

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

I turned fifty this year. I'm still deciding how I feel about having lived half a century. It feels strange. At least this birthday was better than the last one in which I had the surreal experience of explaining to the Emts taking me to the hospital the workings of my ereader and discussing the works of H.G. Wells. But I am now aware of approaching old age.

Friday, December 7, will be the seventy-first anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Let us all take a few minutes that day to remember the nearly three thousand Americans who died that day.
— Lisa

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Joe's Birthday is **December 24, 2012**

Printed on December 5, 2012

Deadline is **February 1, 2013**

Reviewer's Notes

When I was a very little boy, one evening my mother got dressed up to go to a party. As she was getting ready to go out the door, she said, flippantly, that she wasn't coming back.

I broke down and cried and begged her to stay. She did, and I never properly thanked her for it.

Now she has gone away and is never coming back. Those who knew me when I was a little boy have gone away. Another one just did.

It's like this in Fandom, did you notice? Bob Tucker, Rusty Hevlin, Forrie Ackerman . . . the ones who made our little way of life have passed on. At ConCave we sit among the elders and talk about our past lives; then at night the younger sort come out and party hardy.

Rosemary Edgehill, romance writer, is also eluki bes shahar, fantasy writer. Her contribution to *Alternate Skiffy* (1997) was a version of "Aristotle and the Gun" titled "My Object All Sublime".

It was about as murderous as the efforts of that famous Gilbert & Sullivan fan, the Zodiac Killer. A Fan who was disgusted at the takeover by Trekkies somehow found a time machine. He developed a working sixties-technology VCR and distributed it, reckoning that the Trek Fans would perforce sit at home seeing their favorite episodes over and over again, never profaning Trufandom with their presence.

Sure enough, they did. And as a result, sf got pushed out of the market altogether, since those few people who got into SF as a whole through Trek didn't have that opening, and the Fan comes back to the present to find that the SF line is now a romance line.

You have noticed that that happened anyway?

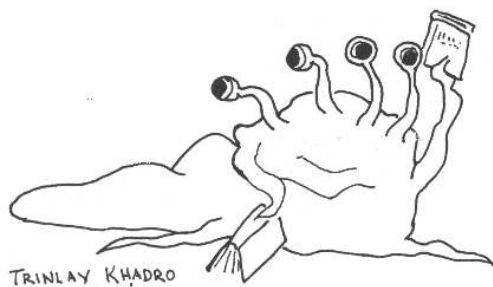
I was showing Lisa the article on Cracked.com about outré romance subgenres — Amish Romances, NASCAR Romances, Angel-of-Death Romances (and it didn't even mention Knight Templar Romances, much less **Sparkly Emo Vampires™**). Then we got to the one that utterly boggled her mind.

Centaur Romances. Not two centaurs, but human women loving (or wuvng) centaurs. The webpage had links to the book pages on Amazon.com to show that it wasn't a joke.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



"You have a person-to-person collect call from John Amalfi for Solenne San Jose, from the planet He, at the metacentric center of the universe. Will you accept the charges?"

"Oui."

Solenne San Jose, of Pessac in France, terminated her telephone account. Bouygues Telecom sent her a final bill in the amount of €11,721,000,000,000,000.

Let's repeat that in words. It's **eleven quintillion, seven hundred twenty-one trillion euros**. (Okay, *onze trillion, sept cents vingt et un billion euros*. Even the Begum's Fortune couldn't have covered that; at current values it would have been only about €1.6 milliard [\$2.1 billion].) They offered to set up a payment plan.

(The bill should have been for €117.21. They said it was a printing error. Then, très embarrassés, they canceled the entire bill.)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19908095>

"When NASA's Curiosity rover found a shiny object on Mars, researchers believed it was just part of the rover. But now, the rover has found more bright objects in Mars's soil, leading NASA officials to believe it is something native to the planet."

The Warhoons evidently don't have push-top beer cans, just the old pop-top ones, and they discard their tabs in the hope that a Thark's or a red man's throat will step on one and throw the rider. Now wasn't that easy?

A well-known media company has bought LucasFilms and intends to bring out *Star Wars: Episode VII* in 2015. So . . .

Poopy Panda Shot First!

I was recently reading two books I both recommend. One is *Army of Evil: A History of the SS* by Adrian Weale (2010, 2012; NAL Caliber; \$28.95). Weale has done a history that does much to illuminate the dark nature of this organization. He makes clear that there was no fundamental separation within it; there was no real differentiation among the concentration-camp guards and the police murderers, and the

combat troops. So much for the Sable-clad Knights saving us from the Posleen.

The other was *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today* by Thomas E. Ricks (2012; Penguin; \$32.95), an analysis of how George C. Marshall won the Second World War, and how his successors have so ignored his methods of selection. Ricks portrays a U.S. Army that has come to resemble a less competent and more compliant Fowler Shocken (from *The Space Merchants*).

Except, perhaps, that Fowler Shocken didn't cover up My Lai. Ricks gives a description of the massacre that makes C Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade, Americal Division look like a unit of the Dirlewanger Brigade.

Weale discusses the criminality of the Dirlewanger Brigade (*SS-Sturmbrigade Dirlewanger*, later *36. Waffengrenadierdivision der SS*) in terms straight out of *Blazing Saddles*:

"Qualifikationen?"

"Vergewaltigung, Mord, Brandstiftung, und Vergewaltigung."

"Sie sagte: 'Vergewaltigung' zweimal."

"Ich mag Vergewaltigung."

(That is:

"Qualifications?"

"Rape, murder, arson, and rape."

"You said 'rape' twice."

"I like rape.")

Dr. Dirlewanger himself had been accused of sex with a fourteen-year old girl. At least it was a girl. I don't think any of his bold lads could say, "*Ich stürmten eine Viehherde durch den Vatikan*," though.

The January/February 2013 issue of *Analog* has two stories particularly worth mentioning. The "Probability Zero" category includes "We Install" by Harry Turtledove, on the items available from solar system salesmen. In the slightly more serious category, or perhaps the "Global Dispatches" one, there is "*The War of the Worlds*, Book One, Chapter 18: The Sergeant Major" by John G. Hemry, on what a good RSM can do when given the opportunity.

"Boss, that thing's flying over us again."

"What is it saying?"

"There's ice down here."

"Let me know if it tells us anything helpful."

The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) reports that the walls of Shackleton Crater on the Moon are 5-10% ice (by volume; 30% by weight). Somebody had better buy Dr. Wendy Pendleton (of Mark Whittington's *Children of Apollo* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1) and "The First Woman on the Moon" (2007)) a copy of Alfred Lansing's *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage* (1959)

In related news, Kenneth Branagh, star of *Shackleton* (2002; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #2),

Henry V (1999), and *Conspiracy* (2001), was knighted in the 2012 Birthday Honours.

Thanks to the Peplum Blog, I discovered that James Purefoy (Mark Antony, Kantos Kan) had been Solomon Kane. You know, the Robert E. Howard hero who wasn't Conan.

Solomon Kane

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0970452/>

Peplum Blog

<http://peplums.blogspot.com/>

MONARCHIST NEWS

Preah Karuna Preah Bat Sâmdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk Preahmâhaviraksat, the King-Father of Cambodia, more simply known as **Norodom Sihanouk**, died on **October 15, 2012** in Beijing. The King-Father had stepped aside for the last time in 2004 due to ill health, and been replaced by his youngest surviving son **Norodom Sihamoni**. Sihanouk had had a very fluid political life, including abdicating once in favor of his father, **Norodom Suhamit**, being head of state under the Khmer Rouge, and having been a refugee in North Korea and China. He was born to Norodom Suhamit and Queen Sissowath Kossamak, the daughter of king Sisowath Monivong, Sihanouk's first predecessor, on October 31, 1922. He was twice king, twice sovereign prince, once president, once head of state, twice prime minister, and also often head of a government-in-exile.

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 Pulk Ułanów

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

Readers may remember that I wrote an obituary for one of my favorite people in the world, Mr. Pat Mellen. In this issue it falls to me to write the obituary for his widow, Mrs. Mary Emma Mellen. She died on **October 8**. As I write this I am remembering springerle for Christmas and *Smithsonian* magazines saved for me. Toys not sent to the attic so that I could play with them. But it was not for these that I loved the Mellens. It was for the kindness and generosity behind them. Alzheimer's turned one of the brightest women I knew into someone who had to be locked up for her own safety and who sometimes did not remember her own children. And yet, occasionally the woman she had been would show in her eyes for just a second or two.

— Lisa

INNOCENCE OF MUSLIMS

Commentary by Lisa Major

WHAT MODERN PLAY
COULD DRIVE MEN MAD?

MAYBE "ANDY WARHOL
PAINTS MOHAMMED?"



After the terrorist attack on our Libyan embassy I decided that since the terrorists thought I and all other Americans should die for a video only a few of us made I ought to at least watch the thing. I found a trailer on YouTube and began watching. Five minutes of utterly boring, awful trash later I decided I would just have to die ignorant. But when the filmmaker was arrested for breaking parole I felt that something was fishy in Denmark. True, he was not arrested for making the film but I find the timing highly suspicious.

<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10151163196698007>

This is the link to Obama's apology for the video and the comments thereof. Many of the posters have no idea of what it means to live in a free society. The following were some of the comments by Muslim posters. Look through the 2,642 comments for yourself.

Why not USA make law/rules/regulation/guide lines/ethics to be followed????....If one person's so called "Freedom of Expression" is hurting billion of muslims then there is a time to re-visit the concept of "Freedom of Expression"

(The USA does not have laws against blasphemy because if it did a majority religion could suppress a minority one. For instance the majority religion could create all sorts of obstacles for the minority religion such as the Coptic Christians face in Egypt and other Islamic countries.)

What ever thy say we just knw that thy r enemies of islam nd we nevr becm there frnd the only solution is JIHAD america,israhil,indian get ready we r coming soon

(If we are such enemies of Islam why is it easier for Muslims to build mosques here than for Christians in Islamic lands to repair existing churches, let alone build new ones? But I do think if we have people declaring they are going to wage holy war against us preparing to defend ourselves is a very good idea.)

????? ??? Hitler the great who killed the bastereds. Hitler zindabad.....

(Well, it's no secret that Hamas wants all

Jews dead. All you have to do to see this is read the Hamas charter.)

Osama was a terrorist of the past but Sam Besile & Terry Jones are the Biggest Terrorists of Today.

(Neither Youssef a.k.a. Sam Besile nor Jones have killed anyone to the best of my knowledge. Nor have they advocated killing anyone. How can people who have not killed anyone or advocated killing people be considered terrorists? I don't hold with burning books as Jones did but Jones, to the best of my knowledge, has never called for anyone's death.)

President Obama and Mrs. Clinton will defend the right of free speech; fair enough but why is it that when someone questions the Holocaust, that is not free speech and everyone attacks it in the US. The issue that riles Muslims more is the double standards that are applied regarding Muslim sensitivities. Muslim faith can be fair game for free speech but when someone brings up a question on the Holocaust, those videos will be labelled "Hate Speech" and removed. Why doesn't we hear the answer to that?

(<http://www.holocaustdenier.com> is a holocaust denial website I found on the first page of results from a google websearch for holocaust denial. Countering Holocaust denial is part of free speech. I have also seen Holocaust denier David Irving openly peddling his books at a gun show. If an Internet server refuses to post Holocaust videos it has the right to do so as a private entity.)

???? ???? ?????? Why there is no law (to) protect the religious (beliefs) of Muslims?

(There is such a law. It's called the First Amendment. But it seems many of these posters have a problem with the fact the First Amendment also protects the right to criticize Islam or any other religion.)

people want peace but you guys abused our prophet and call your selves peace full if we were to abuse you and your religion then what. hitler said that i could have killed all the jews in the world but i kept some to show the world why i killed them. He was right (Christians in Muslim lands are no strangers to persecution. Moreover, it was not all Americans who were guilty of the film.)

Lame Excuses..... Hiltler was right person, you people still need Hitler!!

(So what we need is another six million dead Jews and most of Europe ruled by one of the most evil regimes in history? And what exactly is so lame about free speech?)

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE! only a bunch of Americans dead on muslim soil would placate the rage, assuming there would be no real attempts to block the

film or punish the culprits!

(So all Americans are to be murdered for this film? I can't begin to imagine the outrage if a Tea Party member were to call for the death of all Muslims to avenge Ambassador Stevens.)

u have no idea about islam and no brains to understand, we are hating u more day by day., truth is this that u people afraid of islam and muslim and soon INSHAALLAH we will take over america and then u will see the power of islam as whole america embrace islam, wait and watch and stay away from our religion.

(Well, judging from these postings, we can expect a lot of dead Jews, all women enslaved and all non Muslims becoming second class citizens if Islam takes over this country. And it's going to be hard staying away from Islam when it is shoved down our throats.)

These American Jews & Christians are the real EXTREMISTS & BARBARIANS. Who intend to spread hatred in the whole world. 9/11/2001 was a terrorist attack on 30m People of America but 9/11/2012 was a Terrorist attack on 250m Muslims all over the world.

(Where in America were Muslim ambassadors murdered? Where in America have people rioted and vandalized mosques? It was our ambassador who was murdered.)

Members of Westboro Baptist Church have been banned from entering Canada for hate speech against jews and homosexuality??why royal family of uk going to sue the photographers and magazine who published the naked photos of princess???,but when it comes to islam ,there is no limitations..west needs to stop this discriminatory and dual standards

(Going on this standard it would be all right to judge Turkey for what happens in Egypt or any other Islamic country.)

i hate them all MY FOOT america UR NATION DESERVES EXTREME TERRORISM U MR obama

(So Islam, the religion of "peace", teaches its adherents that it is all right to kill all Americans for the acts of a few Americans?)

The moral of the film maker arrest is that you had better not criticize Islam unless your life is squeaky clean. Even if you have squeaky clean hands you can still find trouble. Just ask Geert Wilders or Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

The film maker does not seem to be an admirable character but should we be rewarding the murderers of Ambassador Stevens by imprisoning said film maker?

ARROWSMITH HYNDE

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE LOST STARS: TARNISHED KNIGHT
by "Jack Campbell" [John G. Henry]

(Ace; 2012; ISBN 978-193077822; \$26.95)

Cyril Kornbluth's *The Syndic* (1953) is set in an America where, in the aftermath of social collapse, one group which has shared communal values comes to power. However, it's not Fandom (cf. Robert Bloch's "A Way of Life"): it's organized crime.

The book describes a breakdown of trust, but outside the East-Coast Syndic, and how some people in the Syndic try to do something about it. (And also shows a lamentable ignorance of the Noahide Laws, but what do you expect from a guy who ordered bacon for breakfast at Grossinger's kosher café?)

Kornbluth's view of organized crime is in some ways as unrealistic and romantic as the fictionalized history in the book by one Arrowsmith Hynde (nowadays I have to explain that Fletcher Pratt was a historian well known among Fans, co-author with L. Sprague de Camp of the Harold Shea stories and author of *The Well of the Unicorn* (1948) among other noteworthy fantasies, and if you still don't get the pun, write us). They don't trust each other.

The people of the Syndicate Worlds, or Syndic for short, don't trust anyone. The Syndic's security forces, known as "Snakes" (has someone been reading S. M. Stirling?) can arrest anyone at any time, and they remain completely anonymous. It's reminiscent of why Soviet Army soldiers feared SMERSH more than they did the NKVD; the Chekist uniform had those distinctive blue collar patches, but SMERSH guys wore ordinary uniform, so anyone could be a SMERSH operative, and you could be unmasked as an anti-Soviet at any moment.

But the Syndic has failed. Their enemies decisively defeated them, due in part to the efforts of someone who was supposed to be dead. I'm surprised they didn't claim that the "Black Jack" Geary" who suddenly popped up in the Alliance fleet was an actor. Failure has its consequences, and one of them is that some subordinates start exploring other directions.

The system of Midway is led by CEO Arthur Drakon, while the fleet defending it is commanded by CEO Gwen Icen. Neither one of them trusts anyone (and it didn't have to do with her other partner), they both have been written off by senior management, and are in a dead-end assignment, soon to be dead when the mysterious Admiral Geary passes through, if not the Enigmas, the cryptic alien race that seems to be more influential than it appears.

They don't have much in common, and little choice. So, reluctantly, Drakon secedes from the Syndic, has the Snakes hunted down and exterminated, and declares independence. Icen cleans out the fleet.

Then they have to learn to adjust to this frightening new state of responsibility. Their previous frightening state was bad enough, but it was at least something they were accustomed to. Being managed by the Pointy-Haired Boss of *Dilbert* and Rita of *Working Daze* would be highly unpleasant, but for some the fear of self-responsibility would be more difficult to handle.

The transitions of Midway are difficult, and only begun by the end of this book. A sequel is forthcoming. Hemry has not made his conclusions final, his heroes perfect, or his story wound up. The world is a little too complicated for that. What he has done is to show that people can work at solving problems, even overwhelming ones. Perhaps that's all we can hope for these days. Charles Orsino was only at the beginning of his efforts at the end of *The Syndic*, too.

IVAN THE DREADING
Review by Joseph T Major of
CAPTAIN VORPATRIL'S ALLIANCE
(Miles Vorkosigan)

by Lois McMaster Bujold
(Baen; 2012; ISBN 978-1451638455; \$25)

You can tell it's an adventure of our favorite sidekick Lord Ivan Xav Vorpatri of Barrayar when the protagonist ends up being taken hostage by mistake before the first chapter is done, and by the fifth is trying to get married in order to avoid being arrested. After which problems get even more complex, widespread, and overwhelming.

Imperial Auditor Lord Miles Vorkosigan is *not supposed* to get into such troubles any more. Perhaps he won't, either, but for now we can rely on Ivan to have the predicaments for him.

The characters have to share the stage with their background, as it were. Bujold describes here the diverse societies of her universe: Barrayar, scrambling to retain its traditions and values as it advances technologically and economically; Jackson's Whole, demonstrating a cut-throat, competitive economy; Cetaganda, a grim field of political competition.

