all the gratuitous background assumption and indeterminate ending of such a work.



THE ONLY THING TO FEAR

Review by Joseph T Major of

JACK 1939

by Francine Matthews

(Riverhead; 2012;

ISBN 978-1594487194; \$26.95

Penguin Publishing (Kindle); \$12.99)

. . . Lenson thought he should know this frail, yet confident young officer — a Reservist, it was clear — yet somehow in the mists of his dreams there was a block on his identity. He was smoking, which didn't seem to accord with his state of health. The man saw the blue ribbon with the white stars and drew himself up. "Sir," he said respectfully — they were indoors and neither had a cover, so saluting was not called for.

"I'm looking for Captain Henry.

Have you seen him? Or that —" he choked down an adverse comment — "that man Budd?" The reservist shook his head. Then Lenson realized he should identify himself. "Dan Lenson. And you are?"

The young man shot out a puff of smoke. "Kennedy. **Jack Kennedy.**"

— Not by David Poyer

David Poyer's *The Only Thing to Fear* (1995) recounts a story not of his always called upon, never well-regarded hero Dan Lenson, but the tale of an unusual Presidential Agent; not a man-of-all-worlds like the Pulitzer Prize-winning Upton Sinclair's Lanny Budd, or the epic performer Victor "Pug" Henry of Herman Wouk's windy saga, but the son of a political enemy. That is, of course, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Lieutenant j.g. U.S.N.R. (ret.).

Now in this story, Jack seems to have taken up the covert trade a little earlier, a little more actively, a little more overseas . . .

And having been recruited by the President himself, Presidential Agent Jack Kennedy finds himself dispatched into the wilds of Europe, to meet seductive lovers past and present, officials of many governments, some even less friendly than others, and the like. Not to mention his own family, which has its own problems.

Matthews takes off on the well-known antipathy of Old Joe Kennedy to That Man In the White House, and the strains within his own progeny. Beyond that, there is the dire state of JFK's health. Indeed, the measures he takes to be able to get up and stagger around would seem to inhibit being a James Bond. I mean, making incisions in his thighs to insert pills directly into the muscle? In some ways, the struggle of JFK to overcome his deadly frailties seems more inspiring than the Official Story of the young man with "vigah" who played touch football with his family.

Once he bandages up the cuts, JFK follows the course of his investigation, which runs him directly into a plot straight out of Sax Rohmer, and Reinhard Heydrich could play it just as hard as Dr. Fu-Manchu . . . not to mention that the investigation has other connections, some of which cut a little too close to the quick.

Matthews seems a little too anticipatory of developments in security matters. She has Roosevelt working with William J. Donovan, and in Britain, JFK is sent to meet Colin Gubbins. This is just a little too early for them to be active in that field.

Having Roosevelt receive the secret messages from his agent himself, if not quite plausible, certainly fits with the man's personality. Even before the OSS, Roosevelt had a personal unofficial spy group. JFK should have reported to his man in that, Vincent Astor; just as in Britain he should have met with the chief of the duplicate secret service, Colonel Claude "Colonel Z" Dansey. Some names lack recognition. (Not always, though; you will recall that Dansey also founded The Laundry in Charles Stross's novels.)

But I bet that JFK himself would have loved

reading this book, if not actually living it.

WIR WOLLTEN HITLER TÖTEN

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE VALKYRIE OPTION

by Markus Reichardt

(Amazon Digital Services; 2012; \$2.99)

1. *Der Führer Adolf Hitler ist tot!*

Eine gewissenlose Clique frontfremder Parteiführer hat es unter Ausnutzung dieser Lage versucht, der schwerringenden Front in den Rücken zu fallen und die Macht zu eigennützigen Zwecken an sich zu reißen.

It does not inspire confidence in a book when the cover seems to have the title wrong. And this book is ridden with typos and infelicities, not to mention at least one ghastly gaping error of political procedure.

The reader who gets past this barrier will find a scrupulous, heavily researched, and well-thought alternate history of the desperate blow of the *Widerstand*, and the long struggle of mistrust which follows.

The means was one of those discussed in the Discovery Channel's *Killing Hitler* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #2). And the principal point of departure has to do with Rommel being just a little more on the alert when the *Jabos* make their appearance.

Reichardt's plotting has a certain sense of irony to it. Hitler just barely survives the blast. But as he lies there, in need of immediate trauma treatment, his personal physician Dr. Theodor Morrell shows up and proceeds to spectacularly bungle things. Indeed, fatally.

Meanwhile, most of the top *Parteibonzen* sit at hand, bewildered and concerned by what is going on — and cut off, unable to do anything about it. In Berlin, Himmler, having been a halfway-effective security officer and knowing about the coup and the assassination plans, but also being a halfway-aware intelligence officer and knowing how doomed the country was, dithers and dallies, doing nothing at all as the coup develops around him.

Even knocking out the key prop of the Nazi Regime only worked in-country. The allies were geared up for war, and the belief that Hitler was only the front man for the Thousand-Year Teutonic Conspiracy for World Domination was all too popular.

There is no way of just throwing a switch and saying "stop" to the war. The campaign continues, though at a profoundly lower key, with a cease-fire (the word "armistice", "*Waffenstillstand*", being less than popular in German memory) and withdrawal leaving various problems in their wake, including what happened to General Patton. On the Eastern Front, reinforcements fight a losing campaign in order to save a little territory.

All too many of those reinforcements are of dubious background. Thus, for example, *Wehrmachtminister* Stauffenberg has to inform his ex-SS now-allies that some of their men are going to fall heroically in battle, unless they wish to face degrading war-crimes trials. (One

wonders if this includes Fritz Knöchlein, late *SS-Totenkopfdivision*.)

Rommel fans will find interesting the cordial scenes between him and his former opponents Montgomery and O'Connor. The author seems to be more sympathetic to the British than to the Americans (note, as said the different fates of the contentuous commanders).

The Allies have their internal strains. Churchill, for example, is divided among wanting to extirpate Naaazism, preserving the balance of power in Europe, staying on good terms with America, and not having the country go broke. Roosevelt is wanting to keep in with his good fellow democrat Stalin. Who wants to have as many territories in which to establish his own political system as possible, including even perhaps France, which is becoming bitterly divided, much to the pain of de Gaulle.

The last Soviet offensive creates strange associates, as when the Warsaw rising promptly terminates — with an alliance between the Polish Home Army and the Germans! And the new German government gives some of the less reputable sorts in their own ranks the opportunity to redeem their crimes terminally.

As opposed to the opportunists. Including a strange effort by the clever Walther Schellenburg (who decided that one good bomb deserved another) to play out *President Fu Manchu*, or perhaps it was the idea from *Jack 1939*, with this cash he happened to have on hand. [Now that's an idea, have Poyer and Matthews do a story in *The Valkyrie Option: Global Dispatches* where Jack Kennedy has to foil this Plot Against . . . well, maybe not all of America.] However, the Empire can strike back. ("Stewart Graham Menzies". Or if you don't think it's appropriate to say that, say "C". Is it really that hard to name the Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service? Ben Bova in *Triumph* (1993) was as held back.)

As Roosevelt's health, the internal policies of France, and the front in Poland all deteriorate, the progression towards an end slows to a deadly crawl. Then, things take a turn for the worse . . .

I've mentioned the errors of non-editing here. One is not just a typographical or layout error. The newly-elected President *could not* be sworn in prior to January 20. That's not just a good idea, it's the Constitution.

Some of your favorite people may not turn up. Thus, nothing is made of Heinz Guderian, and little of Harold Alexander. Similarly, the reaction of the Lord God Almighty, sometimes also known as Douglas MacArthur, might be peripherally relevant. Everybody has his own internal cast of characters.

What of the future? Reichardt has made some interesting observations regarding a number of considerations, from the economic destiny of Britain to the possibilities of the Soviet nuclear weapons project, from the prospects of the Balkans to the future of divided and disheveled France. As with such a vast canvas there is always something left out.

The future of the Palestine Mandate for example; since the assassination of Lord Moyne

has not taken place, the possibilities for Churchill's proposed retrocession of the Mandate are greater. Which would mean a three-cornered war there, but that's life.

Above all, there is the consideration of a certain compromise in the new German polity. There were some Nazi functionaries who were left in positions of authority, Albert Speer for example, and certainly the quest for punishing criminals in the German ranks may be difficult. The antifascist people in the U.S. such as Rex Stout may be saying that this is the old gang under new faces (and never mind that the *Widerstand* was a coalition of everyone from Social Democrats to Nationalists).

The board of historians in the BBC's documentary and drama *Killing Hitler* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #3) finally decided on a "Go" message for Operation FOXLEY, the SOE attempt to assassinate Hitler. Ending the war sooner would save hundreds of thousands if not millions of lives, and change millions more.

In this case Adolf Eichmann would have been only an evil memory for the Jews of Budapest (but not, alas, for those of the rest of the country), and Raoul Wallenberg could show 'Pimpernel' Smith at the Leslie Howard Memorial Ceremony in Stockholm. The remnant of Lodz's Ghetto would have endured, even if their leader Chaim Mordechai Rumkowski likely wouldn't have. Anne Frank would have been the author of the novel *Tales from the House Behind: The Diary of Kitty Fisher* about a family that hid in an attic.

Kurt Vonnegut would be just another grumbling draftee who never got into action (and my cousin Vaden Lackey an officer who went back to the Tennessee National Guard), and the intact wonders of Dresden would be the tourist's dream. Cyril Kornbluth would have written comments about the events of the sixties and seventies that would have been so sharp they made the world bleed, maybe even have sold "The Marching Morons" to the movies.

"Maybe th' sun's comin' up" (*Up Front* (1945), Page 30)

Und der Teufel, der sie verführte, ward geworfen in den feurigen Pfuhl und Schwefel, da auch das Tier und der falsche Prophet war; und sie werden gequält werden Tag und Nacht von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit.

Et diabolus qui seducebat eos missus est in stagnum ignis et sulphuris ubi et bestia et pseudoprophetes et cruciabuntur die ac nocte in saecula saeculorum.

Και ο διαβολος ο πλανων αυτος εβληθη εις την λιμνην του πυρος και θειου οπου το θηριον και ο ψευδοπροφητης και ο βασιανισθησονται ημερας και νυκτος εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων.

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

— Revelation 20:10

(Martin Luther/Vulgate/Greek/KJV)

A REGIONAL OF THE WORLD

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE PROCEEDINGS: CHICON III
50th Anniversary Edition

edited by Earl Kemp and George Price

Introduction by Mike Resnick

(The Merry Blacksmith Press; 1963, 2012;
 ISBN 978-0-61567-627-2; \$13.95)

Once upon a time (all good stories should start "Once upon a time") the WorldCon was about the size of a middle-sized regional of today. There was no animé, no comics, nothing in the way of media, no hall costumes, no Friends of Bill W., no specialties at all. There might be a movie, but it would be only one. The entire program could be held in one room because the entire membership, maybe 500 present out of 730 total, could *fit* in one room.



The World Science Fiction Convention was in Chicago in 1962, fifty years ago. This is the record of that con, the entire program taped and transcribed for our reading pleasure and memory. The original edition was issued by Advent:Publishers in 1963; this reprint was done for the latest convention.

The introduction by the Guest of Honor of that later convention includes his sad admission that then he was too financially constrained to go. So let Earl, George, and Bwana bear you back to a simpler time . . .

Now this was a connected fandom, it had coherence. People knew one another, they were familiar, but an outsider, a newcomer could be accepted quickly. It was not large enough to

create closed off in-groups.

It is interesting to note that the first speaker was from NASA, and one of the things he discussed was the possibility of the Chinese space program. (He couldn't predict the Cultural Revolution, of course.) His predictions for the future of the American space program turned out to be optimistic, and he wanted the writers to quit writing about the Big Bad Congressman who wanted to give no money for space. Ahem. As if bookending, the last speaker was an editor of *Fate Magazine*, presenting the publication as promoting enquiries into the unknown. The lack of confirmation of psychic powers in the past fifty years says something about that, I suppose.

The panels were quite striking, and while the topics would still bear discussion now, I don't think the *quality* of the panelists would be up to that standard. Likewise for the sole speakers, of which Willy Ley is the prime example of one who was there but isn't here now.

The banquet — in those days, there was a banquet — and awards ceremony bears notice, too. Where else could you have had Bob Tucker introducing Forrest J Ackerman to give the Big Heart Award to — Bob Tucker!

One of the controversial items is that of the Best Novel Hugo. The *Proceedings* themselves describe a dramatic, last-minute appearance by Heinlein himself to accept his Hugo for *Stranger In a Strange Land*, with his modest description of his hurried, desperate journey that brought him to the place just in time. In the afterword, written half a century later, Earl Kemp describes cynically how Heinlein had bullied him for the Hugo (as he had said in "Heinlein Happens", his notorious essay for *No Award*) and how he had contrived to make this dramatic appearance. (Earl says he wanted to make the appearance somewhat non-appearing, but that might be the residue of disgust at the treatment he had received from the man.)

There was discussion of novels that might be connected and might not. John Hersey's *The Child Buyer* (1960) was cited a couple of times, for example. Nowadays we have *The Plot Against America* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #6) and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #3), gaining awards without a murmur [except from me, it seems].

One of those citations was whether the book would be remembered later on. Well . . . the book is the transcript of a state legislature committee hearing on the case of a man who has come to a town in the state to buy a child. The purpose is to turn the boy into a human computer. As the hearing progresses, Hersey shows how the child buyer can buy off everyone who might stand in the way of the purchase; i.e., the teacher who might object is bribed with a doctorate from a diploma mill operated by the child buyer's employer.

Norman Spinrad did it better in *Bug Jack Barron* (1969), which is also about child buying, but for a different purpose. For what it's worth, *The Child Buyer* is in print, albeit in a low-quality edition, while *Bug Jack Barron* is available in both hardcopy and for the Kindle (for \$8.99, which I think is a bit much).

As for ChiCon III, they had pass-along funds, a discussion of Hugos at the Business Meeting, and, sigh, only one bid to vote on for the future WorldCon. Do you get the feeling that some things never change?

I presume that Earl and George will correct anything I misunderstood. Best wishes to you guys, and thanks for the effort.

A WORLD OF THE REGIONAL

Review by Joseph T Major of
**COMIC-CON AND THE BUSINESS OF
 POP CULTURE:**

*What the World's Wildest Trade Show Can
 Tell Us About the Future of Entertainment*

by Rob Salkowitz

(McGraw-Hill; 2012;

ISBN 978-0-07-179702-3; \$27.00;

McGraw-Hill (Kindle); \$12.99)

The picture Salkowitz paints is seemingly cheery, yet on closer examination it is profoundly dark. The comics industry is riddled with structural problems.

Current story-writing practices involve long-term planning of story arcs, preparing issues a year or more in advance. This puts a premium on following policy from above.

The small independent writers and artists have seen their markets collapse. Indeed, comic distribution is in crisis, and sales of even major titles are in the doldrums.

The collection market has suffered a catastrophic implosion. All those stories about "Sell all my stocks and put the money into old comic books!" (Wasn't there a Gahan Wilson cartoon with that line?) have now proven unsound.

Indeed, the market has suffered a paradigm shift, with the focus shifting from the comics themselves to movies. However, the movies themselves are now facing the problem of escalating costs.

Salkowitz is honest about this. What keeps the book from being a gloom-and-doom fest is his presentation of the spectacle. He loves the show, it shows in his writing, and there is a great deal to like about it. Comic-Con has become the showplace where new movies, comics, and the like are premiered, where new ideas are discussed, and so on. There is a big market for this and it is well served.

Even if it is not our service. Their Dead Dog Party, for example. It is by invitation, and is for the original actual comics people. They catch their breaths after the hoopla and the presentations, and remember the old days when they were marginal, but close.

He ends the book with a chapter laying out different futures for the con. Realistically, none of them will exactly come to pass. Comics must deal with the prospects and the challenge of digital distribution.

The subtitle makes a sound point. This is not a con as we know it. It is a trade show, albeit one that does have lectures on the background of the trade. And an expensive one; small wonder that Roy from Working Daze maxes out his credit card . . .

AT THE MERCY OF THE WINDS

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE ICE BALLOON:

S. A. Andrée and the Heroic Age of Arctic Exploration

by Alec Wilkinson

(Alfred A. Knopf; 2011;

ISBN 978-0-307-59480-8; \$25.95;

Random House Digital (Kindle); \$12.99)

For those who have read John W. Campbell's *The Moon Is Hell* (1951), the story of the Fort Conger expedition of 1881-1885 will seem very familiar, except that Adolphus Greely's men didn't have to synthesize their own food and were a bit less organized.

