

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

February has come in cold and icy. From the window it is beautiful. It is not so pretty when every step has to be examined. It is not as bad as the huge ice storm of two years ago. Most of the ice is arranged in rough waves, not the slick mess that made sidewalks impassible even for cats. It still requires careful negotiation. The trip to the corner convinces me to take the bus and not try to walk to work. Winter is here in white fury. It is as far south as Atlanta, Georgia, which was totally unprepared for snow. At least here we have snowplows and salt.

— Lisa

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Reviewer's Notes

Does it ever seem like everyone else around you has a much bigger income and membership in some secret discount club? When I see co-workers drive to work in SUVs and talk about their three-week vacations in India or Peru, it's discomfiting.

But . . . I have my own network. I have family across the country. I wish there were more fanzine fans, but the days of Degler (and doesn't that take us back) ended fannish hospitality.

One reason baby-care books boomed was that G.I. Joe and Rosie the Riveter, after their marriage, struck out and moved into Levittown, where they had neighbors, but no network. Instead of asking Grandma why Junior was crying, they looked it up, in the book that said that crying was good natural exercise or the one that said that it was traumatic. There were no connections.

This was why Robert Bloch's "A Way of Life" (*Fantastic Universe*, October 1956) was appealing; in a devastated world, the people with communications and connections were in a position where they could take responsibility — and somebody had to do it. So Fandom ran the world. That it would more likely be like Ian Watson's "The World Science Fiction Convention of 2080" (*F&SF*, October 1980), a marginal group surviving, but barely, in a marginal world, is a bitter realism. But even Watson's Fans had connections and community.

It has been longer since Watson's story than between that and Bloch's story. There have been changes. What connections, what community is there in this fandom of consumers, not participants?

Next January, I will be eligible to retire from work. Eligible is not the same as "able", and with expenses (heating bills of \$\$\$) as they are it's not going to happen. Such are the confines on my congoing.

I've seen recommendation lists for the Hugo nominations. Lists, I've seen, the books recommended I haven't. So often, the recommended books are obscure volumes from small or foreign presses. Has real science fiction become such a marginal market that it now can only be published a step above self-publishing?

As for the Fan Hugos, there is hope now, but again, the realization . . . how many minor pros with blogs are out there, rallying the followers to give them an award?

But it looks as if there will be some sort of convention round this year; ConCave in Bowling Green in February (assuming the convention hotel doesn't fall into a sinkhole), Holmes, Doyle, and Friends in Dayton in March, ConGlomeration in Louisville in April. Then NASFiC n Detroit in July.

A small annoyance is that the announced dates for the DC in 2017 bid conflict with the solar eclipse. I just can't drive seven hundred miles in a day any more, and flying would take about as much out of me. Mike Glyer wanted to have a NASFiC bid in Nashville (near the fringe of the eclipse) but Hopkinsville (at the greatest totality) is better sited, and the con can share with the Little Green Men Festival. Hey, it worked for Ray Palmer.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Ann Siefker, Martin Arbagi, and others of the Agra Treasurers have pledged to continue the Sherlockian tradition in Dayton with a new convention, **"Holmes, Doyle, & Friends"** in Dayton on **March 14-15, 2014**, at the Airport Clarion Inn at 10 Rockridge Road, Englewood, Ohio. Membership is \$60 to Ann Siefker, 25 Macready Avenue, Dayton, OH 45404-2104 (annsiefker@yahoo.com), check payable to the Agra Treasurers. There's not a moment to lose! Thanks to Dan Andriacco and his blog, "Dan Andriacco's Baker Street Beat", for the news.

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

The Martin 5 Theater in Hopkinsville was originally a single-screen, in the shopping mall there. That was where I saw *The Wind and the Lion* on my twenty-first birthday. They moved into a separate structure behind the mall with five screens. Just before my fifty-ninth birthday, it closed.

"It is the wind that passes, but the sea remains."

Frederick Forsyth's latest, *The Kill List* (2013), features the hunting-down of the Preacher, an Islamic orator whose spellbinding sermons, distributed over the Internet, inspire ordinary Muslims to carry out personal jihad against the unbelievers. As a part of the hunt, the agents carry out a cunning plan, as cunning as a fox who has just been appointed S. Baldrick Professor of Cunning at Oxford University. They create an elaborate, convincing physical duplicate of the Preacher, then prepare and release a video of him apparently delivering another oration saying, "All those things I have been saying? I have the Word from Allah that they were wrong. Never mind."

No, his name wasn't really Nehemiah Scudder [cf. "If This Goes On —" (NHOL G.011, *Astounding* February-March 1940, 1953)]. Now if only the Tracker had said to the Preacher "Hasta la vista, baby."

The website of *The Atlantic* has an article, "On Getting Naked in Antarctica", about an old Antarctic tradition; the 300 Club. When

the temperature is -100°F or lower, the winterer-overers at the Amundsen-Scott Station will join this exclusive group. Candidates sit in the sauna, which is at 200° F, to warm up, then on signal, don rubber boots and run out onto the Polar plateau, otherwise naked, to be photographed by the Ceremonial South Pole. It's good to know some traditions are kept.

In the Kindle department, *Over the Wine-Dark Seas* (2001, 2013) by Harry "H. N. Turteltaub" Turtledove, the first mercantile adventure of the Rhodians Menedemos and Sostratos, is now available for Kindle (Amazon Digital Services, \$5.99). Also, the third book in David Row's *The Whale Has Wings* series, *The Whale Has Wings Volume 3 — Holding the Barrier* is now available (2013, Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99). Volumes 1 and 2 were reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #3.

I happened to run across *Of Dice and Men: The Story of Dungeons & Dragons and The People Who Play It* (2013) by David M. Ewell. The book is somewhat haphazard, as Ewell has chosen to intersperse his history of the development of Dungeons & Dragons™ with chapters on his own personal experiences with the game. For those of us who aren't intimately involved with the convoluted corporate history of the game, and how it went from nothingness to boom to bust to redevelopment to persistence, the events described here are an intriguing proof of Moist von Lipwig's observation in *Going Postal* (2009) on how the people who develop a new concept so often lack the business skills to manage it.

Incidentally, while shopping at Barnes and Noble the other day, we happened to find the 2010 adaptation of *Going Postal* on DVD.

It is reported that a new adaptation of 1984 is in development. The movie will be retitled *Equals*, star Kristen Stewart and Nicholas Hoult, and be a romance. The director is Drake Doremus, who previously directed *Douchebag* (2010). Screenplay is by Nathan Parker, who previously wrote *Moon* (2009)

Is it too much to ask that the fulfillment of "We are the dead," be *before* this atrocity is realized? Can we get the editorial staff of the Ministry of Truth to repair this malreport?

Equals

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3289728/>

More zombie news: I was reading a new SF series on the Kindle; *Steel Beneath the Skin*, *The Cold Steel Mind*, and *Steel Heart* by Niall Teasdale. They were interesting, albeit some readers might find them not to their liking. (The frequent girl-girl sex, but the general obsession with being good-looking, would seem to alienate both sides.) The protagonist, Aneka Jansen, is a sometime mercenary — sorry, private security contractor — who is abducted by aliens. She awakens a thousand years later, except in a sense she doesn't, because her

memorise have been downloaded into a robotic humaniform body with human feelings. The thousand years have seen a war with her abductors that led to their annihilation, the destruction of Earth, the modification of humanity, and the formation of a multi-species multi-planetary government.

Jansen is involved in finding the remnants of the abductors' technology, terrorism, dealing with the question of identity, and other changes in the nature of humanity.

Then, in the third volume, a group of terrorists use the alien technology to develop . . . you guessed it, zombies. So much for that.

MONARCHIST NEWS

Sir Shao I-fu, CBE [pinyin: Shao Yifu], died in Hong Kong on **January 7, 2014**. Born on the fourteenth day of the tenth month of the year of the Fire Goat of the 77th Cycle [November 23, 1907] in Ningpo, Chekiang Province [pinyin: Ningbo, Zhejiang], Shao was educated in Shanghai. He joined with his two brothers in Singapore to create Unique Film Productions, which later became Shaw Brothers Studio, one of the leading movie and television production companies in the Sinic world., responsible for the production and distribution of many martial arts and fantasy films. Shao was made CBE in 1974 and a knight in 1977.

He is better known as Sir Run Run Shaw.

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

Report by Joseph T Major

Captain **Józef Kowalski** of the Polish army died **December 7, 2013**. Kapitan Kowalski was the oldest man in Europe at the time of his death (but not the oldest person), and the last survivor of the Polish-Soviet War.

Born in Lwów, (now Lviv, Ukraine) as he claimed on **February 2, 1900**, Kowalski served in the Polish army's 22nd Uhlans, reaching the rank of Lieutenant. He was imprisoned in a concentration camp during the World War II. After the collapse of communist control of Poland, Kowalski was honored, being promoted to captain, awarded the Order of Polonia Restituta, and made an honorary citizen of several prominent Polish towns.

On January 28 I remembered the shuttle *Challenger* and her crew.

Francis R. (Dick) Scobee
Michael J. Smith
Judith A. Resnik
Ronald E. McNair
Ellison S. Onizuka
Gregory B. Jarvis
Sharon Christa McAuliffe

May their memory be eternal.

— Lisa

SPACE: 1889

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE FOREVER ENGINE

by Frank Chadwick

(Baen; 2013; ISBN 978-1451639353; \$15;
Amazon Digital Services; \$7.53)

Game Designers' Workshop's game *Space: 1889* was amusing; an early exemplar of Cyberpunk. When the game declined in popularity and fell out of print, it was an unfortunate occurrence. Chief Designer Frank Chadwick had gone to some effort to evoke the spirit of the real Victorian Era.

At present, efforts are underway to reissue the game. While you're waiting, read this novel, set in that exotic world where Allan Quatermain meets John Carter.

Or perhaps Martin Padway meets James Bond. Jack Fargo of the University of Chicago gets called up by old friends in Blighty to see about this queer coin they found. It's a coin of Galba, iii trib pot — the third year of his imperium. Since Servius Sulpicius Galba Caesar Augustus encountered something sharp, hard, and penetrating, also fatal, on a.d. xv Kalendis Feb. AUC DCCCXXII, a mere seven months after Nero declared "What a poet dies with me!" (but never quite said *who*) and stabbed himself, thus leaving the succession to Galba, there was a small problem there.

The British have developed a long-range sampling device. This coin was one of the samples collected, and it just doesn't fit. Whereupon a professor of classics with a useful background and connections, even if he is from overseas, can be of assistance.

Particularly when something goes *blooey*! Jack wakes up in a hospital. He notices that there is a great deal lacking in the way of up-to-date equipment. Now the National Health Service has its problems, but even they can afford to have cardiac monitors.

Shortly thereafter the inspector arrives. He doesn't quite pull out his notebook, lick his pencil, and begin a moment-by-moment reconstruction of the movements of this Yank Fargo, but he does inform Jack that he needn't worry about Christmas presents, since he'll be hanged for treason by then. It's September, September 1888, that is.

This is when Jack begins to realize that he's shifted time-lines. Did Maxoni and Cocini have those sorts of issues?

Except someone higher up with access to information decides to take over. And, far from being sent to Pentonville for a long drop, Jack finds himself at the offices of the Royal Society, explaining things and having things explained to him. Particularly after that dramatic terrorist attack by the agents of the Old Man of the Mountain.

The next thing he knows, he is on one of HM airships, heading across the Channel to Bavaria. The airship is sustained by Martian liftwood. At which point Jack, not having had

the advantage of having played a game called *Space: 1889* is a little confused. Yes, it's an antigravity material. Presumably a little safer than Favorite.

After a surprise attack from a French airship (you were maybe thinking Wade of Piracy Preferred?) Fargo and his new British associate wind up in Munich, going to see a vacationing British peer. Fortunately, Fargo knows that Baron Renfrew is more than that.

It's not surprising that he has a comely young lady with him, one Gabrielle Courbiere. It is surprising that Gabrielle is an agent of the French Secret Service. (Oh, the Commune took over France in 1871, just as the Confederacy won its independence in 1864, as Lincoln had taken sick and died in '62 and the disarrayed Republicans lost to McClellan, who needed some more time to rebuild the army, and so offered peace.)

But they have to head for the Balkans to stop the Old Man of the Mountain, who has been buying liftwood like nobody's business. See, he wants to stop the motor of the world, or at least reduce Earth's orbital velocity. Like Clark Fries, who would blow up the universe to hear the bang.

Then, it turns out that Fargo met the "Old Man of the Mountain" before, all unsuspecting. Just as his chief scientific advisor, Professor Thomson, is someone he knew, just not that way.

In the hills of the Balkans, a desperate confrontation between the Old Man of the Mountain and his flunkies, and Jack and Gabrielle with the damnedest assortment of Royal Marines, Bavarian riflemen, Servian hillmen, and what not leads to a dramatic climax . . .

(I do hope that some editor points out to Frank Chadwick, should he attempt to reuse a particular *Space: 1889* adventure in the sequels, that "Tereshkova" is a female name! That was a grotesque error.)

ACADEMICS!Review by Joseph T Major of
THE DOCTOR AND THE DINOSAURS

by Mike Resnick

(Pyr; 2013;

ISBN 978-1-61614-861-6; \$17.95;

HarperCollins; \$11.99 [Kindle])

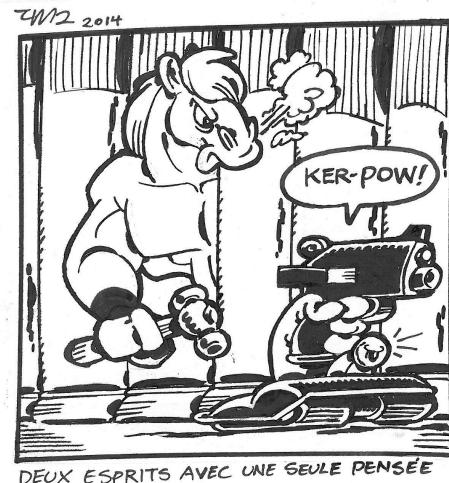
"A Weird West Tale"

Cope and Marsh hated each other to begin with. Well, not quite "to begin with"; there was, presumably, some early parts of their lives when they were unaware that each other even existed. However, during their glory days of paleontology, their feelings towards each other were such that if some redskin medicine man (yes, that was how they said it then; live with it) had reanimated one of the dinosaurs, and had it eat one of them, the other would have rejoiced.

One can almost say that Bwana is getting lazy, when history provides him with such

colorful, larger-than-life characters and such a tension-ridden and conflict-filled setting. Particularly when the Comanche medicine men really are going to reanimate the dinosaurs and turn them loose on Edward Drinker Cope and Othniel Charles Marsh for the sin of having disturbed a sacred (human) burial ground. And once the Triceratops, Velociraptors, etc. finish eating up all the paleontologists, they are going to get hungry again and go hunting more dinner. Like other humans.

Not that this concerns John Henry "Doc" Holliday, who is rather more concerned about the extremely impending end of his life. When He Who Yawns, also known as Geronimo, makes an appearance and makes Holliday an offer he can't refuse. Well, he could, but he is somewhat fond of living. One year's extra life (subject to change without notice in the case of gunfire or marauding big ugly scaly things), that is.



And so, oddly enough not having to endure cries of "Doc Holliday! I heard you had died!", he sets out for Wyoming to try to resolve the matter one way or another.

Somebody else is also there to resolve the matter one way or another. It's a boring day with nothing much to do, so Theodore Roosevelt has turned up. Add to that the feudists' gunmen Cole Younger and William Frederick Cody and you've got a powder keg just waiting to go off.

With the Numunuu ("Comanche" is, not surprisingly, from the Ute, meaning "enemy"; and naturally "Numunuu" comes from the word in their language for "people") taking a vacation from the Comancheria to pounce, big ugly scaly things out there, susceptible to the super steampunk weapons Tom Edison and Ned Buntline have provided, but it takes a lot, and so on, our protagonists are in a perilous situation. Which only one man can resolve . .

IT TAKES A BOAT

Review by Joseph T Major of
CHASING SHACKLETON:
Re-creating the World's Greatest Journey of Survival
 by Tim Jarvis
 (2014; William Morrow;
 ISBN 978-0-06-228273-6; \$35.00;
 2014; William Morrow (Kindle); \$13.29)

... Bilbo Baggins was standing at his door after breakfast smoking an enormous long wooden pipe that reached nearly down to his woolly toes (neatly brushed) — Shackleton came by. Shackleton! If you had heard only a quarter of what I have heard about him, and I have only heard very little of all there is to hear, you would be prepared for any sort of remarkable tale. Tales and adventures sprouted up all over the place wherever he went, in the most extraordinary fashion.

All the unsuspecting Bilbo saw that morning was a Man with a paper in his hand. He was wearing a dark suit with a neatly tied tie, and his dark hair was parted in the middle.

"Good Morning!" said Bilbo, and he meant it. Then Bilbo sat down on a seat by his door, crossed his legs, and blew out a beautiful grey ring of smoke that sailed up into the air without breaking and floated away over The Hill.

"Very pretty!" said Shackleton. "But I have no time to blow smoke-rings this morning. I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success."

It's becoming my opinion that if you went back far enough in the genealogy of the Shackletons you'd get to Aragorn, while it is blatantly obvious that Tom Crean was a Tuatha Dé Danann on a vacation. Frank Worsley, however, was a time traveller with a inertial navigation system hooked up to his brain.

Tim Jarvis lacked those advantages. On the other hand, he had the backing of the Hon. Alexandra Shackleton, granddaughter of the man in question, and he knew it had been done. Accordingly, he thought it should be done again, as closely to the original as possible.

Therefore, a replica of the *James Caird* was built (named *Alexandra Shackleton*), five other masochists willing to endure bitter cold and long hours of complete darkness, along with freezing seawater, cramped discomfort, and faithful versions of official Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition gear were found. Also, corporate sponsors were lined up. One of the sponsors which pulled out abruptly was

the National Geographic Society. Did someone say something good about Dr. Cook? (Jarvis notes Shackleton's assiduous courting of sponsorship and concludes that he would have done very well in today's environment. "Twitter statistics for #EHShackleton, #Endurance, #ITAE...")

What has changed, though, is the environment. There are permits permits permits to get. Every small-bore bureaucrat sees these people as a potential income source. Not to mention political rivalries only nominally suppressed by the Antarctic Treaty. Indiana Jones married Marion so he could get someone to handle the paperwork.

Then there are safety regulations, insurance requirements, and the like. In Paul Edwin Zimmer's *The Survivors* (1979) the protagonist Dane is going slowly but inexorably mad because every venture he undertakes is monitored nonstop by rescue drones. The only reason the *Alexandra Shackleton* wasn't so supervised was that the technology was still in development.

The ocean voyage was one of the less stressful parts of the venture and this was with six guys throwing up constantly, crammed into space on the order of a tube hotel, and being filmed for the documentary non-stop. (The use they found for wool caps is not one mentioned in the sales literature.)

In spite of it all they got to South Georgia, where they would undertake the next step of the recreation. The crossing had its own unique problems. One of the three crossers had to lie to the insurance company, for example. Jarvis and his colleagues did not quite have the impression that a fourth man was along.

Baz Gray, one of the other crossers, when not trekking across mountains, serves in 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group, Royal Marines. Its predecessor was 30 Assault Unit, the exploits of which are described in *Ian Fleming's Commandos* by Nicholas Rankin (2011; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 11 #2).

In the end they got to Grytviken. Where someone else was, gone to see her grandfather's grave. It was entirely fortuitous that Alexandra Shackleton was there, yet she was quite pleased.

There are still people willing to go out there where safe return is doubtful, but there seems to be less room for them in an increasingly closing society.

That comment about the cameras? The documentary *Chasing Shackleton* is available on DVD from PBS for \$24.00.

INTO THIN AIR

Review by Joseph T Major of
MURDER IN THE HIGH HIMALAYA:
Loyalty, Tragedy, and Escape from Tibet
 by Jonathan Green
 (2010; Public Affairs;
 ISBN 978-1-58648-714-0; \$26.95)
<http://www.publicaffairsbooks.com>

Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster* (1997) is among other matters an indictment of the professional guiding business. A significant contributory cause, he says, of the massive death toll and the callous abandonment of dying climbers on the mountain was the attitudes of the guides and their affluent climbers; they had to get their ascent, and anything else was incidental, if not irrelevant.

The business shrugged off Krakauer, and continued. Nine years later, on Cho Oyu, another high-altitude fatality occurred, before parties of professionally-guided climbers, who went their way. Except for one.

In other lands, forcible efforts to break down old social structures, introduce new means, and retrain the backward people with modern methods are quite popular with the most aware segment of the population. How this is reconciled with the "Free Tibet" movement never quite seems clear.

The efforts of the Chinese government to reshape minority cultures into Disneyland-style exhibits and Sinicize the population have been noted. Tibet is, well, the bloodiest case. Tibetans who do not agree with the program have been striving to leave for over sixty years. Naturally, the Chinese government finds this emigration without permission unseemly, and the efforts of the People's Armed Police (*Zhongguo Renmin Wuzhuang Jingcha Budui* ["Chinese People's Armed Police Force"]) to prevent it are drastic.

The Nangpa La is under the heights of Cho Oyu. It is a pass with an altitude of 5806 meters, 19,050 feet. On September 30, 2006, a party of Tibetans attempted to cross into Nepal through the Nangpa La. The PAP fired at them, as climbers watched. One of the Tibetans, a Buddhist nun named Kelsang Namtso, was shot and killed.

In alternating chapters, Green tells the story of Kelsang Namtso and of the witnesses to her death as they both came to the Nangpa La. The guides are sympathetically portrayed; they have to make a living, doing what they enjoy doing, even if it's with people who are only having the latest status symbol. The fate of the Tibetans, oppressed by their alien rulers, burdened by an excruciating progress as they make their escape, ever in danger of betrayal and death, contrasts grimly with both.

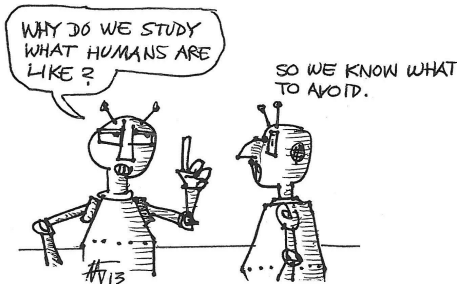
One of those tourists was a Romanian named Sergio Matei. He wanted to record his ascent of a wonderful mountain; he recorded instead the dreadful deeds of men under that mountain. Green describes the dire fear that Matei lives under, for all that his images have gone around the world, the secret out for ever and ever.

But there is so much information out there that no one really has the time to care.

Or other things. One sinister, and saddening, comment that Green reports was how so many of the people he interviewed asked that their names not be used, since their companies did business with China.

