

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

On Wednesday December 7 it will be exactly seventy years since the Day of Infamy. On that day I will pause to remember the sacrifice of Chief Water Tender Peter Tomich, who gave his life so that his shipmates on board U.S.S. *Utah* could escape from the sinking ship.

On November 6 I left my little Acer and birthday gift camera on the back seat of the car. A thief took the occasion to smash the window and remove both. For two years that little Acer had let me write and surf the net on trips. Now it was gone, probably to satisfy someone's drug habit. It was an expensive lesson in not leaving electronics in plain sight. Joe gave me the little netbook for Christmas two years ago. It hurts still to think of it being sold for drug money.

— Lisa

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The 56th Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 10, 2011** at Pocono Downs in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, having been moved from Tioga Downs in Nichols, New York because of flooding. Betterthancheddar won by a neck.

The 66th Running of the Little Brown Jug (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 22, 2011** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio. Big Bad John won.

The 55th Running of the Messenger Stakes (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **November 12, 2011** at Yonkers Raceway. Roll With Joe, the champion money winner for 2011, won.

Joe's Birthday is **December 24, 2011**

Our Fifteenth Anniversary was **November 22, 2011**

Printed on January 7, 2012

Deadline is **February 1, 2012**

Reviewer's Notes

Lastish I made a prediction about animé zombies. As a finale to November (a month we could have done without) we went to Best Buy to get the big electronics purchase changed to the promotional rate. Lisa wanted to get some DVDs for the family. And there it was: *High School of the Dead* [*Gakuen mokushiroku*].

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1685401/>

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Leonard Nimoy has attended his final STAR TREK™ convention; he announced his retirement from the circuit at a convention in Chicago that was being held to celebrate the forty-fifth anniversary of the series.

However, that convention was sponsored by Creation Entertainment, which to some of us indicates that his final STAR TREK™ convention was somewhat before that. Or perhaps he was given an ARC of *Chicks Dig Slash: A Celebration of Kirk/Spock by the Women Who Love It* and decided to get out while the getting was good.

Nightmarish scenario: The Ed Kramer incident causes a financial crisis in Dragon*Con and Creation Entertainment buys them out, then makes a bid to buy WorldCon.

Among the old classics available for e-readers is Edward Lucas White's *Andivius Hedulio: Adventures of a Roman Nobleman In the Days of the Empire* (1921). This is a remarkable work by today's standards, an historical novel that actually tries to stick to the established history and not put in anachronistic characters, much less be a detective story. Rather, it's a tale of a man who unwillingly sees the underside of the Roman Empire, climaxing in a prolonged set of scenes where he is condemned to death repeatedly . . .

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8532>

It turns out that "Lee at the Alamo" could be read for free at the Tor.com site.

"Lee at the Alamo"
<http://www.tor.com/stories/2011/09/lee-at-the-alamo>

The comments include commentary from Turtledove himself!

Some of those works are apparently previews of longer ones, such as the other one I got, Geoff Ryman's "The Film-Makers of Mars". Which may be set in an alternate universe, since it has nitrate film being safe and no mention of next year's "John Carter". As the sole reviewer on Amazon.com said, the story "throws plausibility to the wind" but she seems to think that's a good thing.

John Carter
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0401729/>
<http://www.cartermovie.com/>
<http://www.johncarterarrives.com/>

Release date is March 9, 2012. The big criticism I've seen so far is that Dejah Thoris (Lynn Collins) appears to be tattooed, or at least painted with some Barsoomian equivalent of henna, and that John Carter (Taylor Kitsch) has long hair.

We still live!

The Posthumous Piper Phenomenon persistently proceeds. John F. Carr has brought out *The Last Space Viking* (2011; Pequod Press; \$42; Amazon Digital Services; \$7.99), a sequel to the original set in the reign of Lucas Trask's grandson. Terry Mancour (author of the ST:TNG novel *Spartacus*) has done more direct sequels, *Prince of Tanith* and *Princess Valerie's War* (both 2011; Amazon Digital Services; \$4.99). There seems to be quite a market.

Angie Butler, author of *The Quest for Frank Wild* (1 August 2011; Jackleberry Press; ISBN 978-0956927200; £25), the biography of the most experienced Antarctic explorer, has succeeded in her own quest for Frank Wild. That is, she found his ashes in a chapel in Johannesburg, and reburied them at the Grytviken cemetery on South Georgia near Shackleton's grave on **November 27, 2011**. Among the mourners were six Wild family members and the Honourable Alexandria Shackleton, granddaughter of Sir Ernest. As Anaukaq Henson said when his father was reburied next to Peary, it is a good thing that those two are together.

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

We are all well, Boss.

An Italian woman was fined €32,000 for a parking ticket dating back to the consulship of Emperor Caesar M. Aurelius Antoninus Augustus for the third time and P. Septimus Geta Caesar for the second time, the year DCCCCLXI AUC. The senior consul is better known as "Caracalla" after his style in cloaks. (Presumably Severus didn't want to put up with cries of "*Pater semper te optimi amabat!*") That's what happens when you leave the chariot outside the villa after sunrise, when vehicles are supposed to be outside the City.

(Prosaically, the officer entered the year as 208 instead of 2008. Why they didn't calculate the fine in sestertii I don't know. When they put in the right year the fine turned out to be €CII.)

The screen on Lisa's laptop died. By a fortuitous coincidence, Best Buy had a sale and offered a Gateway laptop with a 1.5 GHz Celeron processor, a 15.6" display, 2 GB memory, and a 320 GB hard drive for . . . about the price we paid for the netbooks.

Which inspired me to go ahead early with this Christmas's plans and get a new Gateway

desktop. This beauty has Intel Inside, an i5 (quad-core) 3GHz processor, 8 GB memory, and a 1T hard drive. Now I've been transferring over files . . .

Is This Really Necessary Department: Now available for Kindle: *I, Robot: To Protect* by Mickey Zucker Reichert [based on characters and situations created by Isaac Asimov (and John W. Campbell, Jr.)] (2011; Penguin Publishing; \$11.99). "First in an all-new trilogy inspired by Isaac Asimov's legendary anthology, *I, Robot*." Makes one wish it were a thrilling prequel to the Eando Binder book, published by Oswald Cobblepot.

For something that will make your brains deliquesce and flow out your ears, go to:

<http://drfaustusau.deviantart.com/>

Then check out *The Call of Cthulhu* — Dr. Seuss style! How cosmically mephitic, squamous, rugose, and blasphemous!

OBITS

MONARCHIST NEWS

Maria del Rosario Cayetana Alfonsa Victoria Eugenia Francisca Fitz-James Stuart y de Silva, Duquesa de Alba de Tormes y Duquesa de Berwick married **Alfonso Diez Carabantes** in Seville on October 5, 2011. The "Fitz-James Stuart" comes from her ancestor **James FitzJames, Duke of Berwick**, the natural son of James II and Arabella Churchill, sister of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. The Duchess is also Spanish Duquesa de Berwick, while her first cousin once removed **don Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart, Duque de Peñaranda** is claimant to the English Dukedom of Berwick, which will become extinct unless he or his younger brother does something about it.

However, Francisco Franco is not dead. That is, **don Francisco Franco y Martinez-Bordiú, Señor de Meirás y Marques de Villaverde**, grandson of the guy you and Chevy Chase are thinking of. He is not heir to his mother's title of **Duquesa de Franco**, which will descend to his oldest sister **Maria del Carmen Martinez-Bordiú y Franco** and thence to her son **Louis Alphonse de Bourbon, Duc de Anjou**, the French Legitimist Pretender "Louis XX".

David Cameron has got the Commonwealth to agree to Númenorean succession. Protests from **Friedrike von Reiche** (the heiress of Victoria under said terms) and **Franz Herzog von Bayern** (the Jacobite heir) in 3 . . . 2 . . .

We note the death of **Leka Zogu**, claimant to the Albanian throne, on **November 30, 2011**. More on his colorful life nextish.

Anne Inez McCaffrey

April 1, 1926 — November 21, 2011
 “Gone Away, gone ahead.”

SF legend Anne McCaffrey has gone between at age 85. Her dragons have not gone between with her but the Sf world is much poorer now. I don't remember when I first read *Dragonflight* but it has always been on my list of the greatest Sf novels.

Dragons live forever, but not so their creators.

— Lisa

A THRILLING WONDER STORY

Review by Joseph T Major of
**THE ASTOUNDING, THE AMAZING,
 AND THE UNKNOWN**

by Paul Malmont

(Simon and Schuster; 2011;
 ISBN 978-1439168936; \$26.00;
 Simon and Schuster Digital Sales [Kindle];
 \$12.99)

DINO FACT-8

You ever wished your favorite writer could live the stories he wrote? Well, here we go, with Heinlein, Asimov, de Camp, Hubbard, and many others joining in an epic tale of derring-do and heroism in a quest to discover the secret of the lost archives of Nikola Tesla. Perils proliferate, threats hover dangerously, and then too the normal problems of life go on, including what to do about the latest idea that JWCjr fired off at everyone.

The book follows on Malmont's previous work *The Chinatown Death Cloud Peril* (2006). It's a headlong adventure, with derring-do out of the pulps. And a most ill-assorted guard of heroes to pull it off. Like most pulp adventures, it falls apart if you look at it carefully, and some of the characterizations have their problems.