This disaster (covered in far more detail in *Ghosts of Cape Sabine* by Leonard F. Guttridge (2000)) is one of the many background items touched upon by Wilkinson in his detailed story of the Andrée Polar Expedition of 1897, the attempt to fly over the North Pole in a balloon. Wilkinson, a writer for the *New Yorker*, also touches briefly upon Fritjof Nansen's efforts to drift across the Pole, capped by his dash for it, and off-handedly mentions Cook and Peary.

His principal topic is the flight of the *Ornän* (*Eagle*), the balloon of Salomon August Andrée, a Swede who somehow managed to get worked up about something. Wilkinson recounts the story in a straightforward manner, covering the careful planning, the short flight, the long drag south, and the mysterious deaths of the three ballooners. He doesn't commit himself to any particular cause, and in fact describes the reasons why most of the proposed causes *couldn't* have happened. (He rules out suicide, for example, which sort of scuppers *Ingenjör Andréas Luftfärd* [*Flight of the Eagle*] (1967, 1970), not that it doesn't deserve it.)

While this does put the expedition in something of a context (more could have been said about Nansen and Peary; and for whatever reason Peary does not even mention Andrée in *Secrets of Polar Travel* (1917)), the account by Hempleman-Adams, *At the Mercy of the Winds* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #3) has more about the flight and beyond that has the insight of someone who had been there and done that. Beyond that, there is not enough context of what is there. There was the entire Polar Year, for example, which was why Greely and his crew were up at Fort Conger.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE TEXT OF TERROR

Review by Joseph T Major of

SHERLOCK

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1475582/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b018ttws>

Sherlock Holmes, the immortal character of fiction created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, is ageless, invincible and unchanging.

In solving significant problems of the present day he remains — as ever — the supreme master of deductive reasoning.

In 1942, Universal Pictures decided to do an update and modernization of the Great Detective, with Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce, who had just done two “period” Holmes movies with Twentieth-Century Fox.. The first of these new ones, “Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror” (1942), deals with the depredations of a Nazi sabotage ring openly, even arrogantly, controlled by announcements over the wireless from the Reich.

Had Sefton Delmer heard of this? His black propaganda operations certainly followed a similar script; see *Black Boomerang* (1962; discussed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #2) for his efforts in that line. As we now know, the numbered Operatives that the Voice of Terror ordered and announced would have been men like Eddie Chapman (Agent ZIGZAG), John Moe (Agent MUTT), and Tor Glad (Agent JEFF) — all Double-Cross agents.

Still, they didn't know better then, and in the end Sherlock Holmes runs down the Voice of Terror. (A plot element parallels one used by Ian Fleming in *Moonraker* (1955).) Seventy years later, he is doing that sort of thing again.

The new series *Sherlock* sets Holmes amid the world of blogs and mobiles, ASBO and nicotine patches, laser targeting and Botox.

Series (US “Season”) One:

A Study in Pink

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1665071/>

But some things never change, and Dr. John Watson, R.A.M.C. (Martin Freeman) has been in Afghanistan, returned to Blighty with a wound pension, looking for a flat at a reasonable price. A fellow graduate calls to mind a man who has been whipping corpses.

But Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) has an understanding with the police, or at least the long-suffering Inspector Lestrade (Rupert Graves). Consider, for example, the initial scene where Lestrade is making a statement to the Press, being interrupted by numerous texts of “Wrong”.

Not so some of the other officers, one of whom warns Watson that he's moving in with a psychopath. Perhaps his ebullient victory dance over learning of the existence of a new serial killer was a sign. (Now that's an idea, on vacation in Miami Holmes finds himself trying to track down Dexter . . .)

The serial killer was a serial poisoner. There are some beautiful “Sherlockisms” For example, where Holmes inspects the latest corpse and tells where she came from and what is missing. Then he finds it.

Tracking the case involves a trawl through the streets of London. Including one incident where they run through mews, over buildings, and down back ways to outrace a cab making its way through a maze of streets. And a very annoyed passenger, who wonders who are these people and why are they bothering him.

But the search is for the murderer, who is out there but never seen. Not a postman, either, but someone just as “invisible” . . . and who confronts Holmes in a nerve-wracking and

different sort of duel.

An interesting riff off the original (yes, *A Study in Scarlet*) is the inversion of the inscription one of the victims left.

Along the way, Watson has a confrontation with a man who seems to know more about the events than anyone else, including the murderer. After a dramatic pickup off the streets of London to a chilly and empty room, he offers Watson a payment to keep track of Holmes. Watson declines.

Now, as Holmes and Watson walk away from the scene of the final confrontation, they encounter him again. Holmes makes a comment about how the other man is gaining weight, and they proceed to verbally skirmish with each other in a tone of extreme familiarity. Sibling rivalry, in fact — yes, this is Mycroft Holmes (Mark Gatiss)! [Unbilled, too.]

Among the witty parts is the scene where Holmes pulls back his sleeve to reveal three large sticking plasters. “It's a three-patch problem,” he says. Consumption of *tobacco products* is sooo 1895 . . .

The Blind Banker

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1664529/>

Which begins with a mysterious bit of tagging in a bank. In an office that was supposedly ultra high security, no less. Then the tagging turns out to be the prelude to murder. Locked-room murders, as a matter of fact.

It also turns out to be one of the most elementary of codes, a book code. A book code that advertises the retribution of a gang for the theft of a item of vast price and insignificant appearance — one that required people to be killed left and right over its possession.

Watson seems to be the butt of this episode. For example, at the beginning he is at the self-service grocery checkout and nothing works, including his bank card. (It could be worse, it could be the Sainsbury's where Ben Willis of *Cashback* (2004, 2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #2) worked and Ben might stop time and debag him.). And so on, as when they are making enquiries about the paint used in the tagging and he ends up holding the can when the police arrive — so facing an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO, the snarkish name-change of the eponymous Lotto-winning protagonist of Martin Amis's latest novel *Lionel Asbo: State of England* (2012). [Martin's father was the well-known SF writer Kingsley Amis.])

In the process, though, Holmes ends up leaving things to Watson; his bank card, the cheque from the bank, and so on. Also, he seems blithely unsure about personal security, and while he manages to escape the strangler lying in wait in one victim's flat, that does stick Watson with a problem. When the bad guys catch “Sherlock Holmes” and threaten him, you see. After all, this guy is carrying a bank card, a cheque, and a mobile identifying him, and one associate of the gang even heard him identify himself . . .

You'll be pleased to note that in trying to determine the volume for the book code, the

first work encountered is by Iain M. Banks. It's not the book in question, though.

The Great Game

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1664530/>

After a brief intro in Belarus, where Holmes corrects a would-be client's grammar and word usage, we segue to 221B, where Holmes is bored. And shooting a smiley face into the wall. (I thought Britain had gun control laws.) Watson comes home, goes looking for something to eat, and discovers there is a head in the refrigerator. He lives with Sherlock Holmes. What does he expect?

Not, perhaps, would-be clients calling to get his help in solving their problems, with an interesting payment and impetus. They have bombs strapped to them, and the deadline for Holmes to solve the relevant case is, well, theirs. As opposed to the one case he doesn't feel like solving, at Mycroft's behest, about someone who made off with a set of plans for a new missile defence system. Perhaps the bomb across the street which started the whole mess gave him impetus.

Between Mycroft sending nagging texts and Holmes getting calls to very urgently solve cases, they do manage to find a little time to look into the reason Cadogan West was found where he was and in the state he was. Then there comes the final bomb call . . .

While this is an adaptation of "The Bruce-Partington Plans", we can note that the title is that of one of Michael Kurland's Moriarty books (2003). So it ends not being all that surprising that in the confrontation, Holmes describes Moriarty as a consulting criminal — Kurland's take on him.

The series was originated by veterans of the latest production of *Doctor Who* and somehow Cumberbatch looks as if he's in competition to be the next Doctor. Since he is already going to be Smaug for Peter Jackson's new production of *The Hobbit*, to Freeman's Bilbo Baggins, he certainly has the connection. ['Excellent!' Bilbo cried. 'Elementary,' hissed Smaug.]

Some people might find Cumberbatch a bit too "pretty-boy" to be the craggy, homely Holmes of the original description, or Mark Gatiss to be too slender to be the stout Mycroft. The deduction, however, is very much to the point, even if these days determining the occupation of a passer-by through the unique items of clothing he or she wears is now less possible.

The writing contains many adaptations of and riffs on the original stories, cleverly inserted and used. The somewhat lamentable trend in the Universal movies away from problems of deduction to standard-issue thrillers with the protagonist happening to be "Sherlock Holmes" so far has not come to pass.

I am indebted to Carolyn Clowes for pointing out that the hit counter on Watson's blog is stuck at 1895. Vincent Starett would have been pleased. Yes, there is a real "Blog of Dr. John H. Watson" out there on the Net.

<http://www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk/>

... [To Be Continued]

ROBERT MASSIE

by Lisa Major

I first read *Nicholas and Alexandra* many years ago. I wore out one paperback copy. When I learned Massie was coming to Louisville and would be speaking at the Main branch I scurried to order two of the free tickets. Joe graciously ordered a new copy of *Nicholas and Alexandra* since my copy was lost in the stacks. The grand night came and we went to the Main branch. Massie gave a very interesting talk about his new book on Catherine the Great. After the lecture he answered questions and then signed books, among them mine.

KENTUCKY FUTURITY 2012

by Lisa



On October 7 we drove to Lexington to see the Kentucky Futurity, the last leg of the trotting Triple Crown. There was no Triple Crown at stake this year but we still got to see some fine racing. The Futurity winner was the aptly named My MVP who won both his heats. As with the Thoroughbreds, the filly version is called the Oaks. It was won by another aptly named horse, Win Missy B. I am still decidedly culturally deprived when it comes to Standardbred pedigrees but I do occasionally recognize the names of horses I have seen on Futurity day and learned about at the Horse Park. Triple Crown winner Glidemaster had offspring listed in the program, as did his sire Yankee Glide.

TIME RESTORED:

The Harrison Timekeepers and R.
T. Gould, the Man Who Knew
(Almost) Everything

by Jonathan Betts

Senior Specialist, Horology
Royal Observatory

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

(Oxford University Press; 2006, Reprinted
2010; ISBN 978-0-19-856802-5; \$95;
Amazon Digital Services (Kindle); \$42.75)
Reviewed by Rodford Edmiston

This is a fascinating book for someone — like me — who has an interest in the combination of history and technology. The author was one of the prime sources used by Dava Sobel in her book *Longitude*. However, that book focused on John Harrison, while this one is primarily about a man in many ways just as remarkable: Rupert T. Gould.

I read reprints of some of Gould's books — *Oddities: A Book of Unexplained Facts*, *Unexplained Facts: Enigmas and Curiosities*, and *More Oddities and Enigmas* — as a young man in the Seventies, and later picked up a copy of his *The Loch Ness Monster*. All of these stood apart from the typical forteen works I read before and after. They presented the evidence in an unbiased way and considered the various explanations objectively. While Gould was obviously a skeptic of the "supernatural," he was also willing to consider "unusual" explanations, if only to discuss why they didn't work. Reading these, I frequently wished I could find more works by the same author. Unfortunately, despite beginning many such works, few were completed, and fewer survive in a format available to the casual reader.

Time Restored is primarily a biography of Gould, but it also provides much information on the history of the Harrison chronometers (the author is currently in charge of most of them) and related works. It does a very good job of providing both the dry details and the human factors behind them.

Betts does not gloss over Gould's failings, personal or technical. For example, as he thoroughly describes Gould's work on the chronometers, Betts includes things Lieutenant Commander Gould did which today would be considered outright vandalism. For example, he replaced the quite functional pull-cord winder of H1 (Harrison's first seagoing chronometer) with a key winder, for reasons no-one today understands. (The pull-cord winder was restored in the Eighties.) Gould was not a trained restorer, nor was he an expert timepiece builder, though as a professional navigator in the Royal Navy he understood the importance of chronometers and how then-modern ones could be maintained and repaired. However, he taught himself to be the former (and occasionally contracted out work he knew to be beyond him) and, truthfully, the first three Harrison chronometers were so different from anything else before or after that no-one was qualified to work on them before Gould taught himself to be.

I think the book's author sums up the situation with the chronometers by admitting that despite Gould's somewhat eccentric work on them, surprisingly little has had to be done to them since Gould's death in 1948. Betts also states, flatly, that if Rupert Gould had not been interested in the Harrison chronometers and offered to restore them, they might not exist in running condition today. Or even at all.

There is an interesting connection, here, with a book I previously reviewed. Gould knew of and was known of by Alfred L. Loomis, of *Tuxedo Park* fame. They probably met at least once, when Loomis visited England to buy precision instruments and clocks. One wonders how the history of both men would have been different if the perpetually almost-penniless Gould had been offered a job by multi-millionaire Loomis.

Gould was a troubled man, often obsessed with interests which no-one else in his family shared. Were Gould to be evaluated today he would probably be declared to have Asperger's syndrome. He also smoked and drank heavily, largely due to severe bouts of depression. These habits likely led to his death at the relatively early age of fifty-eight. It is interesting that every time Gould and his work were evaluated by someone with similar interests — both during his life and afterwards — the results were usually gushing praise.

It should be noted that the movie version of *Longitude* not only glosses over much of Gould's life and travails, but gets some things quite wrong, and even in the wrong order. For example, he did almost all of the work on the Harrison timepieces (including a couple not even mentioned in the movie) in various home workshops, and almost none actually in a museum. Also, while H1 was the first cleaned and preserved, it was the last restored to working condition. Some of the errors are understandable simplifications, due to the constraints of a movie. Others can only be explained by those involved in the movie wanting to tell a story different from the real one.

Roughly a third of this book is references, notes and appendices. One of the latter has modern experts address the topics of Gould's various Enigmas books. Almost uniformly, his work is praised, for both dedicated research and an even-handed open mindedness which never descends into over-eager blind acceptance.

This book is recommended to anyone with an interest in the history of technology, the Harrison chronometers, or the failings of genius.

For the review of the book on Alfred L. Loomis, *Tuxedo Park* by Jennet Conant (2002), see Alexiad V. 2 #1.

JIMMY STU LIVES!

By Kent McDaniel

(Penumbra Publishing; 2011;
ISBN 978-1935563839; \$9.99;
Kindle: \$2.99)

Reviewed by Tom Feller

In Robert Heinlein's 1940 novella, "If This Goes On —", a fundamentalist Christian leader is elected President in 2012 and proceeds to suspend the Constitution and turn the United States into a theocracy. In Kent McDaniel's novel, future events have not gone that far, but the separation of church and state is no longer observed, and you might say that the United States is a semi-theocracy.

McDaniel's story begins in the present. The main character is The Reverend James Stuart "Jimmy Stu" Sloan, founder of the mega-church Church of the Living Lord (COTLL), a three-thousand person congregation in Nashville, Tennessee. A widower, Jimmy Stu has lost his faith and decides to have his body cryogenically frozen when he dies.

He is revived in 2140, when the world in some ways is very different, but in others it is very similar. Besides cryogenics, there are many other technological advances. For long distance travel, teleportation has replaced flying, and flying cars powered by solar energy are now the norm for everyday use. Androids are prominent in the early parts of the novel. There is still a World Wide Web and blogging, but no one ever reads a newspaper. Physical books are so rare that Jimmy Stu is surprised when he finds one. Computer animation has replaced live actors in broadcast media, and all television is three-dimensional.

However, the political changes are much more interesting. While the United States still exists, power has shifted back to the individual states to such an extent that in some cases a person must have a passport to travel from one state to another. There are no longer Republican and Democratic parties, but instead religious denominations dominate different parts of the country. Jimmy Stu's old church controls the state and local governments in Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, Arkansas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Missouri and shares power in Ohio, Indiana, and southern Illinois. Secular Humanists control the rest of Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana, and most of the Upper Midwest and the Northeast, although in some areas they have to share power with Jews and Catholics. Pentecostals and Baptists dominate the lower Southern states, except for Florida, the Mormons control Utah, and a new denomination, People of the New Age, govern the Pacific Coast. At the federal national, coalition governments are the new normal. The current President of the United States is Baptist, and her Vice-President is Catholic.

The plot is driven by a division in Jimmy Stu's old church. The current leaders want to keep him frozen, because they correctly perceive that he would not approve the direction the church has taken since his "death". A dissenter within the church, who is also a descendant of Jimmy Stu, initiates his revival. Since the church controls law enforcement in Tennessee, they become fugitives. This leads to a series of encounters and adventures.