Cho Oyu is the sixth highest mountain in the world, with an altitude of 8201 meters (26,906 feet) above sea level. It was first climbed on October 19, 1954 by a party led by Austrian mountaineer Herbert Tichy. The second ascent was in 1956 and the summit team included Pasang Dawa Lama, who had been with Tichy on the first ascent.

Green tells of how in September of 2009, professional guide Marty Schmidt took investment broker Clifton Maloney to the top of Cho Oyu, on Maloney's second try. Maloney was seventy-one, the oldest American ever to reach the top of an 8000-meter peak. After the summiting, Maloney said to Schmidt before they went to sleep, "I'm the happiest man in the world. I've just summited a beautiful mountain." He died in his sleep that night. There is something poignantly fulfilling about that. [Pages 104-106]



THE MARCH OF FOLLY

Review by Joseph T Major of
JAPAN 1941:

Countdown to Infamy

by Eri Hotta

(2013; Random House

ISBN 978-0307-59401-3; \$26.99)

The assiduous readers of manga and viewers of anime may wonder how such a forthrightly aggressive and powerful culture, which has guys with huge swords, while its competition has only a mouse and a rabbit, could lose. The perfervid believers in Japan Inc. find it incomprehensible that a culture where the workers have *wa* and work eighteen hour days until their company needs them no more, whereupon they gladly go to their deaths, outproducing other nations, could have failed. The eager fans of martial-arts films are at a loss to understand how the kickboxers, ninjas, samurais, and kung fu fighters could be defeated.

In more serious circles, the idea that the peaceful people of that land were provoked to action by the malicious actions of the Yankees are all too common. It is doubtful that any of these will read Hotta.

Barbara Tuchman's *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (1984) touches on the Japanese decision for war, briefly (Pages 29-32). Her argument loses some credibility

when she asserts that a strategy of not attacking the American possessions would have been viable.

What Hotta has done is to describe the careers and personalities of the Japanese leaders. For members of the "system" some of them were surprisingly different. Thus, for example, the Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori was a Korean. (His ancestors had come to Japan in the sixteenth century. That's not long enough to become Japanese.)

Similarly, Hotta describes the basis for what these people did. One memorandum from a subordinate in the American treasury department wasn't going to have much influence. The Japanese economy was terrifyingly marginal even before the decision for war.

As for the military factors, more discussion might have been made of the strategic considerations and the problems of equipment. There was no *Uchū senkan Yamato* ("Star Cruiser *Yamato*") to save the day, no Transformers or other technological marvels that would overcome disasters such as Nomonhan.

Sometimes, reality does not provide the boost that a good story needs to bring about its desired end. Understanding the ways and ends will create such a story, if not the one wanted.

BATTLEGROUND: LANGLEY

Review by Joseph T Major of

SPYMASTER:

Startling Cold War Revelations of a Soviet KGB Chief

by Tennent H. Bagley

(2013; Skyhorse Publishing;

ISBN 978-1-62636-065-5; \$26.95)

Sergey A. Kondrashev was a senior officer in the First Chief Directorate of the Committee of State Security. He ran operations against the Main Enemy and its allies, and handled defectors from them. In a career beginning in 1944, during the Great Patriotic War, and lasting until 1991, outlasting the Soviet Union, Kondrashev was involved in many of the greatest operations of State Security.

And then, being on his uppers, like most former Chekists, he went looking for a connection among his former opponents. Then he found one, in Tennent H. "Pete" Bagley, a long-term CIA veteran of the dark side of the cold war. They seem to have hit it off well, considering they had spent forty years working against each other.

The first part of this is Kondrashev's career in the State Security (which, for the record, was frequently redesignated for about ten years until they settled on Комитет государственной безопасности (*Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*; "Committee of State Security"). He describes a number of efforts at straight-up counterintelligence and espionage, other actions that fell under the head of "Active Measures", bureaucratic struggles with superiors, and other items of the usual

business of any organization and of a spy agency in particular.

Kondrashev also discusses some of the wider and more notorious incidents of the Cold War. By some peculiar alchemy if not strange coincidence, he validates most of Bagley's controversial propositions.

Nosenko a fake spy? Sure. Agent TOP HAT (Dmitri F. Polyakov of the GRU (Soviet Military Intelligence)) a fake spy? Sure. Grand deception? Sure. And fortunately, Kondrashev has died, so is unavailable for comment or elaboration.

The Angleton-Golitsyn theory of a grand deception broke apart the CIA. Bagley was one of Angleton's associates and he seems to have an animus against Yuri Nosenko. It's also worth noting that according to Oleg Kalugin (who is available for comment) in the eighties the KGB was looking for Nosenko, not Golitsyn. And Golitsyn also claimed that the entire dissident movement was a KGB-managed deception operation.

The portrayal of the "other side" being as bureaucratic as ours, and as dominated as much by office politics as by world politics, is oddly enough a counter-argument to the other thesis. The KGB had its Pointy-Haired Vozhd, too.

THE STARCROSSED

Reviewed by Joseph T Major of

WHOLock

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3bGYljQ5Uw>

The bullet-spattered walls are covered with pictures of a man, and of a police call box. Sherlock (Benedict Cumberbatch) sitting in his chair, says, "A name. **Give me a name.**" Then there is a strange noise, and John (Martin Freeman) says, "What is it?" Sherlock gets up, looks out the window of 221B Baker Street, and observes "We have a client."

Indeed. There is a police call box in the parking space in front of the building. Sherlock goes down the seventeen steps, and as he opens the door a man opens the door of the box. Sherlock says, "Who are you?" The man closes the door. Sherlock looks at it closely, it opens, and the man invites him in. "It's larger on the inside than the outside," he says . . .

All right, someone put together clips from *Sherlock* and from various episodes of *Doctor Who* with the Eleventh Doctor (Matt Smith). Nope, the characters appear in the same frame.

The BBC got them to work together on one shoot. Nope, doesn't look like it; there's no credits and it's not listed on IMDB.

In Ben Bova's novel *The Starcrossed* (1975), the harassed Bill Oxnard, developer of the 3-D video system used to produce the witless space opera of the title, works on a system to completely animate live actors, so the actors would look natural, except they would be saying and doing rational, comprehensible things. The devoted fan going under the pseudonym of "John Smith" (or Ghu forbid, that's his *real name*) used advanced editing technology to create this video to a like effect.

It is amazingly effective. It's been referred to as "Sherlock Holmes becomes the Doctor's latest companion."

COFFEE

by Lisa

I have a new favorite coffee. It is Vienna Cinnamon. It is full bodied but not bitter and the cinnamon in it brings back memories of hot cider with a cinnamon stick, one of the great treats after sledding in a cold winter.

This year's Super Bowl is between the Seattle Seahawks and the Denver Broncos. In terms of horses the names are interesting. In the case of the Broncos it is obvious. For the Seahawks the connection is through their city, after which 1977 Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew was named. A fan of predatory birds would probably cheer the Seahawks. As a horse fan my choice is the Broncos. It does not hurt that I loved the city of Denver when I was lucky enough to visit. So it will be the Broncos whom I cheer. Having made my choice I settled back to watch what I anticipated would be a well fought game. It was not. The Seahawks got control with the first snap and the Broncos managed to score only once. It looked like an exhibition, not a game between two teams.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Chronicle of our Solstice Travels
by Joe



Winter Storm Dion went through the area on Friday. This being Kentucky, it began with rain, and finished with snow. This promotes "black ice", frozen patches on the roads. Back in the seventies, after Thanksgiving, Grant and I went with Tim to see our friend Bruce in Lexington. We came back on Sunday; Tim was driving and Grant was in the back asleep. Coming to the county line, though it was a bright sunny day, we hit a patch of black ice and the car went into the median, ending up next to the eastbound lane. Grant got a very disturbing wake-up call.

I don't care to have that repeat. So we didn't go to the Southern Lights, or meet with Tom Sadler and Rod Smith.

December 15, 2013

St. Matthews Baptist Church Christmas

Dinner

This planning had our own problems. Grant was feeling very low, for various reasons, and was wondering if he could even get out of the house. And Johnny was impossible to get in touch with.

However, in spite of everything, they both made it. The service was more ordinary than it has been, but it was a pleasant combination of song and instrumental performance. Elizabeth was in the chorus. Her sister Alice and Alice's husband, Loren, were also there.

Grant managed to get through the serving line all right, there were no disasters at the table, and we had a quite friendly conversation. The weather was a little better that day than it had been last weekend, which meant we didn't have to worry about Alice and Loren. (There had been the time they were coming to have Friday dinner with us and their car hit a pothole.)

All was calm, all was bright, and we got pleasantly stuffed.

Over the next week I prepared. I did laundry, got my medicines, and had the oil changed, but also had to buy a new tire. Then I renewed the auto license and paid the tax, after which I bought Grant a pizza. We went to dinner at Culver's with Tim and Elizabeth, did our final shopping at Wal-Mart, and I did my last packing.

And so to bed.

December 21, 2013

Louisville — Henderson, KY

I woke up a little early. I got the car loaded while Lisa cleaned out the litter boxes, then I put the trash bin where Grant could get it down, and we were off. Ate breakfast along the way and got to Henderson at lunch time. Lisa's father and his wife were home and we unloaded the car. They spent most of the rest of the day talking and watching movies.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 135.1

Sunrise: 7:56 AM (EST)

Sunset: 4:34 PM (CST)

Weather: Warm, rain

December 22, 2013

Henderson

We went out to lunch and then had a family get-together all afternoon. It was very relaxing and a pleasant time was had by all. Checked in with Grant and he managed to get the trash bin down to the sidewalk, though it was pretty heavy because of all the kitty litter in it.

And so to bed.

Sunrise: 7:03 AM

Sunset: 4:35 PM

Weather: Warm, drizzly

Books read: *Robert A. Heinlein: In Dialogue with His Century Volume I* by Bill Patterson
Japan 1941; Countdown to

Infamy by Eri Hotta

Monday, December 23, 2013

Henderson

This was the wind-down. I got an early birthday cake, made without sugar. Now that was nice. We shared gifts and generally enjoyed ourselves

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 45.4

Sunrise: 7:03 AM

Sunset: 4:35 PM

Weather: Cold, cloudy

Book read: *Last of the Blue and Gray* by Richard A. Serrano

Tuesday, December 24, 2013

Henderson — Hopkinsville, KY

Fifty-Nine Years and Thirty-Two Years

Drove down to Hopkinsville. My cousin Myra had had a most distressing experience, which as she was going off to Colorado that afternoon didn't help. Not that we didn't offer to help, but she said she was fine.

So many in the family were unwell; it's always a bad time to be so and what was happening was even worse. One who wasn't unwell was merely aged; cousin Helen had been a schoolmate of my father's.

Got back, finished unloading, made preparations against the chill.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 98.0

Sunrise: 7:04 AM

Sunset: 4:38 PM

Weather: Clear, cold.

Wednesday, December 25, 2013

Hopkinsville

Newton's Birthday

Abusy day. Lunch was at the home of cousin Chris and his wife cousin Penny Faye (this is Kentucky, understand) who had rebuilt Chris's grandfather's house. It's a good distance down a gravel road, and I tend to worry about the isolation. We also saw the mother of my cousin Jim. She is in a nursing home in Hopkinsville, and then we saw some other relatives who were in their own homes.

Turned out I'd missed two get-togethers where I would have been welcome, if not moreover expected

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 54.1

Sunrise: 7:01 AM

Sunset: 4:39 PM

Weather: Sunny, cold

Thursday, December 26, 2013

Hopkinsville — Cadiz, KY — Hopkinsville

One of my cousins has a status that is only unusual if you're from outside the state. He has the same name as my father and older brother. We met him for lunch. The place where we met him has its own unique

distinction. I have seen some very elaborate music boxes, playing brass disks that are broader than LP records, made with elaborate cherrywood cases, and generally showing high levels of construction and craft. One is at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn. The other is at Broadbent in Cadiz.

We also saw Lisa's favorite cousin, Tony, who lives at the end of a gravel road, like so many. He had birds flying around the house, buzzards and vultures. I'm not sure what this means.

We also saw our cousin the other he-Madison Major. Not the one in Chicago, a computer consultant. Not the girl in Hopkinsville. But a chunky young man, working on his grandfather's farms and studying to step in and fill the role. At least he doesn't have to make his own topsoil. (You don't think I should give him a copy of *Farmer In the Sky* (1950, NHOL G.083)?) His sister Ella went off driving a tractor with all the confidence of an old timer. Fine pair of kids. We also saw his mother and grandparents.

My cousin Andrew has the coolest job. As you know, Bob, Chris Garcia works at the Museum of Computing, including building the Steampunk Internet with two Babbage Machines and telegraphs, but Andrew's job is cooler. He is a hacker for the government. Oh all right they say "cybersecurity specialist" but he gets to break into other computers and they'll cover for him! Andrew's parents David and Susan, who we did see, had just seen the children but were awake enough to see us.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 66.4
 Sunrise: 7:01 AM
 Sunset: 4:40 PM
 Weather: Sunny, mild.
 Book read: *Spymaster* by Tennent H. Bagley

Friday, December 27, 2013
Hopkinsville — Nashville, TN — Hopkinsville

We had to go see McKay's Books while we were so close. They have a very satisfying collection of books, graphic novels, DVDs, and comics. They even sell vinyl records (as you know, Bob, this was a primitive form of encoding .MP3 files).

Afterwards, by odd chance, we passed by a Red Robin restaurant. Now we had seen one in Newport, not far from the Aquarium, but had passed on it. This time we went there. It was a good place. For you technical types, the greeters book you with iPads.

After seeing two relatives of mine who happen to have the same last name as a well known fantasy author, we went back to Hopkinsville, with dinner in Clarksville. Fortunately it was a clear day and we didn't have any problems.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 163.4
 Sunrise: 7:02 AM
 Sunset: 4:39 PM
 Weather: Sunny, cool
 Books read: *Murder in the High Himalayas* by Jonathan Green
Visions of Infamy by William B. Honan

Saturday, December 28, 2013
Hopkinsville — Madisonville, KY — Hopkinsville

Lunch with my brothers, their wives, and my incredibly cute grandnephew, who is already reading and apparently generally performing above his grade level. Maybe I should start him out on *Red Planet* (1949, 1999, NHOL G.077) in four or five years. It has an untrustworthy government, and guns, which should be an introduction to reality.

One brother went home, my grandnephew's father came by to get him, and finally we needed to leave also. Went out to dinner and then drove back.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 78.5
 Sunrise: 7:02 AM
 Sunset: 4:41 PM
 Weather: Cloudy, cool
 Book read: *The Whale Has Wings Volume 3: Holding the Barrier* by David Row

Sunday, December 29, 2013
Hopkinsville — Louisville

But it was time to go. We stripped the bed, put the sheets and towels by the washer, made sure there was nothing of ours left, and took our departure. It was a long trip and we wanted to get home.

Grant was feeling up to going out and after an arduous effort at unloading there was enough room in the car for all three of us. We tried the Red Robin in Louisville, which I remembered I had seen once I was reminded of where it was. Embarrassing.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 174.7
 Sunrise: 7:02 AM (CST)
 Sunset: 5:31 PM (EST)
 Weather: Sunny, mild.

Total mileage: 815.7
 Gas bought: \$132.86
 Time out: 9:54 AM
 Time back: 5:24 PM

New Year's Eve Grant was able to get out and we all had dinner with Carolyn Clowes. It was a quiet night for us and we had a good time

Monday, January 20, 2014
Louisville — Frankfort, KY — Louisville

The horse farms weren't offering tours so we went to Frankfort. After an immense amount of trouble, including spending an hour

picking up fallen books.

And we didn't get out for breakfast until it was practically lunchtime, not to mention that I forgot my pills. Which would have effects on Tuesday, but that's another story.

Nevertheless, we got to Poor Richard's Bookstore in Frankfort all right. Rod Smith was there and we caught up on the past few months. I'm afraid he and I drove the others a little crazy talking about such things as Harpo Marx's only speaking role in a movie.

Finally, it got late, we had to go home, and did, stopping for dinner along the way. Then it was only a matter of catching up on the pills, getting the trash out, and collapsing.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 108
 Sunrise: 7:56 AM
 Sunset: 5:51 PM
 Time out: 10:58 AM
 Time back: 6:58 PM
 Weather: Sunny, mild (unlike the rest of the week)

GOTTA HAVE THEM ALL!

Taral Wayne

At times, I've fancied myself a "completist." That's somebody who has to have all of something. As a kid, I was most often a completist about bubble-gum cards and comic books. More recently I've been a completist for videos of *Fraggle Rock*, Elvis Costello albums, or Flavian coinage. In between, I was a science fiction completist.

The object of my first brush with obsessive-compulsive disorder was the Good Doctor, Isaac Asimov. I had read Bradbury, Clarke and Heinlein as well, but it was Asimov who most appealed to me. It wasn't for his evocative language or delicate style. Asimov wrote like the list of ingredients on the side of a biscuit box. You always knew what was in the recipe, but were never impressed by the taste.

Bradbury was all style . . . and most of the time no substance. Vampires sucked electricity from television sets and circus calliopes marched down main streets in small towns to protest recorded pop music. While appealing to mood and sentiment, Bradbury was depleted uranium when it came to literal sense. Clarke was closer to core of science fiction ideas—yet, to me, he was an even more gray stylist than Asimov. Other times, he seemed fascinated with the idea of grand, incomprehensible forces, Cosmic Overminds, in the shadow of which humanity diminished to insignificance. Insignificance wasn't my cup of tea, either. And Heinlein? Everyone loved Heinlein. I never did. His love of human inventiveness seemed to go to the opposite extreme, somehow arrogantly assuming that, in a galaxy of unknown intelligences, humanity was the toughest and most deserving of Darwinian success. Even without alien competition, the

human species is sometimes so vile and stupid I'm not sure it will even survive to get off the planet, let alone dominate a galaxy. Heinlein was also bounded by a frustratingly narrow, parochial sense of history. It was a recap of the American Experience, replete with pioneers breaking the sod on Mars to build log cabins, '49ers rushing to the gold rush on Ganymede and Thomas Edison inventing the starship in his garage. Then there was Heinlein's dialog. It was straight out of 1950's family television – "Hand me the fission wrench will you, honey?" "Of course, sweetiecum, right after I adjust the verniers and pour the coffee." I couldn't stomach it.

But Asimov! Ahhh ... he was just right for me. Certainly not too poetic. Barely poetic at all, in fact. Oddly, there wasn't much science, so you couldn't call Asimov too dry, either. He didn't puff humanity up too much, nor tear it too far down. As well, there was a grander scope of history to Asimov's fiction than in Heinlein's. It was all borrowed from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, of course, but no one faults Frank Herbert for borrowing all the history for *Dune* from the Arabs. From childhood, I was a sucker for Roman history, and I have clear memories from when I was very young of trying to find books on the Roman Legions, Caesar's campaigns and the chief figures of the late Republic politics. The Foundation series was *made* for me.

I was just as absorbed by Asimov's robot stories. R. Daneel Olivaw as plainly one of the models for Mr. Data on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Like Asimov's robots, Data had a "positronic" brain, and was governed by a set of rules that the writers called "The Three Laws of Robotics." Such humanoid robots are wonderful metaphors for how, at one time, fans typically saw their place in society – both superior and inferior to those around them, natural "outsiders." Mere automatons at first, Asimov's robots became more human, and easy to identify with, as he developed the sweeping future history of the 1950s novels.

There was at least one problem with fitting Asimov's early work into one future history. It required that humanoid robots be invented at least twice, and forgotten entirely three times!

Their first invention was by Universal Robotics, sometime in the near future – late 20th century or early 21st. They were apparently invented again at a much later date, at a time when the population of an overcrowded Earth lived entirely in enclosed cities, and the first extra-solar colonies had been established for at least a few generations. Then, as humanity spread through the galaxy and inhabited planets numbered in the thousands, robots were forgotten once again – apparently once and for all, this time. It was hardly the only thing that humanity forgot. They forgot the whereabouts of Earth and that it was the planet of our origin as well.

No matter. By that time Earth was a backwater, largely poisoned by toxic pollution and radioactivity, the natives reduced to impoverished rustics. Rather like much of the American rust bucket.

Don't mistake me. I'm not claiming that the Foundation series was great literature, or that Asimov was highly superior to his contemporaries. My argument is only that his tone and subject matter were more to my liking than were the others. Pity that he stopped writing fiction in favour of nonfiction as the 1950s wore on. It was an even bigger pity that he returned to fiction in the 1970s.

I began collecting Asimov with the basics – his two robot novels, the *Foundation* trilogy, *Pebble in the Sky*, *The Stars Like Dust*, *The Currents of Space*, and *The End of Eternity*. Although it is not part of either the robot novels or the Foundation series, *The End of Eternity* is interesting because it is a story about time-travel in which there is no space-travel. In the end, time-travel is erased from the time-line and mankind is given a new chance to expand into the galaxy – instead of endlessly revising his own past into ever blander and less vibrant "perfection." I like to see *The End of Eternity* as the unofficial beginning of the whole future history, even though I don't recall ever seeing anyone make the same point.

There was also *Fantastic Voyage*. It might well have been the first genre SF that I ever read. I was in the habit of picking up my father's castoff paperbacks, and this was one of them. Frankly, though, the less said of the book, the better. It was written for the money, and shows it. Even Asimov demonstrated his dissatisfaction by rewriting it many years later. Unfortunately, he might as well not have bothered, since it was an uninspired work both times.

In addition, the Basic Asimov required a number of short story collections. There weren't many of note, in the beginning – two collections of robot stories, *The Martian Way and Others*, *Earth is Room Enough*, *Nine Tomorrows*, *Nightfall and Other Stories* and *Through a Glass Darkly* were pretty much the lot. *Through a Glass Darkly* was such a slender volume you wondered if they couldn't have found a few more stories if they looked harder.

At that point, my collection of Asimov might have been called "representative." But it wasn't complete. Before I would be able to think of myself as a completist, I had to track down the six "Lucky Starr" juveniles, written as "Paul French." Fortunately, about that time they were all reissued in paperback by Signet, so I had no difficulty acquiring them. As juvenile SF goes, I can't fault them. They are a quick, light read for an adult, and the picture of the solar system that they present is hardly more accurate than the one painted by the sort of television SF that had puppet actors ... but much of the adult SF of the time was no better. Today, it's easy to forget that we had no idea what lay beneath the clouded atmosphere of

Venus, or what the surface of Jupiter's moons might be like. Until infrared measurements of the temperature of the Venerian cloud-tops revealed astonishingly high temperatures, we could only speculate whether they concealed a world-ocean, a tropical jungle or a desert wasteland. At a temperature considerably higher than the melting point of lead, your money should have been placed on the latter.