In a nice touch, when Elron meets the other writers, he tells them a complete, utterly self-aggrandizing, lie about his career. Not surprisingly, he's the one who gets packed off to the Pacific by himself.

Nitpick department; John Campbell's kamakaze think-tank wasn't set up until 1945, and Asimov wasn't involved. Calling the group here that is sloppy, if not outright lazy. 4SJ didn't afflict us with — er, invent the term “sci-fi” until 1954 (so it's about as old as I am). The title of the other magazine was changed to

Unknown Worlds in 1941.

Malmont has appended a most useful bibliography. Unfortunately, he just missed getting Bill Patterson's *Robert A Heinlein: In Dialogue With His Century* (2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #5) which would have done some good. A comparison with Jon Lellenberg's *Baker Street Irregular* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #3) is also useful.

This is a fun dream, and like most dreams doesn't quite stand up in the morning. I forgot to polish the clocks!

**GILLIGAN'S DESTROYERMEN**

Review by Joseph T Major of
FIRESTORM: DESTROYERMEN
 by Taylor Anderson

(RoC; 2011;
 ISBN 978-0-451-46417-0; \$25.95;
 Penguin Publishing [Kindle]; \$12.95)
 Sequel to *Destroyermen: Into the Storm*
 (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5)

Destroyermen: Crusade
 (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #6)

Destroyermen: Maelstrom
 (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #2)

Destroyermen: Distant Thunders
 (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #3) and
Destroyermen: Rising Tides
 (2011; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #2)

When last we left Matthew Reddy and his gallant crew, there was trouble at both ends of his empire but relief in between. The Grik were still menacing the equivalent of Singapore, the Spaniards were confronting the British East India Company Empire in Hawaii, but Sandra Tucker had been found safe and sound.

The number of people traveling through the portal seems to have increased. Including one genuine hell-ship, with a number of Allied prisoners, including a first cousin of Matt Reddy. (I was hoping to see something interesting when they met; maybe next volume.) The destroyer-men are getting some updates on the war they were expelled from.

Meanwhile, the former captain of the former *Amagi* is getting in some licks of his own. Instead of being dinner for the Grik, he is their air marshal. With dirigibles. (Did Japan even have any airships?)

Back in the eastern Pacific, the struggle against the Spanish colony is getting more nerve-wracking. *El sueño del Santo Oficio produce monstruos* [The sleep of the Holy Office produces monsters], as Goya would have put it, and some of these monsters are nasty. Including the natural ones.

This episode of the series has no big developments, merely progress. I suppose that's something. There is always the prospect of Party of Postponement Syndrome, or we defeated this bunch, but a bigger bunch that hadn't heretofore wanted to get involved is going to turn up for the next volume. (This was what ruined Forstchen's *Lost Regiment* books; the series foundered after the shift to RoC.)

There have been complaints about the writing style but I suppose some people are more interested in content than in presentation. Whatever, there will be more and one hopes it's something of a solution when this saga of paratime travel is . . . [To Be Continued]

MAD ADM

Review by Joseph T Major of
EAST WIND RETURNS

by William Peter Grasso

(CreateSpace; 2011;
 ISBN 978-1461147268; \$12.95;
 Amazon Digital Services [Kindle]; \$0.99)

In 1985, Robert K. Wilcox published *Japan's Secret War: Japan's Race Against Time to Build Its Own Atomic Bomb*. Beginning with a report from *Atlanta Constitution* correspondent David Snell, who published a story there in 1946 claiming that the Japanese had tested a atomic bomb near Konan (i.e. Hungnam) in their colony of Choson (i.e., Korea), Wilcox depicted a desperate effort that succeeded just too late for its builders.

That book is one of the more notable flights of fantasy of the war, somewhere between Operation SEELÖWE and the Pearl Harbor Conspiracy. Apparently Wilcox never bothered to get his science straight, and the Japanese nuclear weapons project was aiming at a target date of 1955; it was pathetically underfunded, ill-equipped, and short of resources.

Which is a bit of a handicap to this story, which begins with the said success — following a failure of the TRINITY test, not to mention an unexpected fire at Los Alamos which destroyed the uranium plant. (Maybe they'll call back the contractor Russell McNutt to rebuild the place — you know, the mysterious agent PERSIAN.) This puts the Japanese a bit closer to the status of Mutual Assured Destruction, or “MAD”.

Flushed with success, the Japanese now have the problem of a delivery vehicle. They could take it by submarine to some American port and detonate it there, but it seems unlikely the boat could make such a voyage. (See the climax of Philip Wylie's *Tomorrow!* (1954) where the USS *Nautilus* (SSN-571) is turned into such a device.)

However, they know the Americans are coming. Therefore, their second device is transported to a location near the beaches of Kyushu, where it will be set off once the invaders are ashore; what we now call Atomic Demolition Munitions, or “ADM”. The shock and awe of this destruction will bring the Yankees to the peace table and if not, well won't it be wonderful to have the nation destroyed like a beautiful flower?

The main story follows the efforts of

reconnaissance pilot John Worth as he flies over Japan in the American effort to find out what the enemy is doing. Here is Grasso's strength, as he has a deep and devoted knowledge of WWII aviation. You've probably never heard of the F-5, and you're probably thinking of the wrong F-5 if you have. This F-5 is the photorecon version of the Lockheed P-38 Lightning, the twin-boom two-engined long-range fighter. The author depicts quite strikingly the difficulties of such flight with the familiarity of one comfortable with that era of aviation. And Worth's plane is very appropriately named "*f-stop*".

Similarly, Grasso has a deep awareness of the inconvenience and "friction" of military affairs (not counting the one Worth has with a nurse), from lost orders to malfunctioning equipment to incompetent pilots with political influence and arrogance to boot.

In matters both in the field and higher up, there is a repeated effort for political spin. Cynically but realistically, one can see that such matters are possible, and indeed the double dealings involved add a striking note of all too grim and dirty realism to the plot.

One problem is the repeated comment that "there were only American airplanes in the air". I'm sure that Bernard Rawlings, Philip Vian, and the other crew and commanders of such vessels as USS *Robin* — that is HMS *Victorious* and her cohorts, pilots, and crew of the British Pacific Force, Task Group 38.7/58.7, might say otherwise.

The romance might be a little too pat. And similarly for the climax, where Worth, grounded by a damaged plane, carries out a daring special warfare assault to disarm the Japanese bomb . . . on the other hand, the covering-over of his derring-do and the undeserved honor awarded the arrogant pilot with political influence sound so very familiar to the experienced.

There is a tense problem, but I seem to recall that often flying stories have flying scenes in present tense, or otherwise shift to show the concentration and intensity that flying requires. It is offputting.

In spite of these, *East Wind Returns* is entertaining, absorbing, and an interesting look into the results of "what if the Japanese *did* get The Bomb"?

HASTA LUEGO, CAIMÁN

Review by Joseph T Major of

CASTRO'S BOMB

by Robert Conroy

(Amazon Digital Services; 2011; \$6.75)

In *See You Later Alligator* (1985), William F. Buckley Jr.'s redoubtable secret agent Blackford Oakes is dispatched to revolutionary Cuba to work out some sort of deal. His code name for this operation is CAIMÁN, and he ends up being amused when various revolutionary compañeros up to Dr. Ernesto "Che" Guevara himself see him off with "*¡Hasta luego, Caimán!*"

Jack Kennedy could well use Blackie Oakes in this story. The Maximo Líder and his

compañero Che have decided that they need to play Civilization I. Or perhaps just the part that says "*¡Nuestras palabras se sostienen por las ARMAS NUCLEARES!*" That is, the Cubans have stolen four tactical nuclear rocket launchers from their Soviet guests.

Guantanamo, not quite yet invaded by illegal combatants, is going to be invaded by legal ones. At Christmas 1962, no less.

The scene switches between the ordinary people caught in the maw of war and the leaders responsible for running it. Conroy displays an understanding of the multiple demands on the political leadership, as JFK finds himself denounced by Barry Goldwater, disrespected by Curtis LeMay, and not quite supported by Lyndon Johnson. And then there are the Cuban exiles, with their "Bay of Pigs II — This Time It's Personal!" By comparison, the Soviets are models of cooperation.

Meanwhile, a medley of Americans are trapped behind enemy lines, escaping the invasion or being dropped in a spectacularly improvised and bungled rescue op. Here are the little people suffering the horrors of war, and Conroy makes sure the reader is presented with the prices and pains thereof.

While the prisoners conduct a regular Stalag XIII operation, able to bribe their way in and out of an improvised Cuban prison camp (and in the Conroy cliché, pretend to be Cubans — a little more plausible here since there actually are Cuban-Americans involved). In fact, they pull off a stunt that Colonel Hogan and the guys never even dared to try.

Not to mention the charming habits of the press, the leakers, and the independent activists. At least there weren't prominent artistic figures flying to Havana to show solidarity, or sit in possible invasion zones.

Ah yes, the invasion. Made necessary by Cuban aggression against the US, but worrisome by the presence of those nuclear warheads, under the control of a somewhat less genial Che. Which have an unusual additional searcher trying to get them. Or perhaps should I say, get them **back** . . .