Even in less energetic political venues there are surprises. As when Tej, the sometime Lady Vorpatri (she hopes with an emphasis on the "sometime") is casually introduced to "The Gregor" — who turns out to be Emperor Gregor Vorbarra, as we all know. You would think that someone really named Akuti Tejaswini Jyoti ghem Estif Arqua would be accustomed to such matters. And with all that name, no wonder she prefers to go by "Tej".

Not to mention her stomach-dropping amazement when she learns *how close* Ivan is in the Imperial succession. Aral next, but Miles is too different to be considered [and Mark not even to be considered], and after that . . . Ivan. Pray for many children for Gregor, or Barrayar is doomed.

However, Tej's dreams are doomed. Since she had been wondering, before Ivan rescued her, how to end her life in a fashion that would be complete, not hurt overmuch, and be practicable, you would think this would be desirable. But, it seems, there are no grounds for a divorce. Very embarrassing.

And of course, naturally family comes to call. First Ivan's; Lady Alys explains the circumstances of her widowhood and Ivan's birth, which were very close together. Then all Tej's family show up; at least they bring along all the rest of her companion Lapis Lazuli's dance team. (Thanks be to all divinities that none of

them is named "Lorelei Lee" and that she is not a gender-altered clone of a notorious adventurer.) Oh, and did I mention that Lady Alys is now cohabiting with Miles's former boss, the notorious ImpSec chief Simon Ilyan?

Then Tej's family starts investigating the underpinnings of all this. There is a secret having to do with ImpSec headquarters, and it has to do with the Cetagandan occupation of Barrayar. Naturally, Ivan gets into trouble. But this time it's trouble along with the rest of the family. There are circumstances where flooding is inevitable, and a romantic accommodation, as romantic as it may seem, may have to be unacknowledged by the outside world.

Bujold has been engaging in not just world-building but history building; the plot of this novel is based in the structure of her future history. Similarly, much of the story is driven by family relationships; there is none of the "orphan with no relationships" setup that so often appears. Or is used, as when a sibling functions only as a mook to be offed by the bad guys (e.g., Emperor of Everything Colin Macintyre's brother Sean in David Weber's *Empire from the Ashes* (2003)) so the **Hero** can have extra motivation.

Another feature is not just different societies, and it's not just "it was raining on Barrayar that day," either. The different planets have different societies, and the people have different perceptions. I am surprised that no one on Cetaganda or Jackson's Whole considered Tej to have carried out a brilliant coup in ensnaring one so high-up in the Barrayaran succession, as preparation for the convenient deaths of Gregor and Aral and their families. Maybe in the follow-up.

HOW FEW REMAIN

Review by Joseph T Major of

BY FORCE OF ARMS

by Billy Bennett

(CreateSpace Independent Publishing; 2012;

ISBN 978-1479337170; \$14.99;

Amazon Digital Services; 2012; \$2.99)

Could Stonewall have made the difference at Gettysburg? And how long would have a sullen, overcome Union have tolerated the rupture of its nation? What would the rest of the world have done about this?

Bennett makes such speculations in this nightmarish vista of World War One's horrors shifted backwards forty years. Not to mention some of the second war's, too.

President William Tecumseh Sherman of the Union is facing a decisive problem, and resolves to resolve it with a crushing blow to terminate the secession. To the south, President Robert E. Lee of the Confederacy is required to mobilize his fragile nation to strike back.

The ensuing war sees massive meatgrinder offensives in the East, hideous atrocities right here in Kentucky (Fort Pillow many times over, perpetrated by the perpetrator), banditry in Missouri, and a many-sided war in the far west among Americans of both flavors, French, Mexicans of both sides, and oh yes Mormons.

All capped with a horrifying decapitation . .

It's all very well to imagine such a war, and Bennett is to be noted for not attempting to conceal the horrors of war, or to glorify the Lost Cause. Similarly, his willingness to have point of view characters killed is realistic.

However . . . he describes two nations that have been on a war footing for the past five years. Such references as "deploying ten corps to the Army of the Potomac" for example. Could the country, countries keep that up?

Other foreign relations seem a little off, as if the author has have to force the plot. It's all very well to point out that attacking machine guns in force is not the smartest thing to do. The Confederacy gets theirs shipped from Britain; but it's been established earlier that Britain is neutral and not fond of supporting slavery. Meanwhile, the Confederacy is allied with France, which had its own rapid-fire weapon, the *Mitrailleuse*.

One can find the conclusion to the war a little too pat and implausible. Add to that the usual quota of typos, and at least one implausibility (a character cites Sun Tzu, who was at that time very obscure outside of China) and you have a very dicey novel. Or is it the matter of Cump "If nominated I will not run, if elected I will not serve" Sherman in the White House?

Which is going to have a sequel soon, it seems, since the digital book contains a preview of the next title . . .

THE VALOUR OF IGNORANCE

Review by Joseph T Major of
RISING SUN

by Robert Conroy

(Baen; 2012; ISBN 978-1-4516-3851-6; \$25)

Long before there was Michael Crichton's book *Rising Sun* (1995) there were Yellow Peril works, some not even (ostensibly) nonfiction. For example, Homer Lea, one of the gaggle of foreign adventurers who attached themselves to revolutionaries (in this case, Sun Yat-sen [Sun Zhongshan]), wrote *The Valour of Ignorance* (1909), a trumpeting of the rising power of the Rising Sun, and how Japan could bring down death and devastation on America's Pacific possessions and even California, were the country not ready.

In this event, the Japanese er bring down death and devastation on America's Pacific possessions and even California. All because the submarine screens were having a bad day.

The Japanese submarine picket line does its duty and attacks the two American task forces sailing to defend Midway, going three for three on the carriers. Virtually carrierless, therefore, America is very much on the back foot in the Pacific.

But, the Japanese don't do the obvious thing and take Hawaii. Instead, they land in Alaska. Has somebody read a smuggled copy of *Victory Through Air Power* (1942), noted the drawing of bombers flying from Alaskan air bases straight to the heart of Japan, and jumped to a conclusion?

Meanwhile, the FBI seems to *still* be ignoring that memorandum from Germany regarding "Naval Strong Point Pearl Harbor", for German agents, somewhat better sorted out than the saps sent to the east coast, are infiltrating southern California.

In fact, the Japanese are figuring well. Noting the strong garrison of Hawaii, they are starving it out. This could cause trouble, and even people trying to escape the place could meet as many problems from their friends as from their foes.

In the midst of this, the "little people" — a naval officer on Admiral Spruance's staff, a civilian nurse on Hawaii, a new Army lieutenant saddled with an incompetent captain, an Alaskan tavern owner and her outdoorsman companion, and a German stay-behind agent — fight to survive. The little stories build up the background and details of the big events.

Desperate, harried, the U.S. Navy retreats, and as the coast endures Japanese raids, they set about gathering their resources for one dramatic and desperate counterstrike . . .

WARNING

HISTORY GEEK SECTION

Logistics, logistics, logistics.

The Japanese fleet seems able to "run wild" across the entire Pacific, devastating Australian convoys one day and shelling the Pacific coast the next. In our time-line, the Japanese aimed at securing the Solomon Islands, thus dividing Australia and New Zealand from the U.S.

Unlike their German allies, the Japanese did not seem to have learned refuelling at sea. The Germans did so in a clumsy manner, but the Japanese didn't even do that. During the planning for Pearl Harbor, one officer with more enthusiasm than sense actually proposed abandoning and scuttling two of their fleet carriers once they had exhausted their fuel.

I am a little curious as to why in our time line the German intelligence services didn't consider infiltrating agents from Mexico. However, they might have asked V-Mann IVAN to pass them money, which would have been interesting. [This was Double-Cross Agent TRICYCLE, Dusko Popov, who would have been quite pleased to put paid to the plan.]

However when he has the *Feldwebel* saying "sir" to the SS colonel, that doesn't fly. He would say, "Obersturmbannführer".

All the same, it is a reminder that people who knew him didn't call William F. Halsey "Bull", they called him "Bill".

FIG TREE AND VINE

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE GREAT HEINLEIN MYSTERY:
Science Fiction, Innovation and Naval Technology

by Edward M. Wysocki, Jr.
(CreateSpace Independent Publishing

Platform; 2012;
ISBN 978-1-47741-020-2; \$24.95)

Four prominent science fiction authors gave lectures in the winter of 1958 at the University of Chicago. It is a sign of the methodical thoroughness of this work, and also of the decline in historical understanding within the field, that Wysocki has to tell the reader who Cyril Kornbluth, Alfred Bester, and even Robert Bloch are. The fourth, of course, was Robert A. Heinlein, and it is a chance off-hand reference in the course of his speech that this book discusses in thorough if not mind-numbing detail.

For Heinlein said:

I had a completely imaginary electronics device in a story published in 1939. A classmate of mine, then directing such research, took it to his civilian chief engineer and asked if it could be done. The researcher replied, "Mmm . . . no, I don't think so — oh, wait a minute . . . well, yes, maybe. We'll try."

The bread-boarded first model was being tried out aboard ship before the net installment of my story hit the newsstands. The final development of this gadget was in use all during World War II. I wasn't predicting anything and had no reason to think that it would work; I was just dreaming up a gadget to fill a need in a story, sticking as close to fact and possibility as I could.

— "Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults and Virtues", *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism*, Pages 28-29

[Quoted, Page 19]

Wysocki bought and read a book titled *Heinlein In Dimension* at the 1983 WorldCon. He went on to look for other works from the same publisher. *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism* (1959), for example, which contains transcripts of the talks, including "Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults and Virtues". Which he credits to the recording desire of Earl Kemp. So Earl, Alexei Panshin, and George Price have all done their part in bringing this work to fruition. (And he didn't try to get it published by Advent?)

The book is primarily not so much about explaining what the "gadget" was as it is about his efforts to find out. Wysocki is thoroughly methodical in his efforts to find out.

As a result, there is far more material about Heinlein's background than there is about the "gadget". For example, Wysocki wrote to every surviving member of the USNA Class of 1929. He lists all the graduates and describes all the efforts he made to find out their fates and lives. Much of the latter became tragic, as so many of his letters of inquiry were replied to by family members with the sad news that the graduate was in no condition to remember.

Also, unfortunately, Wysocki mentioned Caleb Lanning in the letter. He confesses that

this may have contaminated his effort, since of the six survivors who could and did reply, four of them mentioned Lanning and the other two had no idea whatsoever. In short, he owns up to his errors.

His dedication to the text should be commended. Wysocki went to some effort to acquire the original copies of *Astounding* (and the May 1940 issue of *Super Science Stories*, where "Let There Be Light" (NHOL G.007a) appeared) where the stories were published. Since there were some revisions for later publication ("If This Goes On —" (NHOL G.011), for example, had some serious changes) this is to be commended. He is not lazy.

Indeed, Wysocki lists every "gadget" mentioned in the stories. Many of them are obviously not the item in question. It's unlikely that the "classmate" wanted to install Pinero's lifespan forecaster ("Life-Line", NHOL G.005), for example, and not very conceivable that he could put into place the Douglas-Martin power screens of "Let There Be Light".

For background, Wysocki did a thorough search of Heinlein's correspondence. Finding the letters published in *Grumbles from the Grave* (1989) to be _____ and not quite complete, he went to the source, and bought the relevant correspondence from the Heinlein Archives. He also read Volume I of the Biography, in order to get a context, and Bill Patterson gets a lot of good words here.

There is also a broad analysis of science fiction naval battles. He deals briefly with Bywater's *The Great Pacific War*, which he reads both come forth to aver that the book edited by Lynne Thomas and Janet Ellis is more useful and informative and contributes more to the knowledge of science fiction within or without the field? No, I don't think so either, and as for which one is more likely to win the Best Related Work . . .

BJO

Review by Joseph T Major of
**WHY WERE THEY CANCELLED?:
The Plight of Science Fiction and Fantasy
Television in the Face of the Unforgiving
Neilsens and Networks**

by John J. Joex

(Amazon Digital Services; 2012;
ISBN 978-1-62209-298-7; \$2.99)

<http://johnnyjaysays.blogspot.com/>

Why are SF shows created, why do they get cancelled, and why do they spend so much of the time between getting their numbers counted? Unfortunately for the viewer, there is no guide saying on its cover in large friendly letters DON'T PANIC to explain this.

Johnny Jay says how this relationship works, with discussions of the life-spans of the various

SF shows, the means supporters used to attempt their renewal, and why it didn't work, or did. The original STAR TREK, for example, was doing well in the demographics, if not the general ratings, at the end of the second season, and the events that ended up getting it exiled and handicapped were somewhat more complex than Bjo Trimble, for example, could see at the time.

README

Review by Joseph T Major of

SOME REMARKS:

Essays and Other Writing

by Neal Stephenson

(William Morrow [HarperCollins]; 2012;

ISBN 978-0-06-202443-5; \$25.99;

HarperCollins Publishers [Kindle]; \$9.99)

Reading this helped me understand why I found *Cryptonomicon* (1999) such hard going and *Reamde* (2011; reviewed (more or less) in *Alexiad* V. 11 #2) so draggy I couldn't get more than a hundred pages into it.

In his 2004 interview for *Salon*, he describes how he had run into writing advice to the effect that the first draft did not need any control when being written, but could be cut into something useful. He says he tried that and it didn't work. Given how padded his own works are (there is a brilliant novella just screaming to get out of *Reamde*) perhaps he should have reconsidered.

It's unfortunate, because when Stephenson gets torn into a topic he likes, his vices of infodumping become brilliant virtues; he produces an exhaustive, yet lively portrayal of the topic. One has but to read the great essay "Mother Earth, Mother Board" (*Wired*, December, 1996) which puts him in the esteemed company of Asimov, de Camp, Ley, and the other Guys Who Knew How.

One useful essay is one where he presents the evidence and lets the reader draw the conclusion. Unfortunately, so many, and so many writers, won't. In his 2006 essay "Turn On, Tune In, Veg Out" he writes of how *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* is unpopular because so much of it is not explained. In fact, Stephenson points out, the plot was explained. In other works; for example, the damaged nature of Anakin Skywalker was explicated in the *Clone Wars* shows. If you hadn't seen them, too bad.

Those long series of books where writers take everything for granted and assume all the readers have read all the previous works now are explicated. And the result; as Spider Robinson lamented because the sales of his Callahan's Place collections were declining. After all, he'd talked them out with everyone.

Which brings him to his essay on, though he never mentions it, the theme of Frederik Pohl's "The Gold at the Starbow's End" (*Analogue*, March 1972), "Innovation Starvation". His idea, that the availability of *too much* information can as much restrain and constrain innovation as it can encourage and promote it, sounds shocking, but it takes into account some real-world considerations beyond mere scientific thought.

I leave you with one striking image:

I haven't been in this situation myself, but based on what I read of post-structuralism, I imagine there'd be a weeding-out effect. It's fun to imagine a comedy sketch with Robert Heinlein in a writer's workshop having the first draft of *Starship Troopers* evaluated by a circle of earnest young post-structuralists.

—"Gresham College Lecture, 2008" [Page 81]

Personally I think this would be a session paused by a brief excursion by the target, er author, to bring in an item which was to feature in a forthcoming work, followed by screaming headlines on the theme of:

SCI-FI AUTHOR
EXTERMINATES
GRAD STUDENTS!

And serve them right, too. While we live, let us live!

THE UNDISCOVERED SOLUTION

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE: Memories of STAR TREK and a Life in Hollywood

by Nicholas Meyer

(Viking; 2009;

ISBN 978-0-670-02130-7; \$25.95)

But I picked it up at a Dollar Tree remainder shelf for, of course, a dollar.

I remember a cartoon from *Starlog*, from before the premiere of *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. The cartoon showed a young Trekkie discussing her feelings about the report that the forthcoming movie would include the demise of Spock. (And yes, she was wearing Vulcan ears.) She owned up to her feelings, realized the reality of the situation, and pledged to an adult response. The last panel showed her surrounded by various implements for a violent end, including a 16-ton weight. She said, "I just hope it doesn't hurt too much."

Nicholas Meyer might have wished for a handy 16-ton weight when confronted with the five unusable scripts for *Star Trek II* and the need to produce a usable script in twelve days. The result was rather better than one might imagine from such an unimpressive source.

The author of *The Seven Percent Solution* and director of *Star Trek II* and *Star Trek VI* recounts the strange and exotic progression of his life in the worlds of others' creations. Some of the stories are quite interesting.

For example, he wrote *The Seven Percent Solution* out of a dissatisfaction with other pastiches, which he felt did not adequately represent the original character. (I'll note that I've seen a poll of Best and Worst Pastiches, and that *The Seven Percent Solution* won both, though this was a few years ago.) One thing that contributed to the origin of the book was that Meyer's father was a psychiatrist; another Joseph Bell figure, so to speak. Meyer's BSI

Investiture is “A Fine Morocco Case”.

How he got pitchforked into the exotic world of STAR TREK™ was another matter, and it may have been fortuitous, as in “we can’t find another fool who will take this mess”. Coming into such an established structure *in medias res* could cause problems.

Oh, and that weren’t fake abs that Ricardo Montalban was showing off. He really was that buff. (On the other hand, he also had back trouble, which may have been why he set out to be so buff.) Meyer seems to have genuinely enjoyed working with him; he was secure, yet willing to take direction, and had all these fascinating stories.

One point that Meyer seems not to cover, and may not have been aware of, was that the notorious cost overruns of *Star Trek The Movie* came about because Paramount charged all the costs of the abortive proposed second series to the movie. And it still made more than it cost, though in the exotic world of Hollywood accounting no film ever makes a profit.

Meyer also described his involvement with *Star Trek IV*. Isn’t it an odd coincidence that he was tied in with the three good movies of the original set?

There’s probably not much point in a update, as he hasn’t done anything connected recently, but I would be interested to learn what Meyer thinks of *Sherlock* (and *Elementary*). Or the new STAR TREK™ reboot.