But Asimov also wrote mysteries, didn't he? There were only two novels of significance, *The Death Dealers* (which I knew by a superior title, *A Whiff of Death*) and *Murder at the ABA* (also known by the superior title *Authorized Murder*). Neither is a particularly spirited model of the mystery form, and demonstrate that the author is more interested in the puzzle than the story and characters ... a fatal flaw that grew more pronounced in a later incarnation.

With one late addition, the collection of his earliest published stories (*The Early Asimov*), you have the Basic Asimov. One might add these books to your shelves along with whatever non-fiction that suited your taste, and feel that you had a complete collection.

Oh, if only that were so!

In fact, after some fifteen years of writing mostly non-fiction, Asimov wrote his first non-Hollywood novel in 1972, *The Gods Themselves*. It wasn't a bad book, actually, though it seemed uncharacteristic of the author. Gone was most of the fusty, archaic tone of Asimov's earlier writing. The novel dealt with alien beings, a subject that the author had rarely dealt with in the past. Environmental concerns also hinted that the author had new preoccupations.

Asimov's new preoccupations came farther to the fore in the subsequent expansion of his future history. He began to consciously integrate his robot and Foundation novels into one grand scheme, and moved Seldon's Plan farther into both the past and future with *Foundation's Edge*, *Foundation and Earth*, *Prelude to Foundation* and *Forward the Foundation*. I waited eagerly for first of the new series, but it was a profound disappointment. At a stroke, Asimov abolished Seldon's Plan. It had gone off its tracks, and a new, environmentally aware plan took its place. What did Seldon's Plan mean to me, that I felt its abolition so disappointing?

Granted, Seldon's Plan was a ridiculously deterministic idea, based on the notion that mathematics could predict mass human behavior with great precision. We know better now.

With access to more powerful mathematics, we know that complex systems are inherently unpredictable, and that seemingly insignificant events can gather force behind them and alter the system entirely ... and yet tend toward a mean center. Well, perhaps mass behavior isn't entirely unpredictable, then. It can surely be forecast as well as the weather. Unfortunately, no weather bureau in its right mind will venture a forecast for more than

about a week into the future, or make long term predictions other than cyclic ones, such as that strong El Nino events indicate warmer North American winters.

Whatever the weakness of the idea, Seldon's Plan represented to me the enlightenment that Reason and Science cast upon the darkness of blind historical forces. I lapped it up. And what Asimov's continued future history gave me in exchange was a kind of hippy paradise where we asked the trees and hedgehogs if it was alright before we built a supermarket. Yes ... humanity has overdeveloped the Earth, and certainly we should have given more thought to trees and hedgehogs ... but ... sputter ... where's the white lab smock and slide rule? Where's the arrogance of scientism at its best? I will not give up wanting a new flat screen TV just so there can be 11 more hedgehogs in the world! The new Foundation novels were just not the same.

Worse was to come. Asimov remarried to another writer, Janet Asimov – a.k.a. J.O. Jeppson. There is some question in my mind whether the newlywed author could have sold her first book if the publisher had not known she was Asimov's bride. Be that as it may, she went on to collaborate with her hubby on a series of children's books based on a cute little robot named Norby – rather like R2D2 – who assists a precocious youngster on his adventures, saving the galaxy from *bad* men and *worse* zyqrforbs. Oh, well ... to be fair, maybe they are no more awful than the Lucky Starr books ... but, in the post-*Star Wars* world, the very idea seems unimaginative and unpromising.

According to Asimov, his wife wrote most of the six books. He only polished and revised ... indicating that they probably *needed it*. And his name was printed on the covers to enhance sales. I should remember to put Asimov's name on *my* first book ... for the same unselfish reason, of course. For what it's worth, though, Asimov's admission that he is only nominally the co-author does leave the completist collector off the hook. I convinced myself there was no reason for me to buy or read a single one of the Norby books ... and I didn't.

If Asimov had left matters at that, I would have added the extended family of Foundation novels to my shelf, along with a couple more collections of short stories, and been satisfied.

I did mention that Asimov wrote mysteries, didn't I? Ha, ha, ha, ha, haaa....

He does. Since the novels and early SF crossovers, Asimov's mysteries have mainly been in either the Union Club or The Black Widowers. He once explained that they would all be the same series, but for magazine copyrights. They *might as well* have all been Black Union stories (or whatever) since they were without exception among the most wretchedly lame mystery stories that I've read, and would be inadequate even to justify self-publication. Clearly, these stories

represent the Good Doctor at his laziest. They show that he has been mainly interested in "ideas" all along, and regarded character, plot and mood as encumbrances. Without a single exception that I recall, the late mysteries follow a monotonously skeletal outline – a guest is announced at the monthly dinner, he or she explains the mystery, a few of the members offer plausible solutions that are incorrect and, last to speak, the club's headwaiter gives the correct answer. The answer is never especially believable, of course. The whole point of these abbreviated sketches is that they are *tricky*. Apparently there is an audience for this kind of thing, but I'm partial to mystery fiction that's *fiction* ... not a Rubik's Cube sketched out in prose. There are, astonishingly, 11 volumes of this.

Late in life, the Good Doctor decided he had avoided writing fantasy long enough. He began a new series of rather sparse little stories about an other-dimensional imp named Azazel. Bright red and only about an inch tall, Azazel would have been mistaken for a devil in the Middle Ages – or by some members of Congress in the present day – but is in fact a member of an advanced technological civilization, whose "magic" creates more problems for the narrator than it solves. Slight in themselves, the stories at least possess some entertainment value.

Add to everything so far another seven or eight collections of late (and lesser) Asimov short stories ... also a volume of early novellas in their original magazine versions ... and a pair of illustrated collections of old robot stories ... and a 1989 novel called *Nemesis* that was so unmemorable that I can't tell you the first thing about it. Whether or not you feel it necessary to own copies of the numerous biographies that the Good Doctor has written, I leave to your taste.

At this point, you might imagine you have finally gathered together a complete collection of Isaac Asimov's fiction.

Alas, you'd still be wrong! You would still not have exhausted all the works needed for a complete collection! Although they are not written by the Good Doctor, there are three "must" novels written by Greg Bear, Gregory Benford and David Brin that continue the Foundation series even *farther* into the future, each adding its own increment of new developments. They are not especially compatible stylistically, and even introduce ideas that are less agreeable than "thinking" ecologies – such as an invisible network of super robots who undermine human developments so as to keep it stable and "safe" from itself.

Not even that is the end of the Asimov canon. Robert Silverberg has rewritten and expanded upon three of Asimov's stories, creating novels from *Nightfall*, *The Positronic Man* and *The Ugly Little Boy*. They are not bad in themselves, but one wonders if it was inspiration that led to their writing, or whether Silverberg simply needed a new Mercedes to

park in his driveway.

Sigh Finally. Yes, finally. That is the end of it.

And I had them all. Nearly ...

Not in first editions; heaven forbid. Who is that rich and that wasteful of their money? But I had almost all of them in one edition or another. I simply refused to buy the two "new" robot collections, as they included only one new story in each, and I didn't give a fig for the illustrations. Some of the later short story collections were cheaply bought, as well, and rather ratty. I read the newer books first – the "in the worlds of" stuff that Asimov hadn't actually written, then Azazel and *Asimov on Science Fiction* (a tedious and unrewarding chore that was!) then finally the time came when I began to read *Magic* and *Gold*. That was the point where the intellect rebelled!

In a dozen novels and short story collections, the Good Doctor had fallen from one of my favourite early writers to a embarrassment. Oy.

So ... I decided to sell some of the later collections – I sold *Gold*, *Magic*, *Buy Jupiter*, *The Winds of Change*, and *The Bi-Centennial Man* ... it was a better movie than a short story, anyway. I'm looking really hard at *The Early Asimov*, *Alternate Asimovs* and all those Lucky Starr juveniles as well. The Silverberg and faux Foundation books could easily follow. In short, I'm no longer an Asimov completist ... not even notionally.

I used to have all the Heinlein as well ... not that I could stomach reading anything after *Friday*. For that matter, trying to reread some of the older stuff from the Golden Age gives me the fantods. I sold off everything newer than 1973, along with his collected letters and other ephemera.

I never did quite have all the Philip K. Dick. The man must have written thousands of short stories, most of which were never available in mass paperback editions. Even if I had been willing to pay the typically doubled price for small press trade paperbacks and limited edition hardcovers, it's doubtful I could have found more than a smattering of them. I gave up on Phil Dick without coming anywhere close to complete.

I had all of Doris Piserchia, even the two novels under her "Curt Selby" pseudonym. After I read about three-quarters of them I realized I'd had enough and didn't want them. This led to selling all but one or two. I pursued Gene Wolfe for a while, until I realized that he wasn't interested in telling stories that made linear sense ... or were remotely interesting in themselves.

I kept only the older work that had made his reputation. Similarly, I wore out all desire to own all of Samuel Delany, Ursula K. LeGuin, Johanna Russ, R.A. Lafferty, J.G. Ballard and any number of other writers I once pursued with fannish enthusiasm. No more of that!

I still collect die-cast cars, but since I have no more space I go easy with them. I continue to collect Roman coins as well – but I'm in no

danger of overindulging myself with tiny bits of bronze and silver, either. Especially not at the sort of prices they go for of late!

In fact, just about the only thing I'm completist about collecting now is myself. Without a doubt, I have the world's most complete collection of Taral there is, or likely ever will be... but, dammit, even I'm missing some of my work.

LOSCON 40

Con Report by Robert S. Kennedy

Thanksgiving afternoon as usual I drove down to the LAX Marriott. It's about 50 miles on two freeways. Traffic was not bad and it only took a little over an hour. After dinner I obtained my badge and materials. Then it was back to my room to read for a while and to bed. I apologize for not having much comment on sessions. I go to them, but take virtually no notes.

On Friday after an excellent breakfast the first session attended was "Anachronisms in Time Travel: The Dangers of Bad Research". Then it was "Time Periods You Don't Want to Visit" where one of the panelists was Chris Garcia. After lunch it was "Intro to Classics SF" which was outstanding. Then it was "What Are Your Three Must Haves for Time Travel" which was also outstanding and two of the panelists were Chris Garcia (again) and Barbara Hambly. I then signed up for Loscon 41. After that it was dinner and then to the Ice Cream Social. Thankfully, this year they did have Chocolate Chip. I was able to obtain two scoops, then vanilla on which was placed chocolate topping. Following the ice cream was what they called The Crosstime Cabaret. There was a young girl who sang. She really put herself into it; but did not have a particularly strong voice. There was a male singer who sang a four verse song two of which he composed and the other two by someone else. He was good. There was a magician who performed some good tricks. I've missed one performer. But, the last one was incredibly loud music and screaming singing. I couldn't stand it so left and went to my room. Read a bit and to bed.

Saturday the first session was "A Weapon by Any Other Name: The Rise of the (Unmanned) Machines". An excellent session despite the political commentary by some in the audience regarding Drones. After lunch it was "Alternative Sexualities in Time Travel Narratives". Then a tour of the Dealers Room and the Art Show. This was followed by "Believable Alternative Timelines and How to Structure Time Travel" with panelists Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, Harry Turtledove, and I've missed someone (might have been Gregory Benford). This was an excellent panel. Pournelle seems to have mellowed, perhaps because he was among friends. After the panel as we were leaving I asked Harry what if there is no one ahead of us and we are the time travelers just going forward? His

answer was that then basically we're screwed. After that it was back to the Art Show where I made a bid on a Sarah Clemens art. It was a minimum bid of \$20.00. I stuck around until the end of the show. Just before the end a man in a suit who I had never seen before made a bid of \$25.00. So, I borrowed a pen from a lady and made a \$30.00 bid which sent it to the Art Auction on Sunday. After dinner it was back to my room and for some reason that I've forgotten I did not go to the Masquerade.

Sunday I stashed my luggage with the hotel and got to just the last 15 minutes of "Planetary Exploration and the Big Question of Life Elsewhere – What do we do when we find it?" My comment is: Who Knows? If there is no way around the speed of light we may never know. Then it was a quick trip through the Dealers Room and off to the Art Auction. My art was one of the last items offered. The stranger in the suit did not appear and the art was mine for \$30.00. After paying for and obtaining it it was time to go home. The art was my only purchase. I did, however, pick up 7 free paperbacks. Got my luggage, got my car, and back on the freeways. It was a good drive until I hit Thousand Oaks on the 101 Freeway where there was a big traffic backup. It took about an hour and a half to get home. That was it. Unpack, dinner at the Lure Fish House, watch some TV, then to bed.

HISPACÓN XXXI / QUARTUMCÓN

The 31st Spanish national convention,
December 14 and 15 in Quart de Poblet
Reported by Sue Burke

Friday, December 13 (In Spain, Tuesday the 13th is an unlucky day, not Friday)
Madrid — Valencia

My husband and I caught a 9:40 a.m. high-speed train at the railroad station a few blocks from our house, and soon we were racing east in Castilla-La Mancha through fallow fields, vineyards, and olive groves. After a few tunnels under a some small mountains, we were suddenly in Valencia province, now speeding through orange groves laden with ripening fruit. The trip of 200 miles/325 kilometers took an hour and a half each way and cost €79/US\$108 round-trip.

We pulled into Valencia, alighted, found the subway system, and a few stops later, arrived at our hotel, the Turia. A few decades ago it had probably been cutting-edge but now struck us as merely adequate and not especially busy despite economical prices. Our room did have a little balcony that gave us a beautiful sunrise view of the *Ciutat Vella*, the "Old City," its medieval center, and part of the Turia Gardens. For centuries the "garden" had been the bed of the Turia River, but a catastrophic flood in 1957 that killed 80 people convinced Valencianos to move the river safely to the south of the city, and its former bed was filled by a 6.5 km-long park with gardens, sports facilities, playgrounds, sculptures, and

pathways.

We had come early to visit Valencia, which we had never seen, and we spent the afternoon roaming the Old City, its streets lined with palms and orange trees and Christmas decorations. Temperatures were in the seasonal 40sF. Among other things, we visited the 700-year-old Cathedral, which displays the Holy Grail: an ancient agate cup said to have been used by Jesus in the Last Supper, now housed in a special chapel. You may know that relics produce a kind of spiritual force field that benefits the souls who approach, so I am now holier than thou.

We also visited *Les Torres dels Serrans*, the Serranos Towers, built in 1398 as the triumphal entry gate to the city, now the center of the Fallas Festival in February. (That's when they burn elaborate papier-mâché statues.) And we enjoyed the sound of Valenciano, the local language somewhat like medieval French, although the use of Spanish prevailed.

Saturday, December 14
Valencia — Quart de Poblet — Valencia

On Saturday we ran into some friends on the subway, and when we arrived in Quart de Poblet six stops later, working together we were able to find the Quart Jove youth center to get our credentials and welcome pack: a choice of six books from a wide selection donated by six publishers, along with comics, chapbooks, and other materials.

Each year, the convention is held in a different city and organized by a different group, and this year the members of the prozine *Hiperespacio* used their connections with Quart de Poblet, population 25,500, to host the Hispacón. The convention is sponsored by the Spanish Association for Fantasy, Science Fiction and Horror (AEFCFyT), which had searched until September for a local organizer. The event spanned several small buildings, all located near each other in the heart of town: the cultural center, youth center, town hall and library. Paid attendance was about 100, but because the events were in municipal buildings, they were open to the public, so up to 200 people attended.

Several vendors occupied the ground floor of the youth center, selling books, game material, tee-shirts, toys, and jewelry. In the morning, the Skywalker Saga Club, in Star Wars costumes, posed outside the entrance to Quart Jove and entertained fans and people passing by in the street.

Small towns are becoming the preferred place for conventions in Spain because they will open their facilities for cultural events (and an influx of outsiders spending money at local businesses). This keeps costs down – only €15 for registration – yet the towns are close enough to big cities to take advantage of air, rail, and highway connections and hotel facilities. In Roman times, the town was known as *Quartum Miliarium* or "Fourth Milestone," so the 31st Hispacón was called Quartumcón,

following the tradition of giving the conventions historic alternate names. Quart de Poblet featured the quiet charm of a small town, with pleasant little restaurants and, above all, bars that appreciated extra customers. Taking a break to visit the “Bar-con” became an ongoing joke.

The convention enjoyed the presence of five guests of honor with long careers in writing and publishing: Juan Miguel Aguilera, Rafael Marín, Juanma Santiago, José Carlos Samozá, and Luis Vigil. As usual the Hispacón became a chance to renew friendships and occasionally talk business. In general, the convention focussed on books and writers, probably due to the short organizing time that made film or musical presentations difficult. Writers are always willing to flog their work.

Rafael Marín opened the convention with a presentation about the birth of fandom in Spain and the history of Hispacóns. They began in 1969 when isolated fans discovered each other, and national conventions were held sporadically until 1991, when they became annual.

He was followed by a talk by Luis Vigil, one of the founders of the award-winning magazine *Nueva Dimensión*. It was the first professional-minded publication in Spain, and from 1968 to 1983 it established the genre and provided an outlet for writers, critics, and artists. This was during the Franco dictatorship, and “censorship was very brutal,” Vigil said. The pages containing the humorous story “Gu ta gutarrak” [“We and Our Own”] by Magdalena Mouján Otaño had to be removed from Issue 14 in 1970 because censors thought it encouraged Basque nationalism, although it was eventually printed after Franco died. Still, Vigil said, serious topics could be breached in the magazine because “it was possible to evade censorship by talking about dictatorships – in the future.” In addition, the magazine’s copier could be used at night to print pamphlets for resistance groups.

Juanma Santiago spoke about young adult books and how they might serve as a gateway to adult readership in the genre. José Carlos Samozá discussed writers and electronic books.

Rafael Marín and Juan Miguel Aguilera read from and commented on the anthology *Más allá de Némesis* [Beyond Nemesis], an anthology set in the same location as several novels and short stories by Aguilera and Javier Redal. Akasa-Puspa, an imaginary globular cluster orbiting the Milky Way Galaxy, was opened for use by other writers for the anthology.

Finally Marín, Aguilera, Vigil and Carlos Frabetti, all of whom have been writing for decades, discussed how “Les Enfants Terribles Get Older.”

Tanya Tymjälä, a Peruvian writer now living in Finland, spoke about Latin American writers and the boom in genre literature there

in the 1980s. She said writing there often focuses on social and political themes and on traditional mythology, and named important writers and their works country by country.

At a panel that I moderated, Lola Robles and María Concepción Regueiro spoke about women in the genre. Only about one-tenth of the genre writers in Spain are female, while in the English-speaking world they are about one-third. The men at the talk found this regrettable, and Rafael Marín also mentioned the lack of women writers in his talk. But women are not encouraged to be authors in Spain of any sort of literature, so the problem does not seem to have an easy solution.

Up to four tracks of programming went on at once, almost all of them dedicated to authors and writing, and most of them running over, so sessions rarely started on time. On Saturday afternoon, fans of the Aznar Saga, a 59-novel series published in the 1950s and 1970s about the deeds of the Aznar family in space, held their own mini-convention, the 15th Aznarcón, which I didn’t visit but said hello to the many friends as they went past. In addition, author Sofía Rhei hosted two writing workshops, one for children on Friday evening and one for adults on Sunday morning, which I did not attend but her usual enthusiasm and energy apparently made them successes.

A dinner on Saturday evening included the presentation of awards – a dinner limited, incidentally, to 73 people because that was the most that the largest restaurant in Quart de Poblet could hold. But in keeping with the intent to hold an economical convention, the dinner cost only €15.

The Ignotus Awards, named after an early 20th-century Spanish writer, are given out by AEFCFyT and are nominated and voted on by its members and convention attendees. The award is a black monolith, a small version of the one that appears in the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The 2013 winners:

Best Novel: *El mapa del tiempo* [The Map of Time] by Félix J. Palma (Plaza & Janés)

Best Novella: “Osfront” by Eduardo Vaquerizo, José Ramón Vázquez and Santiago Eximeno (Ediciones del cruciforme)

Best Short Story: “Neo Tokio Blues” by José Ramón Vázquez (*Prospectivas*) (Salto de Página)

Best Anthology: *Terra Nova. Antología de ciencia ficción contemporánea* [Terra Nova: Anthology of Contemporary Science Fiction] edited by Mariano Villarreal and Luis Pestarini (Sportula). I helped translate it into English, and you can buy it from Amazon and Smashwords. It was a best-seller in Spanish and achieved a record number of Ignotus nominations.

Best Non-Fiction Book: *La ciencia ficción de Isaac Asimov* [The Science Fiction of Isaac Asimov] by Rodolfo Martínez (Sportula)

Best Article: “Ciencia-Ficción en español” [“Science Fiction in Spanish”] by Fernando Ángel Moreno (*Prospectivas*) (Salto de Página)

Best Illustration: Cover art for *Terra Nova*

created by Ángel Benito Gastañaga (Sportula)
Best Audiovisual Production: *Los Verdugos*, a podcast by Miquel Codony, Elías Combarro, Josep Maria Oriol and Pedro Román

Best Comic: *Espinas* [Thorns] by Santiago Eximeno and Ángel Manuel Sánchez Crespo (The End 2012)

Best Poem: “Quiero comerme tu máscara de gas” [“I Want to Gobble Up Your Gas Mask”] by Santiago Eximeno (*Groenlandia 14*)

Best Magazine: *Delirio* [Delirium] (Biblioteca del Laberinto). I will have a story in an upcoming edition.

Best Website: La Tercera Fundación [The Third Foundation] by Los Conseguidores at tercerafundacion.net

Best Foreign Short Story: “El zoo de papel” [“The Paper Menagerie”] by Ken Liu (Terra Nova)

Best Foreign Novel: *La ciudad y la ciudad* [The City & The City] by China Miéville (La Factoría de Ideas)

The Domingo Santos Award for best unpublished short story, selected by a jury, was presented to “Remolinos de viento coloreado” [“Colored Whirlwinds”] by José David Espasandín García and to “Artículo 45.1” [“Article 45.1”] by Aitor Solar Azcona.

Finally, the Gabriel Award was presented by officers of AEFCFyT for valuable contributions to the genre. It went to authors Juan Miguel Aguilera and Javier Redal for opening Akusa-Puspa, the location of their novels and short stories, to other writers.

Then we hurried to get back to the subway before it closed for the night to get to our hotel.

Sunday, December 15
Valencia — Quart de Poblet — Valencia — Madrid

My first order of business on Sunday morning was to attend the annual assembly of AEFCFyT, since I’m a member. Among other items, we approved bids for upcoming Hispacóns. The 2014 convention will be organized by the fan group Colectivo Urànik in autumn at Montcada i Reixach, a suburb of Barcelona – another small-town site where the event will be organised in collaboration with the municipality and possibly with programming tracks in Catalan, the local language. The 2015 convention will be held in Granada.