This novel is a very fast and entertaining read, and, at 168 pages, a little on the short side by today's standards. I would definitely recommend it for its fascinating depiction of a possible future.

HOW TO GET AN INDOOR POOL — The Sequel

ChiCon 7, the 70th World Science Fiction
Convention, Chicago, Illinois, August 30 —
September 3, 2012

Con Report by Joseph & Lisa Major



The week before took a lot of preparation. Sunday, we began by going to Best Buy to get Lisa a new netbook. It was an open-box item, and we figured we had better get it while the getting was good. Monday we went to the optometrists, it having been a while since that chore had been taken care of. They wanted to sell us new glasses, and I had to make another appointment to get tested for glaucoma. Tuesday we cleaned out the car — it was the only day available.

Wednesday we went to see Lisa's friend Mrs. Mellen, in the nursing home. Thursday was my dentist's appointment — Lisa had had hers in July. On Friday we went out to dinner with Tim & Elizabeth. Saturday we made the rounds; my B-12 shot, flea medicine for the cats, TARC3 tickets for Grant, and then take Lisa to work. We had gone out to the Hometown Buffet on Dixie Highway for breakfast, and discovered, much to our dismay, that it was shut down. So we had breakfast at Frisch's near where Grant used to live. Dinner was at Applebee's.

All the while, I was doing laundry, so we would have enough clean clothes. Also, Johnny had dropped off an envelope with his site selection ballot, which he wanted delivered to the con.

Sunday, August 26, 2012 Louisville Kentucky State Fair

In the morning I took Lisa to church. Picked her up at noon and we went to the Fair.

It was the last day of the fair. The animals had already gone by the time we got to see them, but on the other hand the parking was decent enough. We toured the mall, made donations to Raptor Rescue, got Grant a new phone and upgraded the service, got a collection of county info to give to Dana and Mike, and generally had a good time.

Dinner at Buckhead Grill, with a take-away at McDonald's for Grant. Then, changed the litter boxes, took out the trash, packed the car, and gave up, exhausted for the night.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 57.1
Sunrise: 7:07 AM
Sunset: 8:22 PM
Weather: Partly cloudy

Monday, August 27, 2012 Louisville — Chicago, IL

I didn't want to buck the rush hour traffic, so

after the last little bit of packing we left a little leisurely. That is, going out to Heitzman's for breakfast. It was only after that we went off north.

The weather was variable, shall we say; sunny for most of the way, but with a rainstorm in Indianapolis. Not to mention missing the turnoff in Chicago, and having to join the million or so other free-roaders on I-80 (I-90 has a toll). But we got to Dana's and Mike's in the middle of the afternoon. Nobody was there, so we sat and waited.

Well, somebody was; their two children and a nanny. Anya, their daughter, recognized us. We were welcomed in, moved some luggage in, and waited for Mike and Dana. Mike showed up fairly soon. Dana was — in Louisville! Or on a flight back, anyhow. She got in about midnight, and begged us to stay with them for the whole convention. Well, it was just too late to cancel the hotel reservation, but I thought of ways around it, and it turned out to be not a bad idea.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 326.9

Sunrise: 7:08 AM (EDT)

Sunset: 7:33 PM (CDT)

Weather: Rain, clearing.

Tuesday, August 28, 2012

Chicago

Breakfast, followed by a trip south on the CTA Brown Line to the Metra. This latter is more like an old-fashioned train, complete with ticket-taking conductor. This got us down to the 55th-56th-57th Street station in good order.

Museum of Science and Industry

Which has undergone some renovation since we last saw it in 2000. They processed us through the CityPass line quickly — oh, did I mention the CityPass? Make a payment in advance, get admission to several Chicago sights, and go through the quick line. After remembering the long long long lines to the Shedd Aquarium, I thought being able to go through the quick line a plus.

The storm exhibit has a good bit of show and feel, including being in a vortex. Oh yes, there was the IMAX movie, about some mildly crazy people who chase tornadoes while putting out probes and using Doppler radar, and a thoroughgoing lunatic who built an armored vehicle which could dig in and be hit by one. He wanted to take photographs of the inside of the vortex (and see Miss Gulch riding around on her bicycle, cackling insanely oh never mind).

The U-505 has been moved to an underground pit. She was deteriorating too badly in the weather. They have more information on the men of the boat and of the *Guadalcanal* and the other ships of Task Group 22.3, including some bits on Captain (later Rear-Admiral) Gallery and *Oberleutnant zur See* Harald Lange.

Afterwards we checked out the Powells Bookstore down there. I didn't get anything. We then reversed the trains, Metra to CTA Brown Line.

And so to bed.

Books read: *Space Viking*, H. Beam Piper

Sunrise: 6:12 AM

Sunset: 7:31 PM

Weather: Clear, mild

Wednesday, August 29, 2012

Chicago

Up again and out, and downtown on the Brown Line with a change to the Red Line at Belmont. For some reason it's easy to remember that station. Which brought us after a short walk to our destination of the day.

Shedd Aquarium

This was what I had got the CityPass for. Yet, when we showed up, the line was minimal. And to get ahead of myself, while the jellyfish exhibit was certainly interesting, it was not all that large. Dana and Mike had taken the kids to see it and they had found it interesting.

The first exhibit we saw was the substantial one on aquatic life of the Amazon. This has a bit of a problem since the river floods, rising several feet, then retreats, on an annual basis. The nature of the area fluctuates annually, that is to say, with all the problems that entails.

Other exhibits featured such useful points as why it really isn't a good idea to set your goldfish free in a local pond. They had many examples of adventitious flora which had a less than positive impact on the local biome. Including *models* of zebra mussels, because the real thing could spread through all the tanks.

The IMAX movie had a lot about penguins. They spiced it up with cold air and snow blown into the viewers' faces, and a startling poke in the back when a shark had lunch.

There was a show of performing dolphins and other large and friendly sea fauna. The handlers could get dolphins to perform tricks on demand, just like Friesian horses (you were thinking maybe dogs? A bottlenose dolphin is more the size of a Friesian). They did have one of their beluga whales on show, but the principal one was isolated, having just given birth.

The polar exhibit had some Magellanic (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) and rockhopper (*Eudyptes chrysocome*) penguins, which are from South America. Both species are considered threatened in the wild, though presumably not by bats.

Field Museum

With the time constraints, about all we could see were the special exhibits. The first one we saw was the one on Temujin. The video there had an introduction by the Mongolian Ambassador to the United States, talking about how the Tai-tzu Emperor had been a most important man in world history. Indeed, Genghis Khan (he had a lot of names, understand) was literally the Father of His Country, as recent DNA research has shown that about eight percent of all men in central Asia, which works out to about 0.5% of all men in the world, share a common Y-chromosomal configuration which has been traced back to the era of Genghis Khan. So much for the villain in

The Shadow who was the last descendant of the Great Ancestor. (Though the only contemporary description of Genghis Khan credits him with red hair and green eyes. "Long magnetic eyes of the true cat-green" maybe?)

The exhibit had a number of non-genetic artifacts, saddles, postal-rider insignia, armor, swords, musical instruments, and perhaps somewhat disturbing, the grave goods and body of a Mongol woman. Some of the placards were somewhat hard to believe. I don't think, for example, that the Mongols introduced trousers to Europe. Sure and all those Kelts who were a'wearin' of the briggas just might be after saying otherwise.

The other special exhibit was on Extreme Mammals. All kinds, from some gargantuan armored beast to little ones like platypuses and pangolins. And other definitions of "extreme", which end up including people, in some aspects.

We were pretty tired after seeing the Extreme Mammals, and decided to go out. We stopped off in the Museum Store, and couldn't find anything we couldn't live without.

And **Andy Porter** was in the Field Museum. I ran into him in the Museum Store, and saw him again on the way out. Took some pictures around the Museum, then caught the CTA train back to Mike's & Dana's.

And so to bed.

Books read: *The Valkyrie Option*, Markus Reichardt

Sunrise: 6:13 AM

Sunset: 7:30 PM

Weather: Clear, mild

Thursday, August 30, 2012

Chicago

Chicon 7

We had to spend at least one day at the Hyatt, so drove down. We diverted by Fleet Feet (the ability to find places is a great boon of modern technology) where Lisa could get more socks before getting down to the hotel. Or maybe not, because the GPS went crazy due to all the tall buildings around.

Checked in without trouble (except for having to give way to three mobeys getting onto the elevator), and more amazingly, astoundingly, thrillingly wonderful, and even analogish, there was indeed a refrigerator in the room. We spread our things out and went to register for the con, which likewise went quickly. From there it was a short visit to the concourse, where we ran into **Rod Smith**, who was as usual a bit under the weather.

Milt Stevens was in the Fan Lounge, and the ever-energetic master of such places **Chris Garcia** took a moment from producing the hour's edition of *The Drink Tank* or *Journey Planet* or whatever to say hello.

Doing his part for the lunar program in the adjoining area of the concourse was **C. D. Carson**. And we had to do our part for the con, so dived into the Dealer's Room. There were **Harry Turtledove & Laura Frankos** walking along as if they were only ordinary people, without a care in the world, unbesieged by autograph hounds — though they were kind

enough to stop and let me take a picture.

Murray Moore was at the Fan Lounge and I gave him the past three issues hardcopy. We also saw **Dick Lynch**. **Mike Glycer** was in the hall near the registration and it took me three tries to get a decent picture. **Mark Leeper** was talking to **Fred Lerner**, who I managed not to mistake for Robert Lichtman. **Dave Kyle** had surrendered to his senior years and used a mobey to get around.

The Opening Ceremonies were full. John Scalzi was really acting out when he introduced people!

Adler Planetarium

This was the First Night Reception, and a nice one it was. They had shuttle buses from the hotel to the place. The program cost a little extra but the exhibits could be seen, and the place was full of Fans eddying around. **Guy & Rosy Lillian** had done their part for the con (beautiful Program Book by the way, Rosy) and were now relaxing and enjoying it all.

Also among the visitors were **Evelyn Leeper**, with Mark, and **Nicki Lynch**, with Rich. The entertainment was pleasant and it was good to be in a fannish place among fans. And so to bed.

Miles driven: 11.3

Books read: *Thirty-Five Years of the Jack Williamson Lectureship*, edited by Patrice Caldwell & Stephen Haffner

Sunrise: 6:14 AM
Sunset: 7:28 PM
Weather: Clear, mild

Friday, August 31, 2012

Chicago Chicon 7

We had to do a little packing to get out before checkout time, and the hotel charged me two days parking fee even though I had to leave before three. Sigh.

The 1939 World Science Fiction Convention and New York World's Fair

John L. Coker III, David A. Kyle, Erle Melvin Korshak

In other words, the current president of First Fandom (an Associate Member, obviously), and two of the five surviving attendees. They talked about the history of the bid and the various intrigues and annoyances that were dependent upon it. Korshak had been one of those responsible for saying, "This is a good idea, why don't we do it again?" The first Chicon followed.

Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein* (1831)

John Hertz

This was as much a discussion as a presentation. The conclusion was that Victor Frankenstein had a good bit of blame, since after all the effort he went to in order to create life, he abandoned the result right away. The "monster" had some blame, too, since he had become too quick to resort to violence.

Faneds Feast

This was in the Bistro 151 and it was a nightmare to arrange. Everyone had something else to do. Present were Guy & Rosy Lillian, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Tom & Anita Feller, Murray & Mary Ellen Moore, Naomi Fisher, Martin Morse Wooster, and Joel Zakem. A splendid, if expensive, time was had by all.

Sidewise Awards Ceremony

Steven H Silver, Evelyn C. Leeper, Jim Rittenhouse, Billee J. Stalling

They discussed various award eligibility matters. For example, there's the matter of non-English language AH. Those AH of how Japan won the Greater East Asia War just won't stand a chance unless they get translated. It might be interesting to see another side of things.

And similarly, most of the stuff on alternatetheory.com is out of the question, because it's only scenarios, not stories. (The item that was cited is a story, though.)

As for the ones who actually got it:

Best Short Form

Lisa Goldstein, "Paradise is a Walled Garden" (*Asimov's*, August 2011)

Best Long Form

Ian R. MacLeod, *Wake Up and Dream* (PS Publishing 2011)

Went back on the train and turned in. And so to bed.

Miles driven: 9.3

Sunrise: 6:15 AM
Sunset: 8:27 PM
Weather: Rain

Saturday, September 1, 2012

Chicago Chicon 7

In on the Brown Line and to the con. But with the rain and whatnot we didn't get around all that much, spending some time in the Fan Lounge.

Heinlein's Heroes

Deb Houdek Rule, Ian Randal Strock, Toni Bogolub, Jo Walton, Bradford Lyau

The room was overflowing, but then it wasn't one of the larger ones. The panelists settled on the juveniles as their preferred introduction to RAH. A somewhat unsettling part was that there was apparently exactly one person there who was under thirty — and her thirtieth birthday was the week after!

The Secret History of Science Fiction

Mike Resnick, Robert Silverberg, Joe Haldeman, George R. R. Martin, Gardner Dozois

This was full, full, full. Standing room only, as a matter of fact. It was one of the larger rooms, too. There may have been more people there than there were at Chicon III. And it sounded fun, even if we had heard some of the stories before. But we couldn't go standing up

long enough, and so we had to go somewhere else to sit down.

There was another disappointment that day, a more general one. We had had such hopes. The rumor was that Fred Pohl would make it there. But, alas, he just couldn't.

Back a bit early on the train. And so to bed.

Sunrise: 6:16 AM
Sunset: 7:25 PM
Weather: Showers

Sunday, September 2, 2012

Chicago Chicon 7

This was the day that Dana and Mike and their kids came down to the con. I think they liked it — I know Dana liked the Art Show, and I got a picture of them in front of C. D. Carson's moon backdrop. She was quite exuberant. Dana, wouldn't you like to see San Antonio?

Before we left, we went to eat, and to meet our cousin Madison and his (yes, this is a guy-Madison, and we'd seen another guy-Madison in Cadiz the month before) wife Sara. They were all surprised they lived so close together.

Chris Barkley was at the Starbucks shop in the lobby, and he offered to wrote some more articles. His YA Hugo proposal was defeated.

Worldcon 2014

London
Loncon 3
14-18 August 2014

Pro GoH:	Iain M. Banks
Fan GoH:	John Clute
Art GoH:	Chris Foss
Ed GoH:	Malcolm Edwards
Other GoH:	Jeanne Gomoll
	Robin Hobb
	Bryan Talbot

Membership:

Adult:	£65/\$110
Child:	£30/\$50
Infant:	£2/\$3
Family:	£230/\$390
Supporting:	£25/\$40

<http://www.loncon3.org/>

The Heinlein Society Annual Meeting

Geo Rule, Deb Houdek Rule

Mostly housekeeping stuff. One guy had an actual letter from RAH, describing the real sword that he based the Lady Vivamus (from *Glory Road* (1963; NHOL G.148)) on — a standard-issue Navy dress saber that had been handed down through the Heinlein family.

Apparently the original stuff published in the Virginia Edition of Heinlen's works — the unexpurgated letters, for example — *won't* be available separately. So one has to go to the Heinlein Archives and pay . . .

We had dinner with **Dave Herrington** and **Taras Wolansky** before the Hugo ceremony.

Then we ended up sitting behind Taras and Martin. Scalzi was not hampered with a huge number of other awards to introduce, or with having to read off such a dubious title such as, "I Passionately Desire You to Form a Carnal Connection with Me, Ray Bradbury".

Hugo Awards

Best Novel:

Among Others by Jo Walton (Tor)

Best Novella:

"The Man Who Bridged the Mist" by Kij Johnson (*Asimov's*, September/October 2011)

Best Novelette:

"Six Months, Three Days" by Charlie Jane Anders (Tor.com)

Best Short Story:

"The Paper Menagerie" by Ken Liu (*The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, March/April 2011)

Best Related Work:

The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, Third Edition edited by John Clute, David Langford, Peter Nicholls, and Graham Sleight (Gollancz)

Best Graphic Story:

Digger by Ursula Vernon (Sofawolf Press)

Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form):

Game of Thrones (Season 1), (HBO)

Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form):

"The Doctor's Wife" (*Doctor Who*), (BBC Wales)

Best Editor (Short Form):

Sheila Williams

Best Editor (Long Form):

Betsy Wollheim

Best Professional Artist:

John Picacio

Best Semiprozine:

Locus edited by Liza Groen Trombi, Kirsten Gong-Wong, et al.