HISTORY LESSON

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE VICTIMS’ REVOLUTION:
The Rise of Identity Studies and the Closing of the Liberal Mind

by Bruce Bawer
(Broadside Books 2012;
ISBN 978-0061807374: \$25.99;
Broadside e-Books (Kindle); \$9.99)

Mary Lefkowitz’s excruciating encounter with one facet of this phenomenon is recounted in painful detail in her *History Lesson: A Race Odyssey* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #4). You will recall that Lefkowitz thought some observations on Classical History by Afrocentrist professors to be less than well founded. In return, she was denounced as a racist and colonialist.

So far, other such fields of endeavor have not sparked such conflicts. Bawer has plunged into the depths of Gay Studies, Queer Studies, Women’s Studies, Chicano Studies. . . and found a remarkable if not depressing sameness.

Perhaps the reason the liberal mind is closed is that the expressions of these fields of endeavor are couched in a unique language, one that is resistant to comprehension by outsiders. It’s not the first time that a bunch used jargon to shut out anyone not a member of the in group.

These groups are entrenched; universities and political action groups are their sources of support and sustenance. At best, they only take up space.

A further problem is that of the exclusion. The basic philosophical position to be found in these studies is polylogical; the discourse is not

to be comprehended by anyone from the oppressor group. (Naturally, there is a Marxist basis for it, even though Marx is a Dead White European Male.)

For all that Bawer has shown the emptiness and closed nature of these fields, his thoroughgoing expose will be of no avail. They are compleat and perfect, their theorists don’t have to explain how he is wrong, they already know *that* he is wrong, having false consciousness imposed by the whitemale norm. Alan Sokal’s “Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity” (*Social Text*, May 1996) did not change the postmodernist view of science any more than *Naked Came the Stranger* (1969) stopped the publication of trashy novels, for all that these hoaxes were relevatory of the standards of their targets, not to mention funny.

ALLIGATOR

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE AXMANN CONSPIRACY:
The Nazi Plan for a Fourth Reich and How the U.S. Army Defeated It
by Scott Andrew Selby
(Berkley Hardcover; 2012;
ISBN 978-0425252703: \$26.95;
Penguin Publishing (Kindle); \$12.99)

“With the help of the Detroit Purple Gang, to whom my aesthetic intuition led me directly, I entered the field of international alligator smuggling; my already substantial income increased fourfold, and I was able to expand my Nazi youth group into a sort of special executive for counterintelligence, terrorism, revenge, and extortion — in short, The Organization Organized to Hate, or simply, T.O.O.T.H. . . .”

— *Alligator*, by I*n Fl*ming

In Joanna Russ’s essay “In Defense of Criticism” (1979), she cited *Bored of the Rings* (1969) as proof that others felt the same way she did about the low standards and expectations of fantasy. Which shows what happens when you confine your reading to your own perspectives. The *Harvard Lampoon* regularly publishes satires of “what’s hot” for sale outside campus. Thus, *Nightlight* (2009) when *Twilight* was the rage, *The Hunger Pains* (2012) as *The Hunger Games* became popular, *Bored of the Rings* — and a parody of the James Bond novels: *Alligator*, “A J*mes B*nd Adventure” (1962).

One wonders what Michael K. Frith and Christopher Cerf (the “editors” of I*n Fl*ming’s work) would make of there actually having been someone who tried to make a Nazi youth group into the foundation of a Fourth Reich. Artur Axmann, the would-be Führer was even physically strange, albeit not as grotesque as Lacertius Alligator, the leader of T.O.O.T.H.

The description of the plot given in this book seems a bit overwrought, as overwrought as *Alligator* was purple. The “Axmann Conspiracy” was penetrated before it even got going, was pathetically small, and seemed more the realization of antifa and Nazi dreams alike

than anything real.

(Indeed, if one wants to look for proof that opposing groups tend to become identical, one has but to look at the writings of the antifa [anti-Fascist] writers like Rex Stout, Louis Nizer, Emil Ludwig, Albert Kahn, Michael Sayers, Henry Morgenthau, and so on, to see the mirroring of the Nazi attitude on Jews.)

Artur Axmann was *Reichsjugendführer*, the leader of the various Nazi youth organizations. He had mobilized members of the *Hitler Jugend* to fight in the defense of Berlin. He was one of those who saw the bodies of Hitler and Eva Braun after their suicides, and then, during the escape from the *Führerbunker*, saw Martin Bormann try to escape and fail.

In short, he was one of those people who, while not historically important himself, was a witness to historic events (and also criminal investigations). And in fact, aside from being the instigator of the “Axmann Conspiracy”, he didn’t do much in it. He was disabled (having lost his right forearm on the Eastern Front) and on arrest lists, so went into hiding early on.

Others of his associates set up a post-war organization, as it were. The idea had a certain brilliant simplicity to it. They had access to funds and equipment, and with those established transportation companies. They could go anywhere, people with trucks were in demand during the early occupation period, and the occupation troops were willing to hire locals for that particular service.

Yet, the more interesting part was the effort that the U.S. Army’s Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) put into closing this down. Saddled with an unfortunate name, the CIC has developed an unfortunate reputation due to the employment of ostensibly-regenerate Nazis (e.g. Klaus Barbie).

Its defenders and veterans portray it as an independent-minded, forward-thinking, outfit that was “proactive” before that term was coined. Reading their stories and memoirs, it is possible to wonder how they didn’t get into shooting wars with the OSS.

For example, most CIC investigators were enlisted men. They concealed this, wearing officer’s insignia (not rank insignia) and referring to themselves as “agents”. It is, unfortunately, reminiscent of the methods of another counter intelligence corps, SMERSH, whose officers wore undifferentiated Soviet Army uniforms (see Vadim J. Birstein’s *SMERSH: Stalin’s Secret Weapon: Soviet Military Counterintelligence in World War II* (2012; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 11 #2)).

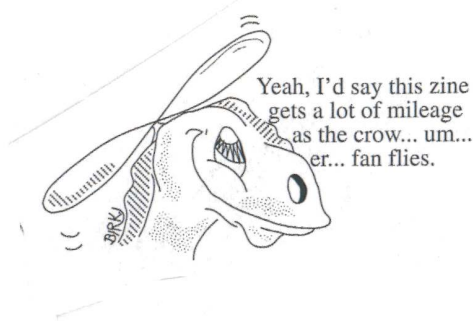
The lead investigator on the Axmann case, Operation NURSERY, was one Jack D. Hunter, who did become an officer. Even though he was color-blind, which had caused him to wash out of his preferred assignment in the Air Corps (it was the Air Corps then). He had become so enamoured of the *Reichluftstreitkräfte* that he had learned German. As a fluent German speaker with no actual German ties, he had potentials in that field.

The investigation of NURSERY was almost pathetically simple. One of the key members was a CIC asset. When Axmann left Mecklenburg, where he had fled after the fall of

Berlin, to go meet with his subordinates (and mistress), this fellow drove him and two other of his people into a CIC trap. All this was before the end of December 1945. The remaining members were rounded up three months later.

Axmann was held, given a nominal sentence by the occupation authorities, divorced his wife and married his mistress, moved to Berlin, underwent two de-Nazification trials, and died in 1996, unrepentant. Hunter went home, wrote *The Blue Max* (1964), the basis of the movie, and several other novels, including *The Expendable Spy* (1965), based on this investigation, became an aviation artist, a speech writer, and a public relations man. He died in 2009 in Jacksonville, Florida.

LANE'S END AND OLD FRIENDS by Lisa



Last Sunday, November 4, we went to Lane's End, the farm where the world's leading money winning horse, Curlin, now resides. This time, they did not take the stallions out of their stalls but we still did get good looks at them. I visited with my favorite, A.P. Indy, sire of Bernardini. Lane's End had made space available and given a Thoroughbred retirement farm called Old Friends caps to sell to raise money. Joe bought me an A.P. Indy hat and himself an Union Rags one. We decided to go see Old Friends for ourselves. There we interacted with several of their horses, chief among them Sunshine Forever, who graciously accepted carrots from his admirers.

NAPOLEON'S BUTTONS: 17 Molecules That Changed History

by Penny Le Couteur & Jay Burreson
(Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin; 2004;
ISBN 1-58542-331-9)
Reviewed by Rodford Edmiston

This very interesting book examines seventeen specific instances illustrating the interactions between history and chemistry. These range from the tin of the titular buttons through caffeine and salt and on to spices, silk and quinine. While these are not the substances most would choose as being the most influential on history, all of them have had impacts at least as great as those of any precious metal or gem.

There is a story — likely apocryphal — that one reason Napoleon's troops had so much trouble in Russia is that the shiny new tin buttons on their uniforms fell apart during that long, terrible Winter.

Tin has an unusual characteristic, sometimes known as tin pest. Below a certain temperature it undergoes an allotropic change, from a crystalline metal to a grey powder. (I recall seeing a *Ripley's Believe it or Not* from WWII urging people to recycle tin cans for the war effort quickly, since they could literally catch cold. I suspect it referred to this phenomenon. Of course, "tin" cans are actually tin-coated steel.) It's still the same tin, just with a different physical arrangement of its molecules. This process does happen at temperatures the French experienced during that campaign. However, the transformation usually takes months. Also, the phenomenon was already well known by this time, so why would troops going into a cold climate have tin buttons? Even if this did happen, Napoleon's Army had far bigger problems.

Still, this illustrates how chemistry can change history, as well as vice-versa. From the craving for sweets to the craving for opium, human desire has caused both triumph and tragedy . . . as well as unexpected discoveries. People familiar with my previous book reviews may recall that the first commercially successful synthetic dye — mauve — was discovered by accident in a laboratory searching for a method to synthesize quinine.

There is quite a bit of chemistry in this book. While the authors do a good job of explaining, it might be a bit much for casual readers. However, understanding the details of the chemistry involved isn't necessary to understand the impact of that chemistry. The book is primarily a history, rather than a chemistry text, and the history alone is very interesting. Given how accustomed we are today to easy and inexpensive access to spices, sugar, drugs, narcotics and so on, many people will likely be surprised at the lengths people in the past went to to acquire, for example, cane sugar. Of course, as this book also illustrates, there are many examples of both humans and nature still today being exploited for certain molecules.

One of the more interesting aspects of how chemistry affected — and still affects — human lives is that in many cases the differences between molecules with very different properties are trivial. Phenol is a simple aromatic molecule, a benzene ring with an attached OH group. In solution it makes a good antiseptic, as Joseph Lister proved. It too toxic to humans for extensive use, but it proved the concept of sterilization and antiseptics as a way to improve (hugely) survival rates for surgery. Fortunately, some phenol compounds — phenol with added molecules — are both effective against bacteria and reasonably safe for humans. Some are still in common use.

Trinitrophenol is a different story. More commonly known as picric acid, it has seen use as a dye, but was also one of the most important explosives of the late Nineteenth Century and early World War I. As the War progressed it

was largely replaced by trinitrotoluene. This is a very similar molecule, but it is not acidic, is immune to dampness, can be melted and poured into shells and bombs, and has other advantages over its predecessor. However, both of these explosives — and many other chemicals vital to the War — depend on nitric acid for their production. At the start of that conflict, saltpeter extracted from Chilean guano was extensively used in the manufacture of nitric acid. However, Germany's supply was soon cut off by British blockade.

Another use for guano is as fertilizer. Fritz Haber developed the process which bears his name to make ammonia, which was in turn used to manufacture artificial fertilizer. During the War, ammonia made by his process was used to manufacture nitric acid, which was then used to produce munitions. His ammonia was also one of the first substances used in poison gas attacks. Hence, the chemistry of life (fertilizer) became the chemistry of death (explosives and poisons).

Both synthetic and natural phenols have an astoundingly wide range of properties. Capsaicin and zingerone (the active ingredient which gives ginger its zing) are built around phenol cores. So is vanillin. So is tetrahydrocannabinol (aka THC), the active ingredient in marijuana. These wildly divergent properties are dependant on often trivial differences in molecular structure.

This gives a very brief and very incomplete overview of just one of the seventeen molecules discussed in this book. If you want to know more, I'm afraid you'll have to buy it. I highly recommend that action.

THE ASHLAND CITY LANDING

By Eric Melcher
(Iguana Pillbox Publishing; 2012)
Reviewed by Tom Feller

The idea behind "First Contact", a 1945 story by Murray Leinster, was not original with Leinster, but the title became a generic description for of all stories of that type. This new novel by a Nashville, Tennessee, resident suggests how aliens might use the Internet to initiate contact.

Alex Morrison is the 37 year old producer of the ten o'clock news at a Nashville television station and lives on a twelve acre farm in Ashland City, Tennessee with his wife Anne, where they raise horses and llamas. Ashland City, a real town, is far enough away from Nashville that it is not a suburb, but close enough for people to live there and commute. The son of a long-time Nashville television personality, Alex grew up in Ashland City and is friendly with the chief of police, which becomes an important plot point toward the end of the book. A lifelong reader of science fiction, Alex is bored with his job and his life, but he finds refuge in Internet discussions of aliens, UFOs, flying saucers, etc. He himself is the author of a blog on the subject, which brings him to the attention of the aliens.

The aliens, who originated from a planet orbiting the star Virginis 61, 27.8 light years

from Earth, have hacked into the Internet and the cell phone networks, where they engage in data mining. A representative, who calls himself Enrico after Enrico Fermi and Enrico Caruso, shows up at Alex's farm one night and asks his help in making their first contact with human civilization. The author is careful to dole out information on the aliens in small pieces, but at one point in their history, they resembled the Heechee of Fred Pohl's series of books.

Anne is originally from Atlanta and the scion of a politically and socially prominent family there. She has no interest in science fiction or UFOs, which creates conflict in the marriage. Other characters include Tyler Fox, a writer for an alternate weekly Nashville newspaper who stumbles on the story of his and everyone else's lifetime, Peter Culp, psychologist and Alex's best friend, and Franco Martinez, an elderly physics professor at a small university in Utah. Fox thinks he is writing about a UFO cult, Culp thinks Alex is having hallucinations until Alex introduces him to Enrico, and Martinez has an interest in the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence, which brings him to Alex's attention. Alex recruits Martinez to help with lay the groundwork for contact.

This novel also has an interesting stylistic device. Most of it is written in convention third person, but interspersed throughout are Alex's first person comments on the story, as if the story is what Truman Capote called a "non-fiction novel", written a few years after an historical event.

This novel starts slowly, allowing the reader to get to know the characters while building suspense, and then is very hard to put down when the reader gets to the last fifty pages. This is the first book in a series and hopefully the later books will be as good as this one.

LOOPER

Commentary by William H. Patterson
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1276104/>

Saw *Looper* yesterday (the first movie I've seen in months). Curious combination of Philip K. Dick sensibilities with a weird incorporation of Jerome Bixby's "It's a Good Life!" the two stories just jammed together — ultimately incompetent as to story, though the writer clearly tried. He may not even have been aware that he was mining a well-known sf classic. But the psychic element is not integrated into the story at all and could have been replaced with a different excitement without altering the story. Putting disconnected foreshadowings of PK into a couple of scenes does not count as integrating the story. It comes as afterthoughts.

The most remarkable thing about the film — and the main reason for seeing it — was Joseph Gordon-Leavitt's performance. The appliances they used to give him Bruce Willis's nose and ears did change his appearance, but the make-up just made him look completely different from the young Bruce Willis, who, after all, had a very successful television career before becoming an action hero in late middle age and

is therefore somewhat familiar. But G-L must have researched by watching every episode of *Moonstruck* obsessively, because he's got the young Bruce Willis's mannerisms down exactly, including the breathy cracked voice and the irritating smirk. Acting trumps special effects, every time.

It was interesting to see Jeff Daniels in a more honest role than *Newsroom*, but he was pretty much wasted. It was odd to have a film in which everyone except Bruce Willis and Jeff Daniels are in their twenties, as if those are the only two old guys in the world. Certainly in the closed world of the story.

There is a certain level of accomplishment involved in getting us to have empathy — even tragic empathy — for a contract killer. So actor, director, and writer get props for that.

Spoiler alert: It seems to me there is something wrong with the logic of the story's resolution, in the working out of the temporal paradox. After one cycle of the new track, the older pattern would re-establish (because the older Looper would not be around to come back and set the motion of the story in play). Furthermore, if the kid does not grow up deprived of his mother's emotional support (and for unexplained reasons wait till he is 40 years old to begin his program of housecleaning), then there is no factor in the future that starts the program of closing loops, so the status quo ante is restored. The story logic is incompletely thought out, I think.

YOU'RE SO VAIN by Joe

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

There will be two solar eclipses in 2013. The first will be an annular eclipse on May 10-9 visible in Australia (West Australia, Northern Territory, and Queensland) and the British Solomon Islands. The maximum duration of annularity will be six minutes and three seconds, visible at sea at 2° 12' N, 175° 30' E. It is part of Saros 138, which began June 6, 1472 and will end July 11, 2716. The second will be a hybrid eclipse on November 3 visible in Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia. The maximum totality will be one minute 40 seconds, visible at 3° 30' N, 11° 42' W, off the coast of Liberia. It is part of Saros 143, which began on March 7, 1617 and will end April 23, 2897.

The next total eclipse will be March 20, 2015, visible in Svalbard and the North Atlantic and Arctic oceans, ending at the North Pole at local sunrise. The maximum totality will be two minutes 47 seconds. It is part of Saros 120, which began May 27, 933 and will end on July 7, 2195.

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

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

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

A CONGOING EFFORT Con reports by Leigh Kimmel

ConGlomeration 2012

ConGlomeration was held over the weekend of April 13-15, 2012 at the Ramada Plaza Hotel and Triple Crown Conference Center in Louisville, Kentucky. This is the same venue where ConGlomeration was held for so many years before last year's ill-fated move, but now under new management and franchise.

We arrived on Thursday before the con began and stayed the night at the nearby Suburban Extended Stay. We thought it wouldn't be too bad for a single night, but it turned out to have deteriorated even more than when we had a bad experience with it in 2010, if such a thing can be believed.

We'd hoped we might be able to load in early, so we went over to the conference center to see if we could find the dealers' room coordinator. However, the concom had gone out to a dinner party with the guests, so we ended up heading back and spending the evening on the Internet. I also got a little writing done.