Sunday morning ended with a series of talks, including one by Andrés Aragoneses, a physicist, who explained how Einstein’s theory of relativity and science fiction do not always coincide. In the closing presentation, Concepción Cascajosa discussed the history of the genre on television and suggested that series like *Star Trek*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *X-Files* were more innovative than programs based on conventional realism.

Since we were taking the late train out, after goodbyes, my husband and I spent the

afternoon exploring Valencia again. We saw Santiago Calatrava's Exposition Bridge over the Turia Gardens at the south end of the Cuitat Vella, wandered through the extensive and beautiful Royal Gardens, then ambled up the Turia Gardens to our hotel, pausing to watch an exhibition scrimmage of the Valencia Giants, an American-style football team. Who knew that Spaniards played gridiron ball?

Then we took the subway to the high-speed train station and were back home by 9 p.m.

Distance traveled: 650 kilometers/400 miles, plus local commutes.

Books brought home from the welcome pack: the anthologies *Perspectivas*; *Terra Nova II*; *Vintage '62*; *Fabricantes de Sueños 2009*; the novel *Señores del Olimpo* by Javier Negrete; the special-edition chapbooks "El paso del Rhin" by Carlos Sáiz Cidoncha and "CTC" by Juan Miguel Aguilera; and the comic *El niño que ama la crema de espárragos* by Toni y Miguel.

Unique refreshments enjoyed: A couple of servings of Valencian paella, made as it should be with both chicken and rabbit. And a bottle of Er Boquerón beer from Xàtiva, a city south of Valencia, with ingredients including Mediterranean sea water – hoppy and just slightly salty.



AUDIOPHILE

THE AVENGING RAY; or, Vengeance Indefinitely Deferred

By Austin J. Small

Reviewed by Walt Wentz

Way back in the Old Stone Age, when I first got interested in science fiction... this was in the mid-1950s, you understand, when

dinosaurs still roamed a cooling Earth and the last of the old Pulp Magazines were still clinging desperately to life... there wasn't much in the way of fanzines for the young beginner to refer to, and certainly no fan activity of any sort in the little Oregon hamlet where I had my being. In fact, aside from the occasional arrival of the odd Ace paperback in the revolving rack down at Hartwell's General Store ("We Match City Prices, Please Don't Tease the Dog"), there was damn little in the way of science fiction to be found.

Finally, an esteemed grade school art teacher bestowed on me a cardboard carton of *Fantastic Adventures* and *Startling Stories*, most dating from several years before, and I suspect that it was in the microscopic classified ads in the back pages of those gaudy-covered, aromatic, ragged-edged old pulps that I finally became aware there were other places to feed my habit.

There were actual science-fiction book dealers advertising their wares, and I risked some 3-cent stamps to write to their old addresses; and, *mirabile dictu*, some of them actually sent me their catalogs! There was *Fantasy Collector* and several others of that ilk, within whose crudely-Mimeographed pages I could browse for the cheap paperbacks and pulp appearances of A. Merritt... my favorite author at the time... offered at prices that in those distant days seemed steep to a grade-schooler, but that would lead to mass stampedes and bloodshed today.

Hardback books, however, were more expensive... some cost two whole dollars or more! And the OLD hardbounds... well, forget about those.

One title that I saw listed repeatedly was *The Avenging Ray*, by one Austin J. Small. I wondered about that book. Ray guns, I assumed. Lurid space battles, with rock-chinned heroes and buxom heroines in brass brassieres, fighting the inevitable Evil Overlord with unthinkable weapons created by a kindly old scientist.

Eventually, however, graduation from high school, searching for work, enlisting the the Air Force and doing fire lookout duty for the US Forest Service in between winter stints at the U of O, on Uncle Sam's GI Bill... all gradually pushed my childhood enthusiasms to the background.

Occasionally over the years, I would run across a stray reference to *The Avenging Ray*, although I never followed up on any of them...

Until a couple of weeks ago, when I was browsing through an antique shop in Coburg, one of the more interesting small towns in Oregon... and there, among a shelf of other The Crime Club, Inc. titles, was *The Avenging Ray*!

I should have left it there. After all, it cost seven whole dollars now. But I was feeling flush and didn't want to leave the shop empty-handed, my childhood curiosity came back with a rush, so I splurged and bought it. Childhood fantasies are best cherished as they are, left

undisturbed by crass reality.

I read the book.

It was, not to put too fine a point on it, bloody awful. It was Bad. It was so Bad that the light from Merely Mediocre took 27 years to reach it. I don't know who I stole that gag from, but it seemed so appropriate that I had to appropriate it.

To begin with, Austin J. Small seemed to be stuck in the old Penny Dreadfuls of the 1890s, although *The Avenging Ray* was published in 1930. His hero is, of course, a young British aristocrat, with a title, and a "living," and a stellar record in the Great War, a former boxing and cricket champion at the 'Varsity, etcetera, etcetera, (insert all the other late-Victorian hero stereotypes here), a clean-living, manly young chap who prefers shooting, fishing, boxing, cricket and even a day's ratting with his little terrier, Mack, to the giddy whirl of Society. His name (let it be admitted and then mercifully forgotten), is Geoffrey Fitzalan Windermaine. He has somehow managed to evade marriage to all the titled young damsels being pushed at him by doting titled mothers, but he just happens, while visiting the Typical Bluff Country Squire Friend in the English Moors, to encounter the simple country heroine, Rosaine, who breaks through all his bachelor defenses at one glance from her saucy blue-violet eyes. In fact, Small doesn't seem to go much below her eyes. Aside from a hasty reference to "delicious feminine perfections," he hardly admits that she has any anatomy at all to the south of her "sweet, pointed little chin."

Ah, but there is a *Mystery* about her. Of course there is, otherwise the book would only be 20 pages long.

It seems the moors are haunted by some Lurking Horror. Small assures us of this, in so many words. He does so repeatedly, even when the evidence cited seems entirely absent, or merely "deucedly odd."

Said Lurking Horror seems somehow associated with a gigantic, sinister, silent figure, something like Lurch in "The Addams Family," who goes stomping about the moors at all hours of the day or night. The country folk refer to him as "the Mad Scientist," even though there has never been any indication whatever of his association with Science, Mad or otherwise. He is simply labeled "the Mad Scientist" from the first, which saves the author no end of tedious exposition.

Well, one thing Small does that seems at least somewhat original is that his Mad Scientist, Carlos Damien, is also a religious fanatic, who is intent upon punishing the Wickedness of Man by destroying the Earth with his Decohesizer and Degravitor rays, which seem to combine the science involved in Tesla's early hydroelectric generators and the primitive fluoroscope that old-fashioned country doctors powered from the coil of their Model Ts.

I know you are simply champing at the bit to get to the climax of the story, so, after a lot of mucking about with various Lurking

Horrors, the hero makes an attempt to shoot down the attacking madman (somewhat hampered by the fact that the author apparently cannot decide whether his hero is armed with a "revolver" or an "automatic"), but whatever it is, it is equipped with both "clips" and "chambers" and fires seven shots, which fortuitously have no effect upon said madman, as Carlos, as is later revealed, just happens to be wearing a chain-mail jerkin under his ulster.

This respite allows the Mad Scientist to capture and bind our hero, and then subject him to the cruel torture of a long-winded exposition of his nefarious plot in his Secret Lair, concealed behind a waterfall deep within mysterious caverns.

Of course, it seems that all is lost. But I won't spoil the ending for you. Of course the Mystery about the delicious Rosaine, which bids fair to keep the young lovers apart, is finally revealed ... although the explanation of said Mystery was, ever since page 17, about as obvious to the reader as a long-dead whale being towed down a busy thoroughfare on a hot summer day.

According to his online biography, Austin J. Small committed suicide in 1929, the year before this book was published. At least, by that simple expedient, he mercifully escaped the reviewers.



FANZINES

Argentus #13

Steven H Silver, 707 Sapling Road,
Deerfield, IL 60015-6939

Askance #30

John Purcell, 3744 Marilene Circle,
College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA
j_purcell54@yahoo.com

Beyond Bree December 2013, January 2014
Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com
<http://www.cep.unt.edu/bree.html>
Not available for *The Usual*; \$15/year, \$20
foreign, \$10/year electronic.

The Drink Tank #361, #362, #363, #365

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

Chris has announced that the Tenth Annish
of *The Drink Tank*, Issue 400, will be the last.
Oh no! Where will all the fanzine energy go?

Fadeaway #39

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

File 770: 163

Mike Glyer, 1507 1/2 S. Sixth Avenue,
Arcadia, CA 91006-4359 USA
Mikeglyer@cs.com
<http://file770.com>

Fish Out of Water #559, #560

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

It Goes on the Shelf #35 November 2013

Cuyler "Ned" Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane,
Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA
nedbrooks@sprynet.com
<http://home.sprynet.com/~nedbrooks/home.htm>

Journey Planet #18

<http://www.efanzines.com>

The Life of Rodney Year 65 #1

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

Luna! Ten

C. D. Carson, Post Office Box 1035, Fort
Worth, TX 76101-1035
ed_luna@lunarcc.org

MT Void V. 32 #23 December 6, 2013 — V. 32 #31 January 31, 2014

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

Opuntia #270 December 2013, #271 January
2014

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

The Reluctant Famulus #97

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

Trap Door #30

Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway
Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611-1948
trapdoor@rocketmail.com

WORLDCON BIDS

2016

Beijing
<http://www.guokr.com/zone/worldcon/>
Year of the Fire Monkey

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

Proposed Dates: August 18-22.

2017

Helsinki
<http://helsinkiin2017.org/>

Japan
<http://nippon2017.org/>

Proposed Dates: sometime in August

Montréal

Washington DC
<http://dc17.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 16-20

2018

New Orleans
<http://neworleansin2018.org>

San José

2019

Dublin
<http://dublin2019.com/>

Paris
<https://sites.google.com/site/parisin2019/>

2020

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

Bids under consideration include:

2021

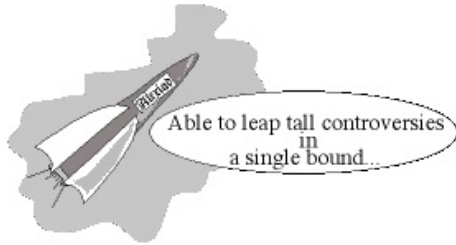
North Texas

2022

Chicago

Thanks to Mike Glyer for the updates.

Letters, we get letters



From: **AL du Pisani** December 11, 2013
 945 Grand Prix Street,
 Weltevredenpark 1709, REPUBLIC
 OF SOUTH AFRICA
du.pisani@telkomsa.net

While it gets warmer from mid-August onwards, and the first blossoms and flowers are already around by 1 September, in Johannesburg Spring only starts with the rains. The rains should start falling from about 10 October, and continue often until late February to mid-March. Once the rains fall, the dust gets washed off the vegetation. And the Jacarandas start to bloom – giving the colours of spring in Johannesburg – light green and purple.

Pretoria is the place to see lots of Jacarandas, as the entire city center has loads of Jacarandas. But Johannesburg has even more, but they are interspersed, and you do not see them en masse. But I like the mix of colours a lot better, here in Johannesburg. The Jacaranda is magnificent during the about two months that it is in bloom, very nondescript for the rest of the year. And very messy while in bloom – it keeps dropping flowers to the ground, where they become slippery hazards to be avoided.

A lot of the rains come in the form of the late afternoon thunderstorm, arriving at about 16h30, and over by 18h00. This buggers up the afternoon rush hour. In Pretoria they talked about this as the civil servants' rain, as government office hours are 08h00 until 16h30.

With the rain come potholes. Johannesburg is still spending a lot less than they should in road maintenance and rehabilitation. Having a policy of a small quota of money to be spent per Apartheid era white suburbs, and everything else budgeted to be spent on Apartheid era black suburbs and townships. This means that the roads in the old white suburbs have not had enough maintenance for the past twenty years, and the old black suburbs have new roads, most of which are less than twenty years old.

A couple of years ago a local short term insurance company tried to fix potholes, as the official city response to potholes was so poor. They had to abandon this after six months, since the company became liable for any

damage caused to vehicles by fixes which did not last. Very few people try to sue city hall for damages – Even if you get any, you will wait a very long time for your money.

But it does look if this shook up city hall a bit, as I can see that small potholes are generally fixed faster than before. Large potholes, on the other hand, are a different story.

In 2008 we had major power shortages, with regular scheduled and unscheduled blackouts. And the gold mines shut down production for the first time since the Anglo-Boer war. At the time one of the responses to the problem was to authorize the building on three major coal fired power plants. (This was after about a decade where government refused to authorize the building of power plants, as they had something else in mind – which never came off.)

In my last letter I mentioned that the first of these are six months behind schedule. I have since found out that the six month slip was only the latest in a series of slips, and that the power plant is actually three years behind schedule. It was supposed to be in full production now. We are currently hoping that the first portion will start producing power by late next year. The other five portions to start producing power later.

We have already had one major scare as to availability of electricity. And I have had a couple of unplanned power outages at home, each lasting a couple of hours, taking out a couple of suburbs. It looks as if this is going to continue, and get worse, before it gets better.

And if some of what I hear is true, the better is not going to last. See, for a coal fired power plant you need a certain amount of coal every so often. And it looks as if the mines to provide that coal are not being dug. This is for two reasons: Government has a preference for new (black owned) junior mining owners. Which in many cases lacks the capital to proceed. And government changed the way mining rights work during the past decade. (Essentially stealing mining rights from the owners of the land.) This change over have introduced a large amount of uncertainty into the system. It did not help that the changeover was neither smooth nor transparent. Which leaves the larger mining houses with the option to develop new mines in other parts of the world, an option which they have exercised.

Associated with this has been labour unrest, a government which is wedded to socialist/communist economic ideas, and organized labour trying extremely hard to price themselves out of the market. As a result, business have scaled down as far as they can, and are switching wholesale to less labour intensive methods of production. Which is why the official unemployment figures of 25% are believed to be really 40%.

And in the very areas where there are jobs (servants, domestic workers and gardeners), government have decided that the work is demeaning, and are trying to price and regulate it away. Not the recipe for success.

Yet I cannot see myself leaving this place – I think that too much of Africa are in my soul.

Nelson Mandela has died. I suppose the world will come and tell us how much he has meant – mostly as a symbol. But I cannot agree – Maybe too long a time where he was the symbol of the enemy. Maybe the belief that he pissed away a huge amount of goodwill, setting the stage for today's divided South Africa. And maybe no man could ever have lived up to the expectations, even though he often got given praise for things that in most decent people would have been taken for granted.

But this now is the past – and that is a different country.

Tolling on the main roads in Johannesburg got implemented on 3 December. A very odd time, just before the summer holidays, and before the elections. I have no idea when the elections will be held – As South Africa uses a modified Parliamentary system, requiring elections every five years, at either the discretion of the President, or if he loses a motion of "No confidence" in parliament. Next year will be 20 years since the ANC came to power. And I have no idea what will happen. There are a lot of divisions in the ANC, and more and more blacks are either speaking out publicly against the ANC, or organizing at local level for alternatives.

My expectation is that the ANC will win an election, but at a lower level than previously. With more small parties emerging from the woodwork. Yet I do not know if the main opposition, the DA, will gain much.

I have had in many ways a bad year SF wise. I had to work too often on days when we have been having meetings, and had to skip all or most of the meetings. And the books I have been finding have mostly not engaged me. I have had to change my daily schedule to accommodate a little bit of reading. Yet the most important change has simply been to replace one light bulb, from one that started out bright and quickly faded, to one that stayed bright, in my bed lamp. This allowed me to read for a while longer.

I am slowly getting back my groove, not that I had much, but I had lost a bit of what I had. Regaining it is proving to be a bit elusive.

In any case, I am soon to be off for a decent holiday with my family. This should provide some recharge for the year ahead.

February 1, 2014

Greetings from a warm and wet Johannesburg.

Summer is our rain season. This year there was an interruption for most of January, with little rain falling in Johannesburg, and for that, for much of the rest of the country. It was just swelteringly hot. Some humidity, but for weeks on end no rain. But it started raining again recently, and we can expect intermittent rain for the next two months. And then the long dry winter months are upon us.

I took a decent vacation over the Christmas

season this year – I had not expected to, but then things at work worked out this way. I went down to Hartenbos to the family shack by the sea, and eventually all of my near family joined there. It was a very nice holiday, but almost all I can remember doing was reading and sleeping. I came back to face the year mostly rested. Unfortunately with a small illness than managed to spoil the last couple of days of my holiday.

The toll roads are still with us. And people are still unhappy about the tolls. The toll management company has had to evacuate their headquarters twice because a suspicious white powder was found on the premises, and once because of a bomb threat. And common bumper stickers defiantly declares that they refuse to pay tolls or get tagged for electronic payment of tolls.

One side effect of this have been that the tolled roads are carrying significantly less traffic than before tolling was implemented. Peak traffic is both shorter and less intense than before. How much of that is because people have found alternative roads, and how much of that is because people have made other arrangements, I do not know. I do expect a future where more and more people work from home, as far as is possible.

However, given that for large portions of greater Johannesburg the city planning is still up to the 1920's idea of how modernity in cities work, (as implemented from the 1950's) with dormitory suburbs, the CBD, and an industrial zone. (Even though to a large extent reality have modified the implemented reality.) I believe that to a very large extent a movement to work from home will happen against an entrenched city planning bureaucracy.

We have electricity supply issues, with threats from the main electricity supplier that they will implement rationing should consumers not voluntarily decrease electricity use. And the main centrally planned solution of new power stations are running at least three years behind schedule, only supposed to start delivering electricity by year end. This can cause problems with increasing your use of electricity at home, once you work there.

Given that there is a very large movement towards solar and wind power, from some of which I stand to benefit indirectly, but which, I believe, are just an expensive boondoggle preventing a move to nuclear and other forms of electricity generation that will actually, you know, work and be predictable. I do not see a stable electricity supply situation anytime soon.

Telecommunications is also a large issue, especially fixed line infrastructure. Cellular is an entirely different kettle of fish, mostly due to the fact that there are two large and two small companies in competition with each other – resulting in voice communications at a reasonable price. Data is something else, with small monthly bundles available reasonably. (500 MB to 2 GB packages) Bulk data is very

expensive. And to some extent collusion between the two biggest mobile operators has resulted in voice and data rates that are still overpriced, but becoming less so over time.

We have two fixed line operators in South Africa. Telkom and Neotel. Telkom is the incumbent, with a very large amount of cables in the ground, a very unionised workforce, and since it is mostly owned by the government, enormous interference into making sure that the politically correct boxes are ticked. They are not very responsive to customer complaints, enquiries and advice. Also very slow to deliver services, especially if it is in the slightest way out of the ordinary. They are, however the cheapest way of getting bulk data.

Neotel has concentrated in gaining business customers, at a premium price. Since Telkom have totally pissed off a lot of businesses, Neotel just has to be slightly more responsive, at a similar price. Not very good at serving retail customers, and not very competitive at providing bulk data. Also, in talks to be taken over by one of the mobile operators, who seems to be interested in them for backhaul capacity.

Most business working from home will need some form of telecommunications, and the current environment are not desirable and overpriced.

For instance, Telkom is the only supplier of ADSL lines in the country. This are available in connection speeds of up to 2 Mb/s, 4 Mb/s, 10 Mb/s (ADSL), 10 Mb/s (VDSL) and 20 Mb/s (VDSL). VDSL use an entirely new infrastructure and modems to the rest of the offerings, and is available in only a handful of locations, covering about 1 000 clients. At the lower connection speeds, you normally get between 50% and 90% of the nominal connection speed. As an example, I have a line with a nominal connection speed of 4 Mb/s, a maximum connection rate of 2.2 Mb/s, throttled down to 400kb/s to 1.5 Mb/s during most of the day, reaching the maximum connection speed only between midnight and 06h00 in the morning. This is for a supposedly premium household account.

Most people pay for lesser packages, limited to 5, 10 or 30 GB of data per month. And more than half of all South Africans do not use Internet in any form, for anything.

Just about the only public transport system in Johannesburg that works with any consistent reliability is the Gautrain, and even so cable theft, water in the tunnels, and strikes by bus drivers are making it not entirely reliable. One of the girls at the office used to take the Gautrain to and from work. She gave it up, since taking the Gautrain was about an hour per trip longer than taking a car. And that is before the incidents where she was informed that the bus drivers had gone on strike, and that she has to find alternative transport home.

Yet lots of people do use the Gautrain. After about 4 years of operation the volumes of passengers are up to what they expected after 20 years. They have already started talking about buying extra rolling stock, expanding the

hours of operation, and extending the network, with 5 options listed. (One of which will be relatively close to where I live.)

And it has been giving my sister who lives in Pretoria a nice outing, every couple of months. She lets me know in advance that she is coming in, and I go and meet her at one of the stations. There is an entire network of malls and shops and other activities, where we meet and talk and spend some time with each other.

I have caught up a bit with reading, during the past holiday. Almost all electronic books, except for a year's supply of *Analog*s. I have been subscribing to *Analog* for a decade now, and will not be renewing my subscription. The problem started when I realised that I do not read *Analog* as it comes in, but let it all pile up until I take a holiday, during which time I binge read the lot. Then, last year, I came to realise that almost all futures described was to some extent poverty stricken hellholes, with sometimes nice people. Almost none of them were places where I wanted to spend a significant amount of time. This year the experience was the same. I'll probably let the current subscription's issues pile up and read during my next holiday. But I am not renewing my subscription.

Talking about movies like that, Roger Ebert the movie critic (but once he did fanzines, and he was a friend of Bob Tucker) categorized that attitude as **Orwell That Ends Wells**.

— JTM

More and more I realise that most of what most publishers are pushing are not books I am interested in reading. It has been compounded by the local publishers removing the common (for at least the past 40 years) B format paperback book from distribution, in favour of the C format paperback, which is larger and about 50% more expensive. I have one series in which I bought 9 of the 10 books. I cannot find the tenth book in the same size as the others. I refuse to pay more for a large format book, that will not fit in with the rest of the series.

Great idea guys – you are losing money and market to cheaper electronic books, and you fight back by removing the cheapest available format of books, and asking your readers to pay 50% more than they are used to for exactly the same book. Do you now understand why I have written off the one book chain that used to see me weekly, that I now only visit out of desperation, and when they have a sale on?

I read, with varying degrees of interest, some of the debates in the loccol. In most of the debates I am on the side of "Let's find out a little bit more, before we implement the Solution" Especially since most times the Solution seems to be indistinguishable from full blown Communism, with the elect as the new aristocracy, who will relieve you of all duty to think, since they will do it for you. Not a future I am interested in, thank you very

much.