I had thought the references to SEALs were an error, but the Sea-Air-Land Teams had just been created and were already operational in Vietnam then. That neither them nor the Special Forces can be of that much help demonstrates how such organizations, though useful, are not miracle workers. Now if they had only dropped in Blackford Oakes (how the CIA manage to hoax the leaker is a hoot).

Conroy has gone with the Kindle. I note that so far this book isn't listed on Uchronia, and indeed I only found it while looking at the listing for his other new work, *Himmler's War* (Baen, 2011 — also available for e-readers, if you have a Baen Free Library subscription).

FOX ON THE RHINE

Review by Joseph T Major of

HIMMLER'S WAR

by Robert Conroy

(Baen; 2011; ISBN 978-1541637618; \$25)

Like so many fantasy books these days the alternate history novels *Fox on the Rhine* (2000, 2002) and its sequel *Fox at the Front* (2003) are novelizations of a wargame. The authors have a somewhat muddled idea of how the German *Widerstand* worked, too. Some of the other things they have Himmler doing when he ascends to power after the assassination of the Führer are somewhat odd.

Which doesn't mean the basic concept is unworkable, and it can be approached differently. Conroy deserves credit for the innovative approach he takes here. A B-17 falls out of formation over Germany, is attacked, and has to jettison its bombs. One of them lands in just the right place . . .

Delivering the Reich into the hands of Himmler (the alternative had some substance-abuse issues) leads to problems. He may not have the time right now to send out the *Ahnenerbe* to hunt down Indiana Jones, but he does have some reasonable ideas, such as dumping the phony-noble champagne salesman in favor of a real aristocrat diplomat. Or putting the armed forces into the hands of someone who knows his *Arsch* from a hole in the ground.

The subsequent deal for a *Unbeschreibliche Militärische Anordnung* ["unspeakable military arrangement"]; I sincerely doubt that "armistice" [*Waffenstillstand*] was a word any German could bring himself to use] with the Soviets may have a bit of a shortfall. Soviet tanks had a brief service life, in keeping with their method of employment, and the Germans may have just taken over 2000 clunkers (Soviet T-34s, and of the older designs at that) from the back lot of Uncle Joe's Finest Used AFV's.

Meanwhile, in spite of everything, the Allies are under strain. Conroy seems to be exaggerating British war-weariness here, as he did in *Red Inferno: 1945* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #2 and V. 10 #4). The Germans, under no constraint to stand fast in France, are falling back, without any Mortain or other last-minute useless counteroffensive, to the Reich itself, behind the great barrier of the Rhine, where they can rebuild and wait for Der Tag.

Now sheltered behind the great river in the west, and the good will of Comrade Stalin in the East, Himmler begins to bring a project to completion. Not the dire forces of the World Ice, or the Ancient Aryan Knowledge that someone who knew of the *Ahnenerbe* would consider more his speed, but a project that was indeed very much feared. And a delivery system somewhat reminiscent of Turtledove's *Settling Accounts: In at the Death* (2007) to boot, one that seems to head off a future war.

In addition, there are the "little people", including an OKW staff officer's family which finds mutiny in the work force, a grounded pilot who learns tank warfare, a Para trapped behind the lines with two different sorts of escapees, and others, some of whom have very brief roles.

Not to worry, the favorite warrior of the era, at least in AH venues, appears, and indeed Otto Skorzeny seems to be both ubiquitous and efficient. I wish some of these people would discover Robert Frederick, Bill Darby, Aaron

Bank, Popski Peniakoff, Paddy Mayne, and the like from our side.

There are a number of small errors. George Marshall was Army chief of staff, not Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. There were two British parachute divisions, 1st and 6th. And there was sufficient Royal Navy transport in the Channel to take off any trapped units.

KOSTA

Review by Joseph T Major of
WOLF HUNT

(*The Burning Ages*)

by Sebastian P. Breit

(2011; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)

The literary perspective of the sociopath is of an highly intelligent, powerfully focused individual who carries out deeds without the restraint of scruple, and so can clearly outdo the morally-constrained other characters, until some random shot from the lone scorned hero brings him down. Being brilliant and charismatic, he not only is able to carry out his misdeeds without opposition from others, he attracts a band of loyal followers who share trust.

Kosta Fotopoulos of Daytona Beach, Florida, would have believed this if he had been told such. He certainly believed himself the modernday Stainless Steel Rat and Dexter combined. His most brilliant concept was the formation of the Hunter-Killer Club, a crack team of assassins-for-hire, available to governments and private individuals alike.

Unlike James DiGriz and Dexter Morgan, he is on Death Row in Florida. Not wanting to go through the formalities of a divorce, he had one of his subordinates break into his house and shoot his wife, whereupon he proceeded to kill the man. Such loyalty to underlings he had.

When the connection came out, another item that came to light was Kosta's brilliant scheme for ensuring loyalty among the Hunter-Killer Club; each member would have to commit a murder, record it on video tape (this was a few years ago), and give the recording to another member, to be used against the person in question should he betray the organization. Being a leader, he did that himself, to another of his subordinates.

Granted, the band of crack professional assassins were no more than the usual sort of drifters, hangers-on, slackers, and idlers who concentrate where unfocused excitement is. Also such inducements as Deirdre Hunt, Kosta's mistress, who in spite of his guarantee that he would kill her if she took any other lovers, had a number. As in so many cases, real life fails to live up to the standards of literature.

One of the almost necessary characters, it seems, of time-travel fiction is the sociopath, the brilliant ruthless leader with loyal subordinates. In real life, to take the founding example, the character in question would have either foundered the USCGS *Eagle* in mid ocean for lack of navigational skills, or should he have been so lucky as to get to Mykenai, had a life-changing encounter between his head and a copper ax. (Of course, the people he left behind would have starved to death after their fifth

plebiscite over whether or not to violate the harmony with nature that the mainlanders so obviously had; the people of that place are *not* the sort who make the serfs pull on their boots, kick them in the teeth, and have the serfs cringingly thank the master for the personal attention that the author of that book would have them be.)

None of which has to do with the NATO task force that is being sent to restore order in Brazil in 2024. The world economy has been in the dumps for the past few years, and it's only getting worse.

Particularly when the force of German, American, and British ships sails into a time storm (Did any of these guys have a great-grandfather on USS *Walker*?) and they find themselves in 1940.

Florian Hallwinter, the German commander has a great idea. "Hey, let's go to Norway and help the *Widerstand* stop Hitler." His American counterpart Steven Flynn thinks that's a bad idea, and the two advanced forces proceed to have a brief but bloody fight.

While the German survivors proceed to Norway, capturing and sinking along the way, the American survivors make their way to the Canaries, where they get abused by the locals, repatriated to the States, and abused by the U.S. government. This is more "The Man Who Came Early" than *Lest Darkness Fall*. In fact, Breit makes it clear what his model is with a reference to "Admiral Birmingham" in 2024, and the presentation of past-timers as being repulsive is straight out of John Birmingham's similar series.

The German commander has a little more luck, and manages to pull off his little score quite nicely. But then, in the end, we see he has a brilliant sociable sociopath in his ranks . . .

Some of the scenes could have done with a little more second-reading, as when Breit has a Vice-Admiral commanding a cruiser squadron (and of one cruiser, at that). Similarly, Breit has a habit of stereotyped descriptions, and of using almost the right word.

When he has a Jewish officer on one of the German ships, Breit does have the others having some qualms, because of the many fine Jewish sailors who served Germany except during those times. However, Jews did not serve in the High Seas Fleet because you understand it would be inconvenient to provide a kosher diet. It was a matter of consideration. **Right!!!**

(Ironically, it now appears that not only Bernhard Rogge, captain of the *Hilfskreuzer Atlantis*, but also Admiral Günther Lütjens was a *Mischlinge* of the Second Class (one Jewish grandparent), which perhaps makes comprehensible Lütjens's signing the petition protesting the dismissal of Jewish sailors from the *Reichsmarine*. So much for the bombastic "Remember you are Nazis!!!" speech of *Sink the Bismarck!*. Oy.)

Breit follows the technothriller style of describing in detail the intricate weapons technology employed. It is fair to add that he shows an understanding of mere shipbuilding, or how to patch up a battered vessel. Captain Hallwinter comes across as a remarkably fixated

and hairtrigger sort.

A sequel, *Clash of Eagles*, is in the works.

ALZHEIMER'S AND THE SENATOR

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE LAST MOONWALKER

and Other Stories

by Mark R. Whittington

(2009; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

In Sir Arthur C. Clarke's "Death and the Senator" (*Analog*, May 1961) an opponent of space travel is faced with the problem of mortality, and with the restraints of its alleviation. He must come to the realization that some ideas have consequences.