On Friday we got up early to get checked out and over to the conference center to load in. At least there load-in wasn't such a logistical nightmare as Kawa-kon, and we were even able to get a second cart and two helpers. So we got everything unloaded inside two hours and were able to set up in good time. We even had time to get checked into the con hotel and to get my art on the art show before things opened.

When the dealers' room did open, we had a couple of really good sales. Then things slowed down and left us with very little to do. I pulled out a notebook and started making notes for a rewrite I want to do.

In the evening we headed back to the room to have our supper. Then we headed down to the con suite to visit with friends before going to the Xerps party. As usual, Xerps had some really good cheese, as well as some really potent whiskey that was getting definite reactions from everyone who tried it. (Since I'm allergic to alcohol, I can't comment from personal experience, but watching the reactions of the drinkers was interesting).

Saturday morning we went down to the con suite for breakfast. Then we headed over to the conference center to get our dealers' tables open for business. I went back to the room to get some stuff and ended up getting caught by the rain that picked that moment to come through.

Sales were slow all afternoon, and we were soon having a serious discussion about what we would do if ConGlomeration were to conflict with one of the two April anime conventions we want to try next year. I also did a fair amount of work on a story I was preparing for an anthology with a rapidly-approaching deadline.

After the dealers' room closed for the

evening, we headed back to the room for supper. Then we had some time before the parties started, so I did some fiction writing and started preparing my con report.

We attended two parties, both of which had good food. The Ghostbusters party, which was hosted by a bunch of guys cosplaying the characters of the 1980's movies of that name, had some spicy goldfish crackers and Fritos twists. They were also playing 80's music and showing the Ghostbusters movies. The MELO party had some fresh-baked cookies. While we were there, we got to hear about how the Xerps party got closed down shortly after midnight due to a noise complaint.

Sunday we got up early to get our personal belongings out of our sleeping room. Then we headed down to the con suite to have breakfast. While I was there I heard that the con suite got a noise complaint as a result of a very animated conversation which had gone on during the wee small hours of the morning. Several people were trying to figure out who had complained, because all the possibilities of the complaining room were occupied by congoers, and several were helping host parties. I hope this is not a sign that the hotel management is ill-disposed toward cons.

Then my husband went to get us checked out of our room while I headed over to the dealers' room to get our dealers' tables opened for business. Sales were quite slow at first, but right around the time I went out to get the empty boxes for packing, we got several sales. I think those sales may well have tipped the balance to the profitable point.

Packing took longer than we expected, so I ended up carrying the first several loads out while my husband was still packing the t-shirts. That was I was able to get most of the books out before he finished packing, but it also meant that some things didn't get packed in the best spots for them. (and as it turned out, a couple of items fell from their perches on the way back and became a problem when it came time to load everything back into our storage unit).

By the time we got everything loaded, it was late enough that we decided not to go back to the con suite one last time, since most of the people we'd be saying good-bye to would've already taken off. So we just went ahead and hit the road for home, since I had a story that I needed to get finalized and off to an editor before a midnight deadline.

InConJunction XXXII

InConJunction XXXII was held over the weekend of July 6-8, 2012 at the Indianapolis Marriott East. We had not originally planned to attend, but two weeks before the convention we got an e-mail that one of the big dealers had canceled at the last minute and the con was looking to fill that hole in the dealers' room. My husband and I talked it over and decided that an opportunity to make money was a good thing. So we went ahead and expressed interest, and we were able to get the tables.

This year the dealers' room had early load-in on Thursday evening. Because of the extreme

heat which had settled over the area for the weekend, I had to wait until after dark on Wednesday night to load the van, and even then it was painfully hot. I made sure to drink plenty of fluids and I was still miserable.

As a result of restrictions on use of the loading dock, we wanted to park as close to the door as possible, so we went over right after lunch on Thursday. Grabbing a good parking space also meant we could spend the afternoon in air conditioning while we waited for the dealers' room to open. When it did, we hurried to get stuff in. We had several friends helping, which enabled us to get in much more quickly than usually would be the case. We took a full case of bottled waters with us and made sure everybody drank plenty to keep hydrated.

After that long, sweaty task it was really nice to be able to set up in air conditioning. We were able to get our store fixtures into place and about half of our merchandise organized before the dealers' room closed for the evening. So we headed back home to gather up some forgotten items, feed and water the cat, and try to get some sleep in a house without air conditioning.

The next morning we got up very early so we could be there the moment the dealers' room opened for setup. We used most of the six hours of allotted time, but we had everything organized by the time the doors opened. I also had time to get art in the art show.

Sales were fairly good, although we had enough lull time that I was able to make some notes on a novel I was writing. Although the dealers' room closed late, it was still so hot we decided to go to the con suite and sit for a while before heading home. It gave us a chance to visit with some friends from Louisville. They'd had some trouble with traffic getting across the Ohio River and were running late.

When we did go home, I ran up to our storage unit to pull some books that people had expressed interest in buying. Even working after dark it was still hot and unpleasant. I also removed sold books from our Amazon.com listings to avoid the embarrassment of duplicate sales. Then we knocked off for the night and tried to get something resembling a decent night's sleep in a house without air conditioning.

Saturday morning came way too early, especially considering that the house never did really cool off. We set out fresh water for the cat and headed over to the hotel, where we could sit in air conditioning.

Once the dealers' room opened for dealer setup, we went in and got our tables open for business. Then I took a little time to look around at the other dealers' setups before the doors opened for business. Sales were a little on the slow side, but we were still selling at a reasonable speed.

In the afternoon I had my anime panel, "Liked the manga, love the anime — or not." We discussed the phenomenon of adaptation decay, in which a storyline or fictional universe often loses something as it goes from one storytelling medium to another. Sometimes it's a matter of information density — a feature-length movie contains about the same

amount of story information as a novella, which means that in order to make a movie of a novel, a lot of material has to be left out. Some times it's a matter of storytelling conventions in different media — in fiction it's expected that the author will lay the groundwork for all important story elements within the first quarter to third of the story arc, while in games the introduction of new equipment, abilities and non-player characters as the player's character levels up is an important part of the game's reward system. And then there's the problem that some story elements simply don't translate from one medium to another — for instance, things going inside a character's mind can be presented directly in written fiction, but must be inferred from visible action in a video format.

After my panel, I returned to our dealers' tables to find a huge book sale in progress. I pulled backstock to cover the gaps in our displays and dealt with some smaller sales going on at the same time. Then I went to the con suite, where they had burritos from Qdoba Mexican Grille. They were a bit spicy, but were they ever good.

Later in the afternoon sales slowed to near non-existence, and I was soon struggling to stay awake. I did fall asleep at least once, and woke with a start when I had a leg go numb from sitting on it wrong.

When the dealers' room closed for the night, it was still so hot that we didn't even want to try to go home. We'd brought our supper with us, so we just went down to the con suite and ate it there. Then we just hung out, waiting for time for the parties to start. We visited with some friends, and I did some work on my con review and some book reviews.

Then we went to the parties. We don't drink, so we gave the Barfleet party the go-by. However, Xerps had a good party, and a local fan was having Party 'Til Your Brains Boil in honor of the heat. We stayed until it cooled enough that I could go to our storage unit and pull books without risking heatstroke, and then we turned in for the night.

Sunday morning we got up and headed over to the hotel. When we opened our dealers' tables, I discovered a gap in our Star Trek books that looked an awful lot like someone had taken a five-finger discount. Not exactly what we want to find, but probably not a huge loss.

Once the dealers room opened, we got a fair pattern of sales, although we had enough slow periods that I was able to write my con report and look up information on other cons we might want to try later in the year or next year. After noon we started packing some of our under-performing merchandise so we could concentrate on the things that were selling well, particularly our t-shirts.

Once the dealers' room actually closed, I brought in the t-shirt boxes and we started packing and breaking down in earnest. I broke down the big gridwall and took it out, then loaded out the books. After that point things became more challenging as I had to figure out how to fit everything back into the van. I managed to get it all in, and even added an empty box someone else had abandoned, but

there were some iffy moments.

Once we had everything loaded, we headed back to the con suite to say our last good-byes. Then we headed home, happy in our unexpected good fortune.

Archon 36

Archon 36 was held over the weekend of October 12-14, 2012 at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville, Illinois, one of the St. Louis Metro East suburbs. Because I-70 is torn up all the way from Indianapolis to the Illinois state line, we took I-74 to my folks' place in the Bloomington-Normal area and stayed overnight, then continued to Collinsville via I-55 on Thursday.

Although the con doesn't start until Friday, some con functions are available during set-up on Thursday. As a result we were able to get our badges and put my art on the art show that evening. Then we headed back to the hotel and I did some work on a book review before it was time to turn in for the night.

On Friday we had breakfast, then headed back to the convention center to get our merchandise into the dealers' room and get set up. As a result of a miscommunication, we thought they wouldn't be opening for setup until 10AM, so we arrived to find setup already underway. We weren't able to get any volunteers to assist, but the Gateway Center has one of the best loading dock layouts of any place we go, so we were able to get loaded in with relative ease. We even were able to use one of the convention center's big flatbed carts, which helped speed things.

Once we had everything inside, it was time to start setting up. This year we'd decided to get three tables instead of just two, and it was a good thing. We used one entire table just for t-shirts, and another went to the books, so we had just one table for collectibles and everything else. At least we had plenty of time and setup went smoothly, so we got everything up and even had a little time to relax before the customers started coming in.

Sales were pretty good, particularly for the first day of a con when a lot of people are still just looking around, trying to figure out what they want to buy. However, we did have a little lull time off and on, so I got to talk with the people at some of the neighboring tables. Among them were representatives from Arch Reactor, a St. Louis area hackerspace. We got to talking about what they do, and I wondered if there might be something similar in Indianapolis. They were pretty sure there'd be something, so I did a Google search and found Club Cyberia right down the road from where we live.

After the dealers' room closed for the evening, we headed over to the art show for the artists' reception. This time they had plenty of food, and we took some time to eat before we went around to look at all the art.

After that we went over to the first autographing session for Joe Haldeman, who was toastmaster. We were expecting a huge crowd, so we each took three books from our

stock and didn't bring anything more. As it turned out, we were the only people in line, so we could have brought the others as well.

Once we got that taken care of, we headed back to our sleeping room. As late as it was, we just checked our e-mail before turning in for the night.

Saturday morning we got up to have breakfast before heading back to the convention center to get our dealers' tables open for business. We continued to get good sales, but we did have some lull times, which I used to read *Pride and Platypus*, Vera Nazarian's latest Jane Austen mashup, on the iPad. I also had to take a little time to go to Joe Haldeman's second autograph session.

After the dealers' room closed for the night, we headed back to our sleeping room for the evening. I was having a lot of trouble with the hotel's WiFi connection, so I finally gave up and did some more work on a book review. I didn't quite get it done before it was time to turn in for the night, but at least I made some decent progress.

On Sunday we got up to rain, which was not a good sign. Fortunately, it quit in time for us to carry out our personal belongings without too much trouble, but it still wasn't reassuring to know we had more rain forecast for the afternoon.

Once we got checked out of our sleeping room, we headed back to the convention center to get our dealers' tables open for our last day of sales. We were actually doing pretty well, but a lot of people hold off buying until they've settled up with the hotel and paid for any art they've purchased on the art show. Because sales were so brisk, we decided to hold off on packing until right before the dealers' room closed.

However, this may have turned out to be a mistake, since the wind had really picked up when I went out to retrieve our boxes. I ran a couple of tiedowns across the cart to make sure the boxes didn't fly away, and I still had trouble keeping them from shifting. The whole cart also wanted to move if I weren't holding onto it.

Once the dealers' room closed, I broke down the big gridwall and took it out, since it goes on the bottom of the van's cargo area. Then I carried out the books. We were able to get four helpers, so two helped me carry stuff out while two helped my husband pack the t-shirts. By this time we had a huge wall of black clouds moving in from the west, so we appreciated the extra help.

We had just gotten the books loaded when the rain started. I was able to move the van into the loading dock, so we didn't have as long to carry the rest of our merchandise. However, things weren't loading as efficiently as they had at the storage unit, in spite of all the stuff we sold. So I had to rearrange some stuff a couple of times, which made things even more difficult. Worse, we had some questions about the whereabouts of one box, and wondered if a dealer beside us might have loaded it out by mistake, since some of our boxes were piled very close to their space.

Finally we got everything to fit back in the

van and could head back to my folks' place for the night. Although the rain had stopped, we were still having high winds, so the drive was still pretty rough. On Monday we continued our way home, and on Tuesday I unloaded. Apparently my concerns about being missing a box were unfounded, because I inventoried the t-shirts and didn't find any huge gaps of the sort a missing box would cause.

BIG WEEKEND IN A SMALL TOWN

XXX HispaCon / II ImagiCon, the 30th Spanish national convention, in Urnieta, Basque Country, October 12 – 14, 2012
Con Report by Sue Burke

Friday, October 12

Madrid – Urnieta

Early in the morning, Chamartín train station in Madrid was quiet because October 12 is Día de Hispanidad, celebrated with a big military parade in Madrid overseen by the King. The parade includes many picturesque moments, especially the double-time march of the Spanish Legion accompanied by their mascot, Blanquita the goat, usually sporting her own little uniform. It's also Pilar Day, celebrating the day in 40 AD when the Virgin Mary appeared in the city of Zaragoza and left behind a jasper pillar as testimony, so Zaragoza has big celebrations. In many Spanish cities, women who are named "Pilar" after that holy pillar gather to celebrate the day together. In short, plenty of people were leaving town for the long weekend, but massive hordes of daily commuters weren't dashing around the big station, so it seemed peaceful.

I was heading for Urnieta near the northern Atlantic Coast, and about five hours later, the train pulled into the little station in San Sebastián-Donostia. I had planned to take a commuter train for a short ride to Urnieta, a suburb, but a volunteer from the convention confused me with a well-known Spanish writer named Susana Vallejo, and even after explanations, I got a lift to my *pensión*.

The convention organizers had arranged for a 30% train fare discount and discounted room reservations in the town's three inns: a roadside hotel, a student residence, and a *pensión*, which is a sort of basic small hotel. The Pensión Guria had nine rooms on the first floor of a building alongside a small restaurant. For 35€/per night (about US\$45; the student residence was even cheaper and, I heard, adequate; the hotel was twice as much and also perfectly adequate) I got a modest, very clean room only a couple of blocks downhill from the convention site.

In fact, everything was close-by in Urnieta, population 6,170. The municipality, located on a hilltop amid farms in mountain foothills, donated the use of its cultural center, theater, town square, and secondary school, where classrooms were used for panels and workshops. A group of unemployed townspeople had organized a friendly makeshift bar under the town hall's arcade and served drinks and food to earn a little money.

I checked in, ate a nice lunch in the Guria restaurant, and headed for registration in the lobby of the theater, across the street from a

medieval church. The mayor himself had offered a welcome at a lightly-attended brief opening ceremony that morning. Many attendees were still in transit, but by then the town had been plastered with posters in Spanish and Basque inviting local residents to the events, since everything was open to the public.

The welcome pack consisted of a wheeled backpack containing a T-shirt, two lapel buttons, tourist information, the convention program/poster, bookmarks, and five books, including an anthology by the Spanish Federation of Epic Fantasy. That organization has four local branches: the Valencia branch had organized the convention there the year before, and the Basque branch, el Bastión del Fénix, had organized this one — hence “II ImagiCon.” Paid attendance reached 155, more than organizers had hoped for.

Special guests were writers Javier Negrete, Toti Martínez, and Susana Vallejo. Foreign writers had been invited but none could attend; Guy Gavriel Kay sent a video that was among the shorts shown at the theater. In all, ten short films were presented during the convention, including *Onironautas* (www.onironautas-serie.com), *The Bequer's Guide* (http://www.thebecquersguide.com/), and *Crónicas Drakonianas* (http://www.cronicasdrakonianas.com/).

In the busy convention schedule, as many as ten events were scheduled at once. At the school, two well-stocked rooms for games were open Friday and Saturday on the top floor. On the lower floors, new books were presented; panels discussed alien languages, genre music, and urban fantasy; and workshops taught editing, makeup, and Basque storytelling.

I had time to attend a panel on book cover art by enthusiastic and accomplished artists; then the showing *Onironautas*, which featured strangely obsessed characters; and finally an outstanding talk on Basque mythology by expert Toti Martínez.

Then it was back to the town square for a tasting of seven brands of hard cider (*sidra*) at the town square; *sidra* is a regional specialty. I shared a round with Susana Vallejo. After a trivia contest about *Song of Fire and Ice*, the episode “Blackwater” from *Game of Thrones* was shown in the theater — but it was 10 p.m., I'd had my fill of cider, and while other friends went to the theater or to bars for food and more drinks, I went to bed.

Saturday, October 13 Urnieta

Early on Saturday morning, a copy of the Iron Throne from *Game of Thrones* was installed at one end of the town square for anyone to sit on and be photographed. Both con attendees and *Urnietarros* (town residents) posed and mugged for the camera throughout the day.

Saturday was another intense day of book presentations, round table discussions, workshops, and presentations, with topics as diverse as translation, self-publishing, and how to survive a zombie apocalypse. The day was enlivened by a few attendees dressed

steampunk-style and by roaming zombies and zombie hunters. Another cider-tasting was held at midday, and the Hall of Arms of Fortuna presented a beginner's lesson on medieval swordsmanship in the town square in the afternoon.

Since I was covering the convention for Europe's sf website *Concatenation*, I interviewed Alfonso Cea, president of El Bastión del Fénix, as he stood in the town square watching people enjoy the throne. “Everyone's happy,” he said. Everything was going well. The local press was covering events with articles and photos, the hotels were filled, its restaurants were getting extra business, and the unemployed bar team was making good money.

“A small town might be the best place to hold a convention,” Cea said, because small towns have the advantages of a compact area and municipal support, plus local enthusiasm that could never be mustered in a big city.