Thank you for continuing to send me *Alexiad*. It continues to show me glimpses of a world to which I belong peripherally, yet to which I remain too much of an outsider and Odd to belong to fully.

From: **Bill Patterson** December 17, 2013

I'm afraid *Alexiad* is getting short shrift these days. 12:5 arrived, and I read through it immediately, but when I started to LOC, I found Mr. Gilliland's remarks to me so vague and elliptical that I felt the need to re-read the last two issues to figure out what the heck he was talking about. Harsh, aggressive, and vague all at the same time! I am dazed in admiration.

As I am really not set up to do archival research for fanzines comments (most of the reading and writing gets done while waiting at bus stops which, in Los Angeles, can sometimes involve significant amounts of time), the writing of the loc got put off and put off . . . upon which the copyedit for volume 2 of the Heinlein biography crashed onto my desk.

And 12.6 arrives during the middle of galley proofs. So long as I can correct 1 or 2 chapters a day I can make my deadline, but it requires me to keep punching at it, to the exclusion of everything else.

I think I can offer a definitive answer to Darrell Schweitzer's convention-panel topical question (p. 11): "when did Heinlein Go Bad?"

It really depends, of course, on what you mean by "bad." If you mean it in the Nietzschean sense in which Darrell Schweitzer is one of the "Good and the Just," defending the divinely ordained boundaries of genre as it came to be set in the 1950's, well, fine, if that floats your boat. It didn't float Heinlein's, and in fact the Good and the Just of his own day are exactly the reason he stopped writing those ingratiating books and found good ways to be bad.

But if you have other definitions of "bad" (and by implication "good"), your answer might be "never," but with a necessary qualification: "at some point he did stop writing for genre-fans-who-can't-tell-the-difference-between-'not-to-my-taste'-and-'bad.'" I think that's what you really meant to say."

Late in life we find Heinlein saying he has a personal goal of finding the toes God made to be stepped upon and then doing Gods will with heartiness and cheer. (He didn't really say much of that; I paraphrase liberally, to capture the emotional truth — a practice I cannot indulge in biography and so am somewhat starved of . . . but when opportunity for such a satisfying "low flying cheap shot" is presented on silver salver — or paper, at any rate . . .).

I have to say that I doubt the worthwhileness of the entire project, here, of

beating the bounds of genre. It seems to me that the whole formulation is naïve and unaware of our own reading processes. I'm getting tired of being pushed back inside the crib.

Sue Burke's explication of Spanish idioms and equivalences with English idioms (p. 16) was highly entertaining and put me in mind of the last (next to last?) American Comparative Literature Association Conference I attended and presented at (I think this was the New Orleans one, and I was in Vancouver the next year, so next-to-last). For some reason CompLit types think this kind of translation and equivalence of idiom is the core of CompLit, while I'm more interested in studying development and change of genres over time — a subject that is not well studied in general but has a lot of potential for development. The Poe panel I was put on the next year yielded some interesting stuff, particularly about translations of "The Black Cat" into Japanese (though the fit of my paper was not so good. The conference organizers really don't know what to do with a genre concentration).

If you want to talk about an untranslatable story, there's always Lawrence A. Perkins's "Come You Nigh: Kay Shuns" (Analog, April 1970) where an urgent message is enciphered by being done in mondegreens.

Let me second the implication of John Hertz (p. 19) that Dorothy Sayers's *The Mind of the Maker* is well worth reading. It's one of those critical favorites that would go in my "desert island" chest (along with things like the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* and one or another of Jane Jacobs' other core-critical books — like *The Nature of Economies*, perhaps —) I tell you, I would be prepared for a three-hour tour!

Warner Brothers is working on a Gilligan's Island movie. I think this proves the conclusion of "The Seven Deadly Sins of Gilligan's Island": Gilligan is Satan!

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** October 25, 2013
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In *Alexiad* V12 #5, Lisa begins the issue by talking about techy toys. I like techy toys, but I stop short of loving techy toys. I know there is a whole generation of plug and play convention attendees who will go into geekish arrest if they are deprived of free WiFi. At LASFS, there are members who come to the club every week only to stare at a computer screen. I asked one of them why he bothered to come to the club to do something he could do just as well at home. He explained that he was a geek. That gave me an unsettling feeling as if

I had just asked a zombie why he ate brains.

Unfortunately, our technology promotes a solitary and sedentary lifestyle. Maybe I was always prone to being sedentary, but technology allows me to remain motionless while using only a fraction of the energy I might otherwise expend. In order to keep my blood flowing, I go to the gym three times a week. Even at the gym, I see people on bicycling machines staring blankly at their smart phones. I don't really believe the machines are plotting to take over, but . . .

As far as who is the senior living SF writer is concerned, Dave Kyle's story in *Stirring Science Stories* doesn't count. He wasn't paid for it, so it isn't a professional sale. Wollheim had an editorial budget of zero for *Cosmic* and *Stirring*. He only managed to produce the magazines by getting rejected stories from regular pros and amateur efforts from his friends in the Futurians. So who is the senior SF writer? It looks like Julian May. Her first sale was "Dune Roller" in 1951. She has sold a fair amount of SF under several names. She has had one Hugo nomination (*The Many Colored Land*) and chaired one worldcon. It seems like Bob Silverberg ought to be the senior SF writer by now, but he was voted best new writer in 1956.

Leigh Kimmel's report on Lonestarcon jogged my memory about one aspect of the convention. I think we have reached the saturation point for mobility scooters. We are beginning to have in door traffic jams. I know some people really need mobility scooters. However there are also people who use them because they represent less effort. I think people in the latter category should be discouraged from using scooters. Worldcons represent more physical strain than any other cons I attend. At the end of the day, I'm completely tired out, and the calves of my legs hurt. I fear that's just part of the worldcon experience. No pain, no fanac.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** Dec. 21, 2013
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Actually, contrary to Timothy Lane, this past year was quite an important one for global warming science. The UN committee of many nations (I forget how many) concluded, overwhelmingly, that the Earth is heating up and humans are responsible. It was also the year of superstorms. And of course it was one of the hottest years on record, but then most years are anymore. Lane seems to be completely delusional at this point. Global warming is an issue that every national on Earth is now dealing with in various ways. Yes, big chunks of the Antarctic ice sheet are breaking off at a record rate. There are global warming stories in the news almost every day. I don't find any specifically today (Dec 20th, 2013). The closest is a story about the discovery of diamond-bearing rocks in

Antarctica, which are at present in a permanently frozen area. But of course it may not be so permanently frozen in another twenty or thirty years. I am sure Lane thinks this is all part of a liberal conspiracy, even as the UN is a liberal conspiracy, and the liberals (who are supermen, after all) seem to have taken over every government on the planet, so as to delude everyone about climate change. It's not surprising that Lane is opposed to green energy, and would rather get rid of wind farms and go back to more polluting forms of energy, rather than try to solve the bird-kill problem. (People are trying to solve it.) The wind-farms are not going away. I was on a train between London and Paris not all that long ago, and I saw modern windmills across both the English and the French countryside. I have never been in France before, but the last time I was in rural England, I saw no such things.

As the ice-caps disappear, the liberals must be doing something with all that ice. It's far more than they need for cocktails at elite parties. This remains a mystery.

Global warming is as real as evolution or gravity. Real scientists deal with it, whatever their disciplines, not just the climate science (who are 99% arrayed against Timothy Lane). Biologists note the shifts in the range of species. My brother the eminent entomologist tells me now that European hornets (like yellow jackets, only three times as large), which were rare when we were kids, are now quite a problem for him in southern New Jersey. (These critters apparently like a warmer climate. I saw them in their native habitat in Tuscany.) In his line of work, he otherwise just records the incidence of southern species as they move north with the warming climate. An epidemiologist of course has a very different job, and now must deal with tropical diseases in temperate zones. Civil engineers now have to plan better sea walls to protect low-lying areas, before we lose New Orleans, or even parts of Manhattan. There are vast implications for agriculture.

That's quite some liberal hoax . . . Of course John Grant's *Denying Science* documents who the global warming deniers are, why they are spreading these lies, and who is paying them. This is old news. In the real world, we leave Mr. Lane in his fantasy bubble and get on with solutions to the problem. When your house is burning down, you do not stop to argue with someone who doesn't believe in fire.

Due to global warming, the MV Akademik Schokalskiy has been stuck in the dwindling Antarctic ice pack off of Wilkes Land, while two powerful icebreakers were unable to even reach the ship and they had to call in the old USCGS Polar Star (WAGB-10) to do the job.

As for the nature of Islam, Lane seems to have swallowed the Al Qaeda propaganda line in its entirety. Yes, Islam does have a World of War and a World of Islam, etc. etc. That is all true. However, millions of the world's Muslims just get on with their lives and take their religion about as seriously as American Republicans take the teachings of Jesus. But Osama Bin Laden very much wanted everyone to believe that there was a war to the death between Islam and the infidel West. If the West accepts this, then Al Qaeda wins, because that makes them orthodox and the inspired leaders of all righteous Muslims. I point out that the Old Testament contains all sorts of horrific things, but modern Jews do not go around condoning slavery or stoning adulteresses and homosexuals. Religions do change, even Islam. As we used to say about Communists, ignore what they say and watch what they do. I watched my Turkish sister-in-law cook porkchops.

And yet this vast majority of moderate Muslims seems curiously silent about this.

By the way, the reason that Yahweh in the old testament does not command conversions by force, is that the Jewish religion was an exclusive tribal religion for Jews only. They rarely took converts, and did not send out missionaries. But there were forced conversions during the Hasmonean period. Herod the great was an Idumean, a descendant of people forcibly converted by John Hyrcanus in the 2nd century BC. The reason he was so useful to the Romans is that he was Jewish enough to be minimally acceptable to the Jews, but he had no local sympathy for Judea. The Pharisees did not accept him however, which was also the source of much conflict, and probably why the Herodian house has gotten such bad press ever since.

As for the question of when and why Heinlein went bad, I don't think it was so much that he needed a strong personality to argue with, but that the strictures of the science fiction market in the 1940s and '50s prevented him from getting too self-indulgent. When he was writing for *Astounding*, there were fairly severe space restrictions. An *Astounding* story could not have stood for a hundred pages of long-winded chatter. Pulp demanded pacing. In the good old days, Heinlein was a master of this. The book market of the 1950s was not much different. The Doubleday science fiction line was sold mostly to libraries, as semi-juveniles. You will remember them with the "atomic" sticker on the spine for SF, placed in the same section with Winston juveniles. That meant that books like *The Puppet Masters* or *Double Star* could only be about 60,000 words long. No 400-page bloated books, larded with lecture. (This size restriction was not always a good thing. I am not sure that the Doubleday version of Clement's *Mission of Gravity*, which is cut by about 20,000 words

from the *Astounding* serial, is improved thereby.) It is clear, as we can see from the bad, uncut version of *The Puppet Masters* that came out later, that Heinlein always **needed** this sort of tight discipline. Panshin put it best when he said that Heinlein went bad when he stopped telling stories and started to preach. Once the length restrictions were off, and particularly when Heinlein could no longer be edited at all (the bestseller syndrome) he went bad. I think in the long-run his reputation may stand on only a very few works, and he may not seem quite the towering figure he was to the Baby Boom generation. I was in a Barnes & Noble the other day, and as I usually do, I made a quick survey of what classic SF authors were still on the shelves. They had scads of Lovecraft and Dick, and a good deal of Bradbury. No Clarke at all. Only two Heinleins, an unabridged *Stranger in a Strange Land* and *Red Planet*. Somebody who knows little about SF and discovers Heinlein browsing in that store may not perceive him as very important. But hopefully they picked up *Red Planet* first.

To answer Sue Burke's question about who was not allowed to take their children when expelled from Ferdinand & Isabella's Spain, it is possible that I am simply wrong and have misremembered something, but I think some historians have made the same error. It is entirely possible they were confusing the plight of Jews with that of Spanish Muslims. This from Justin Wintle's *The Timeline History of Islam*:

1501. . . . Isabella of Castille orders the expulsion of all Muslims who refuse to convert to Christianity from her kingdom and imposes a heavy departure fine on emigrants, who are also forbidden to take their children with them. Many Moors opt to convert and remain in Spain, although this exposes them to the watchful eye of the Inquisition. (pp. 244-45)

P. 3. No, Joe Lansdale was not the author of the first authorized Tarzan pastiche. Fritz Leiber's novel *Tarzan and the Valley of Gold* (1966) was fully authorized and was officially volume 25 in the Tarzan series, as released by Ballantine.

p. 12. I do not understand your comment about Bradbury at all. Is "Mr. Munigant" possibly a garbled reference to the illustrator Joe Mugnaini? How did he effect the quality of what Bradbury wrote? No, what I think happened is that Bradbury hit a few notes very well, and then went stale repeating himself, writing, in particular, about childhood, and a few standard images and scenarios derived from pulp science fiction. He became, as someone put it, a professional 11-year-old, which is harder and harder to do as you get older. His science fiction ideas did not grow either. He wrote imitations of himself. I note that among his later stories, most of the better

ones are mainstream, and about adults. In these he was drawing fresh material from life, rather than self-pastiching.

Which was the point Damon Knight made about Bradbury, using Bradbury's story about the man who was terrified to know he had a skeleton in him, until a little guy named Mr. Munigant offered to crawl down his throat and eat it, turning him into a blob.

— JTM

December 22, 2013

I wrote to you a day too early, obviously, because yesterday (December 20th) was a rare day on which there was no actual global warming news. Today we are back to normal. This from the BBC: Europe's Cyrosat reports that there has actually been a bounce-back in the amount of Arctic sea ice retained this year, which seems a fluctuation. We are cautioned against reading too much into it. The level is still the lowest in thirty years. In a related story, Antarctic ice continues to melt at a record, and accelerating rate. Western Antarctica is now dumping 150 cubic kilometers of ice into the sea every year, which represents a 15% rise in the region's contribution to sea level rise. In a sidebar to that, we read that melting polar ice has added 11 millimeters to global sea levels over the past two decades. That doesn't seem a whole lot, but "accelerating" is the operative word here. You and I may still have time to see New Orleans or Venice while they are above water. Our great-grandchildren may not.

Another insidious liberal plot, I am sure.

From: **Evelyn Leeper** December 22, 2013
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Darrell Schweitzer says he wrote only one alternate history ("The Last Heretic"), but what about "Sweep Me to My Revenge!" in which (according to uchronia.net), "To settle (or win) an academic dispute, a literature prof goes back in time to avert Christopher Marlowe's mysterious death."

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

Schweitzer, Darrell. "Sweep Me to My Revenge!"
Divergence: 1593 CE

Summary: To settle (or win) an academic dispute, a literature prof goes back in time to avert Christopher Marlowe's mysterious death.

Published: In *Talebones* #35 (Summer 2007).

Secret MI5 papers stolen by whistleblowers have revealed that Marlowe was killed by Philip of Spain's inquisitorial agency Muerte a Espias. They took him

by surprise, but then, **NOBODY** expects the Spanish Inquisition!

— JTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** December 26, 2013
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Taking a break from the holiday stuff to catch up on things fannish today. With so many splits in family groups spread around the country, this year we ended up with having three days of Christmas, to be able to get together with different groupings. So far, two down, only one more to go. Like getting to see all these folks, but does kind of cut into the time schedule!

In spite of going going going all Christmas Eve and Day, I managed to miss two family parties where we would have been welcome.

— JTM

Oh, first, new little toon attached. As per usual, if you don't care for it, just let me know. Otherwise, will watch to see it used, then send fresh!

And glad I have at least that to send. Read the whole issue, but have no notes at all as far as any feedback for you. My brain must be numbed from all the turkey and eggnog. I'll try to do better next issue, I promise!

From: **Jerry Kaufman** December 29, 2013
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Thanks for the last *Alexiad* of 2013. Best wishes for the coming year.

I don't have any comments about your reviews this issue, so I'll move on to one or two things in the letter column.

Jim Stumm explains how television writers will create original scripts when they run through adaptations of the stories or novels they started with. My remark about *Perception* running out of material when the show works through Oliver Sacks' books was really a joke. I don't believe the show's writers have given credit to Sacks for his recounting of various cases he worked on, like in his collection *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat*. (I did a brief search on Google to see if there was an explicit connection, but didn't find anything.) But so far almost all the neurological disabilities, diseases, and deficits featured on the show were highlighted in one of Sacks' case studies. Once they run through Sacks, will the writers have to do their own research?

The discussion of the gold standard may never end. No one responded to my question about the best books to read on the subject, so I continue to have thoughts on the subject untrammelled by any deeper reading or knowledge. Wikipedia helpfully informed me that there's no nation currently on the gold

standard, so I wonder how an US return to it would affect our trading relations with the rest of the world.

When the US was last on this standard, if memory serves, we pegged gold at \$35 to the ounce. Currently, I see, gold is valued on the (non-arbitrary but constantly changing) market at around \$1,200 an ounce. Is this the price gold would be fixed at? Also, am I right in remembering that when we were on the gold standard, there were laws requiring that only the Federal government could own gold? Looking at the article in Wikipedia on "The Gold Standard" didn't tell me if my memory is right.

Well, I've done what I can to keeping the letter column humming with my (probably) naive thinking. You can thank me later.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Dec. 23, 2013
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Thank you for *Alexiad* 12.6, which arrived more or less on the winter solstice, bringing tidings of if not comfort and joy, at least the usual. In his Reviewers Notes Joe says that he "can't read the more readable stuff." From context I think he meant to say that he finds the more popular stuff unreadable, a reflection of the fact that the tastes of the rising audience are different than his own. The younger generation may or may not be going to hell in a hand basket but Joe can properly deplore their taste in literature.

With apologies to Rodney Leighton, I feel more inclined to discuss global warming than Islam. Thus, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently issued its fifth report since 1990. A report predicting a three-foot rise in sea level by 2100, and saying that there is a 95 percent chance that the observed warming was caused by humans burning fossil fuel. A rebuttal has been issued by the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC), a creature of The Heartland Institute, described by the *New York Times* as the primary American institute promoting skepticism of climate change. That rebuttal, *Climate Change Reconsidered II*, a collection of arguments that I found unpersuasive, is available on line, where it supports the 5-percent chance that humans are blameless for the observed warming.

For the sake of argument let us assume that both the IPCC and the NIPCC may be acting from ulterior motives rather than seeking the objective scientific truth. So we ask: whose motives are the most ulterior in terms of ideology and cold, hard cash? Generally as a group grows larger it will embrace more diverse ideologies, especially among its unpaid volunteers. The NIPCC employs 31 editors and senior fellow, with 222 volunteer advisors, while the IPCC has 195 members and thousands of volunteer advisors. Therefore the IPCC seems less likely to be able to embrace a

coherent ideology that must be upheld against the evidence. What about money, then? The IPCC says that since the start of the industrial revolution humans have burned 0.5 trillion tons of carbon and (since stopping at 0.5 trillion ton would be impossible) recommends that future emissions be kept below 1.0 trillion tons of carbon, drawn from estimated reserves of 3.0 trillion tons. Assuming that the scientific minions of IPCC are looking for grants, fellowships and tenure, they have a stake of at most a few million dollars. The Heartland Institute of Chicago is a conservative and libertarian 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that does not disclose its funding sources, but THI took in \$4.7 million in 2011. Previously it had worked with Phillip Morris to argue that smoking did not cause health problems. Some funding appears (Greenpeace says) to have been provided by the oil industry, which is looking at the distant prospect of leaving 2.0 trillion tons of carbon on the table. The math is left as an exercise to the reader, but the oil industry working through the Heartland Institute that funds the NIPCC has a vastly larger incentive to refute, dispute, and misinterpret the scientific evidence and is able to hire mercenaries calling themselves scientists for chump change.

Again, the very conservative IPCC appears less likely to follow the money rather than the science.

By way of refuting of the “cultists of Catastrophic Anthropogenic Global Warming,” Tim Lane cites the weather of 2013. On the other hand, yesterday was an unseasonably warm 74 degrees, refuting his refutation, but weather is only a point on the line of climate that proves little until like snow on a glacier, enough accumulates. Tim also offers a scientific speculation that the pause in global warming since 1998 could continue for the rest of the century.

How significant might such a pause be? A recent TV show on glaciers reported that the Greenland Ice Sheet is melting 80 times faster in 2013 than it was in 1980, which means that we would be pausing at a point where the great Greenland Ice Sheet is no longer stable. Will the 200-odd year De Vries cycle of solar activity produce a future Maunder minimum to mitigate the anthropogenic increase in atmospheric CO₂? That would be a useful straw to grasp at. However, if it happens (a big if) any solar cooling effect will probably be overwhelmed by the outpouring of all that anthropogenic CO₂. What do I mean by “all that?” Currently we happy humans are releasing the equivalent to one Krakatoa’s worth of CO₂ every year, when the level of atmospheric CO₂ is already at an 800,000 year high.

Our meet-up group went to see *The Hobbit part 2, The Desolation of Smaug*. Mostly they liked it, although Lee skipped part 2 because she found part 1 boring. Me? I felt there was a lot of padding, especially when the dwarves

were fighting Smaug before he flies off to incinerate Lake Town at the end of TDoS.

However, even padded Tolkien is pretty good, and the visuals were excellent even if, as, and when they strayed from the book. Will I go to part 3? Yes, although probably as a meet-up excursion. Will I buy the DVDs of the three movies? Not unless part 3 is really, really good.

I suspect that Tauriel won't make it out of the Battle of Five Armies. Which should please purists but hardly seems fair to the character.

— JTM

Best wishes, and, of course the Merriest of Christmases and the Happiest of New Years!

From: **John Purcell** December 31, 2013
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Well, Joe and Lisa, as calendar year 2013 winds down today, I believe I shall dash off a quick letter of comment to you while the Twilight Zone marathon plays in the background on the SyFy Channel. Sounds like a good setup to me.

Lisa’s opening paragraph about the idiocy of the holiday shopping season is one that I completely agree with. For me, it’s not only the conspicuous consumption and the totally materialistic nature of marketing strategies that I don’t like, it’s the incessant Christmas music. The overkill of the same tunes over and over, even when performed by dozens of different singers in a dizzying array of styles and arrangements, drives me completely bonkers. It has gotten to the point where I really don’t like **any** Christmas music anymore, not even Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker, which is beautiful music, yes, but it’s constantly played in stores to the point of making me dread shopping at this time of the year. Fortunately it is now New Year’s Eve day, so the vast majority of the airwaves and stores are devoid of these dreaded tunes, thus I feel better about venturing out into public with less of a Scrooge-like demeanor.