The Last Moonwalker: Some forty years after the last moon landing, the last of the moonwalkers is brought into the loop for the new moon program. Some things never change, and we see the stresses of family life, the wonder of discovery, and the simple pleasure of seeing prospects. Not to mention the satisfying humiliation of a Moon Hoaxer. In the relationship of the moonwalker and his granddaughter we discover a world made new again. (2009)

"The First Woman on the Moon" This is a sequel to Whittington's *Children of Apollo* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1). Or perhaps an "illumination"; the life story of Dr. Wendy Pendleton, the erste Frau im Mond (and I'm disappointed that Whittington didn't mention that film). The story paints an unsparing picture of determination and incredulous discrimination, of an individual with a dream and a goal. (2007)

"Two Old Men" This other work in the universe of *Children of Apollo* might well have been called "Alzheimer's and the Senator", though it has a happier ending. The rivals of the 1976 presidential campaign meet to learn they both have the same problem, and the one who opposed the means for the alleviation of it has to consider whether he, like Clarke's Senator Steelman, has forfeited his right to the treatment. (2008)

"Dark Sanction" These vampires don't sparkle and they aren't emos. They do have vampire hunters on their trail, and being a vampire hunter in the Gestapo gives one interesting leisure and scope. No Frau Buffy here! Indeed, the fate of the fearless vampire hunter . . . well it's not enviable, and indeed the subtitle of that movie may give away the punch line. It is possible to live for centuries without becoming a letter-writing ninny. (2009)

"Hurtgen Moon" In which the grim campaign of the late fall of 1944 turns out to be even grimmer. Something attacked a squad of the US 9th Infantry Division, something from legend and fear. To which experts from the Great North have their own answer; if only the experts don't have their own issues. In this story Whittington finds himself, with a

melancholy but not tragic resolution. (2008)

“**Witness to Apollo**” An observer of the Apollo Eleven landing shows that in spite of everything there is hope, and curiosity. (2009)

It’s worth noting, in the petty end of things, that this book *is* properly proofread. Since there are no Russians mentioned, the badly mangled Russian names of *Children of Apollo* are avoided, much to the relief of those who know.

Note:

Frau Im Mond
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0019901/>

MY ATTAINMENT OF THE TEA

Review by Joseph T Major of

THREE CUPS OF DECEIT:

**How Greg Mortenson, Humanitarian Hero,
 Lost His Way**

by Jon Krakauer

(2011; Anchor Books (Random House);
 ISBN 879-0-307-94876-2; \$9.95;
 Amazon Digital Services; \$2.34)

“My collection of M’s is a fine one,” said he. “Moriarty himself is enough to make any letter illustrious, and here is Morgan the poisoner, and Merridew of abominable memory, and Mathews, who knocked out my left canine in the waiting-room at Charing Cross, and, finally, here is our friend of to-night.”

He handed over the book, and I read: “MORAN, SEBASTIAN, COLONEL. Unemployed. Formerly 1st Bengalore Pioneers. Born London, 1840. Son of Sir Augustus Moran, C.B., once British Minister to Persia. Educated Eton and Oxford. Served in Jowaki Campaign, Afghan Campaign, Charasiab (despatches), Sherpur, and Cabul. Author of ‘Heavy Game of the Western Himalayas,’ 1881; ‘Three Months in the Jungle,’ 1884. Address: Conduit Street. Clubs: The Anglo-Indian, the Tankerville, the Bagatelle Card Club.”

On the margin was written, in Holmes’s precise hand: “The second most dangerous man in London.”

“This is astonishing,” said I, as I handed back the volume. “The man’s career is that of an honourable soldier.”

“It is true,” Holmes answered. “Up to a certain point he did well. He was always a man of iron nerve, and the story is still told in India how he crawled down a drain after a wounded man-eating tiger. There are some trees, Watson, which grow to a certain height and then suddenly develop some unsightly eccentricity. You will see it often in humans. I have a theory that the individual represents in his development the whole procession of his ancestors, and that such a sudden turn to good or evil stands for some strong influence which came into the line of his pedigree.

The person becomes, as it were, the epitome of the history of his own family.”
 — “The Adventure of the Empty House”

When he returned from the famous and dolorous *Belgica* Expedition in 1899, Dr. Frederick A. Cook had gained a reputation among the foremost in such explorations. He had distinguished himself in three expeditions, and in this one in particular. While the *Belgica* was frozen in, and the Antarctic winter was long and harsh, many of the men had begun to slowly go mad. Many of them, and some of the sane ones too, began showing the obvious signs of scurvy.

Cook applied his experience to the cause. In particular, he made a scientific conclusion. The Eskimos of his experience ate fresh meat. They did not go mad so; they did not suffer from scurvy. Therefore, if the men of de Gerlache’s expedition ate fresh meat, which they weren’t doing, they would recover. With the help of fellow explorer Roald Amundsen, he got the others to eat fresh penguin and seal meat. Lo and behold, the expedition was saved and Dr. Cook was the hero.

Greg Mortenson took a wrong turn coming back from K2. As a result, he saw a social problem, every bit as bad in its context as the physical problems the men of de Gerlache’s *Belgica* Expedition suffered from was to them; a social deficiency disease as it were. He applied his version of fresh meat.

The villagers of the mountainous wilds of the border country of Pakistan and Afghanistan were unschooled. That is, they had no schools available. Back in America there was money. They could come together, if someone willing, understanding, charismatic, and hardworking would do so. Greg would try, though he did not know the way.

But all things come to him who waits, and he found a benefactor. From that, there came the Central Asia Institute, a charity dedicated to building schools in those lands. When initial efforts ran out, Greg determined to recount his own ventures in that field, and as a result, the long-running best-seller *Three Cups of Tea* (2006, 2007, 2008) came out.

From there Mortenson went from triumph to triumph, building hundreds of schools in the uplands of the Northwest Frontier, bringing education to those who longed to have it. His speeches and lectures have moved millions of hearts and minds; his books, *Three Cups of Tea* and its follow-up *Stones into Schools* (2010) have moved and energized even more.

One of the great men of mountaineering is Dr. Thomas “Tom” Hornbein. On that glorious day, May 22, 1963, Hornbein climbed Mount Everest by the untouched West Ridge, coming down with the rest of the U.S. Everest Expedition party that had to spend that terrible night on the ridge, unprotected. Hornbein seems to have been the only one of the four trapped men not to be frostbitten.

In 1999 he accepted, a position in the board

of CAI. Three years later, Hornbein quit, with some profound misgivings. Why?

Mortenson had what might be called a casual relationship with time. He could not be depended on to keep an appointment, which is bad enough in a business environment, but in climbing could be fatal.

Then it became clear he also had a casual relationship with financial matters. He kept no financial records, spending money with no responsibility.

Krakauer had been donating money to CAI; about the time Hornbein and some others resigned, he asked for some more secure controls. This doesn’t seem to have made much of an impression on Mortenson.

The picture presented here is not a very engaging one. CAI pays all the expenses of Mortenson’s promotional tours; he keeps half the royalties from *Three Cups of Tea* (the other half go to his collaborator) and all those of *Stones into Schools*. Krakauer wonders why instead of buying copies at an author’s discount from the publisher, he buys copies from bookstores to sell at the lectures, but that keeps the book on the bestseller list, gaining publicity for the cause.

Beyond that, the *effort* of CAI is mixed. Far too many of the schools they have built are “ghost schools”; no teachers or students, used as anything but school buildings. Still, some are used for that cause, and that’s better than nothing.

And then, it turns out that so many of Mortenson’s moving stories of his experiences in Central Asia are fabricated, expanded-on, or contrived. Some of the people he met were profoundly displeased with Mortenson’s picture of them and of his experiences with them.

Not to mention his proof of the sanctity of the Blessed Agnes Gongxha Bojaxhiu, (Hon.) O.M. Mortenson described how, in September of 2000, he had visited her chapter house in Calcutta, seen her body laid out for burial, and movingly made his farewells to her. Since Mother Teresa (as she is better known) had died September 5, 1997, either her body was indeed incorruptible, Mortenson got the date wrong . . . or he’s making up the story.

Mortenson seems to have a casual relationship with figures; dates, finances, that sort of thing. He may just be someone who never lets truth stand in the way of a good story. It may not be possible to build schools in the wilds of Afghanistan and Pakistan without some waste. He says that his dealings with Krakauer were brief and uncollegial.

In *Scientists and Scoundrels* (1965), Robert Silverberg said:

. . . Perhaps something happened to Cook’s mind during the dark, terrible winter he spent in the Antarctic aboard the *Belgica* in 1898-99. Until then, he seems to have been a thoroughly admirable character; after his return from Antarctica, we find him stealing dictionaries, lying about Mount

McKinley, and finally inventing his conquest of the North Pole.

— *Scientists and Scoundrels*, Pages 139-140

Certainly, like Colonel Moran, up to a certain point he had done well, but then he had developed a certain unsightly eccentricity. After that, after all his many exploits, he had begun to act as if a thing were true merely because he had said it; that he was a man of such probity and presence that his unsupported word was proof. The Dictionary of the Yaghan Language, compiled by the missionary the Rev. Thomas Bridges, was presented for publication as by “Frederick A. Cook, Doctor of Anthropology”. The Petroleum Producers’ Association rested the proof of its reserves on the confirmation of its chief geologist, Dr. Frederick A. Cook, Explorer. Cook was a physician, without training in anthropology or geology. But he said it, so it was true.

Greg Mortenson has not climbed Mount McKinley or gone to the North Pole. He too gave his word about his exploits in Central Asia. Have people who want to help the less fortunate had Mortenson sell them a gold brick?