"Best Fanzine":

SF Signal edited by John DeNardo
<http://www.sfsignal.com/>
 (Laugh while you can, monkey-boy! This won't be eligible next year.)

"Best Fan Writer":

Jim C. Hines

Best Fan Artist:

Maurine Starkey

Best Fancast:

SF Squeecast, Lynne M. Thomas, Seanan

McGuire, Paul Cornell, Elizabeth Bear, and Catherynne M. Valente

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer:

E. Lily Yu

Congratulations to Jo for beating the Westeros juggernaut. (Myself I think fondly of the tale of Brony Baratheon, as recounted in *FoxTrot* for April 1, 2012.) Condolences to Chris Garcia for being shut out. And to Jim Hines and to the possibly Degleresque gang at SF Signal (DeNardo listed all these people I'd never even heard of as his contributors) profound shooms of lip-music brrrrr. And they can kiss my sharries. But you, O my brothers, remember sometimes thy little Hugo that was. Amen. And all that cal.

The trip back had a nasty surprise, or perhaps we were just too worn out. The train doors closed in our faces as we were about to get off, so we had to get off at the next stop and take the next train back. The train had filled up with teenagers as it went on, then emptied again, but there were still some on board when that happened. One said, quite loudly, that we had been screwed. There's still some decency in youth these days.

And so to bed.

Sunrise: 6:17 AM
 Sunset: 7:23 PM
 Weather: Clear, mild

Monday, September 3, 2012

Chicago — West Bloomfield, MI
 Chicon 7

Made our goodbyes, loaded up and drove down to the hotel. We settled up with Larry Smith: 18 books for \$250. (Including, it turned out, one book I'd bought at ConGlomeration and forgotten about; a hardback, too.)

I saw Roland Green sitting at the table in the Fan Lounge for his Kaffeeklatsch. Alone, and a bit disconsolate. Maybe I should have asked him about the Wandor series and how it was supposed to end.

I also saw Erle Korshak sitting at his table in the dealers' room. I thanked him for having had the idea to have it again.

And so, having made our farewells, and been nicked again for parking, we went over to Greektown to see what it was like. Mostly closed for the holiday, I'm afraid. Well, if that Chicon 8 meeting scheduled for the Stagg Field room had been for real . . . we'll go next time. Dana and Mike said to come back again.

The drive through Indiana and Michigan was nice enough, and I had enough gas to get out of Illinois before I had to fill up. Chicago had the highest gas prices in the country, they said. (I saw places where it was \$4.599/gallon.) Now I know why they like the CTA.

The Levis were glad to see us and we caught up on the past few years of their part of the Major family. Yes, she is my cousin, from the Arkansas branch of the family. (The one where the family elder had known Elizabeth's grandfather, and his father had helped build the

church where Faddy Garrott and my great-uncle Aleck McCord had been pastors.)

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 288.2
 Sunrise: 6:18 AM (CDT)
 Sunset: 8:05 PM (EDT)
 Weather: Clear, warm

Tuesday, September 4, 2012

West Bloomfield — Dearborn, MI — West Bloomfield

Checking my email revealed the horrid news from Grant that the cellar was flooded. I figured out the time home and was about to go when Paul said there wasn't anything I could do. He saved the rest of our trip.

The Henry Ford



We really only had time for the Ford Museum. And with the extras it cost a great many pretty pennies.

The IMAX (is this getting monotonous?) was a documentary about a Soviet (yes, it was that old) research vessel doing a dive on the *Titanic*. The captain of the ship had always wanted to stand on the bridge of the *Titanic*. How do you say, "I'm flying, Jack!" in Russian?

Along with this was the RMS *Titanic*, Inc. exhibit that we had seen at, well, the Museum of Science and Industry back in 2000. It was

interesting to note that the Third Class menu was a quite decent one, not quite the gruel one would expect from, say, the steerage menu of Bruce McCall's "RMS *Tyrannic*" (*National Lampoon* April 1974).

The plumber had called me just as we were going into this exhibit, telling me that yes, the cellar was flooded and a new hot water heater was in the cards. This was well-timed if ill-omened, since the exhibit had a no-cellphones rule. And no pictures, either.

The special exhibit gift shop had snow globes with the "I'm flying, Jack!" scene. All we need now is Rose standing on the dock, throwing the necklace into the sea, and saying, "Rosebud". (Followed by the scene from *Mad* where she gets nearly knocked down by a rush of people diving into the harbor for it . . .)

The Michigan Café had a decent menu, but what made it for us was that they had sugar-free ice cream. And in a point of interest for Knarley Welch: A kind Museum employee took a picture of both of us next to the "ginormous locomotive" (*Alexiad* V. 8 #5 Page 19).

Touring the Dymaxion House made me wonder what my parents would have done with one. They got married in 1948. Lisa wanted to know who owned the patents and rights now, and if someone could build new ones.

All in all, the Henry Ford Museum is the model of Asimov's view of history as being the story of the advance of the human condition through the employment of technology. Or as Huxley put it, Ford's in his flivver, all's right with the world. (See *Alexiad* V. 8 #4 for more on this fascinating place.)

Got back, checked on Paul (he was a bit under the weather), had dinner, and talked more about the day and the family.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 49.9
Sunrise: 7:02 AM
Sunset: 8:04 PM
Weather: Intermittent showers

Wednesday, September 5, 2012 West Bloomfield — Dayton, OH

In any case the reservation at the Miamisburg Super 8 was not only pre-paid and uncancellable, it was for a day earlier than I had intended. Odd how things will work out.

Paul and Kathy had several kind and flattering things to say about us and we felt most pleased and honored by their graciousness and hospitality. Even their little dog and big old cat Milo — the cat we'd first met in 2000, when we met them after the previous ChiCon. (We had gone from Chicago to see Tom Sadler, who lived in Adrian, Michigan back then, and then on to West Bloomfield.)

Their daughter, Susan, had been given a Cruz tablet as a premium for some purchase. She didn't need it, so she asked her parents to put in a yard sale. But they had no idea what to price it at. Instead they gave it to us. Thank you all.

The trip was uneventful, though we got there too late to really see the Air Force Museum. So we checked in at the motel. We stay there for

the Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium, so it's not as if it's a strange place.

I felt dreadfully tired when we got moved in, so checked my blood sugar which was 56 — way too low. I managed to get us to Perkins Café where we had dinner, which helped me recover. Afterwards we went shopping at WalMart for various things Lisa needed, and got some DVDs at Best Buy, along with looking at their iPads.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 235.7
Sunrise: 7:03 AM
Sunset: 8:04 PM
Weather: Fog, intermittent showers

Thursday, September 6, 2012 Dayton — Louisville

Truckers get up and go early. We didn't get out of the room until around nine, when much to our surprise the free breakfast had closed up and indeed, almost everyone else in the hotel had checked out. The parking lot, which had been full when we got back from dinner last night, was almost completely empty. So we went to the Tim Horton's next door and had breakfast, then checked out and were off.

U.S. Air Force Museum

This was the only museum that did not charge an admissions fee or parking fee. Your tax dollars at work. Their most famous plane, the Swoose (see *Alexiad* V. 7 #1) is still in restoration, but they still have the exhibit on the Holocaust, and the genuine piece of the Berlin Wall showing the best use for a Trabant. *Wer mauert hat's nötig*.

Other items include one of Ernst Udet's trophies; a piece of fabric from one of the planes he shot down. Autographed by the guy he had shot down; in the twenties, Udet had come to the U.S. and met his former victim, giving him the piece of fabric. The accompanying explanation took the side of Udet in his disagreement with Erhard Milch.

I kept on looking in the Aviation Hall of Fame and the missiles section for anything about the lead developer of the Minuteman ballistic missile. They gave a colonel a budget and told him to give them a rocket. He did. Only in America. But the colonel was Jewish; did they not want to offend certain other people? (I'll leave out what the colonel's brother did.) *

The drive to Cincinnati got very crowded near the city. Covington was setting up for Oktoberfest, so while there were a lot of stands and carnival rides near Wertheim's, we managed to find a place to park in the usual lot. Alas, the food was not quite up to its old standards.

The rest of the drive home was uneventful. We did not go straight home, but stopped off at Walgreen's to pick up my insulin. This had been a very eventful experience, and I was very glad I got the unlimited-minutes plan. When I got my first cell phone, *any* call cost extra. Back then they had roaming charges, too. How times change.

Grant informed us that the hot water was off again. So, around eleven, I went out back and

looked into the cellar to find — it was flooded! Again!

And so to bed.

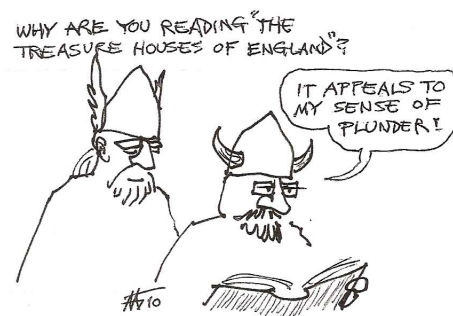
Miles driven: 177.2
Books read: *Chicon III: The Proceedings Pirates of Mars*, by Chris Gerrib
Sunrise: 7:09 AM
Sunset: 8:06 PM
Weather: Clear, hot

Friday, September 7, 2012

We went to my office to shower.

Saturday, September 8, 2012

At least I could do the laundry, in cold water.



Chicago is not a left-turn friendly town. Here we have left-turn arrows on busy streets, or even at rush hour left-turn lanes.

However, the downtown was not all that dangerous and the trains were safe, too. But we got in before midnight; Dana had said as much.

To no one's surprise, London won the 2014 WorldCon. Which means a NASFiC; the current bids are Phoenix, a little too far for us, and Detroit, which may be interesting.

There were hoax programming items, in a notional room called "Stagg Field". Some of them should have given themselves away, like the item with Deke Slayton talking about his Mercury mission, Delta 7. Still, some people got annoyed about the difficulties in going there and finding out the actual situation, particularly the more aging part of fandom.

The timing could have been done better. There was no interval between programming items and the hour-and-a-half format sometimes seemed too long. If the programming committee was hoping those would cancel out, that was not very well thought out.

The hotel room was nice, if expensive, but the dining facilities were just expensive. I'm going to have to start supporting more bids where I have friendly relatives in the same city. (See the Detroit 2014 NASFiC bid above.)

In other news, the plumber came again on Monday and put in another new hot water heater. Now for the problem of who pays and how. (Me, it looks like.)

I think I finally concluded what it is like to come back from a WorldCon:

'Well here we are, just the four of us that started out together,' said Merry.

'We have left all the rest behind, one after another. It seems almost like a dream that has slowly faded.'

'Not to me,' said Frodo. 'To me it feels more like falling asleep again.'

— *The Lord of the Rings*

Total mileage: 1155.3
Gas bought: \$197.56
Time out: 7:45 AM
Time back: 7:40 PM

* Oh all right. The colonel was Edward Nathaniel Hall, né Holtzberg. Yes, he was Jewish. His brother was Theodore Alvin Hall. Yes, he was Agent MLAD, the atom-bomb spy. Have a nice day.

FANZINES



Askance #27

John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle,
College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA
j_purcell54@yahoo.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Banana Wings #50

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59
Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7ES
UK
fishlifter@googlemail.com

Beyond Bree August 2012, September 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 #6, #7

Taral Wayne, 245 Dunn Avenue, Apt. 2111,
Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6 CANADA
Taral@Teksavvy.com
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Challenger #35

Guy H. Lillian III, 5915 River Road,
Shreveport, LA 71105-4739 USA
ghliii@yahoo.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

The Drink Tank #322, #323, #324, #325, #326

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

Fadeaway #30, #31

Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Road, Oxford,
MA 01540-2035 USA
fabficbks@aol.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

The Fanatical Fanactivist #9

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

Fish Out of Water #496, #497, #498, #499, #500, #501

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

The Frenetical Fanac Review #2

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

The Life of Rodney . . . Year 64 #1

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

MT Void V.31 #5 August 3, 2012

Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge
Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA
eleeper@optonline.net
mleeper@optonline.net
<http://leepers.us/mtvoid>

My Back Pages #8

Rich Lynch, Post Office Box 3120,
Gaithersburg, MD 20885-3210 USA
rw_lynch@yahoo.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

One Swell Foop #8

Garth Spencer
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Opuntia #253 August 2012, #254 September 2012

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

Southern Fandom Confederation Update V. 1 #29

Warren Buff, 22144 B Ravenglass Place,
Raleigh, NC 27612-2936 USA
warrenmbuff@gmail.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

WORLDCON BIDS

2014

NASFiC:
Phoenix
<http://phoenixin2014.org/>

Proposed Dates: July 31-August 3.

Detroit

<http://detroitin2014.org/>

Proposed Dates: July 17-20.

2015

Helsinki, Finland
<http://www.helsinkiin2015.org/>
(The Mariehamn bid seems to
have been another Xerps in 2010
or Minneapolis in '73)

Spokane

<http://spokanein2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 19-23.

Orlando

<http://orlandoin2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: September 3-7.

NASFiC:

Houston

Proposed Dates: September 4-7.

2016

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

Proposed Dates: August 18-22.

2017

Japan
<http://nippon2017.org/>
After the revelation of the financial
losses of the 2007 Worldcon, this may
not be so sure.

New York

2018

New Orleans
<http://neworleansin2018.org>

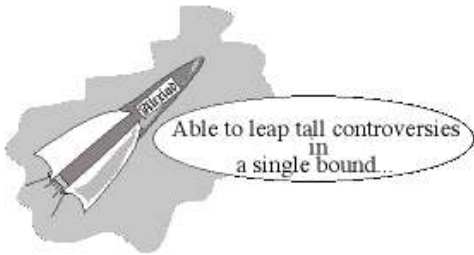
2019

2020

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

As Lloyd Penney says, also a Montréal bid
for somewhere between 2016 and 2019.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Milt Stevens** August 21, 2012
 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA
 93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* V. 11 #4, Lisa writes about reactions to murders. In the years since I retired, I've paid as little attention to murders as possible. I don't really understand the volume of movies and television about murder. When I was being paid to know about such things, I knew about them. I can't imagine why people would want to know about it for free. Years ago, I remember thinking I was awfully squeamish, since I still didn't like looking at morgue photos even after decades of doing it. It then occurred to me I should really start worrying if I ever started liking looking at morgue photos.

Generally, I tried to react as little as possible to murders. Some murders are horrible enough to rattle anybody. I remember my father and me discussing one murder that disturbed both of us as police types. An LAPD detective had been killed. He hadn't been killed in the line of duty. He had been assassinated. He was picking up his son at a daycare center. He must have seen what was coming, because he batted his son to the ground before going for his own weapon. That was the second he couldn't replace. He was darned near cut in half with automatic weapons fire. More than a hundred rounds were retrieved from the front of the daycare center. The boy didn't remember anything about the shooting, but that would cause later problems. It is obviously unsettling to police when police get killed off-duty for being police. Shooting up a daycare center is pretty damned low even for the lowest of lowlife scum. It's the sort of thing that makes you suspect that human decency was just an old time fantasy.

Unlike Alexis Gilliland, I haven't decided to stop going to worldcons . . . yet. There is a lot of strain and hassle connected to attending a worldcon, and I keep getting older. At some point, worldcons will become too much strain and too much hassle. Alexis describes worldcons as elitist as if that was a bad thing. If reading books and thinking about things are elitist, I am in favor of elitism. Just because more people want to attend media oriented cons is no reason for us not to attend print oriented cons. There are truck shows that are larger than

worldcons. That fact doesn't make me think there is anything wrong with worldcons.

Good to see you. Guy Lillian promotes the prospects of lots of good Tex-Mex food along the Riverwalk next year.

— JTM

I guess Friends of Bill W is sort of "dispiriting." I've never really thought of it as part of the program at cons. It's sort of an announced gathering of people who may need that sort of thing. I do wonder why they bother calling it Friends of Bill W. I think everybody in the English speaking world know that means Alcoholics Anonymous. Why not call it what it is?

From: **Sheryl L. Birkhead** August 24, 2012
 22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD
 20882-3422 USA

Hi — *Alexiad* just got here and I took a look through to make sure I really had remembered to mail the loc — and found that even if I do send a typed missive, I can foul it up! Kam's monthly premium is about \$22 (that was supposed to be \$22/m). To bring it up to date his insurance company contacted me (and I figured they were notifying me that everyone's premium would go up) to send a check for \$3.01 since claims in Maryland had been less than anticipated AND his monthly premium was lowered from \$22.33 to \$21.95.