But, he added, the 2011 and 2012 conventions had each taken a year to organize, and the Epic Fantasy Association's members needed to take some time off. “We're thinking of doing this like the Olympics, maybe every four years.”

Later in the afternoon, I appeared on the panel to present the soon-to-be-released science fiction anthology *Terra Nova*. This project has two parts: a Spanish-language anthology featuring the best in Spanish and translated English stories, and an English-language version to bring the Spanish stories to English-language readers. I had translated two of the Spanish stories. (I'll keep you informed of your chance to purchase this exciting anthology.)

Meanwhile, fans of the 59-novel series “The Saga of the Aznar Family” held their own mini-convention, the XIV Aznarcon, on Saturday evening. A newly edited tome of the series had been included in the convention's welcome pack.

At 8 p.m., a folk-punk group called Duendelirium (http://www.duendelirium.com) held a much-awaited concert in the theater. A “duende” is a Spanish magical spirit that inspires musicians. The rousing songs included references to snail culture, such as “Lullaby for a Nosferatu,” “(Morgana) Le Fay,” and “Day of the Walking Dead.” I wasn't sure I'd like it at first, since loud punk isn't my favorite style, but the enthusiasm of the performers won me over. A couple of pieces were sung on Basque.

Shortly afterward, the convention reconvened in a nearby restaurant for the gala awards dinner, featuring six courses, several kinds of wine, and an enormous barrel of cider. A joke claimed that instead of being a HispaCon, the weekend was an HispalCohol. In keeping with the Spanish love of late-hour festivities, the boisterous, jovial award presentations began at 1 a.m.

The winners of the Ignotus Awards, Spain's equivalent of the Hugos, were:

Best Novel: *Fieramente Humano* [*Fiercely Human*] by Rodolfo Martínez

Best Novella: “La textura de tu piel” [“The Texture of Your Skin”] by David Jasso

Best Short Story: “Mytolític” [“Mytholithic”] by Sergio Mars

Best Anthology: *Abismos* [“Abysses”] by David Jasso

Best Non-Fiction Book: “Blade Runner. Lo que Deckard no sabía” [“Blade Runner: What Deckard Didn't Know”] by Jesús Alonso Burgos

Best Article: “Gigamesh, ¿Qué fue de?” [“Gigamesh Magazine: What happened to it?”] by Ignacio Illarregui Gárate

Best Illustration: cover art for *Los horrores del escalpelo* [The Horrors of the Scalpel] by Alejandro Colucci

Best Audiovisual Production: *Eva* by Kike Maíllo

Best Comic: *El héroe* [The Hero] by David Rubín

Best Poem: “Histerias minúsculas” [“Minute Hysterias”] by Víctor Miguel Gallardo Barragán

Best Magazine: *Calabazas en el trastero* [Pumpkins in the Junkroom] http://sacodehuesos.com/calabazas-en-el-trastero

Best Website: La Tercera Fundación http://www.tercerafundacion.net/

Best Foreign Novel (tie): *IQ84* by Haruki Murakami, and *La chica mecánica* [The Windup Girl] by Paolo Bacigalupi

Best Foreign Story: “Ultima generación” [“Final Generation”] by Ian M. Banks

The Nocte Awards were presented by the Spanish Association of Horror Writers:

Best Novel: *Descosidos* [Unsewn] by Javier Quevedo Puchal

Best Spanish Anthology: *Abismos* [Abysses] by David Jasso

Best Spanish Short Story: “La necesidad del dolor” [“The Need for Pain”] by José María Tamparillas

Best Foreign Book: *Now we are sick*, an anthology of poems

Best Foreign Short Story: “Venganza” [“Vengeance”] by Liudmila Petrushevskaya

The 21st Domingo Santos Award for an unpublished novella went to “Orpheus” by M. Bracelli, a story about a boy and his twin whose father has been sent to work in a station at an asteroid in a dying galaxy. The award included a cash prize and publication.

Sunday, October 14 Urnieta — Madrid

In spite of the late festivities, early on Sunday morning a quorum of the Asociación Española de Fantasía, Ciencia Ficción, y Terror (http://www.aefcft.com) held a general assembly. Since I'm a member, I was there. We voted to expand voting for the Ignotus Awards, and approved new editions of our publications, and some other projects. I volunteered to take on *Espora*, the English-language newsletter covering Spanish genre developments.

As the sponsor for HispaCons, we also set aside funds for the next convention in 2013. But we had received no bids for the coming year. Spain has often had trouble finding organizers for HispaCons, and the quality of the conventions has varied from year to year. The future 2013 convention remains unresolved.

The morning included a few more

projections in the theater, and some panels and workshops. The closing ceremony consisted of thanks for the convention organizers and from an Urnieta alderman who had attended the event. Then everyone put their convention badge into a box for a drawing to win prizes including a wide variety of books, posters, and teeshirts. I got *Condenados (The Condemned)* by Santiago Eximeno, a leading horror writer, the first crowd-funded Spanish-language novel. A heavy rain that had begun at the start of the final ceremony relented in time for people to return home. Along with some other attendees, I caught the commuter train to San Sebastián, and then the train to Madrid, arriving at 10 p.m., caught another commuter train to my neighborhood, and then a bus through a downpour home.

On the whole, the weekend had tilted more toward fantasy than science fiction. There were plenty of young people, but a worrisome lack of some of the larger publishers in the dealers' areas — in fact, many of the books presented were self-edited or offered by very small publishers who count on pre-publication purchases to finance their books.

Spain's economic troubles are taking a toll on the genre, which was never well-heeled to begin with. Despite all the genuine joy in creation that writers expressed, very few can earn their living or even much spare pocket money by writing. Almost all the print genre magazines and big anthologies have disappeared. While the *Song of Fire and Ice* is making a splash with its throne, show, books, and fans, Spain has no equivalent to George R.R. Martin, not out of lack of talent but out of lack of opportunity, especially in the current, deepening economic crisis.

Distance traveled: 450 km/280 miles each way
Weather: cool, with rain Friday morning and Sunday afternoon and evening
Book read on the train: *Thinking Spanish Translation*, by Louise M. Haywood, Michael Thompson and Sándor Hervey

FANZINES

Askance #28

John Purcell, 3744 Marilene Circle, College Station, TX 77845-3926
j_purcell54@yahoo.com
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Beyond Bree October 2012, November 2012
Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com
<http://www.ccp.unt.edu/bree.html>
Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20 foreign, \$10/year electronic.

Broken Toys #8, #9
Tara Wayne

Dewachen October 2012, November 2012
Trinlay Khadro, Post Office Box 240934, Brown Deer, WI 53224-0934 USA
trinlay63@wi.rr.com

The Drink Tank #327, #328, #329, #330, #331
Christopher J. Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com>

File 770 #161, #162
Mike Glycer, 1507 ½ S. Sixth Avenue, Arcadia, CA 91006-4359 USA
Mikeglyer@cs.com
<http://file770.com>
NEW ADDRESS

Fish Out of Water #502, #503, #504, #505, #506, #507, #508
Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA

It Goes On the Shelf #34 November 2012
Cuyler "Ned" Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA
nedbrooks@sprynet.com
<http://home.sprynet.com/~nedbrooks/home.htm>

Lofgeornost #109 November 2012
Fred Lerner, 81 Worcester Avenue, White River Junction, VT 05001-8011 USA
fred.lerner@dartmouth.edu

MT Void V.31 #14 October 5, 2012 — V. 31 #22 November 30, 2012
Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA
eleeeper@optonline.net
mleeeper@optonline.net
<http://leepers.us/mtvoid>

Opuntia #255 October 2012, #256 Remembrance Day 2012
Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7 CANADA

The Reluctant Famulus #89, #90
Thomas D. Sadler, 305 Gill Branch Road, Owenton, KY 40359- USA
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SF Commentary #83 October 2012, #84 November 2012
Bruce Gillespie
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<http://www.efanzines.com>

Southern Fandom Confederation Update V. 1 #30
Warren Buff, 22144 B Ravenglass Place, Raleigh, NC 27612-2936 USA
warrenmbuff@gmail.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

TNFF V. 71 #2/*Tightbeam* #261 June 2012, *TNFF* V. 71 #3/*Tightbeam* #262 September 2012
The National Fantasy Fan Federation
There are a number of addresses. About the best is to send \$18 for a one-year membership to the club secretary Dennis Davis at 25449 Byron Street, San Francisco, CA 92404-6403 USA, or sign up at:

<http://n3f.org>

Vanamonde #893 July 6, 2010 — #902 September 22, 2010
John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

WORLDCON BIDS

2014
NASFiC:
Detroit
<http://detroitin2014.org/>

Proposed Dates: July 17-20.

Phoenix
<http://phoenixin2014.org/>

Proposed Dates: July 31-August 3.

2015
Helsinki, Finland
<http://www.helsinkiin2015.org/>

Spokane
<http://spokanein2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 19-23.

Orlando
<http://orlandoin2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: September 3-7.

NASFiC:
Houston

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

Proposed Dates: August 18-22.

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

Montréal
New York

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

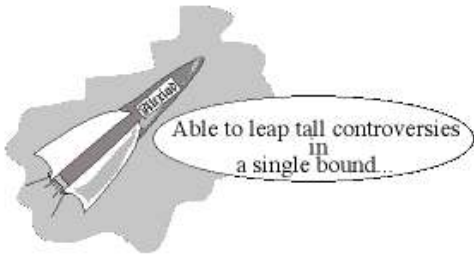
2019

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

Does anyone have Hugo recommendations? There are a number of worthy Best Related works reviewed here, but as I've noted they are all likely to be swamped by one particular work with an avid and active audience.

Fiction . . . continues in the doldrums. Nevertheless, send in your recommendations.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Milt Stevens** October 21, 2012
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 93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad VII* #5, Lisa notes that devices tend to spawn other devices. Automobiles spawned windshields which spawned windshield wipers. However, automobiles also spawned some devices that didn't last long. In the early days of automobiles, there were attempts to install phonographs. The constant vibration in an automobile made the idea unworkable. If you are old enough, you may remember when automobile clocks never worked. I have no idea why auto manufacturers continued with that idea for as long as they did. In recent times, a television show informed me there were such things as computerized rear view mirrors. I have no idea why you would need such a thing, but I'm sure the complete geek would want one.

Some devices spawn all sorts of social change. It has been said that the automobile changed our sexual customs. Many Europeans believe that all Americans have their first sexual experience in a car. You couldn't disprove that assertion by me. Back when I was young, people used to go on Sunday drives for recreation. These days, people spend so much time driving to and from work, the idea of recreational driving seems silly. Back in those days, drive-in restaurants sprung up for people who didn't want to leave their cars even to eat. The idea of car hops on roller skates is an exotic memory.

So Joseph is approaching retirement. I noticed something odd when I was in the same situation. Time went along at a seemingly normal pace until I was on the last six months. Time didn't quite stop, but it oozed along for the last six months. It seemed like took several years to get through those last six months.

I wonder whether senior discounts really work for their intended purpose. Speaking for myself, I don't patronize any businesses just because they offer senior discounts. I don't care whether they are offered or not. Sometimes, they feel like condescension, and I don't like condescension.

Speaking of worldcons, I need someone to second some motions I am going to submit at the San Antonio business meeting. These motions would delete the categories for Best

Fanzine, Best Fan Writer, and Best Fan Artist from the Hugo competition. I'm tired of being irritated at the results of the fan Hugo competition. We can't win, but we may be able to get out of the game.

Has anyone told Jim C. Hines about this? Or SF Signal, or StarShipSofa, or any of the other pros who managed to "work" this system to get themselves an award? I doubt they will notice it themselves.

— JTM

October 27, 2012

I was going to submit a motion at the San Antonio business meeting to abolish the fan Hugos. Since then I became involved in a long discussion on the SMOFS elist. As a result I came up with a set of revised rules for the fan Hugos.

The central part of my proposals is that a fanzine is an electronic publication which is declared to be a fanzine. Thus, it is a fanzine only if you say it is. I think most potentially eligible fanzines have electronic versions these days, so specifying electronic won't make a big difference.

Here are the rules as I would propose them.

3.3.13. Best Fanzine. Any non professional electronic publication which has been produced by people associated with the science fiction or fantasy field. These publications must have included new material in the last calendar year and have been declared as a fanzine to the current worldcon committee. Declaration of fanzine status may be accomplished by writing to the current committee and providing a link to the subject publication for the convention website. The committee retains final authority on the acceptability of links.

3.3.14. Best Fan Writer. Any person whose writing has appeared in a fanzine in the previous calendar year.

3.3.15. Best Fan Artist. An artist or cartoonist whose work has appeared in a fanzine in the previous calendar year.

From: **Brad W. Foster** October 23, 2012
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bwfoster@juno.com
<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

New issue 11.5 in the past week, today the day to get caught up with all the locs that must be . . . locced? locked? loculated?

Only one new little fillo to send this time, but probably being small will work well for the

single-column format there. A simple idea, but one that I liked, and hope will give others a grin. (Much in the way that I got a grin from the 'toon by Alexis on pg 7 about "cat dogs".)



Since the last note, I have managed to find the time to read a bit more this summer, bringing me up to . . . let's see, maybe 1/100th of your own rate. Still, there is progress being made once more on the stack of unread volumes beside the bed. (Although I have just started on *Gravity's Rainbow*, and am having to admit that at times (many times) it feels like quite a slog to keep pushing through. I hit parts that are interesting, entertaining, thought-provoking, absorbing . . . followed by long bits that I can barely keep my eyes open with. Still, only about a third of the way in, let us see where this ends up.) Have also, in the two months since the last email, brought inside the little stray cat that had been hanging around outside, making the official indoor cat count now 4. That is the maximum we have ever had inside, and I hope we will not be breaking any records.

We had six cats for a while.
 That probably wasn't a good idea.

— JTM

And let me add a "me too!" to Richard Dengrove's comment that, while I know I will never be able to achieve the sheer volume of your reading numbers, by your sharing these reviews with us, at least it means I can get a little taste of so many more.

Need to wrap up here and get back to work, having to cut mats and prep for packing up for our last outdoor art festival of the year, coming up this weekend. Weather predictions right now are for a warm, pleasant week, right up to Friday morning when I will have to start setting up our tent and display at the park, at which time a front is scheduled to come through and drop the temperatures about 30 degrees, to last all through the weekend. Ah well, rather have it cold than wet, and maybe it will put the patrons in more of a gift-shopping mood, thinking about Christmas coming again at last. (I probably sell more of my art as gifts at these shows than for the person themselves, with the comment "I've got a friend who loves this kind of odd stuff" most often heard.)

From: **Joy V. Smith**

October 25, 2012

8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

I enjoyed your review of "The Top" by George Summer Albee — and the *From Bauhaus to Our House* excerpt. I assume that Wolfe wasn't impressed by the new housing concepts? Btw, I now live in a 1960s rancher, which was not my first choice in house styles, but it meets our needs — and we and the dogs get a lot of exercise running from one end of the house to the other.

Congratulations to Grant on winning the telescope; it sounds impressive. And thanks for the news re the ships we're giving to the Mexican Navy. I didn't know we were doing that. 'Course I didn't know that Mexico had a navy. Speaking of water, I'm sorry about your flooded basement. I went right out to look at our water heater; I see it drains into the garage. Hopefully it won't run into the utility room. (The door to the garage is close to the water heater.)

I enjoyed your other reviews also because of all the background, though I didn't come across any I wanted to read or had read; and your ChiCon report, along with your museum visits, was fun. I haven't been to Chicago or the Museum of Science and Industry for years. Sounds like it's really changed. I appreciated your fanzine and world con bids lists also.

LOCs: I didn't know that Friends of Bill W means Alcoholics Anonymous. I learn so much in LOCs. And someone mentioned Terry Pratchett's *Making Money*, but I can't locate the mention. Anyway, I really enjoyed *Making Money*. Good sequel to *Going Postal*. And "Fifty Shades of Fear and Loathing" was fun; I would have enjoyed it more, of course, if I was familiar with the authors you cite. Btw, I love all the variations of *Fifty Shades of Gray* that people are now using.

Alexis Gilliland (see below) was the one who mentioned Pratchett's *Making Money*.

Dr. Gonzo had an interesting time explaining to Worsel and Kinnison about how he wasn't a zwilnik. When they said, "QX, clear ether," he asked if they had any with them, since he'd heard you could get really high on it.

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Oct. 26, 2012
 4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
 22204-1552 USA
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for the copy of *Alexiad* 11.5 which arrived as the local trees were starting to display their fall foliage, pretty, but after a hot and dry year the colors have so far been muted rather than brilliant. A small job, pruning a couple of trees and cleaning out some underbrush, talked its way into painting the house (which badly needed painting) and then, the cherry on the sundae, some rotted wood that

needed replacing was discovered up on the roof. Sigh. We had the first test of our backup generator last week with a ten-minute power outage, when it came on after about a minute just as it was supposed to, going back off when the power came back on. It is, by the way, gas-powered like our furnace rather than gasoline powered, so that there is no tank that that needs refilling. In the paper I see that Alpha Centauri has a planet of 1.33 earth masses, albeit in an orbit with a three day year. Still, a planet is a planet, and even if we have so far only found losers here must be plenty of winners lurking in the Goldilocks zone, waiting only for the invention of a super duper interstellar drive for us to seek them out for fun and profit. Closer to home, and probably more useful, *The Economist* reports that a Swiss scientist has discovered that treating sycamore and Norway spruce with certain fungi produces "mycowood" from which master luthiers can produce violins with tonal qualities similar to those created by Antonio Stradivari. He is now seeking to standardize the process so as to provide Strads for the masses.

Milt Stevens suggests that I resent Worldcons being elitist; no, I merely regret that as time went by I ceased to be a member of the Wordcon elite. Thirty years ago I was a contender, going with confidence and swagger to where my interests took me. Time went by and eventually the best I could manage was contender emeritus, a polite euphemism for has-been. I would have been bored at conventions where my interests were minimal, such as gaming, comic or animé conventions, even or especially if they were very large. Which is not to say that I would never go to conventions that bored me. After Lunacon this year, we went to the 100th Anniversary of the *Titanic* sinking at The *Titanic Experience* down in Orlando, Florida, and then to the annual meeting of the *Titanic International Society* in New York City on behalf of Lee, the resident *Titanic* enthusiast, who had a really good time at both.