SING OF JOHN, SING OF JOHN

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
FANTASY COMMENTATOR #59-60
The Sam Moskowitz and A. Langley Searles
Memorial Issue
(Lulu.com; 2011; \$9.60)

What disgusts me is that while this history of a profoundly important figure in the field, composed by another profoundly important contributor, and published in honor of a third fannish writer of some significance, should win the Best Related Hugo, it will probably be ignored while *Chicks Dig Sparkly Emo Vampires: A Celebration of Twilight by the Women Who Love It* will get a rocket.

It’s been said that there is no need for a biography of John W. Campbell, Jr., since it’s all in his letters. This seems a rather superficial comment. It is true that he did write.

Many of his letters were published in Perry D. Chapdelaine’s two collections. But not all; and beyond that some sort of contextualization would be desirable.

One of Campbell’s correspondents was Robert D. Swisher, a chemist who lived in the Boston area. Campbell wrote him at length, primarily about their shared interest in photography. However, personal incidents and work life did feature in his letters.

After Campbell died, Swisher sent the letters to his widow Peg. She eventually sent them to Chapdelaine, who in turn passed them on to Sam Moskowitz. And this is a simple recounting, with background supplied by Moskowitz, of this correspondence.

As Campbell progresses from author to editor, he describes the laborious process of actually selling a story; editorial requirements, and the sheer marginality of his existence. Even in the fifties, H. Beam Piper lived on a very small income (see *H. Beam Piper: A Biography* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #6) for the

grim details) and when Campbell brags to Swisher that he received a raise to \$50 a week, it shows. [Of course, in today’s prices that’s \$810/week.] Small wonder that he continually writes on outside projects.

As he moves up, he describes the process from the other side, the cultivation of authors and their lives. This means perspectives of the more important SF people he dealt with. Oddly enough, Asimov is hardly mentioned at all.

Not surprisingly, there is some discussion of the one guy who went off on his own tangent. At first, Campbell takes Elron at his own word, but after the war and after the experiment with a science of modern mental health, he seems to have realized that while there might have been some good ideas there, the man was a habitual prevaricator. (Note: the Operation Clambake website (<http://www.xenu.net/>) has the Freedom of Information Act release of Elron’s navy record, which is rather at variance with, for example, the story given on being wounded in the Battle of the Java Sea.)

Naturally, the letters tail off in the late forties, so there’s nothing about, for example, the effort to create the November 1948 “trick issue”. Earlier references describe the writing of “All”, the precursor of Heinlein’s *Sixth Column* (*Astounding* January-March 1941; 1949; NHOL G.022) — and of some other works, including one that hadn’t been mentioned beforehand. Since Campbell pitched the idea to Heinlein at a time when the Heinleins were living with the Campbells, the comment about “describing it over the telephone” seems to have been from the blurring of memory.

This is hardly complete, either as to span or as to perspective. Beforehand there was little enough, and Moskowitz provided a useful, if personal, context. The scene in the introduction where he describes his regular trips to New York with Campbell, going in to work, is an interesting example of what more could be said. It is unfortunate that there could not be more, but this is a period of SF history that needs to be recounted while some still remember it.

Not that anyone will care, since *Chicks Dig Corsets and Goggles: A Celebration of Girl Genius by the Women Who Love It* will have a better chance for recognition and acceptance.

MONEY IS REDY

Review by Joseph T Major of
WE IS GOT HIM:
The Kidnapping That Changed America
by Carrie Hagen
(Overlook; 2011;
ISBN 978-1590200865; \$27.95)

One of the many terrors of modern-day child raising is the specter of Stranger Abduction. The thought of the Precious Indigo Only Child being snatched by some drifter and taken off to be the wuv object of some pervert, or sacrificed by a Satanic Ritual Cult, has electrified and intimidated BOBO parents. Now, the Precious Indigo Only Child is overseen 24/7, forbidden to go outside without three remote monitors, a cell phone, and a Responsible Adult Supervisor

closely observing every moment.

Very real parents have faced legal penalties for permitting their children to go to the other end of the block alone. It’s endangerment, leaving the dear precious child open to the possibility of being snatched by some stranger. Yet, the vast majority of child kidnappings have been by the non-custodial parent.

In the sunny days of July, 1874, in the Germantown district of Philadelphia, such prospects and means were vaporings beyond even the extraordinary voyages of imagination of M. Verne or the romantic extravagances of the late Mr. Poe. Charlie Brewster Ross, age four, saw nothing out of the extraordinary when two kind gentlemen offered to take him and his brother to a store to buy firecrackers for their Fourth of July celebration.

When his brother came out of the store with the firecrackers, and found them gone, the trouble began.

It’s commonplace to imagine the nineteenth century as some paradise of serenity. Or, contrawise, as a gehenna of oppression. Not quite. The Ross family had suffered financial ups and downs, and now had reached some sort of stability. And now this.

Over the next five months, the family had to deal with the early version of the celebrity culture, as aid and calumny poured in from across the country. Meanwhile, the authorities posed and postured. And then there were the ransom letters.

The problem of kidnapping is that it has to be an almost perfect crime; the offenders must get away without detection, yet must make contact with the victims. Hence the transfer of money is the most hazardous. (Not to mention that the abductee will presumably be able to identify the criminals.)

So, Charley’s father Christian Ross had to endure intermittent letters and reply to them with brief notes in the personals column of the newspaper. Not to mention constant advice from third parties.

The tone of the letters is revealing. The writer boasts that Charley Ross is beyond the reach of the authorities, yet will be restored to his parents within hours of the payment of a ransom. Indeed, the writer implies that this is the first effort at a career of kidnapping.

The only time Christian Ross tried to make a ransom drop, the signal described by the writers was not forthcoming. The next letter contained the lame excuse that the kidnapers had heard Mr. Ross had left town.

All this stalling and equivocation would tend to indicate that Charley was dead. Yet a subsequent note contained a quite explicit reference to a medical problem of his.

Then, in December, two burglars attempted to rob a house on Long Island, and were shot in the process. The one who lived a few minutes confessed to the crime and said that the dead man had been the one who knew where Charley Ross was. Which left the Ross family and the police at something of a dead end. At least they weren’t accused of being the kidnapers themselves.

There was no closure for the Ross family.

Various people emerged claiming to be Charley Ross; one even persuaded a New Mexico court that he was. But none was, and no trace of Charley Ross was ever found.

Kidnapping as a hazard of life is not uncommon in some cultures; one even hears of Filipino mobs informing their victims in advance, so that they can arrange for ransoms. But this may be urban legend. In the drug world, such measures are more common.

Sometimes these leak over. Kim Antonakos of New York liked to go clubbing where the bad boys were. One of them noticed and decided that he really could use a new Lexus, and her rich father would pay enough for him to get one.

After the snatch, he carefully delivered his ransom demand, making a call on a cell phone and spewing out the details. To the message on her father's answering machine; he didn't even listen as he spoke.

When Mr. Antonakos didn't reply to dead air, the "mastermind" had his boys get rid of their victim. She was already dying from being tied up in the unheated basement of the empty house, but not bothering to make themselves aware of her condition, they set fire to the place and killed her. (See *Burned Alive* by Kieran Crowley (1999) for the story.)

Charley Ross's abductors may not have been quite as incompetent as Kim Antonakos's, but their general disorganization and desperation is about the same. And similarly, the high self-esteem and elevated self-image they possessed.

EXTERMINATOR

by Lisa

One of the most improbable Derby stories has to be that of a big coarse colt foaled in 1915. He was given the name Exterminator in hopes he would exterminate his competition. In 1916 he was sold to a man named Cal Milam who nominated him to the Kentucky Derby. Also at the same sale, another man, Willis Kilmer, bought a fancy imported horse named Sun Briar with the intention of racing him in the Derby. Kilmer's trainer recommended a horse to help Sun Briar train for the Derby. McDaniel chose Exterminator. Kilmer did not think much of Exterminator but the big coarse colt proved able to keep up with Sun Briar in workouts. Shortly before the Derby Sun Briar came up sick. Kilmer would have canceled his Derby plans that year except that Churchill Downs legend Matt Winn counseled going with Exterminator instead. Exterminator overcame a muddy track to carry Kilmer's colors to Derby history. He would go on to win 50 out of 99 starts and become an American legend.

There was discussion of a match race between Exterminator and Man o'War but nothing came of the talk.

Exterminator raced until he was nine and spent 21 years in retirement until his heart gave out in 1945. He is buried in a pet cemetery in Binghamton, New York.

On October 28 we went to see My Old

Kentucky Home in Bardstown. It was unfortunately too late in the year to see the play but we did have a nice tour of the mansion itself. Even better though were the museums in Bardstown. There was a natural history museum, a civil war museum, women's history, military history and Bardstown village. All the museums were well worth seeing and more entertaining than the mansion. Next day we went to the Horse Park, fun as always.