To be fair — I also got a letter from the insurance company that had simply refused to pay my bills they authorized by phone etc (and their canned message that you tune out while waiting actually says that nothing authorized by a representative is binding) — and which I cancelled as soon as I could. Anyway, when I saw the envelope had them listed as the return I really wanted nothing to do with them and almost tossed it in the shredder. Surprise! The new health care reform states that insurance companies have to spend at least 80% of the premiums on actual care and they had not. So, the legal repercussion is that they had to give their (at that time — for 2011) insured part of the premiums paid back. A check.

Can you do something about homeowners insurance?

September 12, 2012

At least I am trying to catch up (well, I fib — I just pulled out zines in a bunch and I um . . . er . . . let *Alexiad* slide to the top since it is an in-between size and easier to deal with size-wise).

Chicon is over — let the bashing begin! Seriously, 'tis the nature of fandom to complain — as long as you are nominating and voting, then I figure you have the right to criticize whatever results you don't like. But, like it or not, technology is doing its thing and **that** is a part of the science thing, so we all need to deal with it. I think there were some changes made by the

WSFS this go round to try to get fanzines to be . . . um . . . fanzine (electronic or otherwise) and not blogs etc. — at least that is the way I think it went. We shall see.

Thus to the blogs, "Laugh while you can, monkey-boy!"

Nice to have London win the 2014 bid even if I know I cannot go — but I'll be on the sidelines watching the bloodshed.

Around here school started before Labor Day, too. When I taught there was only one year when this happened, but it is more and more frequent. The one time I taught through that week, the classrooms were less than half filled. Either parents hadn't realized the implications of missing that week, or they didn't care. They do now.

Condolences — the loss of such a brilliant little spark can be breath-taking. How can such a little mite be such a big presence?

It seems difficult to believe that Thoroughbred breeders in the US were not interested enough in I'll Have Another to keep him here in the US. Now we will have to see if his bloodline can fulfill the promise made in his starts. Sadly, it will have to be from his get elsewhere. I hope the US breeders don't live to regret this.

I had hoped to be able to watch live Worldcon happenings: more widespread than last year. Since I did not stay up and haunt the Hugo results, this was not to be. I had hoped there might be a listing of live feeds from some panels and perhaps walk throughs of the artshow and hucksters room. But, I am not sure if there are any restrictions (copyright-wise) for artwork that would appear on a podcast — beyond my pay grade!

One of the complaints was that the livecast of the Hugos was cut off during the Best Dramatic Presentation awards by copyright-protection software.

Courtesy of Netflix, I just watched *John Carter* — Woolla was worth it for me. *Prometheus* (as is true of *MIB III*) isn't yet available — but they are both right up there on my list for when they are.

The latest update I have for Stu Shiffman is that he continues to have various problems that bounce him back and forth between the hospital and rehab. It is difficult to believe that it has been over three months since the original problems with the stroke and fall. I wish them all the best and try to keep tabs on how things are going.

Meanwhile, Grant has finished with his physical therapy.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** August 25, 2012
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

What a beautiful tribute to Delenn. My sympathy for your loss, Joe and Lisa.

I read *The Long Earth* and was disappointed. No real point to the book — or enjoyment. One of the few Pratchett books I didn't keep. I always read your true spy book reviews, but I never remember all the details of who did what; I'd appreciate an encyclopedia for reference.

Re: movies as discussed in the LOCs. I rarely go to the theatre any more; I catch them on DirecTV via Movies on Demand or the free preview channels; most weren't worth paying good money for. I did enjoy *Thor*, which I saw at Oasis in May. I see Bill Patterson recommends *Men in Black III* (II was so bad!) so I'll keep an eye out for that. The more I read about *Prometheus*, the more determined I am to avoid it.

I read *The Apocalypse Codex* by Charles Stross and gave up on him. (His books sound so good in the reviews.) For an idea of what I was hoping for in that book, read *Operation Chaos* by Poul Anderson. And yes, I am annoyed too when people combine Over and Out in a book or movie. Mistakes can be perpetuated forever — like crape murder and using downfall instead of downside. Aaarrghh!!!

Dainis, I like your phrase, "industrial-strength dust kitties" (under your son's bed); and thanks to Sue Burke for her Spain update and her Hugo list and descriptions. And I hope you get some rain soon too, Sue.

Joe, I love The End of The Wheel of Time. Uh, is that The Monolith in the cartoon?

The scene where Indy blew away HAL was something else!

— JTM

Btw, my Oasis 25 con report is in the August issue of the *Southern Fandom Confederation Update* e-newsletter, along with the listing of upcoming SF conventions and other news.

From: **Brad W. Foster** August 27, 2012
Post Office Box 165246, Irving, TX
75016-5246 USA
bwfoster@juno.com
<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

Been a crazy summer, have had to put a lot of the fun part of things to the side, including those things fannish, so have this feeling I might have missed sending any comments on the last issue or two (or three?). Lack of a loc or a WAHF this issue would seem to confirm that. I have been a bad fan, and will try not to let that happen again . . . at least until the next semi-emergency pops up!

Be glad you didn't lose to the pro fanartist.

Fillo attached for possible use, I like to think it is a good representative for all the loc writers gathering each issue!

Always a new book title or two that are reviewed each issue that end up being added to my "look for this book to read" list. You've got

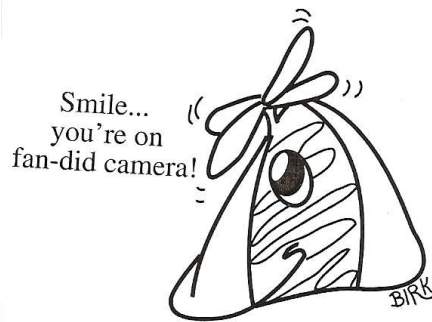
to slow down, I'll never be able to catch up with you at this rate! And found more confirmation of what a crazy summer it has been, as looking back at my book list, I see I finished a grand total of 6 books in June and July — that's just sad. I bet there were two, three . . . maybe even four times that many books published those two months. How will I ever get to them all??

Sorry to read of the loss of Delenn. I've always had a cat in my life in some way. Even when lived on my own in a small apartment that didn't allow cats, there was a big old tom who didn't "live" with me, but managed to drop by at least once or twice every day, spending a lot of time stretched out on my couch. Right now Cindy and I have three inside cats (all of whom who want to go outside), and a small stray outside who hangs around a lot, and seems to want very much to come *inside*. And there are the various little markers around the house for the past furry friends who shared their lifetimes here as well. Always miss them when they go, but would rather have that touch of bitter-sweet heartbreak over their passing, than never having had them with us at all.

Lots of other emails to catch up on here, so thanks for keeping me on the mail list through the lack of response from this end!

It's easy enough not to delete someone from the email list. The sunk cost is the same, unlike printing and postage.

— JTM



From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Aug. 29, 2012
Post Office Box 5323, Oracle, AZ
85623-5323 USA
laurraine@mac.com
<http://www.weasner.com/>

My heartfelt condolences on your loss on Delenn.

We recently (about four weeks ago) picked up a new (to us) cat named Gateway (for his appearance). He is about nine years old, we were told. It's taken this long for him to become accustomed to the new house, to us, and to Mercury. I finally managed to trim his kitten-sharp claws just a few days ago. I will be taking him to our vet for a thorough check-up to make sure he didn't pick up some dreaded disease during his many years in cat shelters. He is about half Mercury's size and has short hair.

Now that he is no longer afraid of us, he is quite loving.

C'Mell has kitten-sharp claws.
She's also our oldest cat.

— JTM

I'm happy to hear that Lois McMaster Bujold released a copy of her upcoming Miles Vorkosigan book to Sue Burke's friend who was dying of cancer. It was a very kind gesture.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Aug. 31, 2012
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
22204-1552 USA
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for the copy of *Alexiad* 11.4 which arrived a few days ago. Your loss of Delenn is noted, with regrets for the mortality of cats in particular, and for people in general — farewell Harry Harrison, farewell Josepha Sherman. For all the usual reasons we took Pest, now about 15, to the vet, who gave her shots, took x-rays, and prescribed an anti-bronchitis pill. Something appears to be working because our little cat seems less stressed and a lot livelier than she had been. New to me was the tiny edible envelope in which the pill is inserted, to make a medicated cat-treat. Pest loves it, so that pilling the cat is no longer the struggle it used to be.

In my letter of June 25th I mentioned the first 100-degree day of the summer. It was, in fact, the first of a long run, including a 107-degree day, which tied but did not break the all time record. On July 3rd a derecho swept through the area (derecho, a word new to me, is a herd of thunderstorms stampeding in a straight line at high speed, in this case 75 mph) knocking down branches and trees, and causing power outages for about a third of the metro area. Because the Washington area has more trees than most, power outages have been a recurring problem, and I had already been thinking about Taking Steps when the derecho made up my mind for me. On 8th Street South there were trees down in the park and several piles of fallen branches ranging from large to humongous within a couple of blocks. When the power came back on July 7th, we rejoiced — no AC in the middle of a heat wave is miserable, until a fire truck pulled up across the street, called in by neighbors who saw the smoldering branch resting on the power line leading to our house. Eventually a Dominion Electric truck arrived and turned off our power so the branch could be safely removed. I subsequently spent the money for a back-up generator, a gas powered Generac 10 kW, which had excellent reviews on the web, but whose installation took longer and cost more than the estimates we had been given. Thus do I defy weird weather by investing in my future comfort.

One time we saw my cousin Kathy, her husband Paul told me about the big Detroit blackout earlier that year. He had planned ahead and bought a generator.

Then, he described how he and everyone else in the Greater Detroit area drove around looking for a gas station that had and could pump gasoline. This is why I am thinking of getting a propane-powered generator.

George Price advocates a return to the gold standard. This is an old idea with a lot of staying power, since I read that there is a plank in the 2012 GOP platform calling for a feasibility study of that very thing. There was also such a plank in the 1980 GOP platform, resulting in a report published in 1982 that rejected the idea, though the Libertarian Ron Paul published a book-length dissent. In *Making Money* Terry Pritchett gives a funny and surprisingly perceptive take on the subject, which ends up with golem-based money, "so sound you could bounce a troll off it" with the golems being safely buried to keep them from trashing the economy. The fact that I find Terry Pritchett more persuasive than the Libertarians probably shows that I am fundamentally frivolous. Price also believes that homosexuality is not normal but a gross developmental defect. I don't agree. In every species we have studied we find about ten percent of the population is homosexual. Since homosexuality reduces the chances of passing on one's genes, the fact that the trait is conserved suggests that some degree of homosexuality must be advantageous to the group. The fact that the trait persists in profoundly homophobic cultures suggests it is natural, a condition that compels individuals to accept their sexual identity as the way God made them, society to the contrary notwithstanding. In some cases it may be transient, a developmental phase; Arthur Hlavaty thinks that the reason more 16-year old girls than 26-year old women describe themselves as lesbians would be 16-year old boys. Price also says: "Government regulation should be limited to preventing fraud and violence, and not to second guessing business decisions" though any number of lawyers could argue that since fraud WAS a business decision, the government should butt out. We note that credit crises have been recurring on a regular basis since the invention of credit, so I suspect he is right that no government regulation will keep business on the straight and narrow. Sigh, one can read the papers to learn that government regulations can't even keep government on the straight and narrow. However, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't aspire to honesty, transparency, and their associated virtues.

In Tuesday's Washington Post we see that the Arctic ice pack has already shrunk below the previous record minimum, 1.58 million square miles on August 28, 2012 vs 1.61 million square miles on September 18, 2007, with maybe three weeks yet to go before the ice starts refreezing. Googling Arctic Sea Ice Volume lets you find several graphs showing how the volume of Arctic Sea ice is declining even more dramatically than its area, to the point where it may soon disappear entirely during the short Arctic summer. Global warming may be a hoax,

and climate change a fantasy spun by lying liberal climatologists who foolishly obsess over all that anthropogenic CO2, but the Arctic Sea is, for whatever reason, warming up at an unprecedented rate. What else? Hurricane Isaac with 80 mph winds made landfall in Plaquemines Parish, topping an 8-foot levee with a 12-foot storm surge, before giving New Orleans a near miss on the seventh anniversary of the powerful Katrina. Isaac thereby upstaged the GOP convention instead of flooding it out, as it had earlier been predicted to do. A reasonable person might conclude that God did not hate the Republicans after all. However, Rush Limbaugh has blamed the hurricane on President Obama(!), suggesting that Rush may be mistaken about other things as well.

From: **Murray Moore** September 12, 2012
1065 Henley Road, Mississauga Ontario
L4Y 1C8 CANADA
murrayamoore@gmail.com

Are you reassured, Joe, about the future of Worldcon, after attending Chicon 7?

A little. The problem will be if we have another like Nolacon 2.

The result for 2015 will be interesting. I was an early Spokane pre-supporter. Before Chicon I heard several people wish for a third bidder for 2015, but I heard no-one wish 'I hope the Finns bid.' I heard Helsinki in 2015 spokesperson Eemeli Aro speak twice during Chicon: I was sufficiently impressed by his presentations and his manner that I offered myself as a Helsinki bid volunteer: I think that encouragement of the Finnish bid is a good investment, and, also, it should be fun.

Did you notice, Joe, in the Chicon program, both Friends of Bill W and the WSFS Business Meeting were in the Fan Culture track?

For decades my mother's family, the Hartleys, have gathered for a picnic on Labour Day. When Worldcon occurs on Labour Day, we go instead to Worldcon. My cousins and I are the seniors now at the Hartley picnic. My mother died nearly five years ago, my father in 2003. I am one of the younger cousins.

My Uncle Don's first wife died last year. I don't have any uncles or aunts left, she was the last one, and only two of my father's first cousins. My mother outlived her brother and her first cousin.

Sally Ride and I were born in the same year, 1951. I noticed during the In Memoriam section of the Hugo ceremony more than a few names with birth years 1951 and 1950 and 1952.

Monarchist News. The CBC reported "sad news" from Buckingham Palace. 'Oh dear' I thought, 'Prince Phillip.' Death it was, but the death of two of the Queen's dogs. I was amused.

The LoneStarCon 3 WSFS Business Meeting has the potential to be interesting. John Purcell says he is thinking of submitting a resolution that a nominee be restricted to one nomination

in a category

I disagree. I am firmly of the opinion that the voters not the nominees decide the recipients of the Hugo Awards. If Author X is nominated for two short stories, Author X should not have the option of withdrawing one story of the two nominated stories. Nor should Author X be restricted to one nomination if two of Author X's stories are among the top five nominations. Also a nominee should not have the option to withdraw a nomination. The results are skewed when the final ballot is not a reflection of the will of the nominating voters. I understand why winners say 'Don't nominate me next year': part of kindergarden indoctrination is that sharing is good.

Good to hear from you.

— JTM

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Sept. 16, 2012
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In the August issue, should I say enjoyed *Alexiad* again? Of course. Most of the book reviews concern books interesting to me. While I wouldn't read a hundredth of them, that's a plus. Your reviews allow me to learn something about them. Another part of *Alexiad* I like is the lettercol. Because it is so often composed of the usual fans, I have learned to know and love the letters, even when I disagree with them.

And I confess to doing a lot of disagreeing. First is your review of *Alger Hiss: Why He Chose Treason*. Concerning Smedley Butler's testimony on the Business Plotters, you ask whether businessmen who didn't even get along with each other would choose the anti-business Smedley as their leader. Also, whether they presumed the Army would follow a marine?

You bet. My experience with conspiracies in government and out is that they display total incompetence and end in disaster.

Not that I don't agree with you the Business Plotters never existed, if the conspiracy is based only on the testimony of Butler. Although, with him, I am apt to believe, someone, for whatever confidence game, was pulling his leg.

Congressman Dickstein (who conducted the hearings) was a corrupt media manipulator. The NKVD dumped him as an agent because he was always asking for more money and producing nothing.

Other conspiracies require skepticism for other reasons. For instance, the legend that the Nazis had one of the more effective spy operations. After World War II, it was presumed to be the case. Of course, the story of Pujol in Garbo, and of other British counterspies, is giving the lie to that.

It is no wonder. If Hitler believed only Jews and other inferiors were fit to be spies, as he claimed, he may as well have told the intelligence services of the world to kick him.

Of course, it isn't only Uncle Adolph who has miscalculated the intentions of nations. We do that all the time. I disagree with the normal interpretation of Soviet spying today and during the Cold War. I agree that world conquest may have been the Soviets' long-term objective. However, as Deception shows, I doubt their short term objectives, the only real objectives, differed much between Stalin and Putin.