Darrell Schweitzer thinks that the future will judge the present harshly for not taking steps to stop global warming. My own suspicion is that the future will probably conclude that no such steps were possible, and go on burning fossil fuel to the max. However, Darrell also argues concisely and elegantly that Climate Denialism is bogus. On the other hand; Taras Wolansky appears comfortable in the Climate Denial (aka Anthropogenic Global Warming Denial) camp, gracefully conceding that the warming trend since about 1850 is real while serenely repeating his mantra: "The sky is not falling." A case can be made that Taras is mistaken, and the sky just hasn't landed in New Jersey yet. The short version is that, for whatever reason, the Arctic Ice Cap has been shrinking very rapidly. The only model tracking that shrinking with any degree of accuracy has been the Pan-Arctic Ice Ocean Modeling and Assimilation System, PIOMAS, which also projects an ice-free Arctic by the summer of 2015, and less certainly an ice-free Arctic year round by mid-century. A warmer Arctic will naturally have all sorts of consequences, this year's ongoing drought perhaps being one of them, but if Taras wants to

amuse himself with the sight of scientists in a state of near panic, he should check out the Arctic Methane Emergency Group. It would appear that a warmer Arctic has the potential to suddenly release more methane (from methane clathrates in the shallow waters off Siberia) and carbon dioxide (from warming permafrost) than has been released during the whole of the industrial revolution. That little old warming trend since 1850 has been sufficient to shift some poorly understood equilibrium point, so that natural forcings and feedbacks have taken over, and the global climate can proceed without assistance from additional anthropogenic CO2 to reach its new equilibrium. The sky IS falling, Taras, but you've got to be patient.

What else? On the 21st we had an adventure that was sort of political. Lee and I were driving into DC on Route 50, and as we went on to the Memorial Bridge, this state police car flashed its lights and blocked our way. On asking we were told that the President had just finished a speech out at George Mason University, and that they were clearing the route to facilitate the return of his motorcade. The Presidential motorcade drove by half an hour later, reminding us that the joys of living in the Nation's Capital are not unalloyed.



From: **Robert Lichtman** November 3, 2012
robertlichtman@yahoo.com

Thanks for the October *Alexiad*, and for that matter all the issues you've been sending these many months without response from me for a long time. Though I've been silent, it hasn't been because I don't find your fanzine a useful resource. Quite the contrary, I go through each issue looking in particular for clues about (mainly) books that I might find of interest.

In this issue it's the reissue of the *Proceedings: Chicon III*. I was aware of it some time before it appeared because Earl Kemp put out a call for a good-quality scan of the *Playboy* advertisement in the Chicon III program book. Mine was judged the best of half a dozen, and I was supposed to get a contributor's copy of the book. Your review reminded me that I hadn't received one, so I promptly wrote to Merry Blacksmith Press's John Teehan to inquire. So far I haven't had either a reply or a copy of the book, so no happy ending just yet although I do expect one.

That aside, I enjoyed reading your and Lisa's account of ChiCon 7 and associated

travel and sightseeing. And as I made my way through the issue, I wondered if Johnny Carruthers had gafiated or simply run out of candy bars to review.

Well, he hasn't gafiated.

As for the book thing, glad to be of service. If you have any advice, we will be glad to listen and to thank you for giving it.

— JTM

From: **R-Lauraine Tutihasi** Nov. 4, 2012
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lauraine@mac.com
<http://www.weasner.com/>

Congratulations to Grant on winning the telescope. Please, please, please tell him not to point it at the sun without a solar filter; it could melt the plastic parts in the telescope. (I checked with Mike. That telescope does have plastic parts.) If he needs a solar filter, check with your local telescope dealer. If you don't have one, contact <http://www.optcorp.com>. They do business by mail and carry Celestron products and accessories. The only time it is safe to point the telescope at the sun is during a total solar eclipse, but only while the sun is totally eclipsed.

Thanks for the info about Hundred Zeros. Books on the Knob reports on free and bargain-priced e-books from a variety of sources, but it is not all-inclusive.

If we ever make it back to Chicago, I'll have to check out the Shedd Aquarium. I **love** penguins.

I've been having problems with bursitis and sciatica. Although I've started seeing a physical therapist, I'll probably have to rent a mobi at Loscon. So you find us less abled people troublesome, eh?

From: **Mark Plummer** November 8, 2012
mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

Can I offer a couple of corrections to the details you provide on the 2014 Worldcon, Loncon 3.

Firstly, the rate you quote as 'adult' is in fact the 'young adult' rate (between 16 and 25 on the start date of the convention, 14 August 2014). The adult rate is currently £95.00/US\$160.00.

Also I'm not sure where you got your designations for the people on the guest list, some of which seem a little peculiar (John Clute as a Fan GoH?), but the official Loncon 3 position is that its seven guests are presented without designation, not least because some of them wear more than one hat.

That was the initial report. The clarification is appreciated.

And reference Milt Stevens's letter, I put up my hand as being at least one person in 'the English speaking world' who had no idea that 'Friends of Bill W' meant AA. I saw the references to it at Chicon and was mildly

curious as to what it meant, but not to the extent that I bothered to find out. So thanks for answering my unasked question.

And a quick straw poll on small private email list suggests that there's no common understanding of the term here in the UK generally so I'm not alone. It may be a widely recognised synonym in the US or even in North America but not here.

Congratulations on winning the Best Fanwriter Nova Award and Banana Wings winning the Best Fanzine Nova Award.

— JTM



From: **Murray Moore** November 13, 2012
1065 Henley Road, Mississauga Ontario
L4Y 1C8 CANADA
murrayamoore@gmail.com

Lisa, yes, Canada geese flying south is a sign that winter is in the offing, but not all of the Canada geese here migrate. We will know that climate change is accelerating here in Mississauga when we see butterflies in November.

(I answer the question Where do you live?, when we are in a foreign country, with "Mississauga." Pause for puzzlement. "Mississauga is where you land if you fly to Toronto." Some people remain unclear.)

I do not at all miss the heat and the humidity of July and August. Humidity is the chief villain. At the opposite end of the year I can control my comfort by wearing clothing appropriate to the temperature.

Joe, the New Zealand in 2020 Worldcon bid will announce that it is an official bid at Loncon 3 in 2014 if support for the first New Zealand worldcon seems sufficient.

I am 61. I was given a lot of change for a ticket to a movie, years ago, by a young person. Later I looked at my portion of the ticket and saw that I was charged the senior citizen price.

In your reviews of the new Holmes episodes you fail to remark about the actor who is the best of the bunch, he who portrays Moriarity. (I do not type his name out of fear: simply, I do not remember his name.) Or am I ahead of myself in the episodes?

Nope. His name is Andrew Scott. What I like is how casually he appears for the first time in the show.

Andrew Scott
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0778831/>

In the previous century one Christmas we were spending Christmas week at my in-law's house. The neighbour who said he would check our house regularly, didn't. The furnace stopped when the last of the oil in the oil tank was burned. When we returned home, the water in the downstairs toilet's bowl was frozen. When the ice in the pipe above the ceiling in our dining room melted, water leaked from the pipe, necessitating replacement of the ceiling.

You tell Sue Burke that during Worldcon she can leave a message on the Zombie Board. If she leaves a message twice, would that be deja voo-doo?

I t 'ud be the voo-doo she'd do.

— JTM

From: **Jim Stumm** October 19, 2012
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-0029 USA

RED/BLUE STATES: I wonder if anyone besides me thinks they've got these colors reversed. Traditionally red has always been associated with the left. Liberals, Democrats, and other lefties dominate what should be RED States, or at least pink. The other side doesn't have any particular color as long as it isn't black (anarchist) or green, so it might as well be blue.

Who invented this red/blue business with the colors reversed? I suppose it was some liberal organization that wanted to deny their historical association with Reds. Well, let's see. Wikipedia says ABC used this color scheme in 1980. CBS joined them from 1984 on. By 1996 CNN and the NY Times were on board, and other media gradually fell in line after that. So it's just what I suspected; the usual liberal suspects.

George W. Price: Yes, banknotes issued by private banks would not be legal tender. Art I Sect 10 says that States may not make anything but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debts, and also that States may not coin money. But nothing in the Constitution prohibits private persons, banks, companies, etc. from minting coins. And indeed there has been private coinage from time to time, especially in California at the time of the gold rush. But anyone who mints private coinage today will probably be prosecuted by the Feds even though he would be within his rights as long as he doesn't try to pass it off as official US Government coinage.

Taras Wolansky: A fully developed gold

standard would allow anyone to exchange any amount of dollars for gold at the set price, which I suggested might be \$1600/ounce. So there would be no higher gold price as long as the Govt has gold reserves remaining. Why would anyone pay more than \$1600 if they can buy gold from the Govt at that price? The Govt would control the amount of dollars they issue. Excessive issue, such as the now current policy of the Federal Reserve, would lead to a run on the Govt's gold reserves. To prevent that, the Govt would have to avoid inflating the currency, thus avoiding the resulting price inflation. That's what the gold standard is meant to do.

Heinlein's stories, it seems to me, don't convey how hostile the surface of the Moon can be for persons in spacesuits. I'm thinking especially of the radiation, particularly solar flares. If I have this right, anyone caught on the surface in a spacesuit during a solar flare would receive a lethal dose of radiation. Which makes me wonder about Apollo astronauts. They demonstrated that there was no harm in short periods on the surface of the Moon. But were they just lucky that there were no solar flares while they were on the Moon? Was "the Sun in a less energetic part of its cycle at that time from 1969 to 1972?"

I don't mean to find fault with Heinlein who mainly wanted to write entertaining stories. But as I read these stories that he wrote in the 1950s, I can't help wondering whether conditions really would be like that for persons walking on the Moon.

SANDY did no damage in Buffalo aside from a couple trees blown down. There was no widespread electricity outage here. So Buffalo's record of being pretty much immune to natural disasters remains intact. What happened in New Jersey should persuade the Govt to stop paying over and over to rebuild houses on ocean beaches, but probably won't.

Robert S. Kennedy: There's nothing in the Constitution that authorizes the Federal Govt to conduct survey research like that American Community Survey you received. The power to conduct censuses is given in Art I Sect 2 where the word "census" doesn't appear, but it does speak of making an enumeration within every term of 10 years. This is solely for the purpose of apportioning members of the House of Representatives among the several States, which would require a simple headcount, nothing more than the names and perhaps the ages of the persons living in each household.

Richard A. Dengrove: The concept of private money not backed by gold or silver is called Free Banking. It's based on a 1977 paper "The Denationalization of Money," written by Frederick Hayek. The idea has been greatly expanded and defended by others since then. It proposes that money should be provided by private businesses like any other commodity, like soap or shoes, and govt should have nothing to do with it. No Central Bank. No special bank regulations. These competing private bank notes would not be legal tender. No one would be required to accept them in payment. Banks would provide gold-backed currency or accounts only if that's what customers

demand.

When a new currency is introduced after a hyperinflation, often new monetary rules are introduced at the same time. In the 1920s, when the Germans introduced a new currency to end their hyperinflation, they made the new currency exchangeable into US dollars at a fixed rate, at a time when US dollars could be exchanged for gold at a fixed price. So the hyperinflation ended because the new currency was directly backed by US dollars and indirectly by gold. Also this meant the German Govt had to be careful to not issue too much of their new currency lest they suffer a run on their dollar reserves.

You mourn the problems caused by a large company going bankrupt. Well it's many times worse when a national govt goes bankrupt, or a country's currency and economy is destroyed in a hyperinflation. Then it isn't just the few workers in one company that suffer, but everyone in the country.

If there are competing currencies, the inflation of one currency, or the insolvency of one bank, won't necessarily affect the other currencies or banks.

US merchants must accept your US currency because it's legal tender which means the Govt forces them to accept it. Here in Buffalo some merchants do not accept Canadian money which is not legal tender in USA. So here we have some experience with a competing currency that is not legal tender.

The purpose of gold backing of a govt's currency is to curb inflation by putting some limit on politicians who have an insatiable desire to spend vast amounts of other people's money.



From: **John Purcell** November 18, 2012
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TX 77845-3926 USA
j_purcell54@yahoo.com

For a moment there I had to stop and recompute which whole issue number this zine is: Volume 11, Number 5 translates to ten full volumes at 6 issues, so that's 60, plus the 5 in the current 11th volume, so yeah, 65 *Alexiads* thus far. Math just simply isn't my strong point, I'm afraid. Still, I did pass that last graduate

statistics class on my doctoral degree plan this past summer, so I guess there's hope for me yet.

I agree with Lisa about not missing the summer heat. Here in SouthCentralEastern Texas — a.k.a., the Land That Time Forgot — summers are abysmally hot. Right now, though, the temperatures are fantastic: mid-40s at night, mid-60s to low 70s during the day. Gorgeous weather. Next weekend — Sunday, Nov. 25th, to be exact — Valerie and I are spending our 23rd wedding anniversary at the Texas Renaissance Festival; November 25th is the last day of the RenFest (it's been running every weekend since October 6th), so maybe we can finagle some great deals on goodies by playing up our anniversary — while in costume, of course (the photos I'm attaching are from when we went in 2010) — on the day when most vendors drop their prices to unload as much as they can before packing up to move onto the next festival. I will let you know how that works out.

Hey, Joe, I don't sneeze at getting senior discounts, either. Any way to save a few bucks works for me. Do you have an AARP membership like I do? It helps when making plane and hotel reservations.

AAA is more my sort.

Interesting review of "The Top", the George Summer Albee play from 1953. It sounds very good, and I agree with you about its linkage to the Pohl and Kornbluth stories that made up *The Space Merchants* (1953), one of my all-time favorite science fiction books. As much as I enjoy Edward Albee's work, his father's work looks to be just as interesting, especially "The Next Voice You Hear" (1950). I shall have to look that one up on the Internet and watch it because it sounds so wonderfully satirical.

Like Tom Feller, I also received a review copy of Kent McDaniel's book *Jimmy Stu Lives!* (2011). Yeah, it was a brisk little read, but I think Kent could have done a lot more with the future religion/political mash-up and its consequences. The book was almost two separate stories: the first half being about the Church of the Living Lord and the geo-political-religious structure of America in the 22nd century, then the second half of the book turned into a chase-movie-with-love-interest story. The first half was by far, in my opinion, the more interesting. The whole book was indeed a very brisk read and very entertaining in spots, but it sure could use some expansion, or so I think.

We did too, and Lisa was thinking of reviewing it, but Tom sent his in before she got started.

I am glad you and Lisa had a good time at ChiCon 7 — wish we could have made it — and I look forward to meeting you two at LoneStarCon 3. I was volunteered to host the fanzine lounge by Toni Weisskopf and Kim Kofmel, so that will be the place to find me. Speaking of LSC 3, your comment to Milt Stevens in the loccol about the Riverwalk

restaurants is a definite plus. I have been to San Antonio once (10 years ago on a school trip, taking a large group of international students to the Alamo), and the Riverwalk is indeed lovely and loaded with tons of wonderful restaurants up and down its length. Val and I are planning on doing some touristy type things as well while in San Antonio — he has never seen the Alamo (I have, with that school trip I mentioned a moment ago) — and we have already reserved our hotel room. If you guys haven't done that yet, you'd better do it pronto: rooms are disappearing rapidly.

It is reassuring that Richard Dengrove doesn't consider Valerie and I as Neanderthals. Maybe we're more like well-dressed troglodytes in Victorian garb, but that's another story entirely. To address his comment about us at Fencon VIII in his letter, though, many people dress in Victorian era clothing at Steampunk events because that is the time period in which this genre is placed. Some people add goggles and gears to their clothing (or top hats, canes, and other accessories) and call it Steampunk, but that's not entirely accurate. The genre is much more than that and is still evolving. When we talk about this, Valerie posits that the Steampunk era is one big, honking mash-up of the Industrial Age and Victorian Era with the Age of Scientific/Medical Discovery just as electricity and the internal combustion engine are being invented. Toss in zombies, vampires and werewolves, and what you have in Steampunk is probably the most wide-open literary genre available. Pretty much anything goes, it seems, and some writers — like Paul di Fillippo, Gail Carriger, Cherie Priest, and Tim Powers — have written very entertaining stories in this genre. Then there are the musical groups and masquerade balls that Steampunk has spawned, and those are worthy of their own full-blown articles. About all I can say is that Valerie and I are enjoying it, and apparently we are not alone. Of course, that is what makes it even more fun: the people involved. It is a whole 'nuther fandom, you know, with some cross-over from traditional fandom. To name just a few people, Lloyd and Yvonne Penney are into it, too, and Chris Garcia is also a fan of the genre. Bottom line: it is fun, and that's all that really matters.

So I think I shall call it quits here. *Askance* #28 should be posted later today at efanazines.com — sent it to Bill Burns last night (Nov. 17th) — and it will be the last issue until next summer. The zine is going on hiatus while I concentrate on my dissertation, doctoral exams and defense. By next summer I will be — I'd better be — Dr. John A. Purcell. Just call me Doctor John. I kind of like that. Too bad I don't play stride piano.

Have you covered the endochronic properties of resublimated thiotimeline in sufficient detail?

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 18, 2012
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA

93010-2451 USA
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for Vol. 11, No. 5
Good pictures (p. 10 & p. 13).

I obtained a copy of *Destroyermen: Iron Gray Sea* from the library. Another good read. But, this looks like it might be the Never-ending Story.

James Stumm: Another shipment of books. Thank you very much.

Taras Wolansky: Yes, Amanda Tapping did a great job in *Stargate: SG-1*. That's why I started watching *Sanctuary*. (Well, it was also because she is a fine looking woman.) But, as indicated previously, I stopped watching when they had two monsters in one show. I do not have any idea what she is doing now.