— Lisa

AN ANKH-MORPORK COPPER'S LIFE ON THE QUIRE

SNUFF

by Sir Terry Pratchett
(*Discworld* Series #39)

(HarperCollins; Oct 2011; HC, 416 pp; ISBN:
0062011847; \$25.99)

Review by Grant C. McCormick

Poor Sam Vimes . . . He loves his wife, the Lady Sybil Ramkin, with all his heart and all of his soul. She has given him **Everything**: the true love of a truly good woman, a family, wealth beyond count and measure, respect and prestige in the present, and hope for the future. And because of this, there is *very* little he can refuse her — such as a two-week vacation at the Ramkin estate in the country, The Crundells

Located near the River Quire, which enters the Circle Sea at Quirm, a day or so by coach from Ankh-Morpork, near the edge of the Octarine Grass Country, The Crundells epitomizes the perfect example of the Privileged Class's Bucolic Getaway. In short, if there is a place on the Disc where the egalitarian and populist Sam Vimes would least like to be, it's there. Where he *doesn't* know his environment better than the back of his own hand. Where some of the locals see him as a High-Rank Nob, and others as the Master. For a solid sixnight (weeks in the Ankh-Morpork calendar have eight days each).

But Sam is the Copper's Copper. As the Commander of the Ankh-Morpork City Watch himself has put it, 'Where there are Police, there is Crime.' With his trusty Man, Willikins, Commander Vimes discovers that all is not as it seems around his home away from home. Someone tries to frame Vimes for the disappearance of a local rabble-rouser and troublemaker, and it looks like someone or someones may have been murdered. Meeting a diverse and eccentric collection of the locals, from a writer (a veritable Bard!) whose works enthrall Young Sam (now 6) from top to bottom; to the local constable (who has almost as much actual experience as Young Sam); to a family of river-folk who are not at all inclined to listen to a landlubber. And all through this, he encounters Goblins. Legally vermin, masters of survival, and considered by almost all the disc to have no redeeming features whatsoever.

It strongly helps if you have read the previous *Discworld* novels, particularly those involving the City Watch (in chronological order, *Guards! Guards!*, *Men at Arms*, *Feet of Clay*, *Jingo!*, *The Fifth Elephant*, *Night*

Watch, and *Thud!*). Most of the watchmen whom you have grown to know and love play important roles in *Snuff*, such as Sgt. Colon (whose fondness for cigars leads him to a problem with the bottle that he just cannot shake), Captain Carrot and Angua (keeping an eye on Ankh-Morpork while the Commander is away), Wee Mad Arthur (who plays a *very* big part in *Snuff*), and the rest of the crew (Nobby Nobbs [of course!], Cheery Littlebottom, Detritus, and [one of the newer additions] A. E. Pessimist). Many of our other acquaintances from previous books are there, as well, particularly the Patrician.

But Samuel Vimes and the Lady Sybil are the two most important members of the cast, and in *Snuff* you truly see why Vimes's rise to greatness began with his marriage to her. Her wealth was significant, but the Lady herself is the reason. In *Snuff*, you see how she and Vimes are each the perfect complement for the other.

On aspect of this book is that a significant portion of it is set on the River Quire, Old Treachery, so named because of its unpredictable and dangerous behavior. Vimes's time in the riverboats on the Quire gives parts of this book a distinctly Twainsian feel. Before it ends, you will see if Old Treachery lives up to its name.

A mystery that revolves around tobacco products (including, yes, snuff) might not be politically correct these days, but Sir Terry has never been a man who lets political correctness rule him. But then, neither does Sir Samuel Vimes.

Most highly recommended.

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

Being the occasionally interesting ramblings of a major-league technophile.

Faster Than a Speeding Bullet

In many ways, the history of speed is the history of human technological development. While this article will mention aspects of the overall history of speed, there is one class of object which will be focused on. That's because this class of object has such a long history of being pushed faster and faster that it has become synonymous with speed.

Bullets long predate firearms. Cast lead sling bullets go back well over two thousand years. There are cast 4th Century BC sling bullets with a winged thunderbolt imprinted on one side and "Take that" in Greek on the other. (Additional mottos found on ancient sling bullets were "Ouch," "For Pompey's backside" and even dexta (Catch!)) Lead is denser than rocks, giving more punch on impact, and lead bullets cast in a mold were consistent in weight, and therefore behavior in flight. However, there was a huge variation in both slings and bullets used by different slingers. Some of the latter were more than half a kilogram. (Forget about slinging it, just dropping it on someone could

kill them!)

Maximum velocity of a bullet or stone from a sling is under a hundred meters per second, likely well under. Many learned modern texts claim velocities of around 30 m/s initial velocity, but this contradicts both ancient accounts of range and effect and modern tests. These latter agree that a good slinger is capable of more than twice that speed. (Arrows from a powerful bow can slightly exceed 100 m/s. I believe the modern record is nearly twice that, using specialized equipment. However, arrows have more aerodynamic drag and slow more quickly than sling bullets.) Even with the mechanical advantage of the longer radius of throw offered by a sling, the human arm just couldn't manage anything much faster. There were other ways to launch bullets, some of which combined sling pouch and bow. None were much of an improvement, at least in terms of velocity. However, that changed with the adoption of firearms.

It needs to be noted that before the age of modern science, measuring the speed of fast-moving, small, flying objects was pretty much impossible. There were wild speculations on how fast sling bullets went. Some accounts claimed they became white hot from air friction! (The practice by some armies of heating clay sling bullets before launching them to hopefully start fires among the enemy may be the root of this myth.) Firearms only made things worse.

The first really good method to determine bullet velocity appeared in a book published in 1742, called *New Principles of Gunnery*. It was written by Benjamin Robins, an English mathematician with an interest in ballistics. This was a very influential book, among other things introducing military men to Newtonian physics.

For his work, Robins invented the ballistic pendulum. His first version was a heavy iron weight with a wooden board covering its face. The bullet was fired into the pendulum weight and was embedded in the wooden board, transferring all momentum in an inelastic collision. This caused the pendulum to swing along a curved scale. Measuring the swing and doing some math gave the velocity of the bullet.

Robins' initial velocity measurements were so much higher than expected that he wasn't certain he believed them. He reviewed his procedures and his equipment and repeated the experiment. The velocities remained high.

That was not the only astounding discovery (for the time) made by Robins. He determined that the air drag force on a bullet was many times more powerful than the force due to gravity, and that it rose sharply with increased velocity, which upset many preconceptions. Robins' book started a chain of firing tests, instrumentation developments, and so on. It also contributed to the development of artillery towards the end of the 18th century and was responsible for introducing calculus to the syllabus of many military academies. In fact, Benjamin Robins is considered one of the founders of modern aerodynamics and the father of modern gunnery. Before this book appeared, gunnery was simply a matter of guesswork, though it was often educated guesswork. After

this book was published, gunnery became an exact science. The work was so influential that the famous Swiss mathematician and physicist, Leonhard Euler, himself translated this book into German.

The ballistic pendulum worked and was fairly accurate, but there were problems. Even for handguns, the rig was massive. Kinetic energy increases in direct proportion to the increase in mass and with the square of the increase in velocity, so rifles greatly added to the problems. Cannon — their projectiles no faster but far more massive — were much worse than rifles. In 1781 a ballistic pendulum was constructed, intended to measure the velocity of cannon balls weighing just 1.4 kg; it had a pendulum massing about 315 kg.

During the period of 1842 to 1847, Major Alfred Mordecai from the United States Army tried to determine the muzzle velocity of larger guns using a ballistic pendulum massing over 4215 kg. This was mounted between two large brick towers. This could only measure velocities for 32 pounders at most. It was estimated that a ballistic pendulum to measure velocities for the largest weapons then in use would require towers as large as those on the Brooklyn Bridge!

Later methods measured — through various means — the time required for a bullet to traverse a carefully measured distance, the most successful ones using electricity. Most modern devices — usually called chronographs, because the heart of each device is a clock capable of accurately and precisely measuring tiny intervals of time — use this method, though many start with light. Photosensors detect the reduction in ambient light as a bullet passes over the beginning of the measured distance to start an electronic timer, and the similar event at the end of the distance stops the clock.

Early black powder firearms had muzzle velocities under 300 m/s (which is a fortunate coincidence, because at speeds much higher than this pure lead begins to strip off and deposit in the bore). Later black powder guns generally topped out a little under 700 m/s, and required either hard lead alloy bullets or a paper-patched ball to avoid leading the barrel. (Note that many muskets — smoothbores without rifling — had bores deliberately larger than the bullets. The patch filled in the gap to make a seal, as well as reducing leading. Also, given the long and widespread history of black powder firearms, the range of variations is huge. Therefore, these statements should taken as generalizations.)

More powder won't increase velocity by much over this, and requires either very strong firearms or a huge rifle. One reason for the non-linear speed increase is that kinetic energy increase, mentioned above. Doubling projectile velocity (in a very simplified situation) requires four times the chemical energy. Even loading four times the powder behind a bullet won't actually double the velocity, because of multiple, limiting factors. For example, a short barrel provides less working distance. However, a very long one many result in a slower muzzle velocity, due to the drag of the bullet down the

bore as the gas behind it expands and exerts less force. Maximum velocity results usually come from a bore length designed for the powder charge, or vice versa.