Getting away from world leaders, of World War II, and any time period, I have a comment about your cousin Grant. I bleed for him. While my time bombs haven't exploded yet, like one of Grant's has, they could. My multiple sclerosis is in remission due to weekly interferon shots. Forever? Who knows? Then there is diabetes, and last, and probably not least, arthritis. If any chooses to explode, I'm in trouble.

On the other hand, so far my troubles have proven mere insects beside Grant's.

Next, I will talk about myself even more than above. I will do this by thanking Sheryl Birkhead for her good wishes on my retirement. So far it's been great.

Maybe I should emphasize other people more, like the younger generation. I do wish to say something to Lloyd Penney about it because he believes it's in danger of losing imagination. I'm not certain that's the case.

What is the case among the younger generation is the mundanes have swamped the fans at conventions. Thus, seeing whether the younger generation is losing imaginations is a matter of separating the chaff from the wheat.

Now let's go back a number of years before the younger generation to the Neanderthals. Because I have heard altogether too much about the *Clan of the Cave Bear*, I am reluctant to agree that my views, in any way, dovetail with it. But, like it, I do believe that the Neanderthals interbred with the Cro-Magnons. And if the Cro-Magnons swamped them in the book, I have to agree that that was what was going on.

On the other hand, John and Valerie Purcell are not Neanderthals. If there are up-to-date humans, they are them. And, yes, I agree with him that she dressed authentically Victorian. 1880 as opposed to an ahistorical Steampunk style? I admit no airship captain with top hat and goggles she. However, a lot of women at Fencon VIII dressed authentically Victorian; and, I gather, it was to look Steampunk.

On the other hand still, I don't think Jim Stumm is sufficiently up-to-date. I gather, with the tetrabyte pc's and break neck download speeds, hardcopy holdings of the Library of Congress might be easily downloaded to a single computer.

Now that I have dealt with up-to-date technology, I am going to deal with '80s technology, Star Wars. George Price wonders what blast I was talking about in Stars Wars. The most publicized technology called Star Wars, I remember, would be powered by a nuclear blast. Then laser emitters would convert the blast into an X-ray laser.

About this blast, George will probably brand me a Commie Pinko; but there is a problem for the people below. It was considered a problem

even though the device would only have been exploded over Russia, and would only have affected Russians.

Now we go from military defense to, I guess, economic defense. George Price responds to my comments arguing against private money by responding in favor of currency based on a gold and silver. To me, such backing doesn't seem relevant to his case for private money. Wouldn't the entrepreneurs of private money, like in the 19th Century, choose how they backed it? However, to George, how money is backed seems very relevant indeed..

As far as I can see, silver and gold backing is a solution without a problem. I have never had trouble with any merchant accepting my US currency, while getting them to accept it appears to be George's objective. In fact, I have heard no reports of merchants balking at dollars throughout our history, even when, during the Civil War, the treasury printed 'greenbacks'.

It is true hyperinflation has occurred in other countries. However, even where hyperinflation has occurred, a new currency, without silver or gold backing, has done the trick.

Then there is the problem of whether silver and gold backing is the panacea George presumes. I gather currency backed by silver can be manipulated. To inflate the currency, George's bugbear, you just back it up with more silver. The government wouldn't even have to buy it. The idea behind the cry for Free Silver in the 19th and early 20th Century was that people could take their privately owned silver to any minter, and have it turned into coins.

Of course, we know that George believes only wimps use silver backing for their currency. He wants currency only backed by gold, i.e., the gold standard. However, I will let the person whom he addressed that argument to answer it.

All I want to say here is, like silver backing, the gold standard has been manipulated throughout history. Has George never heard of debased currency? Even when the coins contained the gold backing them, they could contain other substances as well.

I think I have spent enough time on gold and silver backing. In addition to defending private money by arguing for gold and silver, George makes a more relevant point. In fact, I have to admit I mistook George's position. I presumed in my *Alexiad* 46 comments that George believed everyone practiced enlightened self-interest.

No, it turns out that he admits a lot of businessmen haven't followed their enlightened self-interest. However, he claims they get weeded out by bankruptcies, and only the strong survive.

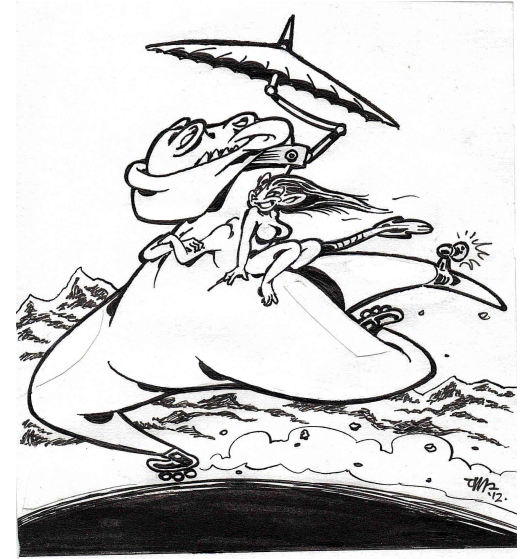
The only problem is that these days, when some companies go bankrupt, they are big enough to take a lot of other people and businesses with them. For example, the Financial Meltdown did that.

This is especially relevant to private money because being too big to fail would have special repercussions there. I hate to think of what would happen if, as happened, banks that printed money for a whole community went bankrupt.

Before this letter gets too big to fail, I better finish it and send it on to you. Looking at it, I probably commented too much on politics and political nostrums. While I find my enthusiasm for them is waning, I bet a high percentage of my *Alexiad* LOCs will continue to concern politics both past and present.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Sept. 16, 2012
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Thank you for Vol. 11, No. 4.



In the previous issue I commented to **Alexis A. Gilliland** that in a conversation with Bennett Greenspan (the head of Family Tree DNA) at the Southern California Genealogical Society Jamboree in June he said that in Asia there is an indication of another mixture with Homo Sapiens that is not Neanderthal. In an email received from National Geographic it appears that they are called Denisovans. Information can be found on the Internet and is quite interesting. As indicated previously this is a very fascinating subject, needs much more research, and I hope to see more published on it. By the way, National Geographic has a new DNA test that contributes to their database helping to "chart a more complete map of the early stages of human history", and includes seeing if one has Neanderthal or Denisovan DNA. National Geographic in conjunction with Family Tree DNA is doing further research on human migration patterns, a very worthwhile project. If interested you can check on it at <http://shop.nationalgeographic.com> and click on Geno 2.0. Or, you can do a Google search. A few years ago I furnished them with my DNA for their first program and plan to do so again for this new program.

In the mail I received a surprise from the U.S. Department of Commerce. It was The American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. It requests a lot of personal

information. They claim that my address was selected at random and not by my name. Not willing to antagonize the Government the survey was completed and mailed. One item that impressed me was that they asked for "sex" and not the ubiquitous "gender", the later which ticks me off. The one answer I made that they may not like was "race" where I wrote Human/Homo Sapien. Also, when they asked for "ancestry or ethnic origin" I entered "Irish/Scottish/English/Norwegian". I might also have added Danish, Norman and Dutch. But, that's not fully proven as yet. Maybe instead of Irish I should have entered Celtic. Anyway, it went in the mail for them to do with it whatever they do with these surveys. Oh, I almost forgot. A few days before the Survey was received a letter arrived telling me that the Survey would be received shortly. Then, a couple of days after receiving the survey there was a post card reminding me to fill it out and send it in. An incredible waste of money!

Once again nothing that I voted for as #1 won a HUGO. Is it worth my time to keep voting?

Do you want to let them win?

— JTM

I made the mistake of watching the remake of *COMA* on A&E. It compares very poorly with the original movie. The ending left me asking why I had wasted my time.

Thank you for the review of *Destroyermen: Iron Gray Sea*. I'll have to obtain a copy. The review of *The Long Earth* was appreciated. I gave my copy to the Friends of the Library. Also, appreciated was the review of *ALGER HISS: Why He Choose Treason*.

Thank you too for the update on Grant McCormick.

From: **Lloyd Penney** September 19, 2012
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Thank you for the most recent *Alexiad*, whole number 64. Always some interesting to read and to comment on. Here's some proof of the latter . . .

I do wonder about the future of the Worldcon, now that we have entered SFnal years, and the average age of the average attendee seems to be 40 to 45. Anyone younger prefers a media SF convention or an anime convention, and I have to wonder if Worldcon will live beyond 2025. I expect there will be SF readers at that time, but the tradition of fannish groups bidding for the right to stage a Worldcon will be largely gone.

And what's going to happen when the local trade show "cons" fall apart, and the only "cons" are Dragon*Con and Comic-Con?

We've never had cats ourselves, but even so, there are cats we miss terribly. I've written

about Momcat, a petit tabbycat with so much personality, and then there's Chat-Chat, a tortoiseshell who kept me company on lonely nights during my last year of university. She almost taught herself to type, but smacked her paw with one of the typeheads, and never went close to the typewriter again.

Thanks for the information on the next Resnick Weird West novel. I wonder if I'll get a copy of it to review . . . I have heard more about another Montreal Worldcon bid . . . there's been a change in bid year, based on other bids, so I am expecting it any time between 2016 and 2019. I know the bidders, so I may pester them and ask for information, with the agreement that I will not be part of the bid.

Fandom as a whole, and all its assorted interests, is relatively coherent. It is the incoherency of certain fans I could name that gives me pause for thought, and fear.

The Purcells have been to another steampunk event, and I am hoping that John might show us pictures of his steampunk costume. John, if you show us yours, I will show you mine. But then, you've already seen it, especially on my Facebook page.

Tomorrow, I have an interview with a financial publishing company. I found out that I have doing voicework for a subsidiary company they own, so I may have an advantage in that some of them already know me. Fingers crossed, please please please, I don't want all the jobs I apply for, I just want this one. I am so tired of looking.

Been there, done that. I know how agonizing it is waiting waiting waiting, and dealing with employers who don't bother to notify the rejected, who never fill the job, who had a candidate already . . .

— JTM

Many thanks for this issue, take care, see you again soon.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** Sept. 21, 2012
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My apologies for getting behind in reading and commenting on *Alexiad*. Meanwhile, meanwhile, as the hottest summer on record is ending, I keep reading reports on the BBC almost daily about the shrinking polar ice caps (down 50% in the last ten years), and all manner of other stories related to global warming, ranging from Glacier National Park running out of glaciers to floods in the Philippines to the US grain belt turning into a desert, exactly as predicted years ago.

No, the Antarctic ice cap has been the largest recorded in some time. This too is proof of AGW, I understand. But what isn't?

I have a book for you to read. Look up John Grant's *Denying Science, Conspiracy Theories,*

Media Distortions, and the War Against Reality from Prometheus Books. Prometheus is a publisher you should be familiar with for its publications of numerous pro-science and skeptical (in the good sense) books, with many titles on their list by Isaac Asimov, L. Sprague de Camp, Philip Klass, Martin Gardner, etc. Grant has been called the logical successor to Gardner.

This book is about how and why people deny science — just refuse to believe the evidence — when it suits them, for emotional, economic, or political reasons. The core of it is indeed about the global warming "debate." His point is that in the real world of science, there is no debate. The science is in. There is consensus. We can only ask then, who is spreading lies about the matter and why? This he explores in great detail, naming names and corporate sponsors of in the "doubt industry." The name Exxon Mobil comes up quite a lot, the same way Philip Morris does in "debates" about the health effects of tobacco.

A key quote comes from the chapter "Marketing Climate Denialism":

Deniers of anthropogenic global warming have managed to conceal from large swaths of the public an incontrovertable fact: that, within the scientific community, the argument "global warming isn't happening and if it is it'll be good for us" *has already been lost*. In science, when a hypothesis makes predictions that reality confounds, it's the hypothesis that's ditched, not reality. The prediction of the deniers — that climate change won't happen — has indeed been confounded. (p. 269)

Essential reading. Know the enemy. The purpose of the deniers to create the illusion that there is still some sort of controversy, that this is all "just a theory" or that "the facts aren't in." I remember hearing Mitt Romney asked about this by a reporter and he said, "I have no time for science fiction." He has no time for science either. Anti-environmentalism is of course now a plank of the Republican platform. It's quite consistent for someone who supports only the immediate interests of the very wealthy. But I should point out that even the wealthy stand to lose a great deal. Folks of Romney's generation will be able to retire to Florida. Their grandchildren might not, because it might not be there anymore. What is remarkable is that everybody from the United Nations to the National Academy of Science to the CIA is in complete agreement on this point. Yes, the CIA did its own study in 2009 on threats to the USA caused by instabilities due to global warming, i.e. the coming Climate Wars.

Actually I believe that the future is going to judge us very harshly. We *knew* what was happening and did nothing about it, for short-sighted, selfish reasons of the sort boldly embraced by the Republican Party. Our children and grandchildren will pay for this.

John Grant is also the author of such very worthy tomes as *Discarded Science, Corrupted*

Science, and *Bogus Science*. He also has a lot of science fiction credentials and has won two Hugo awards.

On a historical point Richard Dengrove brings up, I don't think it's so much that the Nazis and Japanese would have needed different armies or or allies to win World War II. They would have needed a different agenda. They would have needed to be different people than they actually were. The reason that the Germans did not decollectivize Russian agriculture, of course, is that their intent was to either kill or enslave the people they conquered. They were not interested in being benevolent and winning hearts and minds. A conqueror with the personality and agenda of Napoleon could have beaten Stalin, but Hitler could not have done what was necessary and still have remained Hitler. This is where alternate history is at its least interesting. You have to make so many changes to bring about the conclusion the author wants that it is too obvious that all the story elements are totally arbitrary. The strings are showing. There is little dramatic interest. Far better to make a change and then see where it goes. Develop the story from the source, not backwards from the assumed conclusion.

If Dainis Bisenieks would have rejected "The Procurator of Judea" — the most famous story by a Nobel Prize winner — I think he would have been making a mistake. **Of course** we know this story is about Pontius Pilate (this is established immediately, not held back as a "surprise") and we know that it's going to inevitably talk about Jesus. What is clever and arresting about the story is how glancingly it does this, as the questioner asks whatever happened to Mary of Magdala. She allegedly ran off with some wonder-worker, he is told, a guy named Jesus. The punchline of course is that Pilate cannot actually remember any Jesus of Nazareth. WE are able to see the familiar story through his narrative, but he can't.

This is one of those stories where the author has to do his damned to divert the reader from looking for and being disappointed by the all-too-obvious "surprise" which is not a surprise after all. This happened to me once in a story called "Why We Do It" (in the anthology *Dead but Dreaming*). This is about a nerdy college kid from a weird, cult-ruled town who brings this worldly, sophisticated girl home during a semester break to meet his folks. Now you *know* that she is going to end up naked on an altar by the end of the story, and by the time she did, some readers who saw this in a workshop complained about what a feeble and obvious "surprise" this was. Of course it was never intended to be a surprise. The real story is about the kid realizing that these things have to be done because the premise of the town cult is *true*, i.e. the elders really are thousands of years old and they really can summon the Great Old Ones out of the sky. So he has to give up on any fantasies of making time with the girl or running off with her. She rejects him, anyway. She thinks he's a complete dork. She is only there, in a condescending way, to "study" the townspeople for her anthropology class. She is the only one who is surprised, not the reader.

So, to head off any possibility of a surprise, I started out the story with the completely bald statement, "Of course there was no surprise at the end, and what happened was inevitable ..."

Likewise Anatole France does not conceal from you that this is a story about Pilate in retirement, and then leads you exactly where you think the story has to go, but he does it with surprising indirection. You're expecting the story to be Pilate's side of the Gospel story, or his defense, but no, what makes the story good and memorable is that from Pilate's point of view, what *we* are interested in is not even worth noting.

That may explain why the story has endured so well, and has even survived to be plagiarized in science fiction at least once.

Here's a bit of monarchist news for you. The Canadian SF writer Derwin Mak managed to get himself ennobled by someone claiming to be the heir to the Empire of Trebizond. He's now issuing coinage. The first is a commemorative, the 1700th anniversary of the vision of Constantine the Great. The next one, which I hope to pick up from him the next time I see him, depicts the Empress Theodora, wife of Justinian the Great, but in a slit dress looking more like a Hollywood starlet than a chaste Byzantine empress. Derwin is now a Count of Thxois (not sure how to pronounce that) which is a speck near the Black Sea coast most emphatically NOT recognized as independent by the Turkish government.

. That wasn't hard.