George W. Price: You make reference to "Vlasov's Army." This would appear to be *History of General Vlasov's Army, First Division ROA* (1953). The only place that I can find the book is the US ARMY HERITAGE & ED CTR and it does not appear available for loan. In my collection I have *The Illusion: Soviet Soldiers in Hitler's Armies* by Jürgen Thorwald (1974/1975 — Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). It's excellent.

The forced repatriation of those soldiers to the Soviet Union (they should have been treated as captured German soldiers) is to the great shame of the leadership of our country including General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Suppose that Martin James "Martin Wiethaupt" Monti had fallen into Soviet hands in Berlin. Should he have been handed over to the U.S.?

Amazon.com has: *The Russian Patriot: A Red Army Soldier's Service for His Motherland and Against Bolshevism* (2008) \$19.79. *Vlasov: General For Two Devils* (2004) \$19.95 DVD. *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement: Soviet Reality and Emigré Theories* (1990) \$34.00. *Recollection of Pre-Revolutionary Russia, the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the Balkans in the 1930s and Service in the Vlasov Army in World War II* (1986) \$9.99 Kindle Edition

Because of comments by William H. Patterson, Sheryl Birkhead, Taras Wolansky and maybe some others it looked like maybe I should reconsider my opinion of *John Carter*. I rented it from Red Box and watched it again. That did not result in any change. So, I obtained the book itself from the library. It had been many years since my having read it and maybe my memory was faulty. To some extent that was the case. But, in general my memory was rather good. Now my major problem with the movie is the shape-changing humanoids who are in the movie and appear nowhere in the book. I will raise my rating from a 1 to a 2.5 out of 5. But, that's it. Oh, and if the movie was to be really accurate everyone on Barsoom should have been naked. ☺

Well, thanks to the wonderful

publicity efforts of the Poopy Panda Pals, the movie got buried at the box office. Makes one wonder about the prospects of STAR WARS EPISODE VII.

— JTM

From: **George W. Price** November 20, 2012
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October Alexiad:

Many thanks for the kindly review of *The Proceedings: Chicon III, 50th Anniversary Edition*, edited by Earl Kemp and myself.

We really should include John Teehan as an editor. He runs Merry Blacksmith Press, publisher of this new edition, and he quite properly had the last word when the three of us disagreed on points of style or contents. He also added quite a bit of material that was not in Advent's original 1963 edition, such as reproductions of pages from the Chicon III program book. I had stashed away the leftovers from the convention, including handouts given to members, and fifty years later it all came in handy.

My part was primarily to scan the original *Proceedings* and do the optical character recognition (OCR) conversion to computer text files for John. In addition to the usual editing to catch OCR errors, I took the opportunity to (if I may say so) considerably improve the typography. John then chose the type fonts and sizes and designed the page layouts.

After the 1962 Chicon the Advent crew did the camera-ready copy for the original *Proceedings* on an IBM Executive electric office typewriter with proportional-spaced type. That is, its "M" was much wider than an "i" and other characters were of varying widths in between those. This gave a printed page that looked like real book type, not monospaced typewriting. It also let us set up fully-justified pages, although that required double typing. We typed the page once to determine how far short of the right margin each line came, and then typed it again inserting extra space between words to make the last word just hit the margin. Workable, but tedious.

Because this was all done on the one IBM typewriter (owned by Earl Kemp), it had to be all in one type size and with underlining instead of italics. (There were ways to get around this, mainly by renting another IBM typewriter with an italic face, and razoring in the italic words. Again, very tedious. You can see examples of this in other Advent books in their original editions.)

For this new edition I changed the underlined words to italics, added boldface where appropriate, and converted most all-capitals to small capitals. This was particularly used in introducing speakers.

Thus, where the 1963 edition has:

Mr. Holmes will tell us a little about the future.
If you would now, Mr. Holmes—

JAY HOLMES: Thank you, Earl.

The new edition has:

Mr. Holmes will tell us a little about the future. If you would now, Mr. Holmes....

JAY HOLMES: Thank you, Earl.

These typographical niceties are easy with modern computerized typesetting, but were not practical for semi-amateur publishing back in the Sixties, when we couldn't possibly afford professional hot-metal (Linotype) production.

We also tried to weed out inconsistencies in the old edition. For example, in the above the lead-in to the speaker is an em dash (—) in the original, but four closely-spaced dots (....) in the new edition. The original varies, with three dots for some other lead-ins. Earl and John and I had considerable argument over whether we should make all the lead-ins dashes, three spaced-out dots (. . .), three closely-spaced dots (...), or four dots. I will not say who preferred which, but I think we are all reasonably satisfied with the results.

The review mentions Earl's new afterword in which he says some hard things about Heinlein's egoistic conduct. At the time, I knew nothing about this. As treasurer I was so busy behind the scenes that I actually saw very little of the convention apart from the masquerade, the banquet, and the one panel that I moderated. Earl dealt with Heinlein, and it wasn't until many years later that he told me what had really gone on. I was just as happy not knowing.

In any case, we're very pleased with the new edition, and I urge you to buy it. Send your money to Merry Blacksmith (*not* Advent) at 70 Lenox Avenue, West Warwick, RI 02893.

But it's going to be up against Chicks Dig Comics.

— JTM

Alexis Gilliland disagrees with my belief that homosexuality is a "gross developmental defect." Taras Wolansky also cites evolutionary biologists who attribute homosexuality to "sexually antagonistic selection." Alexis notes that, "In every species we have studied we find that 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."

Well, maybe. Ten percent seems a little high for humans; the figure I've usually seen is one or two percent. (Though they do kick up a fuss far out of proportion to their numbers.)

Nor need we assume that homosexuality is genetically conserved. That it keeps popping up in every generation is not proof that it is hereditary. It might just as easily be that the neural and biochemical conditions for normal sexual development in the womb and childhood are complicated enough that a few times in a

hundred the proper connections just don't get made. I don't think anyone would claim that, for example, spina bifida could have any advantages for individuals or groups, but it still keeps popping up (though nowhere near as often as homosexuality). Something goes wrong, that's all.

Still, Alexis may be right. A friend suggested that a certain degree of homosexuality might be useful to primitive tribes, in that men who felt like women might stay home from hunting and raiding, and be available to use their male strength and fighting abilities to protect the women and children. I had to point out to him that this is not politically correct, since it assumes that women are genetically selected for staying home with the children and not fighting.

One thing we can agree on is that homosexuality is not a choice, regardless of what some on the extreme right may like to believe, and while it may be repressed, it cannot be "cured." At least, not yet. If a real biochemical cure is ever developed, it will be extremely interesting to see how that plays out.

There is a great overlap between those who believe in abortion on demand and those who favor homosexual rights, including same-sex marriage. Now what if we develop an accurate test to determine if a fetus will become a homosexual, and most mothers then start aborting such fetuses? You may expect the gay groups to really go up the wall! When political correctness collide—.

Mr. Gilliland also notes that my principle that government should "be limited to preventing fraud and violence, and not to second guessing business decisions" doesn't cover the possibility that fraud might actually be a business decision. Exception accepted; thank you.

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



Alexis also says, "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." If that "he" refers to me, that's not my position.

Most of the credit crises — especially in modern times — have been triggered by governments messing with credit creation (the Federal Reserve exists for that purpose). And for those problems that really are due to businessmen's dishonesty, I suspect that they could be handled much better (though never perfectly, of course) if governments were not diverting so much of their efforts to meddling with those honest business decisions. Trying to do everything usually results in doing nothing properly.

Well, the election results mean that we can look forward to four more years of the government mucking with more and more business decisions — and getting most of them wrong. Sigh.

Richard Dengrove comes down on my wish for a gold standard. He says, "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.' "

I haven't looked it up, but I suspect that if a merchant had rejected those Civil War greenbacks he would have gone to jail. That's what "legal tender" means, you know: you can't refuse to accept it. And I have heard of plenty of cases in our history, mostly before the Civil War, when some private bank notes were rejected — they were scornfully called "shinplasters" — when it was suspected that the issuing banks didn't actually have the gold or silver to back them.

Also, Mr. Dengrove might look up the history of the Great Depression and why the Roosevelt administration not only took us off the gold standard, but called in the gold coins and made it a crime for citizens to keep them.

The ultimate purpose of a gold standard is to prevent politicians from inflating the currency by issuing more of it than is needed to keep prices more or less stable. Given the opportunity, the buggers WILL print extra money, because that is so much easier than either restraining their spending or raising taxes to fully cover it. Spending gets you re-elected; taxing gets you defeated, so if you can spend without taxing, hooray! (Note: "printing money" is shorthand which also covers creating money out of thin air by opening a checking account for a borrower without any cash having been deposited.)

But they can't turn on the presses and grind out a flood of gold or silver coins. The growth of precious-metal money is limited to how fast

it can be mined and refined, usually about two or three percent a year added to the existing stock. Which is roughly what is needed to handle the normal growth of business.

Any government can quite easily call my bluff and demonstrate that a gold standard is not needed. All it has to do is repeal its "legal tender" laws and allow its citizens to reject government paper money and demand gold (or silver) in payment of debts. Since paper is much more convenient to handle, especially for large sums, the citizens will of course stick to using paper. That is, right up until they realize that the politicians are spending more than they are collecting in taxes, and printing money to make up the difference. Then they'll reject the inflated paper and the government will have to rein in its spending. Whether it's America or Zimbabwe, legal tender laws are needed only if the government intends to inflate its currency.

In short, the gold standard imposes a discipline upon politicians which they will go to any lengths to evade. The very fact that they hate the gold standard is the proof that they need to be subjected to it.

To my remark that Asimov's "psychohistory" is forever impossible because it involves "factors that cannot be measured or quantified," the editor notes that "they argue that [such factors] are averaged out in the end." Yes, that's what they argue, but it won't wash. The unquantifiable factors include damned near all of what psychohistory has to deal with — everything involving human emotions, preferences, and judgments. About all that's left for measurement are the physical characteristics of the world in which people act, and that's not enough.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Nov. 21, 2012
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It's time again to write a letter of comment to you. I have finished *Alexiad* October 2012, picked out 'chirce' comments; and am ready to go. I hope I can get them in the next *Alexiad*. I hope, I hope, I hope.

I am the boss of my letter, and "The Top" (1962) talks about the bosses in an ad agency. Unlike me, they don't do much of anything. Which proves that "The Top" is out of date.

Since then, the managements of the big corporations have been made slaves to their smart phones, whether Blackberry or Droid. They are bombarded at all hours of the night by emails from the big boss.

From no one doing any work, it has gone to never ending work for some in the new economy.

That doesn't mean the old world has been completely obliterated. If you are telling us true, Joe, a series of Sherlock Holmes flicks has survived where he is using reason, as Conan Doyle intended, rather than fists to solve crimes. In this era of action sequence after action sequence, I am impressed. It almost tempts me to break down and go to a movie.

No, it's a TV series on DVD.

Of course, praising Now does not mean that I can't look back on my family history. Another thing cannot stop me either: that all written records of my Russian relatives were destroyed in World War II.

The reason is my mother's family has preserved some of the tales, AKA bubba myse's, her great grandfather told about himself.

I am tempted to tell you one. I don't know why except for the snapshot of Tsarist Russia. Once, her great grandfather told how he was conscripted into the Russian army, and was beaten with a knout to force him to give up his Judaism. To this brute force, he claimed he resisted; and received a medal from the Tsar for it.

That my great grandfather was beaten in the Russian army for being a Jew was no fable. On the other hand, that the Tsar gave him a medal was. The Tsar's anti-Semitism normally equaled any in his government. On the hand, that my mother's great grandfather said this did not even constitute a white lie. He had to, or he would have been considered unpatriotic. The battlecry of the peasant was: 'If the Tsar but knew.'

And their grandchildren said,
"If Stalin but knew.."

— JTM

Now let us get more recent, to the Financial Meltdown. Alexis Gilliland says that it was based on fraud. In part, yes, among other things, borrowers were funneled to subprime mortgages with hidden balloon payments.

However, the big reason for the meltdown was not the fraud on others, but the fraud the banks and the developers perpetrated on themselves. Yes, housing prices can go down, and, in a bubble, inevitably do. However, rightfully, no law prohibits fraud against yourself. You could only control such self-deception with government regulation that George Price despises.

I have disagreed with Alexis Gilliland. On the other hand, I agree with Darrell Schweitzer on one thing: a Nazi regime with Adolph Hitler at the head could never have beaten Stalin or the Americans. Only a Nazi regime with a less

fanatical, or differently fanatic, bunch might have succeeded..

I disagree with Darrell, though, on another point. Novels do not rise or fall on the facts. The plot, the characters, the theme or other ideas may make a novel about the Nazis winning a good read. I hear that is called *Plus*. Works for me. In fact, I find my favorite reads do not hold together logically or factually — like McCammon's *Speaks, the Nightbird*.

I am less confident on other issues. However, I am honest about one. In a past *Alexiad*, I came right out and said I do not know the citation where the Federalist Papers assured its readers that the Supreme Court could change with the times. On the other hand, Taras Wolansky has also failed to give us a citation for his legal views.

On the other hand, if what Taras says is true, I accept that rather than my lawyer co-worker's claim. Taras said the Federalist Papers intended for the judiciary to be the weakest part of the Federal government. I disagree that this somehow means that the Supreme Court should keep the Constitution as unchanging as the laws of the Persians and Medes.

If the Supreme Court is weak, its decisions would have to change, as Mr. Dooley said, with the election returns. There is an alternative, though. The Supreme Court could make its unchanging decisions anyway.

This is what would happen then. As Andrew Jackson said of Justice John Marshall, he made his decision about the Indian Removal Act, and now he would have to enforce it. While the Indian Removal Act may not have been exemplary legislation — to say the least — it was one a weak judiciary could do nothing about.

I am sure George Price finds these prospects evil because changing the Constitution reduces respect for the rule of law. I beg to differ. People disrespect laws that have become outmoded, and are irked when new injustices cannot be addressed. Unchanging laws hardly increase respect for law.

It is the reason why aristocrats of the old regimes and dictators of many recent regimes have lost their head. They decided to rule as they always had. Why tamper with success? Of course, if you stand too much on your laurels, you can get pricked badly.

Two other things George says, I not only am not going to disagree with, but I am going to ratify them 120%. For one, that the Nazis refused to de-collectivize Russian agriculture because they wished to control the populace. In fact, enslave them. On a no less important issue, grammar, I have to ratify too that 'derring do' is the term, and not 'daring do.' The bad thing is that I have known it but, when I'm not paying attention, a quirk makes me write 'daring do' anyway. Thanx, George.

I knew exactly what to say on the last topic, but what can I say to sum up amid a myriad of topics: bosses, Sherlock Holmes, my great grandfather, Hitler, the Constitution, Nazis and grammar. Let's just say this letter is about perhaps, and leave at that, because everything in the world is perhaps this and perhaps that.

From: **Sue Burke** December 5, 2012
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Four more years: In Catalonia, a region in northeastern Spain, a candidate lost whose election that was effectively a referendum on Catalanian independence. However, the election fragmented the vote among many political parties, so this won't put an end to the independence debate, which will go on. And on and on.

Two more years: To the extent that I can plan ahead, I hope to go to Britain, with or without an independent Scotland, to attend Loncon in 2014. London is a fun town but expensive.

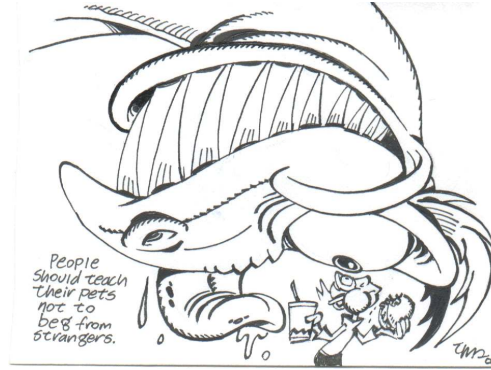
Nineteen years older: I'm watching the Spanish television show *Isabel*, set in the 1400s, about the teenage years of the future Queen Isabel. It tries to be reasonably historically accurate as well as dramatic and suspenseful, but I'm very disappointed by the actor chosen to portray Fernando. He and Isabel married when she was 18 and he was 17, but the actor is fully 36 years old — handsome and popular, so that may be why they picked him, but the script is clearly meant for a younger actor. "He's so young," someone declares at their wedding. No, he has gray hair in his beard. Every time he's on screen, I'm thrown out of the story.

Twenty-one years ago: Milt Stevens talked about being paid to know about murders. As a journalist, I covered a few murder cases, including Jeffrey Dahmer — which still troubles me for many reasons. And I have a question. What if a crime like that happened now instead of in 1991? Certain details about the Dahmer murders have never been reported by any media. As an editor, I had a conversation with my reporter about what she could include in her article. She held her notes out to me, and after a moment, I said, "You can write about this and this, and you can hint at this, but don't mention this and this." She said, "Thank you," greatly relieved. No news outlet of any type has ever reported those unmentionables, and not because of any general agreement. Both competitive disdain and the urgency of deadlines kept us from talking to each other. Instead, there was an invisible line that we all independently respected. You can learn the facts; Wisconsin has open records, and it's all in the trial transcript. But unless you go to original sources, you won't know. I wonder if today, with the Internet and with more bottom-feeding news outlets than ever, a secret like that could be kept. I doubt it, and given how I wish I could forget, I'm sorry.

Seventy-four years young: At the Iberian-American summit in November, his Majesty King Juan Carlos I said: "As you can see, I've had a few mechanical problems that will require me to follow the advice of my doctor and interrupt my official agenda and go back to the shop." Specifically, osteoarthritis in his left hip had him hobbling around on crutches, and he

needed an implant, which he received a few days later. He was walking without crutches three days after that. At age 74, he now has two hip implants, one knee implant, and uses hearing aids — well on his way to becoming the world's first bionic king.

This summer: While I was visiting Milwaukee, like Trinlay Khadro I got to the Milwaukee Art Museum for the French poster display, and I enjoyed seeing how the art form developed over time.