More modern propellants made achievement of velocities over 600 meters per second not only practical but easy. By the early Twentieth Century velocities for lightweight bullets in front of large powder charges were exceeding 900 mps. Specialist firearms — such as early anti-tank rifles — could exceed this, though at the cost of a very short service life. Today the absolute best performing normal rifles can just break 1300 mps.

However, also working against high velocities for bullets is the fact that a projectile propelled by expanding gasses can't move any faster than the speed of expansion in those gasses. That speed in turn depends on the molecular weight of the gasses and the chemical energy released, which in turn depend on the composition and temperature. Bullet velocities can approach the burn rate of the propelling powders but never exceed or even match it. Given the inefficiencies involved with transferring energy to a projectile, that means 1350 mps is a rough, practical limit. The absolute limit for smokeless powders appears to be around 1600 mps, and for that you need specially formulated propellants and carefully designed firearms.

One trick to increase bullet speeds is the squeeze bore. For this, the bore of the firearm is tapered, and the bullet designed to squeeze smaller as it traverses the length. Again, this technique is very rough on the gun, which consequently has a very short operational life.

Another trick is the discarding sabot. A tough but light casing (aluminum and some polymers are common) encloses a long, slender, dense projectile. This gives a large base area for the expanding gasses to work on, but once the projectile leaves the bore the outer casing falls away. This gives a very aerodynamic shell moving at very high speed.

Gas propellants have been evaluated for artillery and tank guns. Besides providing a faster speed of combustion and a lower molecular weight, this would also allow tailoring the muzzle velocity by injecting just enough propellant. However, so far this trick hasn't provided enough benefit to compensate for the disadvantages. The biggest one being the need for new or modified equipment.

While these techniques do provide significant increases in projectile velocity, they still are limited by the speed of combustion of the propellant.

One of the most difficult things to convince early critics of rockets about was that a rocket could exceed its exhaust velocity. A rocket gains velocity by a different mechanism than bullets do. A well made rocket can, in fact, make a change in velocity much greater than the exhaust velocity. Because of this people have long thought that a rocket gun would prove superior to a conventional firearm. (How long? Buck Rogers was using a rocket gun in the late Twenties, and was likely not the first.) However, the acceleration of a rocket is

inherently lower than that of a bullet (though some rockets have been flown which pulled hundreds of Gs, that pales before firearms, which can accelerate a bullet at tens of thousands of Gs).

The (in)famous Gyrojet pistol and rifle were seriously limited by this. The weapons were smoothbore, the spin provided by angling the rocket ports at the rear of the projectiles. Those “bullets” were rather large, since they had to carry their propellant with them. They didn’t reach maximum velocity — or maximum spin — for some distance after leaving the muzzle. This made them less effective at short ranges than a traditional firearm the same size and weight, since they were still gaining speed. Because they didn’t spin up to full speed until some time after leaving the muzzle they were also much less accurate at a distance. Finally, once the fuel burned out you had a low-density projectile with a large frontal area. This was not conducive to velocity retention.

Rockets do have advantages, of course. They got us to the Moon, after all. They have also given us the fastest speed (relative to the Earth) for any large object humans have made. The Stardust sample-return capsule was the fastest man-made object ever to reenter Earth’s atmosphere (12.4 km/s at peak). This was faster than the Apollo mission capsules and 70% faster than the Shuttle.

This brings up an interesting point. More people have walked on the Moon than have driven faster than 1200 kph. Going fast in space is easy. Without friction you just keep building speed for as long as you can produce thrust. On the ground, you have multiple sources of friction. Especially if you’re on wheels. Friction eventually balances thrust, setting the ultimate limit for speed.

Aircraft remove all sources of friction save for air resistance and internal engine friction. Small surprise that early aircraft soon eclipsed the speed of automobiles and planes. Today, the fastest manned aircraft to fly is the SR-71, which could exceed Mach 3. The X-15 rocket plane — actually a winged suborbital spacecraft, rather than an aircraft — came close to Mach 7. The Shuttle (or Space Transportation System Orbiter) hit Mach 25 (8,200 m/s) during reentry. In orbit, it was actually traveling at around 8,100 m/s. To reenter the atmosphere, the Orbiter fired its Orbital Maneuvering System rockets — the smaller nozzles at the rear — to slow below orbit speed, removing about 300 mps. However, as it dropped it picked up speed from the fall; hence the reentry velocity being higher than the orbital velocity. (These numbers will vary depending on the Orbiter and the mission flight profile.)

Most reading this probably know that a few ground vehicles have exceeded the speed of sound. You’re probably also aware of the first supersonic flight. However, how many of you know the first object to exceed the speed of sound (~330 m/s)? It wasn’t a bullet. Many early firearms could throw bullets faster than this velocity, even muskets. However, they came much later than the accomplishment.

The first man-made object to have exceeded the speed of sound was likely a piece of rope or cord. You see, the crack of a whip is the sonic boom produced when the tip exceeds the speed of sound.

Kinetic energy is still a very good way to do damage to a target. Researchers — for both military and civilian applications — have tried multiple tricks to give bullets a higher velocity than a chemically powered gun can provide.

The technique of using a gaseous propellant was mentioned above, as well as its limitations for field deployment. Researchers in laboratories are a bit less constrained than artillery or tank crews, and have used this concept to produce high velocities. However, they have also come up with another trick which works even better. For such things as studying asteroid impacts, they use an explosive charge to drive a piston into a tube of hydrogen gas, which then launches the projectile. Because of the extremely low molecular weight of the working fluid, these light gas guns can reach muzzle velocities in the low end of potential impacts, and are improving steadily.

A device which is a combination of traditional gun and jet engine is the ram accelerator. The launch tube and projectile effectively form an inside-out ramjet. The tube is filled with a fuel-air mixture, and a propellant charge starts the projectile forward. The fuel-air mixture compresses as the projectile moves down the bore, and ignites once past the constriction, the detonation forming a standing shockwave on the rear shoulder of the projectile. The pressure from this forces the shell down the tube. Since the combustion is moving with the projectile, you don’t have the propagation speed limitation of conventional firearms. This concept was originally developed with the intent of replacing sounding rockets, which gives you an idea of the muzzle velocity. Accelerations of over a hundred thousand Gs and muzzle velocities of over 5,000 mps are expected for the larger, longer ram accelerators.

The stresses involved in such a device are stupendous. When asked what would happen if the blast from the initial propelling charge flashed past the projectile and ignited a detonation in the fuel-air mixture, one of the developers stated that no malfunction of the launcher was worse than normal operation. The last I heard, ram accelerators were still under development.

When chemistry won’t do the job it’s always a good idea to try physics. Electric cannon are still not quite at the deployment stage, despite being worked on for about a century. One major problem is dumping enough electricity fast enough into the launcher to do the job. Having the launcher survive such treatment is even more difficult.

Some electric launchers work like a solenoid, and are often nicknamed coilguns. These work by using electricity to generate a magnetic field which interacts with the projectile much as the rotor of an electric motor does with the magnetic field produced by the windings, except the force generated is linear

rather than circular. They are simple and generally easy and cheap to build, but have lower performance than some of the other alternatives.

Another version of electromagnet launcher is the railgun, so named because the projectile is positioned between two conductive rails. This works very much like a linear induction motor, and can be thought of as a variation on that device. These launchers are very hard on their rails, and rarely shoot more than three times before needing refurbishment. Much of the research on these is focused on improving the working life.

Some use the electricity to vaporize material at the rear of the projectile or on the face of railgun-like rails, turning it into an electric rocket. If the material becomes a conductive plasma, no physical contact between projectile and energy source is necessary, eliminating that source of drag. Because the power is coming from outside, the projectile can actually be supplied with more energy than an equivalent volume of chemical propellant would produce. Any propellant container on the rear of the projectile can be dropped once the launch is over, reducing drag.

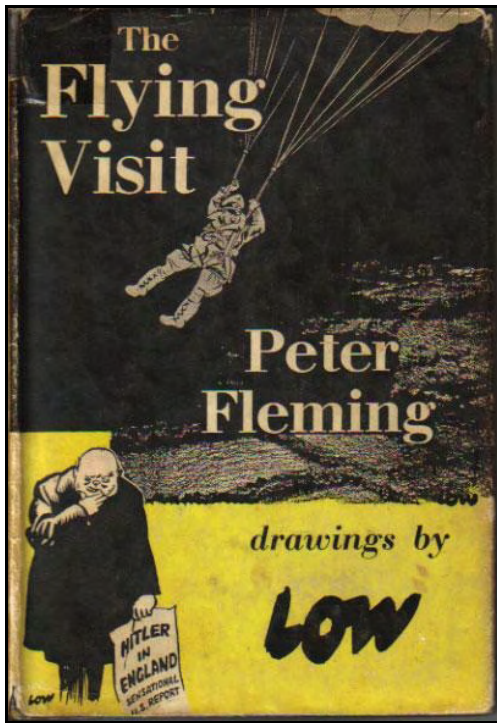
For all of these, the energy supply is the limiting factor. Which is likely why the US Navy has made the most progress with fielding a large working electric gun. If you’re on a ship, getting enough electricity for your weapon is greatly simplified. Especially if that ship is nuclear.