Right now the Yahoo Jacobite group is being nagged by a guy who claims to be a descendant of Count Rohenstart (the illegitimate son of Charlie's illegitimate daughter). And they were glad they had got shot of Michel "Prince Michael of Albany" Lafosse ...

— JTM

But you have to admit it is more impressive than being of the nobility of Redonda, to which many early 20th century literary people belonged.

From: **Trinlay Khadro** September 16, 2012
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Sorry it's been so long without a proper LOC. Thank you for keeping in touch and keeping me on the mailing list.

I couldn't manage to make it to WorldCon . . . maybe someday.

August brought the 2nd anniversary of the wreck where I was hit by the drunk driver. If all goes well, the bills and the settlement will be taken care of before Christmas (knock on wood).

We've been enjoying *Dr. Who*, *Lost Girl*, the occasional episode of *Grim* and *Fringe* and a series called *Dark Matter*. I also managed to get to the Milwaukee Art Museum to see Posters of the Belle Epoch; it's always wonderful to get an

up close look at original works. I particularly enjoyed seeing the smirk on the cat's face on the often reproduced *Tournée du Chat Noir* that usually isn't available in the reproductions.

Currently, I'm recovering from last weekend which was full of activity; first a fellow local fan's birthday party on Saturday and on Sunday I had an "unbirthday and garage painting party" with 11 of my fannish friends and 11 hours a shabby "craptacular" garage was thoroughly scraped, cleaned, sanded, and repainted.

A nice break for lunch of tacos (chicken, beef, or tofu) CAKE and cookies and lots of uncaffeinated sodas and gatorade all day.

I'm feeling very loved and the garage looks great.

Hopefully, before the snow falls, I'll manage a trip out to Franklin to visit with my paternal Aunt & Uncle ...



I'D LIKE TO THANK THE
INVENTOR OF THE LOTUS
DRIVE, THE ACADEMY....

I'm also busy getting things ready for Con*stellation and NecronomiCon. Been making Dragons now, in addition to my usual Cthulhus, winged cats, merbunnies, Nac Mac Feegle, etc.

<http://www.zibbet.com/trinlayk>
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/trinlayk>

This morning I finished a commission for KT: a netbook bag crochet with a scale pattern (crocodile stitch). \$40 in yarn, \$5 in notions, and 14 hours of work. She's very happy with it and has been hugging & petting it and telling friends how "shiny" it is.

Sorry for the loss of your dear Delenn; those fuzzy hearts make us better human beings, don't they. My vets clinic is also very busy; but when Elric & E² passed they sent condolence cards and also addressed them to Megumi as well as the human family members. (Megumi missed E² something awful since he helped raise her;

so eventually we adopted Seimei.)

Every time I sit or lay down, I have either one, the other, or both right with me and often on top of me.

Grant has that problem, and it affects his sleep. We bought a baby gate to put between the middle two rooms. The cats soon figured out how to jump over it.

Milwaukee fan and author of *Inca* (an alternate history) Suzanne Alles Blom passed away recently. I don't know how far out into fandom she was known but she was one of the leaders in Milwaukee fannish life. She'd come to the ER with digestive issues, had what seemed like a reaction to the contrast used in a test and her kidneys shut down; about a month later they were still working at stabilizing her and to find out what was causing these difficulties when they found she had cancer on a Wednesday. A status report said she had weeks, maybe a couple months, but by Saturday she was gone.

She'd run a fannish salon, often shared books and resources, and also was quite the force in support of the people in her neighborhood and communities.

Inca: The Scarlet Fringe (2000; 2001) was a finalist for the 2000 Sidewise Award. Alas, the sequels seem to be lost in the Blight . . .

<http://www.uchronia.net/bib.cgi/label.html?id=blomincaxx>
— JTM

Milwaukee fandom is gearing up for the annual Halloween events' the party and the production for the Trick or Treaters. The theme for the performance this year is Pirates — it's a bit more specific than that, but I don't have the details yet.

I'm not going to be in the performance. I just don't have the energy, or the money this year. I'll probably be there running about taking photos as I usually do.

Since the wreck I tire more quickly than I did before . . . I don't know if it will eventually improve or not. So now I'm pooped and will finish this up so I can get it in the mail.

From: **Taras Wolansky** September 25, 2012
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Alexiad v11 n3 (I can't find my copy of the next one and it's not on efanazines):

Joe: Been listening to the late Christopher Hitchens read his memoir, *Hitch 22*. It strikes me that what prevented him from completing the journey from leftist to neo-conservative is that he never went back and re-evaluated his early judgments. For him, the Viet Cong still represent the "Vietnamese people". Ronald Reagan is still malevolent and senile — yet mysteriously chose to help Hitchens' adored Margaret Thatcher liberate the Falklands and overthrow the foul Argentine torturers Hitchens

especially despises. (Perhaps feeling a contradiction there, he quickly changes the subject.) All Hitchens' early prejudices — against religion and for the Left — remain in force: he even makes the absurd claim that authoritarian Portugal under Salazar was more totalitarian than Communist Hungary.

I wonder if he would have testified for David Irving at the libel trial. He did write a review of two books on the trial without even mentioning Deborah Lipstadt.

Darrell Schweitzer: Though the title was adapted from Alan E. Nourse's *The Bladerunner*, the movie is called *Blade Runner* (two words).

Quite right about John Carter not having the iconic quality of Tarzan — but why did none of the ads for the movie even make the obvious connection to Tarzan? Did they focus-group possible ads, and did Tarzan turn out to be a negative?

George W. Price: Good point about "strikebreakers" merely protecting workers who want to work from union goons and killers.

My recollection is that in the earliest James Bond films the villains are Soviet agents but, with the ascendancy of the Left in the movie business in the Sixties, this quickly changed. The villains were usually evil capitalists, and Soviet agents were frequently Bond's allies.

Hollywood may also have been influenced by the possibility of making money distributing films in the USSR. If you attack the U.S. or the U.S. government, you have no difficulty distributing the movie in the U.S. If you attacked the USSR, the Soviet government would never let in your film.

Today, it's China that Hollywood leans over backward not to offend. I wonder if this has affected Richard Gere's employability, after *Red Corner* (1999) and his efforts for Tibetan civil rights.

Richard Dengrove: "[I]n the Federalist papers, Madison was asked what would happen if the Constitution became outmoded. And he said that the justices would make new interpretations." Do you have a citation for this? It conflicts with I find in *The Federalist*. For example, the Judiciary is supposed to be "beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power" (i.e., branches of government: executive, legislative, judiciary). If the Supreme Court can simply rewrite the Constitution, this would hardly be true. Furthermore, why would the Founding Fathers create two separate mechanisms for amending the Constitution if they expected the Court to do the amending?

Rod E. Smith: "I have sometimes wondered if the name of Leeja Clane, from *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, was inspired by *Dejah*." Lord Clane "the Mutation" is the hero of A.E. van Vogt's *Empire of the Atom* (an SF retelling of *I, Claudius*) and the sequel, *The Wizard of Linn*.

Van Vogt also went back and did

some research from the original sources; the description of the origins of the Linn family in *Empire of the Atom*, Chapter 10, parallels Suetonius's description of the origins of the Octavii (Divus Augustus Chapter III).

Robert S. Kennedy: In the first season of *Sanctuary*, Amanda Tapping's British accent came and went. Is she doing better now? I thought she did a terrific job of playing a woman USAF officer on *Stargate: SG-1*, but she didn't have to do an accent in that role.

October 2, 2012

Alexiad 8/12 (thanks!):

Joe: This year's Worldcon seems to indicate there's life in fandom yet. I couldn't easily find attendance figures for Chicon 7 — but SFWA's numbers up to 2010 show steady increase up to about 1980, and then a very slow, almost imperceptible decline. At my age, I'm more likely to become too decrepit to attend conventions before I run out of conventions to attend.

"Huck flees down the river on a raft with African-American Jim": I'm sure you've heard of the famous Joseph Conrad reprint, entitled *The N-Word of the Narcissus*.

Unless he lost the war, I don't see a plausible path to *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln*, by Stephen L. Carter. A more plausible scenario would have him run for a third term and be defeated; sort of the way the British gave the back of their hand to Winston Churchill.

It's the Radicals giving the back of their hand to Soft-on-Secesh Abe, while not wanting to raise taxes high enough to pay for the reconstruction policies they favor.

Review of *Alger Hiss: Why He Chose Treason: "[Hiss] demurr[ed] from the Soviet proposal for multiple seats in the United Nations General Assembly.*" But the Soviets did get multiple seats in the General Assembly.

Bill Patterson: "Why zombies," indeed! I don't understand the appeal, either.

HBO's *True Blood* was a disappointment, when I finally saw a few episodes after hearing about it for years. The "Sookie Stackhouse" books — I picked up the first two free — are entertaining light fantasies. The TV adaptation is campy and shoddy.

I enjoyed *John Carter*, though somehow I had never gotten around to reading the books. It's funny how an actor like Taylor Kitsch can become flavor of the month in Hollywood. Perhaps they saw him as a Johnny Depp they didn't have to pay \$75 million! It reminds me of how Mickey Rourke was treated 25 years ago — until a survey of 400 filmgoers showed not one of them knew who he was.

Nearly all 3D movies now use a single camera and computer-generate the effect. This can be annoying when you get parallax on a

distant mountain range, as if your eyes were 20 feet apart. *Avatar* played fair (in this if nothing else): distant flying shots were in 2D – as I discovered when I experimented with my 3D glasses during the many dull spots.

On the eccentricities of Gary Westphal, here's his hilariously wrongheaded take on *John Carter*: "this sort of story must end with the complete, transcendent triumph of the hero, something that the film's John Carter is denied". In the book, of course, Carter doesn't even know if he succeeded in saving Dejah Thoris, and the entire planet of Barsoom, from suffocation.

Alexis Gilliland: Either fossil fuels will become more expensive, gradually leading to the adoption of alternatives; or the alternatives will come down in price so much that fossil fuels will no longer be worth mining and drilling (the "Flint Scenario"). Admittedly, sufficiently stupid government policies, like those of Jimmy Carter in the 1970s, could give us wasteful (i.e., subsidized) use by the politically well-connected, coupled with shortages for the rest of us. (My unfair advantage is that I've studied the Austrian School economists, the people who predicted the failure of socialism decades before it happened.)

"[Taras] also believes global warming to be a hoax not unlike the population scare of forty years ago." A bit garbled. My point was that population growth was and is real, even while the "population bomb" that would destroy civilization was at best an exaggeration and at worst a lie (cf. Harry Harrison's *Make Room, Make Room*). Similarly, the warming trend since about 1850 is real, but the sky is not falling.

Which was the point of those open letters in the *Wall Street Journal*, not quite accurately characterized as a "denial article by 16 non-climatologist scientists." These alleged "non-climatologist" signatories include: "Richard Lindzen, professor of atmospheric sciences, MIT", "Henk Tennekes, former director, Royal Dutch Meteorological Service", and "William Kininmonth, former head of climate research at the Australian Bureau of Meteorology".

In their second letter, "Concerned Scientists Reply on Global Warming", they compare IPCC projections of global warming with the actual record. Their point is that the models have consistently overpredicted global warming because they overestimate the effect of carbon dioxide.

Richard A. Dengrove: No question but that the defeat of the Nazis had a lot of poetic justice in it. They could easily have posed as liberators of Eastern Europe. But they simply weren't up to being as devious as, say, Mao Zedong, who trained his forces to make nice with the peasants – until the Reds were in full control and were free to slaughter them by the tens of millions.

Ignoring physical differences between men and women has become the rule in the popular arts, from TV shows like *Once Upon a Time* to military SF writers like "Jack Campbell" (John Hemry). The older I get, the more I feel like somebody who grew up before the Russian

Revolution – who knows that what young people are being taught by the schools and the media is false but doesn't dare contradict it.

Funny thing is, it makes great stories like C.J. Cherryh's *The Paladin* and Disney's *Mulan* obsolete, because they go into how a woman warrior works around her relative lack of strength.

Martin Morse Wooster: I forgot all about implementing the Hugo Awards – for worst Hugo nominees and winners – at Chicon 7.

It seems strange that Lord Fellows' *Titanic* miniseries is padded with **"backstories about why the poor people on the ship were so admirable and the rich people so beastly."** The upper classes are presented pretty positively in his *Downton Abbey*. Also, from what I've read (like Charles Pellegrino's book) the upper classes really did behave well on the Titanic.

John Purcell: I'm not a fan of *Doctor Who* – I did not imprint upon it as a child, so I can clearly perceive its hammy acting and cheesy effects – and I'm particularly annoyed when its multiple nominations rob other shows of recognition they deserve. So I would favor your "one nomination per category" rule. Figure the nominees by adding together all votes received by various episodes of a single show, plus ballots that merely specify the series but don't identify individual episodes; for each nominated series, the one episode with the most votes would become the nominee. A *Doctor Who* episode would still win, but at least other shows would get a little exposure.

Robert S. Kennedy: That race other than Neanderthals which interbred with modern humans in Melanesia and Australia is called the Denisovans. So far all we have is three bones.

I think of the new *Amazing Spiderman* movie as something like my nephew's high school production of *The Music Man*; that is, good in its way. The *real* Spiderman movies starred two of the best young actors in Hollywood, Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst; the high school production stars Andrew Garfield and Emma Stone, who are OK but not in the same class.

This may be a case like *John Carter*, in which the studio tries to save money by casting lower-priced actors. This time it worked, because everybody knows who Spiderman is.

Jim Stumm: Not sure what you mean by **"the more benign view of the Moon I often see in Heinlein stories."**

In your gold standard plan, if the price of gold goes over \$1600 an ounce, people would convert their dollars into gold, melt down the gold, and sell it for a profit in dollars. And then use the dollars to buy still more gold, and so on, and so on.

Dainis Bisenieks: **"But what is reading for pleasure without pleasure?"** To be able to offer an informed opinion, if a negative one.

George W. Price: **"writing letters to the editor knocking down ridiculous arguments against . . . SDI"**. I had one in *Scientific American*, pointing out that those oh-so-easy countermeasures the Soviets were expected to deploy would require them to rebuild their entire strategic arsenal every time we tweaked our

software.

I think you're right that many of those who opposed SDI because they said it wouldn't work actually feared that it would. The Left thinks the U.S. is too powerful as it is.

Just a few years ago, evolutionary biologists came up with an explanation for male homosexuality: sexually antagonistic selection (less lurid than it sounds). Here's an example I like to use: if short men are less successful at reproduction than tall men, why haven't short men gone extinct? Answer: because their short *sisters* have lots of babies and so maintain the level of genes for shortness in the population.

And that's exactly what seems to be happening among the sisters of male homosexuals. Evidently certain genes that increase fecundity among women – maybe men smell *real good* to you – also create a tendency toward homosexuality among men. Overall, these genes provide an evolutionary benefit.

Hugo Awards: When I saw a writer I'd never heard of get two Hugo nominations, I started wondering about consecutive money orders. And when I read his novella, which turned out to be an historical essay disguised as SF, with what seems suspiciously like Communist Chinese propaganda stirred in, my thoughts became even more unfriendly. I was happy the novella didn't win – but his schmaltzy, bogus short story did.

The novella had 76 nominations, the short story had 68. The notorious "money-order ballots" were 50 for both the novel and the Campbell – no one else nominated the book or its authors.

—JTM

Another nominee for the Hugo Award was John Scalzi's labored fantasy parody with a very long parody title. Scalzi is a writer who has recapitulated the evolutionary path from Young Heinlein to Old Heinlein in just a few years. I went to his reading at Worldcon but it was so tiresome I left after a few minutes.

My favorite Hugo nominee was the wonderfully odd "The Cartographer Wasps and the Anarchist Bees", which I suspect is partly an allegory about Chinese history

From: **George W. Price** September 28, 2012
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August Alexiad:

Bill Patterson takes off on illogicalities in the movie *Prometheus* (which I haven't seen). My own first choice for illogicalities in top-rated movies is *E.T.—The Extraterrestrial*.

The story starts out with the poor little guy cut off from his buddies, with humans closing in on them. His ship has to leave without him, and he is stuck on Earth until he finds a way to call them back. And again he has to get by a human cordon to reach the ship. Only this time E.T. and his human friend fly over the cordon on a bicycle. Whoops! Whaddyaknow — the little

bugger can fly! So why didn't he just fly over the people between him and his ship at the very start? Perhaps because then there wouldn't have been any story? Which is the definition of an "idiot plot."