Joe, you open with some discussion about Hugo-worthy books. Sadly, being an award voted upon by fans instead of industry professionals (which the Nebulas are), the Hugo is simply a popularity contest now largely controlled by marketing and clique-voting. A great number of people were happy that John Scalzi’s *Redshirts* won, but there was an equally large number of folks (myself included) who felt that Kim Stanley Robinson was robbed by dint of Scalzi’s devoted fans. I will admit that I enjoyed *Redshirts*; it is a fun book, but it isn’t “Hugo-worthy” which I felt *2312* was, having such a broad, sweeping story-line, thought-provoking ideas, and written in a much more literate, serious tone. Taking the two books you mentioned based on their fan-bases of 2013, I would think that now *A Storm of*

Swords would win out over *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Voters are a fickle lot, especially since they tend to vote along the group mind instead of qualities like plot, themes, ideas, characterization, etc. You and I are preaching to the choir here, sadly, because those of us who inhabit traditional fandom — fanzines, conventions, and such — are a shrinking minority. Science Fiction is a huge media industry now, so it doesn’t surprise me that the Hugo Awards have become meaningless, although I am disappointed. All along I have thought that SF fans were much more intelligent and independent than the average K-Mart shopper. Guess I was wrong, especially since now so many K-Mart shoppers called themselves “science fiction fans.” The problem is obviously definitional: literary science fiction fans vs. media science fiction fans, and the latter far out-number the former.

What's hot changes. In the late nineteen-nineties, J. Michael Straczynski ruled. LSC 2 goes were devastated when he couldn't make it; in Baltimore next year he filled an auditorium and they had to schedule a second speech. Then Babylon Five ended, his next series Crusade tanked, and he speedily became "Jay who?"

There. That should garner some comments. Onward to a couple other things in this issue.

Hey, I really liked that review of *Worlds of Edgar Rice Burroughs* edited by Mike Resnick and Robert T. Garcia. Those capsule reviews are good, and make me want to go out and find this book. It sounds like a fun collection of stories. Okay, fine: I’ll order it online. Sheesh, the Internet takes all the fun out of book-hunting these days.

Rod Edmiston’s installment of “the Joy of High Tech” was interesting reading again. I kind of like the conclusion he comes to, that of the different theories to explain Dark Matter, the one that works best is the theory of Weakly Interacting Massive Particles, or WIMP. In a way this makes sense. I mean, if the meek are to inherit the Earth, then it’s not far-fetched to believe that wimps hold the universe together.

Would you do me a favor, Joe and Lisa? The next time you list either of my fanzines, *Askance* or *Askew*, please show my street and e-mail addresses. Normally you do, but those were omitted in this issue’s fanzine listing. Thank you.

Say, in my loc I see that I may have dropped a word: when I was talking about the Worldcon the sentence about Leigh Kimmel should have read “Sure wish I had met Leigh Kimmel, though.” Insert “wish” and it makes much better sense. Also, I really do want to meet her someday and get those books autographed.

Ah, me. Time to wrap up shop here and call it a loc. Many thanks for sending the zine my way, and I wish you two a prosperous New

Year free of car troubles and health issues.

No such luck.

— JTM

From: **Jim Stumm** December 27, 2013
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Darrell Schweitzer: I recently read Heinlein's *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel* for the first time and found it to be poor compared to other Heinlein books I have read. What it lacks that I find so appealing in other Heinlein stories is this: Usually the protagonists find themselves in a jam and by cleverness, pluck, and daring-do they manage to save themselves. There's nothing like this in *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel*. Instead, after failing to escape from vile aliens on the Moon, the two kids are dragged around the galaxy like sacks of potatoes, forced to go wherever various aliens want to take them, and there's nothing they can do to help themselves. The happy ending occurs entirely at the whim of aliens who could just as easily have killed them both and wiped out all of humanity if they felt like it.

Until Kip Russell persuaded them that it might not be in their best interests to do so.

In the more usual kind of Heinlein story that libertarians find so appealing, the protagonists are self-reliant, masters of their fate, and not tossed around by forces beyond their control. There is also the successful libertarian revolution in *Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, and speeches that express ideas we find congenial, and unusual sexual arrangements based on mutual consent. These features, more than literary merit, are what gives Heinlein his high place in the libertarian pantheon.

Milt Stevens: There would be a lot less need for law-abiding private citizens to have guns if all violent low-lives were disarmed. For once I'd like to see a gun control law aimed at disarming criminals, ex-cons, and reckless juveniles, but instead politicians give us laws that disarm law-abiding citizens, that leave law-breakers fully armed.

There are many countries with a much higher murder rate than USA. My source says the murder rate in USA is 4.7 per 100,000, which is far below the world murder rate of 6.9 and below that of many other countries, such as Pakistan 7.8, Mexico 23.7, South Africa 31.8, and Honduras 91.6.

Richard A. Dengrove: No I didn't say judges should stick to the letter of the law. They should stick to the letter of the Constitution, which they have sworn an oath to uphold. Laws, IE statute laws, are made by Congress, often with considerable input from the President. Justices of the Supreme Court should judge these laws to see if they comply

with the Constitution, when appropriate cases are referred to them.

George W. Price: I have discussed the economy of abundance in great detail elsewhere (in *The Connection*, published by Filthy Pierre). It's hard to say much about it in a short letter. It could come about if machines progress to where they can make any goods or services faster and better than humans. Imagine if these machines, or some of them, were also autonomous and self-replicating.

Von Mises wrote about economies where the workers and central planners were all humans with certain human limitations and foibles. That won't necessarily apply to an economy run by autonomous productive machines where machines do all production and distribution of goods and services and humans are all retired. In such an abundance economy, labor (IE machine labor) and natural resources will be unlimited in the long run (though not at any one moment) since resources, except for energy, can be continuously recycled, and it will be possible for machines to continue making more stuff with the only upper limit being reached when all material in the solar system, and all the energy of the Sun, is fully utilized.

I don't know what role capital will play in this future economy. Who will own resources and means of production (machines)? Will autonomous, replicating, self-aware machines be self-owned? Trying to preserve today's economic system in this future may be like trying to preserve feudalism at the beginning of the industrial revolution. In the Soviet Union workers said: "We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us." But in the abundance economy machine workers will all be like those auto assembly line robots, toiling away 24/7 without a complaint, and there will be no human workers. So this would be an entirely different situation.

Of course, if we give machines such power, can we keep them under human control, or will they become our masters? And if our masters, will they remain benevolent toward humans?

Look forward to an exciting career in the Reeks and Wrecks.

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** January 6, 2014
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Thanks for *Alexiad* WN 72, Happy New Year, and I fully agree with Lisa about mixing the holidays. One at a time is best. With our Thanksgiving in October, we have that first, then Hallowe'en, then Christmas and New Year's. Still, the first Christmas commercials are heard on the radio and TV just before Hallowe'en now, and the Valentine's Day stuff was in the stores just before Christmas. Insanity all around. I've noticed that a lot of the holidays

we celebrate are about 5-6 weeks apart, just the right time to boost the economy on a regular basis. Boy, are we trained...

I haven't read new SF in years, so if I have my Hugo voting franchise, I exercise it only where I might pass for vaguely knowledgeable, and that is usually with the fan categories. Seeing I know next to none of the potential candidates, seeing so much of fan activity seems to happen through websites, blogs and vlogs and podcasts, I will soon be completely unknowledgeable about every category on the ballot.

I was direly tempted to ask Best Fan Writer of 2007 John Scalzi, Best Fan Writer of 2011 Jim C. Hines, and Best Fan Writer of 2012 Tansy Rayner Roberts what of their writings they wished to contribute to the 2013 Fanthology, but had to take into consideration that they might not have any idea what it was.

— JTM

The Detroit NASFiC is something the fans there have been bidding for for some time. I think I still have the bid shirt for the last time they bid, in the 80s? It is literally down the highway from me, but as always what we can afford will determine if we go.

The local...Brad Foster, you've probably fully recovered from your eye operation. At some point, you will probably develop a cataract from this surgery, and will have to have it removed. Not fun, but it is what will happen, you'll get a new lens, and you will be partially bionic. Cool!

My loc...the three-month contract I had for last year unfortunately ended prematurely on Christmas Eve due to lack of work. There is the distinct possibility of being called back, but in the meantime, I must look again. I met Dave Kyle at SFContario again, and the years are telling. I wish him and his daughter the best.

Maxichlorians? I think that might come from fluoridated water...not sure. Better living through different chemicals?

Time to go, I am running out of interesting things to write. Am I getting too old or senile for this kind of thing? Who knows....Take care, and see you with the next issue.

From: **Joy V. Smith** January 7, 2014
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Thanks for the round-up of ERB-dom books; I wasn't aware of how they were proliferating! Mike Resnick's mystery sounds interesting — and refreshing as you point out. *The United States of Paranoia* sounds like it covers a lot of territory, and it's rather depressing... Thanks for the other non-fiction reviews too. And I always enjoy the con reports. (Oasis isn't running this year, which

I'm sorry about.)

Lots more interesting items in letters, and I enjoyed Sue Burke's translation tidbits. (Good ideas for culture slang in fiction.) Must get back to work now. Oh, btw, I recently signed a contract for my science fiction novel, *Strike Three*.

From: **Rodney Leighton** January 5, 2014
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CANADA

It's a winter wonderland around here. I was just out shovelling a bit of snow. More snow on the ground now than we had all last winter. Everything is covered with ice and snow. Trees look bedraggled, many are bent over praying for rain and mild temperatures to get the snow and ice off and allow them to stand up again. I've been awash in SFanzines lately. *Alexiad* 72 arrived Dec.23 on top of *Opuntia* 270 and under 2 packages of printed off the web zines.24th. brought *JOMP Jr*. Dec.31 brought another package of ezines.

I have been pondering the nature of fandom and fans. One of those bundles contained a couple of issues of fanstuff, one was all about GAFIA and was quite good I thought and the other was mostly about some open letter Graeme Cameron sent out to Canadian fans. Since I don't qualify as such by Graeme's definition or Arnie's or as far as that goes by my ownplease don't growl at me Lisa! ...I haven't seen it. Or perhaps it was online only and since I am not...in any event, based on the parts quoted in *Fanstuff* 40 it was mostly about trufans and fringe fans and all that bullshit. Graeme is trying to find new fans, apparently. Specifically new fanzine fans. Katz claims to have done so. Well, maybe so. He lists a bunch of folks that fall within his list of 250 trufans. Well, about 70% of them were at that Corflu thing that Murray Moore writes about. Gotta be a Trufan as defined by Katz/Hooper to attend one of those things, right?

But I wonder: if producing fanzine fans is the criteria, do all of these people count? I know, I fall within the 250,000, labelled in this issue as Definition 2: A participant in fandom, someone who engages in some form of activity within the context of Fandom. And to be fair, he may have meant that some of the 14 Vegas fans that he has lured into fandom fall within that category. The sensuous Jacq Monahan has done fanzines, I have seen them. And of course my lack of knowledge is hardly definitive. I mean, Graeme proclaims himself as an expert on Canadian fandom and fans; in *Space Cadet* #23 he lists someone named Dave Haren as 'Renowned Letterhack'. I have never heard of this guy. The only other loc in that issue came from the guy who locs everything that vaguely resembles a fanzine.

So I was looking at this Corflu list. Murray seems rather defensive, somewhat ticked off at whatever you said about that con. Used to be

you had to be an accepted member of the clan as defined by Katz/Hooper/Lichtman. People who are not "us" as defined by Robert need not apply. But lately there seems, at least to me, to be some folks who don't fit my definition of a Corflu goer. Murray himself being one. Laurraine Tutihasi. Well, she's a party girl and a Trufan. But you know what? If I counted them right Murray listed 94 people. Believe it or not I know something about almost all of them. There are some names on there that I don't know; good Lord there were a lot of Brits at that thing. But one thing I wondered: how many of these folks qualify as "us". That's Robert Lichtman's term for so called trufans. Mrs. Moore for example. Mike Weasner for another.

One of the bundles that arrived Dec.23 contained a bunch of back issues of *A Meara for Observers* by Mike Meara who was at that Corflu along with his wife Pat. Lisa partakes of *Alexiad* in various ways; Pat appears in words and photos in *AMFO* but doesn't contribute anything as far as I can tell. Lots of photos in that fanzine; one was Robert Lichtman and Ted White sharing something. In issue #11 in the letter column the discussion was about mailing lists and I came across this from Mr. Lichtman: "...I do occasionally add a few prospective new names but there are slim pickings out there." I exclaimed aloud: "Well, fuck you too!" I then immediately sat back and wondered why in the world I should be irate. Robert has been usually polite any place we have had any contact; he has sent anything I have ordered from him quickly, he has sometimes responded to some of my questions in various fanzines. He has told me that I am not someone he wants on his mailing list for TRAP DOOR. Twice. Well, that's his decision, right. I accepted that long ago. And since he rejected me back when I was loccing everything I could get my hands on, it only stands to reason that he would not want me now that I only loc once in awhile. I was unable to determine why that statement pissed me off. But also I think it is a matter of perception and opinion. Graeme nor anyone else is going to promote fandom nor find new fanzine fans by blathering about what I think Graeme now calls Tradfans. God! Or as someone described it awhile ago: "Trufandom, core fandom, old school fandom, shove it up your arse fandom".

**I don't feel welcome at Corflu.
I'm not in their clique.**

I am on the mailing list for *AMFO*. Unless I have recently been kicked off. I will, I believe, get a copy of *Feline Mewsings* when and if Laurraine does another one. I recently got a fanzine from Seattle. I would never go to one of those Corflu things, even if I could afford to do so, there are way too many people in one place but you know, reading Murray's list, I find 3 or 4 people who I believe would be happy to meet me and although I am a really lousy conversationalist I think there are a few folks who wouldn't mind talking to me. There are

also about that same number of people who would want to know what the hell I was doing there, who would either confront me or avoid me and also some that I really would not want to meet.

And also a bunch of folks that I don't enough about to know if I would want to meet them. And vice versa I imagine.

The bundle that arrived Dec. 31 contained, along with *Spartacus* #2 and a fanzine from one of those Brits named Christina Lake and *Fadeaway* #38 a copy of *The Reluctant Famulus* #96. One of the great thing about fanzines is that almost anyone can find someone who will publish their writings. I see our old pal Gene Stewart gets his drivel published in this one. Later on there is a decent column by some lady named Michael Jordan. Come the letter column and what do I find? Stewart taking potshots at Joe and Bob Kennedy and suggesting that Ms. Jordan find another pastime. Oh, it's a good thing I am not on the TRF mailing list! I have never heard of this woman as far as I know. Still, if I were getting TRF, there would be yet another Leighton/Stewart war.

Remember the other one? Of course, the editor did stand up for the lady somewhat. He writes a mild reproach and then writes that he hopes Stewart doesn't take offense. I was thinking, Tom, Stewart takes offense at praise sometimes. Besides which, if you allow writers to trash folks like that, well...

But now, eventually, I am back to the point: why can't we all belong, take and give what we wish to from fandom and be happy? None of the people I just wrote about would qualify as trufan. Hardly anyone mentioned in all this ramble would be eligible for one of those Faan Award things. Strangely enough, I would. Not that I have any interest in them. And Graeme's special Graeme Cameron Fan Awards or whatever. Give them to Lloyd, or Taral or someone. I ain't interested. Fanzines come from many places, diverse lands, different folks, wide ranging interests. Clinging to old school ideas or folks is not going to promote fanzines. Writing and publishing interesting articles and fanzines which are available to any person who wishes to read them and using their contributions without regard to whether the person is a trufan or a fringe fan or just someone who likes to read fanzines. Treating all people with respect; offering advice without trashing them; provide good reading and good publications without regard to whether the contributors are poor as mice or rich as sin; without worrying whether they are pure fans or professional writers or artists and without trying to drive enthusiasts away just because you think you are superior to them or you don't like the way they write or even because they are pros; that will likely result in people joining in. If you have to use a battering ram or a bribe to be admitted to a club, very few folks will bother to attend. If you are being attacked or scoffed at or belittled, well, some folks, like you, will truck right along. Some, like me, will

fight back sometimes and sometimes feel it's not worth it. Others will feel the hassle is not worth it at all.

Sad, isn't it?

As Sheryl Birkhead might write ...urn, er, I don't know where that came from. The enclosed generic letter thing goes to, well, I bought 20 copies. Going to start a new *Look* thing. Don't know for sure what I will do with *The Life of Rodney*.

I am watching *Taxi*. My benefactor sent the entire run of that. It's fun. Watched the first season of *Bones*. Pretty good show. Must have been the inspiration for *Castle*. I also got the 3 episodes of *Foyle's War* season 8. Watched the first 2. I didn't like them quite as much as I did the earlier ones. Not sure why. Sam doesn't appear as much.

One of my recent DVDs has 3 episodes of a show devoted to exploring the Bible. Not sure if it is on or was on. History channel I believe. It's quite interesting. Third one was all about books that were excluded from the Bible. More of them than were actually included. Jesus was a kickass dude in some of those. Just another human being in some of them.

Nice to see Tim surface; I almost wish Schweister would aggravate him more, just so I could read what he writes. I miss *FOSFAX*, believe it or not.

Yeah, but, Sheryl: being the greatest fanartist on earth doesn't necessarily mean you will get all the fanzines there are, especially if you spend all your time obsessed with bloody computers; reading *TRF* and *JOMP Jr.* and *Alexiad* in a short span of time it seems that Sheryl is all about computers.) And besides which, if you define fanzine as a publication intended for all fans that want to read it only 3 of the 10 qualify. *Broken Toys* does except it's strictly electronic; get your computer woes resolved and I am sure you could get that one. Maybe you do. I hear that Taral emailed me a copy of one or so of those issues. Haven't seen it yet. The drawback of having an email address in the U.K. is that mail, locs and zines, are dependent upon the guy over there printing the stuff and mailing it to me. He was embroiled in work and life troubles. He had been sending me copies of *Broken Toys* printed off the web. Yes, those 3 bundles of fanzines mentioned earlier came from him. No *BTs*. I think he has to print them from a different machine or something. Some will arrive before anyone sees this no doubt. I don't suppose it means anything but I only get 1 of the 10 listed in *Alexiad* 71.No. 2, supposing *Broken Toys* arrives.

It varies. Sheryl often has problems with telephone and Internet service, with cars, with the house. ... Maybe she ought to come live with her brother.

— JTM

And 2 of 11 in this issue. I only sent paper

copies of my bitty thing to folks who sent zines; those ancient issues of *Vanamonde* and *Opuntia*. Christ, an old fashioned Leighton loc! Edit at will!

From: **R-Lauraine Tutihasi** Jan. 9, 2014
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I found Lisa's coffee experience interesting. I don't get addicted to coffee for two reasons. Caffeine doesn't keep me awake; in fact it puts me to sleep if I have enough of it. But even before that happens, the acid in coffee really upsets my stomach badly. I've been drinking a cup or two of coffee most of my life, because I like the taste. By the way, I had a coffee maker once that could be installed under a cabinet. You don't sacrifice any counter space.

I knew you didn't make it to LoneStarCon, but I didn't realize how close you got before you had to give it up. I was just plain too sick. I might have been able to make the trip, but I wouldn't have been able to enjoy the con. I'm sick again but don't know if it's a recurrence of the Lyme or something else. It's very similar but not exactly the same.

Get well soon.

— JTM

To Taras Wolansky: the reason scientists didn't talk much about the effect of climate change on Antarctica before was because so little was known. Many believed that Antarctica might not be affected very much. More recently, however, new discoveries have led to more disturbing conclusions that bode ill for the world.

Sorry my LoC is so late. I'm catching up but slowly.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Jan. 11, 2014
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Ah, an *Alexiad* to comment on, December 2013. If you notice, no high octane politics this time around. However, my annoyance with it has turned into a rational objection. I have to figure out my objective in writing about politics. A subject guaranteed to get people hot and bothered with you, especially if you tell the truth. Not that, looking back on it, I have always spoken truth to either ignorance or power.

On the other hand, I have not eschewed all politics. My first comment embarks on mild politics. I have a question to ask Jeff Geenfield, who wrote *If Kennedy Lived*. Would Kennedy have gotten us out of Vietnam, as opposed to Johnson? Or would he have felt that he had to prove his toughness, and come to the same end? While Liberals want to believe the best about JFK, I am not certain he wouldn't have stayed

in Vietnam. Given the times, toughness had to be a big deal with him.

Jesse Walker, in his *The United States of Paranoia*, sounds more on the mark about conspiracy than Jeff Greenfield does about JFK. I have only one remark about him, which pertains to all mainstream commentators on conspiracy theorists. It sounds like they think conspiracy theories are a rare disease.

Not that rare in the States; and, I suspect, the majority of the World's people believe in them. It isn't a totally irrational take either. Where emotions run high, it's hard to believe the other side is giving you the facts – even if the other side is everyone else.

More than thinking he was on the mark, like Jesse Walker, Rodford Edmiston's column on dark matter, in addition, started the wheels cranking in this old brain pad. Thus, I have something to add. If the dark matter in the universe was sufficient, wouldn't the universe shrink back into a micron only to big bang itself into another universe again?

I am going to go from physics to applying the same approach to every day life, i.e., coming up with brain storms. In the letter column, Sheryl Birkhead wants to know how to get along in the world without much money. How to afford computing power, how to afford cars. The answer requires a different take on everyday life. The way to afford things is to borrow, borrow, borrow. Isn't that brilliant? Maybe not. Thinking about it, maybe borrowing isn't as satisfactory an answer as it first seemed to me.

Lloyd Penney, in his letter, doesn't need dubious advice, but congrats. Congrats, Lloyd, that you're once again employed – even if it's temporary. You know we wish you the best of luck.

Back to wisdom again because John Purcell, in his letter, wonders whether over-abundance is making us complacent. I haven't notice that happening. No matter how rich people become, most always want more. Most also don't get cowed by overabundance. If they get cowed, it's due not to overabundance but lack of opportunity.

By the way, Joe, in commenting on John Purcell, you mention an Huga Well-Erb, Heinsturbury for her initiative sapping ability. Isn't she a fictitious authoress imagined by Harlan Ellison?

While Huga is fictitious, Horizon magazine was real. I have to ask Dainis Bisenicks, though, whether the one edited by Cyril Connolly, which he mentions in a letter, is the same one my parents used to receive in the '50s. It came in hard cover, and contained some good articles.

Speaking of blasts from the past, I remember the Frederick Pohl story "The Midas Plague," which George Price recalls from his years in science fiction. George believes the plot is ridiculous; no such commonwealth of overabundance, could exist. For once, I have to agree with him. That overabundant society would be easy to shut down.

On the other hand, even though the apprehensions about consumerism which it played on have vanished in the intervening years, I have found the idea remains humorous. I could picture the poor being forced to consume in an overabundant future, and the rich and poor changing places. I remember the protagonist, Morey participating in group therapy. In this case, though, the group was made up of psychiatrists and not patients. Also, each psychiatrist represented a different school of Psychoanalysis, popular then.