In November: Spain's Constitutional Tribunal rejected a challenge to the law permitting homosexual marriage on the grounds that "it makes no material change in the legal rights that govern the requirements and effect of marriage between two people of the opposite sex" and "it does not deny or restrict anyone's constitutional right to marry or not." While some people acquired new rights, the judges ruled, no one's existing rights were affected. Consequently, the law was constitutional.

Back to the past: In tests in Madrid vineyards, the best way to keep out rabbits, mice, and moles seems to be not rockets, recordings of frightening noises, pesticides, or scarecrows (including the modern version of balloons with eyes), or but rather falconry. A falconer takes a few hawks, owls, or eagles out into the fields an hour or so a day, and that solves the problem — non-invasive and ecologically sound, and very traditional.

Regarding the record of BOBO communities refusing to let hunters take deer ("rats with hooves"), coyotes, and other invasive species, I don't think that idea would fly here.

— JTM

Meanwhile: The Spanish economy remains entangled in cutbacks, protests, strikes, and unemployment. But I'm happy to report that Spain has received plenty of rain this fall, although to the extent of occasional floods. The temperatures remain unseasonably warm.

From: **Lloyd Penney** November 29, 2012
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Insanity rules, and time is not my own these days. The new job is eating my life, we had a wonderful vacation from reality as FanGoHs at Loscon 39, and I am soooooo far behind in so many things. I need a vacation to recover from my vacation. More comments, this time on *Alexiad* 65, as soon as I go to the next paragraph.

The snow is flying, not around Toronto (well, it was the other night, but it didn't stay), but just to the north, it is quite white. Winter will soon be here, and there are, as always, far too many reminders of impending Christmas. I figured that the beginning of December is probably the best time to start advertising, but I've seen Christmas ads and other reminders since just before Hallowe'en. Enough already!

We are taking advantage of the senior discounts, too. I may not really qualify for them yet, but I will take them if offered to me. It all depends on what age they say their discounts are for . . . 55? 60? 65? I am 53, but having a few extra dollars in my pocket always helps.

We missed Josepha Sherman at conventions this year, and when we heard she had passed away. . . well, we will miss that voice with the gentle sarcasm, and that writing talent.

I haven't seen the BBC's new *Sherlock*, and I don't have time for other shows like *Elementary*, so I will be quite content with my own Holmes, Jeremy Brett. Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman have worked together on another project . . . the three-movie version of *The Hobbit*.

"Quick, Baggins, quick, there's not a moment to lose!" Smaug said as a tongue of dragon flame lit up the rooms of 221B Bag End.

Ah, Chicon 7, wish we'd been there. I will say the same thing in a year when we miss LoneStarCon 3. I hope not to say the same thing the year after for Loncon 3, for we want to be in London. I have heard of a Montreal bid for 2017, even though nothing is firmly set yet. 2017 will be Canada's sesquicentennial year, and the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal. With luck, some solid information will be coming soon.

My loc . . . if the fan-run cons go away, and the local pro-fun cons go away, will Dragon*Con and SDCC be the only big convention-style events left? We'll be long gone before that happens, but I hope there will always be a group of enthusiasts (no matter the interest) who will hold their own convention to cater to their interest. A little bit more about a Montreal Worldcon bid . . . 2017. That year will be Canada's sesquicentennial, and the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal. More info as it leaks out.

Taras Wolansky wants to set up the Yugo Awards for worst in the various categories? Just like the Razzies, or in Vancouver at VCon, the Elrons that Graeme Cameron stages. Should be lots of fun, and a few red ears here and there.

"I'd like a gas cap for my Yugo."
 "Seems like a fair trade to me."

— JTM

Off it goes! Hey, I got it done, and only hours to spare. Thank you, and please send us the next one.

From: **Timothy Lane** December 1, 2012
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I notice a lot of discussion in recent issues about the James Bond books and movies, especially the Cold War aspects. So I decided to consult some of reference works on the subject.

Kingsley Amis reported that most of the novels, up to *Thunderball* (in which he introduced SPECTRE and Blofeld), involved some sort of fight against the Soviets. However, some of the villains were crooks who had some sort of Soviet link but weren't necessarily Soviet agents per se (*Live and Let Die*, *Goldfinger*); much the same thing happened in *The Man With the Golden Gun* (the last novel). In *Diamonds Are Forever* and *The Spy Who Loved Me*, the villains were crooks with no foreign connection indicated. In the various stories, the villain in "For Your Eyes Only" was a Batista thug, and neither "Octopussy" nor "The Hildebrandt Rarity" had any political aspect ("Quantum of Solace" was an anecdote being told to Bond), but the others had some sort of political aspect (though only an indirect one with "Risico").

The movies started with *Dr. No* in 1962, during which time Fleming was sending Bond up against Blofeld in the books. Perhaps as a result, most of the movies made SPECTRE and Blofeld the enemy until they lost the rights to him (a long story, but that's why *Never Say Never Again* wasn't from Eon Productions and the movie *For Your Eyes Only* started with an unnamed villain who was clearly meant to be Blofeld being killed). *Goldfinger* was a businessman, but it's apparent that someone else is assisting him, no doubt Red Chinese. They definitely were working with SPECTRE in *You Only Live Twice*. After that, the villains were usually free-lance crooks, some of them rich businessmen, some of them rogue Soviets, and some regular crooks.

In Sir Kingsley's own Bond book, *Colonel Sun* (1968), the chief villain was a PLA officer.

— JTM

The aftermath of Hurricane Sandy has been most instructive. Naturally, climate alarmists took great advantage of the fact that there have been few northeastern hurricanes until last year, provided your memory isn't very long. (A look at the major hurricanes listed in the World Almanac reveals many, including 3 in 1954-5 [Carol, Hazel, and Diane].) Sandy wasn't an especially severe hurricane, but arrived simultaneously with a major nor'easter, and at the high tide of a full moon. As for the oceans rising, that's been happening for the past

sesquicentury at about an inch per decade, at least some of which is NOT anthropogenic because it preceded the major rise in carbon dioxide since 1930. But when you start with the assumption that everything proves catastrophic anthropogenic global warming due to greenhouse gases...

What makes this especially interesting is that it turns out that (according to the Hadley Centre and the University of East Anglia, the alarmists whose cultic behavior was exposed in intercepted e-mails) there has been NO significant net warming over the past sesquidecade (1997 through August 2012). They kept very quiet about it, but it came out about a month or two back. Their defense was that they still Believe even though their theories didn't predict such a hiatus (which means the theories are wrong). I don't doubt that there will be further warming, but if it were going to be at the catastrophic levels that the fear-ridden sorts expect, it undoubtedly would have warmed over that period.

From: **Taras Wolansky** December 1, 2012
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Alexiad 10/12:

Joe: "Afterwards we checked out the **Powells Bookstore down there. I didn't get anything.**" Suddenly I begin to believe in the Mayan Apocalypse ...

I have familial reassurance that it's not going to happen that way.

— JTM

Given the age breakdown of the Chicon membership this year, perhaps it's not that significant that there was only one person under 30 attending the panel on "Heinlein's Heroes". On the other hand, I'm sure it's true that the tsunami of YA publishing washed Heinlein's juveniles right out of the public libraries long ago.

One might consider expensive collections like the Virginia Edition of Heinlein, or the Vance Integral Edition, as elegant mausoleums for these authors, rather than as a way of keeping their work alive.

Review of *Jack 1939*: (Which is not another Ripper rip-off, as I assumed from the title!) It's amusing to reflect that when Nixon and JFK had their famous debate, it's Nixon who was actually the strong, virile one – while JFK was just made-up to look that way. It's less amusing to reflect that if Nixon had been elected, we would never have heard of Vietnam (except maybe on the back of some DVD players).

Review of *The Proceedings: Chicon III*: This led me to look up Earl Kemp's diatribe, "Heinlein Happens". Embarrassing indeed, but mostly to Kemp, who comes across as one of those stalkers who are filled with rage because the object of their affections barely knows they are alive.

Review of *Sherlock* – "A Study in Pink": This is the one in which the killer convinces the

victims to commit suicide. When I saw the episode, it seemed implausible to me that every victim would react the same way. But it's been a while since I've seen it.

You mention J.K. Galbraith's *The New Industrial State* (1967), which claimed large corporations are no longer subject to the marketplace. I saw William F. Buckley debate Galbraith on that very subject before an Oxford audience. Buckley was able to show that in just 10 years (I think it was) many of the "invulnerable" corporations Galbraith had cited had in fact fallen into decline, even gone bankrupt. Buckley's case was so strong that even before a left-leaning audience he still won the debate.

Darrell Schweitzer: "Why We Do It" should have been called "Give Me That Old-Time Religion". (I take it, the town elders don't require a virgin sacrifice!)

Exit poll data indicate that the Republican Party is what it has always been: the party of the middle class. Income cohorts above \$50K voted for Romney; below \$50K, for Obama. Which is to say, tax payers voted for Romney, tax consumers for Obama.

It's also worth noting that the Democrats studiously avoided making global warming an issue in the campaign. Clearly, they saw it as a losing issue even with their own voters.

A recent *Frontline* documentary about climate skeptics, reported by John Hockenberry, was grossly biased, but revealing nonetheless. Hockenberry tried to make the skeptics look like a powerful, sinister force – but the visuals of the skeptics' shabby little convention, and their tiny foundations and think tanks, gave him the lie. He revealed that of all the oil companies only Exxon-Mobil ever gave anything to those tiny conservative foundations – and Exxon-Mobil, under political pressure, has cut them off.

I was curious to see how the documentary would handle MIT Prof. Richard Lindzen, perhaps the most distinguished climate skeptic. In fact, they didn't interview him, or even mention him. But what left me literally gaping with astonishment was that, nonetheless, his name appeared on screen at least twice. Once was when they highlighted a sentence in a *N.Y. Times* story about global warming: Lindzen is mentioned in the *next* sentence. The other was a shot of a climate questionnaire of some kind. In any case, leaving him out of the documentary was clearly not an oversight.

Alexis Gilliland: "**Rush Limbaugh has blamed the hurricane on President Obama(!)**". Based on what I found on the liberal site, *Politico*, as well as the leftist *Daily Kos*, this appears to be a garbled reference to a typical Limbaugh riff on the subject of hubris, about a week before the election. Just as the "gods of golf" will mess you up if you think you have golf figured out, he explained, so the Obama campaign people, who thought they had the election figured out, are now facing a huge unknown factor: Hurricane Sandy.

George W. Price: Continuing the subject of Hollywood kowtowing to China, in the two years between the filming of the *Red Dawn* remake and its release, the villain was changed

from China to North Korea.

Trinlay Khadro: “**Milwaukee fan and author of *Inca* (an alternate history) Suzanne Alles Blom passed away recently.**” I remember having some great conversations with her at a con, around the time her book was published. She had an ad for the book on the back of her wheelchair.

From: **Trinlay Khadro** November 30, 2012
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Thank you for the zines. The fall & “Holiday Season” here in S. E. Wisconsin is full of Fannish Activity.

Halloween is, as always, a Huge Deal. Not only with a party, but also a production on Trick or Treat Sunday, at Lytheria for the kids. It’s an interactive thing, with a fresh theme every year and kids lined up around the block and down the street. This year Lee transformed his front porch into the deck of “Petit Marie” for Capt. La Fette recruiting at Port Royale for his pirate crew. (Photos are up on my flickr — look for my set name Halloween 2012.)

After what happened to Port
Royale I would be careful.

— JTM

My kitties are doing fine and taking good care of me, as I continue to recover. I have new glasses, much needed, and can see much better.

KT and “her Theo” are now engaged with their date set as “eventually”. This was announced at the fannish Thanksgiving dinner, to much applause. They are a sweet couple and have been together for just over five years now.

From: **AL du Pisani** December 4, 2012
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It has been a long winter. Here in Johannesburg, not so cold at maximum and minimum, but on average colder. And it lasted longer — until middle October the nights were cold, even though the days were pleasant. We even had a day when it snowed. The first time I actually saw snow coming down. Not just later, the snow on the ground. This is unusual, because Johannesburg is a place where it usually does not rain, or for the matter, snow in winter.

My mother had a very cold winter on the farm, and in the rest of the country it was colder than normal as well. The main road from Cape Town to Johannesburg and Pretoria was closed for a day, just outside of Beaufort West, due to heavy snow. The only reason I heard about this was that friends of my sister were becalmed in Beaufort West during this. They were lucky enough to arrive early, as the road was just closed, and could find a room to stay in. Later people stuck there had to sleep in their cars.

Every now and again I am reminded that I have gotten older, and can no longer do things I could do before. In these days it mostly comes

as a general feeling of tiredness, and the desire not to do things. This is even though I have been scaling down my non-work related activities, and are trying to reduce the impact of work as well. I have had to plan my weekend activities, and have to budget for extra sleep as well.

I have been taking Fridays off in November and December. Somehow, I do more on the weekends than I do at work. Like shoving the washer and dryer around so I can put a metal vent hose on the latter.

All this means that I am reading a lot less than before. Partly because I have gotten a lot less interested in reading stuff which I regard as not entertaining, but partly because I have become a lot more discriminating about what I read as well. And my local bookstores have been playing their part as well — where I had a choice of books for my money, I now have money but no books that look interesting enough to buy. They have also almost completely dropped the old paperback format for more expensive “trade paperback” format. The price difference is significant — R150 a book for what used to be R100. They have also not really done much regarding books in electronic formats. The one local e-book store I checked out was so badly organised that I really could not browse around looking for interesting things, but had to know what I was looking for in advance. And their prices were more than I expected. See, I have become accustomed to Baen Books’ price level and service. In comparison, most local and international e-book stores does not measure up.

Locally, the news have been labour unrest, opposition to toll roads, and the ANC’s leadership election. Because of a lot of factors, if you work in South Africa, you are either well paid or poorly paid. And we have a lot of people that are relatively speaking well paid, but see that management are making a lot more money than they do, and are unhappy about that. Given that the government are populated with people that talk a lot about how much they care about the poor, while making sure that their own nests are feathered, you have a situation where they need a lot of jobs, but are not willing that the jobs be low paying. Combined with a very vocal and violent organised labour, it is perhaps not surprising that jobs are not being created, and are disappearing.

We keep on seeing ex-South Africans with get up and go that got up and went. For instance, the son of friends of mine became a fireman last year. Top student in his class. But he is white, and that means there are not a lot of jobs for him in South Africa. Which is why he is currently working at Bagram airbase in Afghanistan. As are a lot of other South Africans. He mentioned that just about every South Africa dog handler is also in Afghanistan, as are a lot of pilots, security guards etc.

When toll road legislation got passed yea many years ago, a requirement was that for

every toll road, there must be an alternative route available. The alternative route were usually narrower and longer, but there had to be one. So a couple of years ago it was decided to upgrade the major highways in and around Johannesburg and Pretoria. And that they will be toll roads, with no real alternative. Most of the roads have been built, and it was a nightmare during construction. Now the government wants to start tolling. So far their plans have been set back a year, as there has been very vocal opposition to the idea.

Especially since it looks like the way tolling will be implemented is designed to be as inefficient as is possible, while making sure that as much money as possible goes to the right people. To nobody’s great surprise, the right people are politically connected.

We built toll roads in Kentucky back in the sixties. Now, all the bonds have been paid off — and the roads are no longer toll roads!

And our glorious ANC is a hundred years old this year. Combining the festivities is the five yearly election of party leader and exco. Last time Thabo Mbeki lost out as party leader, and was relieved as President of the country some time later. Jacob Zuma is trying for a second term, but the party is restless, and very divided. What is maybe a good thing is that they have managed to sideline Julius Malema through legal shenanigans, so he is not a formal part of this year’s circus. We are expecting ructions.

Otherwise we have been surviving, even thriving.

PS. Ever since I heard the title of the newest movie, I have been wondering what Commander Bond was doing in the Skolian Imperiate. So far I have not thought of anything.

Their medium dry vodka martinis, shaken not stirred, straight up with a twist are said to be particularly good.

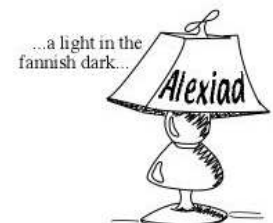
— JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Pat McCray, with thanks.

Taral Wayne, with questions about Kelvin Throop.



GAME OF THRONES — BLACKADDER

Thanks to the wonders of pale blue sans-serif type on a white background, I thought I saw this. So . . .

FADE IN on the **Blasted Heath** of Westeros. Marching across the **Eternal Snowfields** is a column of **Pressganged Troops**. The camera rushes down and focuses on two of them, **Lord Blackadder** and his serf, **S. Baldrick**.

Baldrick: "So why are we 'ere, sor?"

Blackadder: "Because the lord came with some of his other troops and said he would kill everyone who didn't join."

Baldrick: "And wot are we goin' to do?"

Blackadder: "We're going to fight a great bloody battle where many of us, and a lot of the other lord's people, are going to be horribly killed."

Baldrick: "And then wot?"

Blackadder: "We get to kill all the prisoners, take over his villages, butcher all the people there, slaughter the livestock, lay waste to the fields, and burn the houses."

Baldrick: "And if we lose?"

Blackadder: "Why, then, *we* get killed."

Baldrick: "So wot's the point of it all?"

Blackadder: "We get to go on to the next battle."

Baldrick: "Wot 'appens in the meantime?"

Blackadder: "Half the troops will starve to death or die of dysentery, since there hasn't been a crop in years thanks to all this snow and cold."

Baldrick: "An' wot 'appens when all the other lords get themselves killed off?"

Blackadder: "The last one left wins and becomes king."

Baldrick: "Why didn't they fight it out among themselves first?"

Blackadder: "Because then we wouldn't be having this lovely war!"

And the final scene:

In a long sustained track we pan over the **Waste Lands**. There is nothing living to be seen, neither animal nor plant. The Seven Kingdoms are absolutely devastated and destroyed except . . . wait a minute . . . there is one person left. The camera pans in on him.

Baldrick: "Blimey! I think I won!"

Co-Editors:	Lisa & Joseph Major
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Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in (by Grant) and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

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

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