I've never seen anyone else point out this inconsistency. So did I miss something? I never bothered to see it a second time; was there any explanation of why E.T. did not fly in the first scenes, but was able to at the end?

My favorite point-out was "Why doesn't he touch his chest with his finger and heal himself?" And don't go asking Mike Resnick about the inconsistencies unless you have a few hours to spare.

* * * * *

Richard Dengrove points out that there is hardly any realistic way that the Japanese or Nazis could have won World War II, simply because of the kind of people that they were. For example, "The Nazis were so rigid that they didn't even do the obvious, de-collectivize Russian agriculture. Thus, they forfeited the support of the Russian peasants."

True. However, the Nazis did enlist several hundred thousand Soviet citizens into anti-communist armies to fight against the Soviet Union. (See "Vlasov's Army.") This led directly to perhaps the worst atrocity that the U.S. and Britain committed: After the war we forcibly repatriated thousands of those men who had surrendered to us. Some committed suicide rather than go back; the rest we delivered over to Stalin, knowing that they would go to either the Gulag or the stone wall. Someone on our side obviously understood what was about to happen, and bitterly code-named the repatriation "Operation Keelhaul."

One might suspect that a big reason the Nazis didn't de-collectivize Russian agriculture was that the Nazis were themselves collectivists who didn't see anything particularly wrong with state-run farms. (Vlasov's Army, as I recall, included many Ukrainians who wanted to get out from under Russian rule. That was nationalism, which the Nazis could more easily understand.)

This ties in with the common misconception — assiduously propagated by the left — that the Nazis were the puppets of German industrialists and other big-business leaders. Nonsense, twaddle, and taradiddle! Hitler tolerated a form of capitalism only temporarily, and under tight control, and (so I have heard) planned to go to full collectivization once the war was won.

Minor point: Mr. Dengrove twice refers to "daring do" when he means "derring-do." To be sure "derring" is an old variant of "daring"; it appears to survive only in this usage.

* * * * *

Jim Stumm asks Dengrove to "provide a reference for Madison saying that Supreme Court justices could make new interpretations of the Constitution." Yes, I'd like to see that too.

The primary argument against changing the Constitution by interpretation, rather than by amendment, is that it destroys the rule of law. The principle virtue of the rule of law is that it lets us know in advance how the government will react to what we do. That disappears when judges can change the law at will (not to say at whim). Then no one knows where he stands and what he can do.

On another subject, Mr. Stumm points out something I hadn't realized before about the gold standard: that "the Constitution does not give the Federal Government the power to issue any paper money, not even backed by gold." As he says, the Constitution does not authorize Congress "to emit bills of credit" and specifically forbids the several States to do so. As Stumm also says, apparently the only constitutional way to have paper money is for it to be issued by private banks. I presume such private money, even if backed by gold coins or bullion in the banks' vaults, would not be "legal tender" and could be refused by creditors holding out for actual gold or silver.

The Federal Reserve can legally print paper money only because it is technically a private banking system, not part of the Federal Government. Of course this is obfuscatory bullshit, and I amuse myself wondering what would happen if some crotchety Federal judge ruled that since the Fed's top honchos are appointed by the President and confirmed by Congress, then it obviously really is a government agency and hence has no right to print money.

That judge could also go at it from a different angle, and point out that since Congress has no constitutional right to "emit bills of credit" — print paper money — it cannot give any such right to someone else, such as the Federal Reserve. That is, no one can print paper money that is backed by "the full faith and credit of the United States" and is "legal tender" that creditors have to accept. Only gold (and maybe silver) can constitutionally be declared legal tender. All paper money has to be regarded as being like personal checks: acceptable only if debtors and creditors are mutually agreeable. Now that would turn the financial system upside down and give it a good shaking!

* * * * *

Dainis Bisenieks mentions the *SF Hall of Fame Two B*, in which "some wiseacre has turned (in the recent Tor reissue) 'The Specter General' into 'The Spectre General', somewhat spoiling the visual likeness to 'Inspector General'. Betcha the same was done in any printing the story might have had in the U.K., where also the Lensman and the Mouser turn grey."

Mr. Bisenieks loses that bet with regard to Gray Lensman. I have those issues of the British edition of *Astounding* (Oct. 1939 to Jan. 1940), and it is "Gray" on the covers and in the text. In fact, the British edition appears to use the American spellings throughout — "color," not "colour," etc. The British edition's typeface differs from the American edition's, so it had to

have been completely rekeyboarded (no computer files in those days), and changing the spellings would have been easy. But they chose not to.

Just to make it more interesting, the Oct. 1939 American edition of *Astounding* spells it Grey Lensman on the cover (but "Gray" in the text). So we have the oddity of British spelling on the American cover and American spelling on the otherwise identical British cover.

By the way, you can excuse Tor, because it is "The Spectre General" in the original 1973 hardcover of *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame Two B*. Apparently this was editor Ben Bova's idea, since it was "The Specter General" in its first appearance in the June 1952 *Astounding*. I wonder what the late Ted Cogswell thought of this treatment of his title?

* * * * *

Recently I saw a news item stating that as a youth the famous (or infamous) left-wing economist and columnist Paul Krugman read Asimov's "Foundation" series. He was so impressed that it inspired him to become an economist and dedicate his life to promoting socioeconomic techniques to correct the failings of our social system. If that is true — oh, Isaac, you have much to atone for.

This would account for Krugman's evident faith in top-down regulation and planning. In reality, of course, "psychohistory" is forever impossible because it has to deal with factors that cannot be measured and quantified, and therefore cannot be calculated no matter how wise and brilliant the planners are or how powerful their computers are. A real Seldon Plan would run off the rails in maybe six months. And you wouldn't need any Mule to throw off the calculations; the calculations would be meaningless from the start.

I have no idea if Asimov himself took "psychohistory" seriously. He was a left liberal, so possibly he did. I wonder what kind of stories he might have written if he had been influenced by Mises and Hayek?

What they argue is that the "factors that cannot be measured and quantified" are averaged out in the end. Think Eugene Burdick's *The 480* (1964) wherein is discussed the predictability of votes by socioeconomic groupings.

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** September 29, 2012
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Chicon 7 was too big, too much fun, and too busy. I know (because I saw someone else's photos) that Joe Major and many other friends were there, but I never got to see them, although I know at some point we were probably all in the grand ballroom. My only regret is missing

so many friends, and that some of my Hugo picks lost. A delightful WorldCon.

You can leave a message at the
Zombie Board.

—JTM

Back home, Spain's economy continues slide into deeper failure due to deepening austerity. Protests still fill the streets. Although the fall is predicted to bring average rain, we need exceptional rain to make up for the drought. This weekend's floods may be a start. The damage from the drought has already been done: cereal harvests are down 30%, and grape harvests down 15%. Droughts do tend to create excellent vintages, but prices will go up.

As an austerity move, the Health Ministry is now charging for services to people who are not included in the socialized medicine system, such as undocumented immigrants or retirees from other European Union countries: €39 for a doctor's appointment, €3,610 per month for hemodialysis, €3,498 for radiotherapy, €30,566 for a kidney transplant, and €79,928 for a heart transplant or pacemaker. Not bad, compared to the US.

Despite cuts in their budgets, Spain's scientists keep making discoveries. A DNA analysis of Neanderthal fossils showed that most of them went extinct 50,000 years ago, well before the arrival of Homo sapiens. The survivors in central and western Europe suffered from very limited genetic variability, a risk factor for continued survival.

An analysis of the dental plaque of five Neanderthal remains found in El Sidrón Cave in north-central Spain shows that they ate more than meat. They also used various medicinal plants, including chamomile and Achillea millefolium (yarrow). "They had a sophisticated understanding of their natural environment," a researcher concluded. But they didn't have dentists to clean their teeth.

In these troubled times, the King remains as a symbol of unity and stability for Spain, and in a gesture of "transparency, rigor, and innovation," the Royal Household has recreated its website, www.casareal.es, available in Castellano, English, Catalá, Euskera, Galego, and Valenciá, although you will see that if you click "English," not much really gets translated. There's still no Facebook or Twitter, and no mention of the legal troubles of in-laws. But you can enjoy 12,000 photos and 3,000 speeches, including the one he gave on the night of February 23, 1981, in which he defended Spain's constitution and democracy in the face of an attempted coup. His first blog post, published on September 18, managed to be controversial: he called Catalonia's separatist a "chimera."

Without much fanfare, the King's parents, don Juan de Borbón and doña María de las Mercedes, the counts of Barcelona, have been interred in the Pantheon of Kings in El Escorial. In fact, they occupy the last two remaining tombs in the crypt. Where will don Juan Carlos I be laid to rest? The official answer: "It refers to a problem that is not immediate, so it has not

been considered by the Royal Household."

The King was voted out in July as honorary president of Spain's chapter of the World Wildlife Fund, a post he held since 1968, as a result of his elephant hunt in Botswana in April. The Royal Household accorded "maximum respect" to the decision. His Majesty has to pick his battles, just like the rest of us, but with more public scrutiny. I treasure my anonymity.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** September 25, 2012
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While preserving its aspect of museum of childhood (Gawd, the LEGO kits!), my son's room is now preternaturally clean. *There is nothing on the floor.* The industrial strength dust bunnies quickly filled up a vacuum cleaner dust bag. It had been agreed long ago that no boughten presents would come fromme (unless from time to time a book); I loathe giving presents when I must guess at how they will be taken. More than once the absolutely right present has been *The Lord of the Rings*; somewhat later, *Little, Big*. On the right side, friends have rejoiced in *Shrinklite* and in *Impressionist Cats*. At one time long ago, I sent quantities of books to kibbutznik friends, and I thought the 1863 and 1884 Yearbooks of the U.S. Department of Agriculture would go over rather well. They did.

On U.S. agriculture in the Antebellum era, I have been reading a freebie find, *Larding the Lean Earth* by Steven Stoll (Hill & Wang 2002, tp 2003). It contrasts the ideal of sustainable agriculture with dung-producing cattle and a good proportion of land producing fodder, against the soil-depleting practices of the Southern planter.

I happily paid money for John McPhee's *The Founding Fish*, a work I'd somehow overlooked even when it ran in *The New Yorker* a decade ago. That fish is the shad, and I learned a lot about shad fishermen, the actual history of this creature, and its ups and downs in the diet of Americans of past centuries. George Washington has a role in the story. The British while occupying Philadelphia tried to block the spring shad run up the Schuylkill. I have a book about that river, but its focus excludes the shad; there are only a few passing references to unnamed fish.

Maybe McPhee could debate
Mark Kurlansky on the comparative
virtues of shad and cod.

Tolkien, as we know, left much to the imagination, but filled his Middle-earth with enough things that it had to be deemed a complete world. I had before this thought that anadromos fish had a place in that world which is, after all, our world. Now that my shad-consciousness has been raised, I can see that it would fit the bill (of fare) very nicely. The hobbits of Buckland must have done more with their boats than just messing around in them. . .

What would the world have

been like if Tolkien had written *Three Hobbits In a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)*? Would you rather know what Drogo and Primula had been doing in that boat that night to make it tip over? They may have been being very active.

Tolkienists will find the September 14 issue of *The Times Literary Supplement* of interest. We are told of the artist Mary Fairburn, her paintings to illustrate *LotR*, and how she offered them to Tolkien for his consideration, and how in confused times in their lives it all came to naught. Two surviving paintings are reproduced, the Mirror of Galadriel and the boats on the Great River. I find them a bit too stylized for my taste. Elsewhere, naming no names, I have not been pleased by the epic scale of some pictures, nor by the architectural fantasies. Ah, if Neuschwanstein had never been built!

When Al Brodax and Forrest J Ackerman made their presentaion to Tolkien for a live-action movie, they brought concept art and a script outline. Tolkien loathed the outline (it had the Eagles being an air service, prefiguring Bored of the Rings and the Rankin-Bass *Return of the King*) and thought the art quite beautiful. Naturally, the art has disappeared, but the outline survives.

A branch library here has, in nonfiction, the best discards, about a decade old and read only a couple of times in that span. Recently I got books on Mercator and on Halley — not his whole life but an episode of exploration. These nicely fill in my picture of the development of thought and knowledge since about the time of Columbus.

From elsewhere, Roger Penrose's *The Emperor's New Mind* is a deep, deep book. But do we need to know the laws of physics to understand that while computers are mutable without limit, human beings are not. We inherit from our mammalian lineage a penchant for play. A robot could be made to fly a kite as well as to tote a barge and lift a bale. But who would believe that it knew the difference between play and toil or that it was playing in the one case or toiling in the other?

So much for Charlie Stross's *Saturn's Children* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #4 & V. 8 #3) with its robots engaging in Hot Sex™.

—JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest..

Mike Brown, with best wishes.

FIFTY SHADES OF FEAR AND LOATHING

... but that was some other era, burned out and long gone from the brutish realities of this foul year of Our Lord, 2011. A lot of things had changed in those years. And now I was in Seattle as the public affairs editor of this small newspaper that had sent me out here in the Great Red Shark for some reason that nobody claimed to understand. "Just check him out," they said, "and we'll take it from there..."

Indeed. Check him out. But when we finally arrived at the Grey House my attorney was unable to cope artfully with the security procedure. We were forced to stand in line before a blonde bimbo chosen more for the amplitude of her figure than any other feature, serving here as prelude to a night in the fat fascist's harem. I kept telling myself: "Be quiet, be calm, say nothing, speak only when spoken to: name, rank and press affiliation, nothing else, ignore this terrible drug, pretend it's not happening..."

There is no way to explain the terror I felt when I finally lunged up to the receptionist and began babbling. All my well-rehearsed lines fell apart under that woman's empty eyes. "Hi there," I said "My name is... ah, Raoul Duke... yes, *on the list*, that's for sure. I have my attorney with me and I realize of course that *his* name is not on the list, but we *must* have access, yes, this man is actually my *driver*. Just check the list and you'll see. Don't worry. What's the score here? What's next?"

"Excuse me one moment, Dr. Duke." She arched one artificial eyebrow on her artificial face and with some mental effort made a communication on the telephone.

"Mr. Thompson is expected. Please sign in here, Dr. Duke. You'll want the last elevator on the right, press for the twentieth floor." The woman's face was *changing*: swelling, pulsing... horrible green jowls and fangs jutting out, the face of a Moray Eel! Deadly poison! Terrible things were happening all around us. Right next to me a huge reptile was gnawing on a woman's neck, the carpet was a blood-soaked sponge — impossible to walk in it, no footing at all. "Order some golf shoes," I whispered. "Otherwise we'll never get out of this place alive. You notice those lizards don't have any trouble moving around in this muck — that's because they have *claws* on their feet."

"Lizards?" he said. "If you think we're in trouble now, wait till you see what's happening in the elevators."

The lizard held out one scaly, taloned claw that contained a security pass with "VISITOR" stamped on the front. I took it with loathing, as though it might turn into a gecko and begin climbing up my arm, face, into my nose, and begin eating my brain, or start trying to sell me insurance. We made our way over to the bank of elevators and past the two security men in ill-fitting mass produced black suits, cut to hide their dorsal spines.

The elevators whisked us up at terminal velocity to the twentieth floor. Somehow the young couple in tight black leather preparing to arm and detonate a bomb, muttering about agents, who shared the car with us didn't set off their device until after we got off. It might have killed the pterodactyls lumbering around the corridors in pools of fresh blood.

The lizard behind the fortress of sandstone at the end of the room got to her feet and smiled, revealing a mass of grisly fangs. "Dr. Duke, could you wait here, please?"

There were a number of chairs upholstered in peeled dragon hide, and behind them a floor-to-ceiling window. "Look outside," I said.

"Why?"

"There's a big... machine in the sky... some kind of electric snake... coming straight at us." The man in its claws was all in gray with a gargantuan bracelet shooting out all sorts of colored rays of light.

Before he could respond yet another lizard came out of a large door to the right. "Dr. Duke?" it said. "Mr. Grey will see you in a moment. Have you been offered any refreshment?"

I opened the kit-bag and took out two pellets of mescaline. "Maybe *you* should only eat *one* of those," my attorney said. "That acid's still working on you." I got them down without any lizard juice.

The office door opened and a tall black man exited, then turned and said over one shoulder, "Golf this week, Grey?" There was some dire sound of response from within, and the lizard got to its back claws and summoned the elevator.

"Mr. Grey will see you now, Dr. Duke. Do go through," the lizard said then.

The mescaline was beginning to take hold, and with that fortification I stepped forward to confront the master lizard in its den...

— Not by H. S. Thompson or Erika M. Leonard

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