I suspect even George will admit that I am not being belligerent in the above statement. Ironically, I am being more argumentative in my next comment. I beg to disagree with you, Joe, about the "Decadent Empire": that it didn't work right. It's just perfect for a dystopia, or a society a hero singlehandedly would reform. Themes that sell sufficiently well.

With your dystopia, Joe, I have reached the back page, and there is no more *Alexiad* for me to conquer; so I await your efforts next *Alexiad*.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** January 16, 2014
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Thank you for Vol. 12, No. 6 (December 2013), Whole Number 72.

Enjoyed your review of *The Lost Stars: Perilous Shield* by Jack Campbell having read the book as indicated in my letter.

Interesting review of *If Kennedy Lived: The First and Second Terms of President John F. Kennedy: An Alternate History* by Jeff Greenfield. I've had my library enter a suggestion to purchase it. If JFK had lived and were still alive he would be 96 instead of having been murdered at 46. He is forever young.

Your review of *The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory* by Jesse Walker was appreciated. I have the book; but haven't read it as yet.

You mention (p. 5) *MacArthur's War: A Novel of the Invasion of Japan* by Douglas Niles and Michael Dobson that you had previously reviewed. I can obtain it from the library.

I went to see the movie *Gravity* and on my scale of 1-5 gave it a 5.0. It was quite enjoyable despite it being a combination of Tom Hanks movies *Apollo 13* (1995) and *Cast Away* (2000).

I read *The Ocean At The End Of The Lane* by Neil Gaiman (2013). It was enjoyable until the end which I did not like.

The movie *After Earth* (2013) was obtained from my city library. Our library has a large selection of DVD's for which there is no charge. That may be one of the reasons Blockbuster closed its stores. On my scale of 1-5 I gave it a 1 and that was being nice.

Also, obtained from the library was *Star Trek Into Darkness* (2013). I gave it a 4.5 even though I had a hard time in the beginning getting use to the characters who, of course, looked nothing like the originals and that Hollywood had to get some of its politics into the movie.

After being on a wait list *Destroyermen: Storm Surge* by Taylor Anderson (2013) which is the 8th novel in the series was finally obtained from the library. After reading the first couple of pages I said to myself that I'd already read it. So, I went to the end and, yes, I had already read it. I've now made a list of all the books in the series so that the mistake of checking out a book in the series that has already been read will not be made again. I do hope that Taylor has an end to the series in mind so that it does not become the never-ending story.

I am glad that Commander Reddy and crew are not making dramatic technological advances, but improvising and making do. Though their enemies may just be too numerous for them to keep on going.

— JTM

The Mentalist: Well, since my last letter we now know that the person thought to be Red John was not Red John. But, the real Red John is now dead because Patrick Jane strangled him. I did have a problem with how the Red John concept ended. The FBI could not just come in and shut down the CBI (the California Bureau of Investigation which does not exist in real life) which was a state agency. Furthermore, the first thing that the CBI people should have done was to demand that the "FBI Agents" display their left shoulders to make sure that none of them had the Red John tattoo. Patrick Jane and the CBI people becoming part of the FBI is a bit farfetched. But, for the program to continue it had to take off on a new track. Obviously I like the program and continue to watch it.

John Purcell: I agree with you about Daylight Saving (no "s") Time. Many years ago before they had extended it I said to someone that I didn't like it and if anything it should be the reverse.

Joe: I had marked your review of *The Last Full Measure* by Jack Campbell in V12 #2 and then sadly forgot it.

Timothy Lane: Your comments on wind turbines are excellent. Wind farms kill about 440,000 birds a year. But, the Interior Department has agreed that wind farms can kill eagles for up to the next 30 years. How do the turbines know the difference between eagles and other birds? Every bird lover and bird watcher society should be screaming their heads off. Some time ago I read that it would take a wind farm the size of Connecticut to just power New York City. Wind farms should be abolished.

From: **George W. Price** January 21, 2014
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December *Alexiad*:

Joe's review of Jesse Walker's *The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory* makes me wonder: What inspires "conspiraphiles" (as I call them) to spin wild theories on little or no evidence? And why does anybody believe them? Some possibilities:

- (1) "I know something you don't know." Many a conspiraphile loves to think he's got the Real Inside Dope, putting him one-up on the rest of us. Convolved reasoning and lack of evidence may even make a theory more attractive: he prides himself that his superior intellect grasps reasoning that is too deep for the common herd.
- (2) "Nothing happens by accident." Some conspiraphiles just cannot accept that "shit happens." No, by golly, whatever happens must have been planned by somebody, and their task is to figure out who and why. They leave no room for accidents and screwups. During the Cold War many right-wingers fell into this trap. When the Communists made a gain, it couldn't be because our side had made honest mistakes — it had to be that traitors sold us out. This typified the John Birch Society. The reader may think of similar traps that leftists fall into.
- (3) "It can't be that simple." Many conspiraphiles can't believe that world-shaking events can have trivial causes. It is literally unthinkable that a dumbshit loser like Oswald could bring down the leader of the free world all by himself. There just has to be more to it than that. It scares them to think that major events can happen at random, or at the whims of madmen. So even being ruled by villainous Secret Masters (the International Jewish Bankers or whoever) is more comforting — or at least less frightening — than having to live in the real world where no one at all is in charge.

Regarding Point 2; this is still going on. I am waiting for Diana West to accuse George Marshall of having been a Soviet agent and have in her hand a list of 205 Communists in the State Department.

Darrell Schweitzer says China is the world's leading polluter "because the Chinese have completely unregulated capitalism, very much in bed with the corrupt government but not at all answerable to the people." Oh now, Chinese capitalism is highly regulated, but the regulation is almost entirely political, and for the benefit of the rulers, not the environment.

Many of China's worst polluters are not just "in bed" with the government, they are the government. The People's Liberation Army isn't only a military force — it operates many huge business enterprises which are less than attentive to environmental purity. And even the truly private businesses still have to do exactly as the government says; they exist by sufferance of the rulers, who neither respect property rights nor believe in an untrammelled free market.

By the way, is it "corruption" when it pervades the entire system? When it effectively is the system? At what point is "corruption" better called "standard operating procedure"?

The Chinese rulers give lip service to environmental cleanup; someday they may actually do it. They might not even need a big bureaucracy like our EPA; they could just rely on tort law. That is, the government would recognize and enforce the right of ordinary people to sue polluters who befoul their neighbors' air and water. Who knows, China might even develop a free-market economy. But don't hold your breath.

Alexis Gilliland says that when I extol the virtues of the gold standard, I "should consider whether there are minuses as well as pluses" to my "beautiful idea." Oh, I am sure there are. It's far from perfect — but still one hell of a lot better than any known alternative.

Alexis cites William Jennings Bryan's famous "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!" speech, and adds, "The fact that the nation eventually abandoned the gold standard suggests that Bryan might have been on to something."

Well, no. What it suggests to me is that Bryan was an inflationist whose agenda was thwarted by the gold standard, luckily for the country. That we eventually abandoned the gold standard means only that the inflationists eventually won, to our great cost. It is no coincidence that the price level fluctuated over a relatively narrow band (about two-fold up and down) during the 140-odd years we were more or less on the gold standard, and has shot up about twenty-fold since we abandoned gold.

Brad Foster has old records which he no longer plays for lack of a working turntable. About \$300 will buy a table-top stereo that plays records (78, 45, and 33 rpm) and music tapes, and also burns them onto CDs playable on modern equipment. I may get one — I have albums I haven't played in years.

Like Jim Stumm, I am skeptical about how much global warming is due to human

activity. Visiting my sister-in-law in Phoenix about ten years ago, I found a book on her shelf about colonial America, published circa 1990, before climate change became a huge issue. It casually mentioned that the New England colonies were founded four centuries ago just as the "Little Ice Age" was giving way to the long warming trend that we are still in. Well, if the warming began two hundred years before the Industrial Revolution started pumping CO2 into the air, then the cause had to be natural. It is certainly possible — even likely — that our emissions have added to the warming. But how much? For me to take seriously the theories of the warmists, they need to show that they can quantitatively distinguish man-made warming from the natural cycle. So far they have come nowhere near.

**The Norse colonies in
Greenland were founded during
the Medieval Warm Period. When
the Little Ice Age closed down,
the Inuit moved in.**

Richard A. Dengrove says, "George Price advocates taming the politicians with bimetallism." No sir, I did not say that. I said that Milton Friedman thought bimetallism might work, but I did not say I agreed. Actually, I don't see how it can possibly work, but I hesitated to dispute Friedman, who has been right on so many other monetary issues. Perhaps I deferred too much to his authority.

Mr. Dengrove adds that if we had Free Silver — where "Anyone could have any silver they owned brought to the mint, made into coins and used as the currency" — that would get us pretty close to the private currency that I advocate. But he suspects that the effect would be the opposite of what I want: it would inflate the currency, "and the farmers who advocated free silver intended it to do just that then."

The inflationary effect should not be significant. Like gold, silver is scarce enough that the amount mined and brought to the mint would usually be very small compared to the amount already circulating. As long as the money supply grows no faster than the economy, the wage and price level should stay close to constant. Past discoveries of gold and silver have usually resulted in prices rising moderately and leveling out quickly as the new money is absorbed into the system.

Yes, many farmers wanted inflation, but I bet they would not have liked it if they had gotten it. Inflation generally benefits only the first people to get the newly-created money, and that would have been mostly the silver miners, not the farmers.

The common fallacy that pumping up the money supply will create prosperity arises from confusing wealth and money. Wealth consists of real things that help us live better. It can be tangible (such as factories and cars) or intangible (such as a workman's skill). But

money is only a marker for wealth, and multiplying the markers does not multiply the wealth. Quite the opposite: inflation destroys prosperity by introducing false signals into the price system, sabotaging the creation and preservation of wealth.

Mr. Dengrove also says I have failed "to give any actual proof that the Community Reinvestment Act of 1978 was the cause of the Housing Bubble of the ought years." What would he accept as "actual proof"? Obviously, this can never be proved (or disproved) with scientific certainty, since it involves deducing people's motives. Let's look at it again:

The Community Reinvestment Act, as amended in the Nineties, required banks to make more mortgage loans in minority neighborhoods. As I recall, the penalty for not meeting the quota was loss of federal deposit insurance, which might put a bank out of business. So they stepped up "subprime" lending and met their quotas (set at about 50% of total home loans). This much is historical fact, and needs no further proof.

The CRA assumed that racism was why banks were not lending much to minorities. My own unprovable judgment is that the real reason was the obvious: minorities were mostly poorer than mainstream borrowers, and less able to meet the standard criteria for lending risk. (The anti-racists assumed those criteria were rigged to purposely exclude minorities.) What is undisputed is that lenders did lower their standards, and loaned to people who wouldn't qualify under the old rules.

Of course most of the lenders well knew that such mortgages would suffer high defaults. So why didn't they kick and scream and protest that they would be put out of business, either by losing money on borrowers who couldn't repay, or because the government would punish them for not lending to those poor borrowers?

To me, the obvious answer is that they knew they could pass those bad loans on to Fannie and Freddie and the FHA, and let the taxpayers take the hit. True, there's no way to prove that's what they thought. Mr. Dengrove suggests that "lenders were willing to stoke the housing bubble because they saw dollar signs in their eyes. With prices always going up and up, foreclosures didn't matter. Nor that the mortgagee was a credit risk. The lenders could still make money by reselling the property." But this only describes how lenders thought after the boom got going, not why the boom started.

(We might also note that "prices always going up and up" was due to the Federal Reserve making "easy money" readily available to the housing market. That's another of my unprovable opinions.)

Once it became apparent that lending standards had been drastically lowered, with the full approval (not to say connivance) of the government, then all kinds of slippery dealers

and outright crooks crawled out of the woodwork and began issuing “liar’s loans” and other dubious financial products. Most lenders took greater and greater risks.

Since Mr. Dengrove does not think that all this constitutes proof that the CRA was at the root of the bubble, let me ask what he thinks was really the cause. Are we to believe that in the late Nineties lenders abruptly started taking huge risks on subprime loans for no particular reason? Greed and bad judgment are standard parts of human character, so why did they suddenly run wild at that particular time?

I also ask Mr. Dengrove just what he thinks would have happened if, when the CRA was amended to punish lenders for not making enough subprime loans, the lenders had courageously refused to make the riskier loans. (I think the government would have punished them as threatened — resulting in a financial crisis that would of course have been blamed on the “intransigent” bankers.)

A minor point: Mr. Dengrove says, “I disagree with George that absolutely no one saw trouble coming while the housing bubble was in progress.” I don’t believe I ever said that. To the contrary, I said that the *Wall Street Journal* did indeed see it coming, but did not anticipate how bad it would be.

Timothy Lane says that “No other religion of significance . . . treats women anywhere near as badly as Islam does.” True, and ironic. I have read that Islam originally commanded an improvement in the status of women. Before Islam, an Arab could have an unlimited number of wives and concubines, and could treat them as badly as he pleased. Mohammed’s revelation limited a man to four wives (and as many concubines as he could afford), required him to treat them equally, and even set limits on how big a stick he could use to beat them. It is hard to think of Mohammed as liberal, but for his time and place he was. Alas, many Islamic cultures seem unable to liberalize beyond the original revelation.

I don’t usually comment on my own letters, but my last one had an oddity introduced by the editor. Discussing the Spanish novel *Cenital*, I italicized that title. The editor kept the italics and added an underline. This was done to both mentions of the title, so it doesn’t seem to be an accident. I do not see this usage with italicized words elsewhere in *Alexiad*. Would the editor tell me, why the underline?

Cenital is 1) a book title in 2) a foreign language. I’ve been doing that all along; i.e., with Jules Verne Voyages Extraordinaires.

— JTM

I have also noticed that *Alexiad*’s style is to use italics for titles, but not for emphasis in regular text. At least, my italics for emphasis always get changed to roman. So in this letter I have forgone italics and have used the underline for emphasis. I will look to see if my underlines are still there.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** January 20, 2014
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It is now 65 years since I had a glimpse of the Statue of Liberty and landed on these shores; it happened also to be the day of Truman’s inauguration for his full term. I had been primed for science fiction in Germany by a marionette play of Kasperl’s trip to Mars, which turned out to be a colorful place with colorful inhabitants. So: in time, Heinlein in *Boys’ Life* came my way, and the Conklin anthologies. I will not chronicle the rest except to note that in time I read more and more selectively. I have not yet forgiven certain authors who knew damn well they were writing shit. And were they not putting their readers off science fiction?

What would that be, “Satellite Scout” (August 1950, NHOL G.083b)? Or “Tramp Space Ship” (September 1952, NHOL G.092b)? Those being condensed versions of *Farmer In the Sky* and *The Rolling Stones* respectively.

In one of Rosemary Edghill’s urban fantasies, the p-o-v character reflects on the incongruity of the denizens of Faerie showing up in modern cities. It is as though you had the Seelie Court and the Unseelie Court duking it out — in Minneapolis; something something — in Toronto; and a third which I forget. I recognized the first at once; it’s *War for the Oaks* by Emma Bull. I think I have now found the Toronto book, it’s *Gate of Darkness, Circle of Light* by Tanya Huff. Can anyone clue me in on this, and on the third book? I no longer have the source book; *The Sword of Maiden’s Tears* is not it. The only other thing I can remember from the sequels is an episode in which the aristocratic Elf requires to have his boots pulled off and turns to the woman p-o-v as to a servitor. Some debate on the matter ensues.

This brings to mind a passage from the second chapter of G. K. Chesterton’s *Orthodoxy*: “The determinist makes the theory of causation quite clear, and then finds out that he cannot say ‘if you please’ to the housemaid.” This is, in Marthn Huber’s terms, an “I — It” relation, where “I — Thou” is desired, which courtesy and listening can begin. (But the employer, too, is a real person.) A wage-slave, by definition, is deemed to have put into abeyance, during working hours, any call on courtesy and listening, in exchange for what is

deemed a living wage. A wage-slave may speak only those words that are in the script. The girls at Hooters are a perfect example of wage-slaves. Their human dignity is in abeyance. In grand houses, the domestic staff worked invisibly and inaudibly.

Mr. Hammer in *The Cocoanuts* (1929) had a solution to that problem: “What makes wage slaves? Wages!”

In the future, when the towns are caves of setel, Lije Baley is shown as granting the courtesies to his robot partner’ Asimov made much of this in subsequent work.

Does labor — any labor — have dignity? Where would Brahmins be without the labor of the Untouchables? Who may yet ask: “Who do you think you are? What do you think I am? Who ordered our respective estates?” Many of our chores have been eased by machinery, but there is always a residue of scutwork. Now if the scutwork was done by humanoid robots, which have no faces in which — if we looked — we might detect reproach? No faces, only masks. Ah, to be safe from being reproached by those who serve us! Asimov, of course, considered this in characterizing the series.

I will not further expand on these thoughts here.

It was their karma. The Brahmin had been virtuous in a previous life, the Dalit had been less so. Elliott Ness joke omitted.

A nonprofit organization in the neighborhood supplies books to prison inmates; of those donated, only a small part is suitable. Some of what looks valuable is briefly offered for sale, but such is put out on a table in front for passers-by to take. I had been seeing parts of a well-organized SF/F collection (pbs all) put together 20 - 30 years ago — all by woman authors! There were some twenty each by Jo Clayton, C. J. Cherryh, and MZB. Takers for these hereabouts are few; to save them from being rained or snowed on, I hauled off several batches and took them (saving a few) to the North-East Regional Library, which has a room full of donated books going cheap. Of books available there, I was highly pleased to find a very recently published *London: A History*, a nice fat volume that would have cost me £25 new. I cannot now imagine adding another book on London: enough is enough. Or on Jerusalem, either, after buying (used, \$8) *Skyline Jerusalem*, a large-format album of aerial views from about 20 years ago, including quite a few taken after January 1992 snowfall.

I liked Jo Clayton. She wrote about what I called the Canonical SF Universe; a place with ancient mysteries, conflicts among humans, other races, far-off

places. She connected her books in an intriguing fashion.

— JTM

From: **Taras Wolansky** December 1, 2013
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October 2013:

"Oomphel in the Sky": The "economy of abundance" is an economic myth, a misunderstanding of human nature. Or, to put it another way, we can start talking about an economy of abundance when we all have personal starships — but then, of course, we'll want better starships!

Jack Vance understood this. In *"Ullward's Retreat"* (1958), the protagonist buys a continent on a newly discovered planet, but he and his guests feel cramped because the other continents are off-limits.

Technological unemployment is also a myth. We went from 97% farmers to 3% farmers without putting 94% of the population out of work.

Review of Surrounded by Enemies: What If Kennedy Survived Dallas?: **"Beyond that there was the President's tangled love life and his treacherous health."** Or in plain English, he slept with a gangster's moll in the White House, and with prostitutes on every trip he took outside of the White House, unsurprisingly contracting venereal diseases. He also took mind-altering medications, which may explain some of his erratic behavior as President.

I recall seeing an ABC report that indicated, had JFK not been killed when he was, he was about to have a tsunami of scandal wash over him. Depending on how much of the truth about him got through the media firewall, it's quite possible he would not have been able to run for re-election in 1964.

A good thing for the country? Probably; elected through Hollywood glitz over substance, JFK was one of our least competent Presidents. He also holds the record for lowest score on an IQ test by a future President: the brains that made him President were his father's.

Review of The Riddle of the Labyrinth: **"Alice Kober ... came out of nowhere; saying nothing of her past, her family, her origins. She seems to have been a totally bland and indifferent-looking person ..."** Which of course raises the obvious question: time traveler, or alien robot?

Time traveler. She died of cancer, so presumably came from an era where the connection between that and smoking had been forgotten, and in blending in, went too far.

Leigh Kimmel: **"Apparently the**

organizer of the Orlando [2015 Worldcon] bid had alienated a lot of people." Orlando losing the Worldcon — and so badly — was a surprise. Optimistically, I would like to think the Communist theme the organizers adopted didn't help — I told them it was comparable to drawing on Nazi imagery — and it seemed they de-emphasized it toward the end.

Given the ruined state of the city, Detroit winning the 2014 NASFiC was also a surprise to me. It seemed as if the bid came out of nowhere. (Had there been some sharp practice involved, I wondered idly, offending a committee person who was within hearing.) The Detroit people assured me that security is good in the convention district — but if you're the type of person who likes to explore the town where a con is happening, you may want to think twice.

We'll go to the Henry Ford and to see Paul, the widower of my cousin Kathy.

Sue Burke: **"I'd like to sit next to my boyfriend ... so would you mind changing tickets? Mine's first class."** And after so promising a beginning, all that happened was a comfortable, five hour train trip? No handsome stranger mistook your identity and involved you in a thrilling romantic adventure?



Darrell Schweitzer: **"Wilde ... sued Queensberry for libel. Queensberry defended himself by proving that the charge [i.e., allegedly libelous statement] was true. ... By today's standards what is offensive about Wilde's behavior is that he broke his marriage vows."**

Let me get this straight: "by today's standards" it's not offensive that Wilde brought a false charge of criminal libel against Queensberry? Note that I used to think it was just Queensberry's money that Wilde was trying to steal by perjury, but the truth is much worse: if Queensberry had lost the case, he could have gone to prison for two years. Thus, it's an exquisite piece of poetic justice that, in the end, Wilde was sentenced to — two years.

"The basic legal principle illustrated here is that you should never sue for libel when the charges are actually true and the accuser [i.e., the defendant in the libel suit] can prove it."

I hope Darrell does not mean to imply it's OK to sue for libel if the defendant *can't* prove

the truth of what he said! Which reminds me of another "hero", John Henry Faulk. "They were bad detectives, and we got 'em!" he crowed to his young friend, Orson Bean, a fellow blacklisted. (The defendants in his libel suit were "fascists", Faulk explained to the disillusioned Bean, so perjury and witness tampering were justified.)

Interestingly, both Wilde and Faulk were specifically mounting legal attacks on freedom of speech and the press, ironic as both men posed as advocates of those freedoms.

In fact, I expressed my *main* objection to the myth about Spanish Jews being forced to give up their children in 1492 as follows: "For one thing, no one would leave, under those circumstances." (They would undergo a false conversion — as many did anyway — then grab their kids and go.) The potential expense and annoyance to the Spanish government and/or Church was secondary.

But this may be a garbled reference to a real atrocity. For money, the King of Portugal offered six months refuge to the Jews — but when that period was over any Jews still in the kingdom were enslaved. At this point, several hundred Jewish children were separated from their parents and sent away to a plantation, never to be seen again. (I don't recall the details, if the details are known. Possibly their ship foundered.)

During the American Revolution, **"the French Canadians ... were at that point fighting against their own king and country ..."** In all the accounts of the American Revolution I've ever read, I've never heard of French Canadians actually fighting on the British side. Rather, with their country heavily occupied by the British, they simply sat out the war.

"I do not think the real conflict today is between Islam and Christendom. It is between Islam and Secularism." In that case, start studying the Koran. Secularism: "You're a doomed animal on a doomed planet in a doomed universe." Islam: "Paarrrr-ttttyyy!!!"

"Taras conveniently fails to report about all those news stories about climate change not fitting some of the predictive models ... that these stories always make a point of giving the deniers no cause for comfort." In fact, I've pointed out that scientific researchers whose actual findings undermine the global warming consensus are careful to kowtow to all the proper idols, as a matter of survival. (You would see a similar pattern of behavior in, say, economists doing research in the Soviet Union: regardless of their actual findings, Marxism always had to be correct.) Of course, the reference to "deniers" is something of a straw man argument: warmists try to pretend there are only two possible positions, believing everything or believing nothing.

"The [global warming] models have often proved too conservative. The climate is changing faster and more radically than predicted." (Later in the same paragraph:) **"There are some questions about the**

apparent slowdown of the process. Not that it is stopping, but that it is, for a time, slowing down, and there is no consensus on the cause." So global warming is accelerating and slowing down?

"It is offensive to suggest that [Saladin] Ahmed only got nominated for an award because of his name and ethnicity. It's rather like suggesting that Samuel Delany or Octavia Butler only got nominated for things because they were black." We were trying to understand why a not-greatly-distinguished DAW mass-market paperback was nominated for a Hugo Award. Not nominated "only" because of the author's name, but the name was a "plus factor", in the jargon of affirmative action, which is pervasive in our society.

It had zombies, which have replaced vampires as the "plus factor" du jour. I don't know what horror trope will be the next "plus factor" in SF.

By the way, Octavia Butler is still the only science fiction writer to win a MacArthur Foundation "Genius" grant, in the 33 years of its existence. Perhaps Delany and LeGuin were passed over because they had only one "plus factor" apiece, not enough to cancel out their sci-fi cooties. Gene Wolfe? Fuggedaboutit!

Finally, Robert S. Kennedy: Next Worldcon, get yourself one of those indoor motor scooters – and bask in the knowledge that you are helping to bring to life the world of Dr. David H. Keller's 1928 "Revolt of the Pedestrians".

January 31, 2014

As always at the last possible minute, comments on the December 2013 *Alexiad*.

Review of Dam Busters by James Holland: George Lucas adapted the story for the climax of *Star Wars: A New Hope*, but did he have to dumb it down?

Rodford Edmiston: Setting off a "gigaton warhead" to illuminate the solar system would also reveal our presence to aliens with relativistic bombs. (P.S.: Another great "rambling"!)

Sheryl Birkhead: I watched *The Bletchley Circle* for several episodes but got annoyed with the writing: the women use their cryptographic techniques to find a new victim of the serial killer before the police do, yet (for dramatic purposes) no one listens to what they have to say about the case, even so. It reminded me of *Medium*, in which every episode began at zero, as it were, with the police forgetting the dozens of times they previously doubted the protagonist and she was eventually proven right.

"Jenny McCarthy is the new co-host on the *View*." Ratings at the time indicated that Elizabeth Hasselbeck walked off with a

healthy chunk of the, um, viewership, carrying it to *Fox and Friends*, which set ratings records; while McCarthy (notorious for encouraging parents not to vaccinate their small children) brought no audience with her.

Leigh Kimmel (Archon report): "The hot tub ... had been shut down permanently because it couldn't be made compliant with ADA accessibility requirements." As I recall, something similar happened when a firm wanted to install self-cleaning toilets in sidewalk kiosks in New York City: they were rejected by the government because they couldn't be made wheelchair-accessible.

They could be made wheelchair-accessible. And also hooker-accessible, becoming mini-brothels.

Lloyd Penney: Actually, "Dubya" won his wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in the latter case by rejecting the advice of the Joint Chiefs and finding a better way. Not that the achievements are necessarily permanent; but he is not to blame for the gross ineptitude of his successor, who has frittered away much of the gains.

U.S. military spending is in the neighborhood of 20% of the Federal budget, dwarfed by the vast social programs that increase every year on automatic pilot. But statistical reporting tricks are used to make military spending look bigger; for example, excluding from the count those vast social programs; or reporting 10+ years of the war costs while giving the rest of the budget on an annual basis. (Looking at a chart of Federal spending as a proportion of the GDP, it's hard even to make out the war years.) This is probably how you got the false impression the wars created the deficit.

Not to mention counting interest payments on the deficit, the space program, and even some of those social programs as "military spending".

Milt Stevens: Good point, that "Making bullets is cottage industry." Sometimes people hatch these "bullet control" schemes. "In the United States, it does appear that the number of massacres [i.e., mass shootings] has increased in recent years." I think you're right: there were fewer mass shootings in the period before most gun controls, when people carried their rifles onto planes and school buses.

Alexis Gilliland: "American's shrinking middle class". "Middle class" is a statistical category with a floor and a ceiling, both arbitrary. Thus, the number of people within the range can be reduced both by increasing poverty and increasing wealth. The latter appears to predominate: people are rising, rather than falling out of the category. "We seem headed for more inequality of income than we currently enjoy." With a constant flood of poor and uneducated immigrants, that's

probably true. On the other hand, living standards are becoming less unequal over time, and that's probably more important.

Darrell Schweitzer: Obviously Michael Fumento's *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS* (and Delany's comments along similar lines) refer to the U.S., not Africa. Where, I'm told, the abysmal state of public health results in millions of untreated STD cases which produce lesions HIV can then exploit. There are also indications that the white population has higher percentages of resistant forms of the cell receptors exploited by HIV, due to an earlier encounter with a pathogen that used the same receptor: the Black Death. Headline from *Science Daily* in 2005: "Biologists Discover Why 10 Percent Of Europeans Are Safe From HIV Infection".

"The science on global warming is in. We know it is happening and it is caused by human activity. The UN admitted as much recently." It seems bizarre to use a political body – and an extravagantly corrupt political body, at that – as a scientific authority. To me, the U.N. is where the Pol Pot regime, a member in good standing even after exterminating one-third of Cambodia's population, condemns human rights abuses in Israel; where Qaddafi's Libya chairs the Human Rights committee; where (just now) Iran is elected to a major arms control post. We can only conclude that anthropogenic global warming is a hypothesis useful to some of the world's most evil regimes.

"The southern polar cap ... is melting too." Here's the British Antarctic Survey, cited by Wikipedia: "Antarctica seems to be both warming around the edges and cooling at the center at the same time. Thus it is not possible to say whether it is warming or cooling overall. ... There is no evidence for a decline in overall Antarctic sea ice extent." Given the increasing well-known (but still unexplained) flat lining of global warming since the late Nineties, these findings shouldn't be a surprise.

"The Chinese have completely unregulated capitalism, very much in bed with the corrupt government but not at all answerable to the people. Profit is all." Unregulated, profit-oriented capitalism is totally answerable to the people, in their role as consumers (and investors), and no one else. What the Chinese have is crony capitalism ("in bed with the corrupt government"): what Ayn Rand fulminated against in *Atlas Shrugged*, and what America is moving toward in the Age of Obama. Under crony capitalism, "rule by the rich is the most common form of human government." To be precise, it's not the rich that rule, but the rulers get rich: take a look at what happened to Russian tycoons who crossed Putin, for example.

Okay, so Orren Boyle supports Putin, the way Floyd Ferris wants to be on the Global Warming Control Board.

— JTM £105 per night, or US\$173. Good thing our travel expenses will be low.

The Calais-Dover stretch of
that bus trip will be interesting.
— JTM

“What [bad Heinlein] had she read? *I Will Fear No Evil*, *The Number of the Beast*, *Time Enough for Love*, etc.” Ironically, a similarly young woman in the audience of a Heinlein panel, where there had been a lot of late-Heinlein bashing, rose up to say she didn’t understand what they were talking about: she *liked* late Heinlein!

Time Enough for Love is more a scrapbook than a novel; *I Will Fear No Evil* was a product of its time; *The Number of the Beast* I can barely remember, but what I do remember is rather bizarre. On the other hand, *Job* and *To Sail Beyond the Sunset* I recollect with some affection. All of these books I read only once, when they were first published. Might be good to read them again.

Dainis Bisenieks: On the subject of the editor who “corrected” the drunk’s speech in Titus Groan, I once bought myself a paperback of *Paradise Lost*, a Signet edition I think, and discovered the editor had restored all the vowels Milton had painstakingly extracted for rhythmical reasons. Silly, old-fashioned Milton, writing his primitive poetry without the benefit of our modern advances!

Brad W. Foster: **“I always wondered what a Monty Python sf movie would have been like.”** They actually did a half-hour episode about how giant blanchmanges from the planet Skyron in the galaxy of Andromeda attempt to win Wimbledon by transforming Englishmen into Scotsmen.

From: **Sue Burke** January 25, 2014
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Continuing the theme of translation, Joe said goodbye at the end of my last LOC with “Hasta la vista, baby” from *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*. But how should that be said when dubbed into Spanish? Here in Spain, it turned into “Sayonara, baby” to keep it foreign and using an expression with somewhat similar lip movements.

In the French dubbings of Warner Brothers cartoons, Pepe le Pew is Italian.

Lisa objected to Christmas decorations before Halloween. Here the Christmas candy was out well before All Saints Day, too. I refused to buy it before its time.

My husband, Jerry Finn, and I have signed up for Loncon 3. It’s reasonably close: we could actually get there by bus, 29 hours and €100/US\$135 each way, although a plane will be the same price and less than 4 hours. We plan to go a day early for sightseeing. But even with the convention discount, our rooms in the Ibis Hotel – already reserved – will run

Both Richard A. Dengrove and George W. Price wondered about the central premise of the novel *Cenital* by Emilio Bueso: a sudden disappearance of petroleum. In fact, he was challenged on that in his presentation at Hispacón XXXI. He answered that the major reserves are state owned, and it is in those countries’ strategic interest to misstate the reserves. (The CIA confirms that. Privately owned companies also tend to lie for tax reasons.) The question is how much they are lying. For the book, Bueso assumed they were lying a lot. While there are other energy sources, none is so widely used, efficient, and concentrated as oil. In fact, we can’t dig and ship coal without petroleum-powered vehicles and equipment. A sudden breakdown in the supply of petroleum would not give us time to switch to alternative sources or exploit untapped reserves.

Bueso’s main thesis is that modern agriculture depends on oil. “We are eating petroleum,” he said at Hispacón. Petroleum is essential for producing fertilizer, powering equipment, and transporting seeds to fields and produce to consumers. After a sudden, unanticipated disappearance of petroleum, we wouldn’t be able to switch over to another energy supply quickly enough to avoid losing a year or more of harvests. Meanwhile, we wouldn’t have the means to distribute what food there was. There lies the disaster.

In the end, though, he confessed that the premise of the book serves best as a means to ponder our dependence on petroleum. We won’t run out, oil will just get more scarce, and our lives will change, possibly a lot, since our current lifestyle depends on cheap, abundant oil. The future will be based on sustainable energy, he said, one way or another, but getting there might be hard.

Finally, I’m sad to say that my sister, Elizabeth Horton, died on January 9 of lung cancer at age 53. She had been diagnosed in January 2013, and although it had seemed to be in remission at the Fourth of July, it came back, this time incurable, and her health deteriorated quickly. I’m glad I had time to spend with her in San Angelo, Texas, to help her and her husband, and to get them to my brother’s house in Houston for a family reunion at Thanksgiving. She leaves behind a loving husband and wonderful son, and many happy memories. She was enjoying life and making jokes until the very end.

From: **Murray Moore** January 30, 2014
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Knowing as I do nothing about the record, blood line, owner, etc. of any of the horses you list running in the 2013 Pacing Triple Crown races, I would have picked Captaintreacherous. I like the name.

We are attending our first NASFiC because it is in Detroit, i.e. close to us in Mississauga. We have become ConFusion (in January) regulars. The Sunday of this year’s ConFusion I joined the group of DetCon 1 committee members on a tour of the DetCon hotel. I was surprised that the hotel is as old as it is, dating to the late 1970s.

You will enjoy, if new to you, exploring “Michigan’s Largest Bookstore”, John R. King Books, 901 W. Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit MI 48226. It occupies the multiple floors of a former glove factory, ten minutes or fewer by car from the DetCon hotel.

Re. the review of *Dam Wars*, as part of your drive to Detroit you can visit, near Hamilton, Ontario, the Canadian Wartime Airplane Museum. Among the aircraft is one of the two Lancaster bombers still flying:

<http://www.warplane.com/vintage-aircraft-collection/aircraft-history.aspx?aircraftId=4>.

You can be a passenger in the air in the Lancaster, in exchange for \$2,500. Oh, and you must be a museum member.

A relative bargain is a flight in a B-25, 20 minutes for \$450.

So, you can get Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo for \$11.25, or in 1942 prices 78¢.

— JTM

Four bids for Worldcon in 2017. Helsinki will be a distant second to DC in 2017, for no other reason than Worldcon last happened on your East Coast in 2004, or 13 years ago by 2017.

Helsinki did as well as it did in 2013 because Tampa underwhelmed, and Spokane did not overwhelm voters. But much support for Helsinki Redux will switch to D.C. The list of the D.C. bid’s committee members is wide and deep.

And Helsinki chose not to oppose Kansas City in 2016, I am led to understand, because the Helsinki bidders and the Kansas City bidders are friends.

So no NASFiC in 2015, 2016, 2017, and perhaps 2018. But the Chinese are coming: to LonCon 3, to bid for a Worldcon.

From: **Sheryl L. Birkhead** Jan. 31, 2014
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Just when I thought I was getting caught up I got lax in my locs and . . . well . . . you know! Yeah, the holidays are now running together at the end of the year. If the stores could somehow manage (can we say *sales*?) to stimulate buying for a longer period it might

serve everyone better — no feeling of rushed (but hey, for some of us that is fun!). I would hope it would mean everything gets purchased over a longer period of time so there is not any sudden expenditure that means big problems in the budget (yeah, that's experience talking.)

Got the *Harry Potter* Forever stamps before the "temporary" 3¢ price increase — along with some of the global Forever stamps. I like them, so it is my personal preference — as it is for all the stamps I buy.

The latest things I have thought about, equine-wise, are the *Budweiser* Super Bowl commercials — heard a lot about the one from 2002, so went and found it online — then hadn't seen 2013 either and went to that one too. Working on Sundays puts a crimp in my TV watching that day, regardless of what is on.

This year one of my pseudo-resolutions was to spend at least one hour a day doing something I like — sketching drawing, etc. That lasted one day. I still *intend* to do it, but so far life keeps getting in the way without extending the number of hours per day. I will get back to it, just not sure when . . .

Hope you are riding out the weather this winter — cold is not exactly descriptive. I watch the pile of wood rapidly dwindle and worry a bit. We shall see. Ironically, it is supposed to flirt with the 50s this weekend — then (rumor has it) a bad storm is supposed to be coming in another week or so. Oh *goodie*.

It is time to think about Hugo nominations again! I (every year) hear mumbling about don't bother, but my take on it is, if I am qualified to nominate, I can complain about the results only if I did my part and nominated. I get that feeling that it is an uphill battle. After all this, the fandom of today and tomorrow is not the same as yesterday . . . that's called progress (like it or not). Since I am interested in the fan categories, especially the fanartist one, I cringe at the thought that *any* art is qualified (meaning some and dance, filk, etc.). I had, honestly, never given any thought in that direction. All my time (up until just recently) in fandom fanart meant drawing for fanzines. Right. Now fanzines are . . . well . . . not necessarily the fanzines we have had in our fan culture for so "loong". Again, like it or not, that's progress. It never crossed my mind that art encompassed so many categories that fit the definition and unless the criteria are much more specific than they are now all those are qualified. Personally, I feel the *fan* part of the name comes with "responsibility" to fandom — but to me (as a no-convention goer these days) this means not just in art shows. Once again, that is my take on it and without very specific guidelines.

What "Fan Art" means these days is a website with cartoons from which the artist makes a living with tie-ins.

— JTM

I do have to say that I was a bit surprised last year that whoever decides if something or someone is qualified for a nomination let some of the "items" through (esp. in the fanzine category). Okqy, enough creebing especially when preaching to what I suspect is the choir.

I did a fantasy check on what a trip to LonCon3 would cost and gave up very quickly (I entertain myself every few years with making a budget for such a trip — oops, forgot to add a passport into this one — ah well, never going to happen).



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

Lloyd: Hope the job situation was as ghould as possible — you didn't know at last loc. When my brother, who is off to Hawaii for two weeks to their time-share, then back and after three weeks off on a 120-day cruise — all while waiting for their "new" (i.e., new to them) home to be available, asks me where I am going for my vacation this year, I tell him the same place I have gone for the past 22 years and he has stopped askign where that might be. I keep hoping that one year I will be able to actually go somewhere, if only for a day or two — but need to win the lottery for that. With the \$17,000+ needing to go into the house (and a whole \$461 saved so far), unlikely there will be any non-essential traveling. I hope you get to LonCon3 and I look forward to a trip report! (By the way, I'd love to be able to afford the new technology, but I can't. It is amazing that you can get along without all the bells and whistles — but people have done it for years. If it won't shoehorn into the budget, it isn't even up for consideration these days.)

Seeing *Rodney's* glasses saga — same here except these are my first pair. Insurance will pay for diagnostics but **not** the routine exam, and of course not the glasses which totaled about \$650. To be fair, I went to the allied optician beside the ophthalmologist — not one of the touted low price chains. I have now had the glasses almost a year and they still make me dizzy, I compare my vision plus dizziness with glasses and vision without — the glasses are still ahead. Unfortunately there is not a lot you can do if there is a problem. These are progressives — was never told I had an astigmatism — so with the glasses, scripted for two problems — i.e., go for the progressives. Now I think I want a separate pair just for computer reading — not specifically for driving. The optician said that until I have an old set of frames, any new glasses, progressives, will be at least \$400. We had an honest talk about going to one of the chains, but I worry

about problems there — must be a reason. The optician is 4th generation in the business and even I know the family name! So when (now have a total of \$61) I can get a pair of reading/computer glasses I'll see if that solves some of the problems. The ophthalmologist suggested just driving glasses — knowing I would not be able to look down at the console/dashboard and be able to focus on it — not willing to make that concession . . . yet. The budget is not elastic and with the roof estimate at \$12,000, that trumps a second pair of glasses, for right now — caveat — no way am I coming up with the \$12,000 int eh near future, but it becomes the top item on my list for right now.

Richard Dengrove: this (very) used and now badly abused laptop actually came with a cordless mouse. It was all a surprise when I opened the box and various bits and pieces fell out. I use it every so often. Now that the noxious battery is gone, it seems less important. If I was trying to work with artwork, that would be a different situation.

Ender's Game went on my Netflix list as soon as I knew it was being produced. It now sits in my no. 1 spot with the notation (it will be available (through Netflix) February 11. That means I *should* be able to watch it in the relatively near future. We'll see.

Because I seem to have fouled up the lines of communication between the worldcon and my desire for paper copies of . . . well . . . everything, I keep forgetting that it is time to start putting together my nomination list. I had hoped to check out the artwork for LonCon3 to see if anything I might have to offer would fit their style. Usually I expect concommis to utilize (and rightly so) their local talent, but just in case . . . So, for the last few years I have not gotten any paper copies and lost track of any deadlines . . . for the most part. This year I need to vote for TAFF and then be sure I have done my Hugo nomination and voting duties.

Sorry, still have not been able to get back to at least an hour a day on artwork. Well, one day is better than none. I know I want to get back to it RSN.

Thanks for this! I have about 6 more Beanjies to add to my list of 20 or so in the line — maybe I can work on an *Alexiad* Beanjie — but most probably not this go-round.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Martin Morse Wooster, with the same.
Cathy Palmer-Lister, who always enjoys *Alexiad*.

Bob Kennedy, **Lacy Thomas**, **Garth Spencer**, **Mike Glyer**, **Joel Zakem**, **Lloyd Penney**, **Steve Silver**, **Chris Garcia**, **Chuck & Patti Lipsig**, **John Purcell**, **Bill Breuer**, **Jeff Boman**, **Guy & Rosy Lillian**, and others with birthday and holiday greetings

LOSING MR BAGGINS

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt8960737/>

The BBC's story of the tense (and failed) negotiations for a Disney presentation of *The Hobbit* is the highlight of the 2015 season.

Repeating his striking portrayal from *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013), Tom Hanks plays the beloved Walt Disney seeking to bring to the screen the latest sensation in childhood literature. The efforts expended to bring reluctant writer J. R. R. Tolkien (Sir Derek Jacobi) to an agreement are shown in full and intense detail.

The reluctance of the Professor is illuminated in his correspondence with his wife and their son Father John Tolkien, as he struggles with his conflict of Art and Commerce. The Disney artistic vision is limned in great detail, as is the struggle between the two creators.

The notorious copyright problems are used to further the plot, as Disney executives, behind Uncle Walt's back as it were, negotiate with novel editor Donald A. Wollheim (Michael Richards) to realize the public-domain solution to the matter.

When two great creators go head-to-head against each other over an artistic vision, the result can be as striking and conflicted as any fiction. Recommended.

Comments:

The details were striking for the reviewer, no doubt. Some of the concept art presented is truly dreadful, stomach-turning, even. The "Bilbo and the Twelve Dwarfs" [sic] scene, for example is barely painted-over Snow White. How much did the animation cost the Beeb?

They even had Disney Princesses then! This Princess Tauriel they intrusively introduced was so much at odds with the original concept. They were no doubt planning to make a mint on tie-ins.

You're all so down on Disney. Unlike some of the other adaptations, this would have been done by people with skill, and respect for the original.

I knew Donald A. Wollheim, and Michael Richards, you're no DAW. You're no Futurian, you're a Pasturian.

What are we going to see next, "Walt Disney Presents Doctor Who"?

And the chicks will dig that.

Co-Editors: Lisa & Joseph Major
Co-Publishers: Joseph & Lisa Major
Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa, & McCormick, Grant
Tech Staff: Grant C. McCormick

This is issue **Whole Number Seventy-Three (73)**.

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.

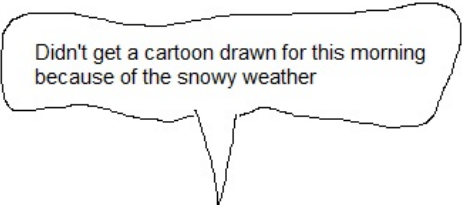
Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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Didn't get a cartoon drawn for this morning because of the snowy weather