Studies have been made of using ground-based lasers to supply energy to large rockets, in a variation on the theme of the third version of electric cannon described above. The on-board propellants — perhaps plain water, but more likely hydrogen — would be chemically inert or at least far less toxic and energetic than chemical propellants. The lasers might be electrically or chemically pumped; the exact nature of the power source is irrelevant. They would beam energy to the working fluid, heating it to vapor and possibly even dissociating the molecules. This would provide performance much higher than any current chemical rocket, while also improving safety.

So there you have a very brief overview of the history of speed and how it is produced and measured. This runs over three thousand words (somewhat longer than typical) yet has just barely scratched the surface. If there is sufficient interest I may go into more detail on certain aspects of the human quest for speed in the future.

FLYING LOW

Revisiting a Little Known
Alternate History Novel
by Taral Wayne



It's been years since I first read this book. I bought it from a collector in Ottawa for a mere five bucks, and read it cover to cover the next day.

It wasn't difficult. At 128 pages of large type and with illustrations by the renowned WW II political cartoonist, David Low, reading "The Flying Visit" takes little stamina. If not a very long book, it is a droll one... and full of extremely uncanny predictions about the unfolding war!

To start with, the book was written by Peter Fleming, who is the older brother of 007's creator, Ian Fleming. Brother Peter wrote travel books mainly, no spy stories, and no novel that he is much remembered for. Brother Ian, of course, is famous the world over for James Bond. But he is not much remembered for his travel books.

David Low was arguably one of the most famous political cartoonists in history, and an inspiration to any illustrator who wishes to rise above the abysmal level of draftsmanship of Gary Trudeau. Low's cartoons of the Nazi menace and Britain's brave defiance will live forever . . . or at least as long as Popeye. Immortality is relative, after all.



In summary, the book begins with Adolf Hitler in a moment of introspection, wondering whether or not he really understands his adversaries, the British. Partly to satisfy his curiosity, and partly because he realizes that it would be a terrific propaganda stunt, he orders a Luftwaffe plane to carry him over the British Isles. Unknown to Hitler, conspirators have concealed a bomb in one of his thermos of vegetable soup. When it explodes, the plane is destroyed and der Führer is the only survivor. His parachute lowers him into a mud puddle somewhere in the Chiltern Hills, near Oxford.

Wandering alone, hungry and very dirty, Hitler accidentally intrudes into a costume party in a small village, where he is awarded first prize for his splendid impersonation of the German dictator. He cannot understand a word of what is being said around him, of course. But a sharp-eyed miss realizes that Hitler is the *real* Führer, and locks him safely in a loo until the authorities can be notified.



Absurd as all this is, the discussion in Whitehall over what to do about having the Führer under lock and key are even more absurd. The Germans have produced a double, who is working overtime to keep up a pretense that the beloved leader is still on the job. The British Cabinet risks looking as though they were taken in by a hoax if no one believes *they* have the real Hitler! Their solution is as silly as the initial premise. Reasoning that the real Hitler is more a menace to his own side than to the British, they parachute him back into Germany... into another mud puddle, to be

precise.

Peter Fleming wrote this bit of light-hearted nonsense in early 1940. The war was only months old – France had been overrun, but the invasion of Norway had only just begun. For the British, it was still possible to think of the hostilities as just a big war, with reason still in charge and the enemy still human. The torpedoing of civilian ships at sea, the Blitz, forced labour, Auschwitz, the massacre at Lidice and human experiments all lay in the future.

Yet "The Flying Visit" makes some startling predictions about the war over the next few years. I'm sure they were all coincidences, but they are still uncanny.

In Fleming's novel, Hitler planned to fly over London for propaganda purposes in March, 1940. History tells us that a little more than a year later, the Deputy Führer, Rudolph Hess did exactly that! Hess flew over Scotland, rather than Oxfordshire, but like the fictional Führer, he arrives by parachute and had vague ideas of contacting a local member of the peerage who he imagines is friendly to Nazi ideology. He was quickly captured, and the war cabinet notified of it. Unfortunately for Hess, he was not returned to Germany and – beginning with a short stay in the Tower of London – spent the remainder of the war in captivity.



VERY WELL, ALONE

1. The fictional Führer's plane is destroyed by a bomb concealed in a thermos of vegetable soup. Almost exactly two years after the bomb in the story exploded, a bomb was carried aboard Hitler's personal Condor 200 by Lieutenant Colonel Heinz Brandt. Brandt was a volunteer, working for elements in the army who opposed the Nazi regime. The bomb was disguised as a box containing two bottles of Cointreau rather than the more prosaic thermos of vegetable soup, but the parallel is nonetheless striking. Hitler's luck held, unfortunately. The British pencil detonators, normally reliable, failed to set off the explosive.

2. Wandering forlorn in the English countryside, the Führer in "The Flying Visit" decides to shoot himself! He is luckier than the real Adolf Hitler, who in April 1945 succeeds splendidly in the act of

self-destruction. The fictional Führer is frustrated by an automatic full of blanks, thoughtfully provided for him by aides familiar with his suicidal streak. One difference, though. This Hitler is squeamish about shooting himself in the head, and aimed for the heart instead. The real Hitler wasn't and didn't.

3. You might say that the Second World War began earlier than planned. The Wehrmacht repeatedly warned Hitler that they would not be fully prepared to begin a general war until 1942 or 1943. But the ever-confident Führer pressed on with his plans to annex the Czechs and invaded Poland, kindling the war at least three years ahead of schedule. By remarkable coincidence, on page 47 of my copy of *The Flying Visit*, Hitler muses about his conversation with the British Prime Minister once he has revealed himself. He imagines he will lay the groundwork for peace, guaranteeing the British their sovereignty and a few token remnants of empire that Germany has no need of. "And then, in 1943, perhaps, he would show the British what it meant to incur the enmity of Germany..."

4. Another eerie correspondence between fact and fiction is that the author quite pointedly shows Winston Churchill to be the guiding influence behind the British government in "The Flying Visit." What's peculiar about this is that Neville Chamberlain is still Prime Minister in early 1940, and Churchill only First Lord of the Admiralty. Yet Peter Fleming already seemed to know who was really going to call the shots as the war progressed.

At that point the string of unerring predictions ended. I found nothing more in "The Flying Visit" that foreshadowed other events in the Second World War. One wonders what went wrong. Which took the wrong turn? The novel? ...or the war?

TYING UP LOOSE ENDS

Review by Taral Wayne of
**THE TROUBLE WITH PHYSICS:
The Rise of String Theory, the Fall of a
Science, and What Comes Next**
by Lee Smolin

(Mariner Books; 2007;
ISBN 978-0617818683; \$15.95;
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (Kindle); \$8.77)

Every now and then, a crack opens in String Theory. Although it has been the darling of particle physics and cosmology since at least the early 1990s, and the theory has been elaborated in several unforseen directions, String Theory *still* doesn't explain a damn thing! Moreover, it remains as unprovable today as it did twenty years ago. No wonder scientists are beginning to wonder if they aren't groping up a dark matter alley.

Not long ago, the editor of another fanzine threw a question to the readers. What was the

Higgs particle and why was it so important to theoretical science? There are fans and there are fans. Some are media and some are literary. But, this was the sort of challenge that no fan of the geek variety can resist . . . so I wrote a loc.

I *could* probably write a proper article on the Higgs particle, and why it's nicknamed the God Particle, but it would only mean looking the subject up on Wikipedia and paraphrasing. Any number of other science-geeks in fandom could do it.

The Reader's Digest version (from memory) is that there needs to be another, higher-dimensional field in which the associated particle is the Higgs. Depending on the rest energy of the Higgs, the physical properties of other, more commonplace, particles is fixed at the values we see in nature. In principle, the Higgs particle could have *any* rest energy, and create different universes with different physical laws — hence, "The God Particle". It just happens to have the energy it does and we live in the universe we do for no particular reason. No evidence of it has been found, however. Nor is the theoretical necessity for the Higgs particularly strong — though attempts *have* been made to tie the Higgs to the Inflationary Model of the early cosmos. Particle physicists feel there is a slender possibility that a very low estimate of the rest mass of the Higgs (the one that made *our* universe) might fall within the upper limit of energies that can eventually be reached by the new Large Hadron Collider at CERN.

The Higgs particle is only one of a number of stumbling blocks in modern cosmology. Not the least is the problem of how to explain why galaxies rotate as solid objects and not as a collection of independent stars, and how this has led cosmologists to assume the existence of an invisible, undetectable "dark matter" that only exerts gravitational influence exactly where needed to explain our ignorance . . . but does absolutely nothing else.

The same with "dark energy" — which exists mainly to fill in a gap of understanding about the expansion of the universe.

Then there are branes, a baroque extension of String Theory that demands we accept the existence of an infinite number of alternate universes that may only be different from ours in as small a way as my not making the typo at the end of this line.

See . . . String Theory isn't so hard. But the condensed milk version is very, very approximate, and if anyone is really curious, they should go to the Wiki article. I also recommend a book called *The Trouble with Physics: The Rise of String Theory, the Fall of a Science, and What Comes Next*, by Lee Smolin.

According to the author, string theory has produced nothing but tangled knots since it came into fashion, more than twenty years ago. Not only has it *not* solved any problems, it has caused more, in fact. String Theory is *unprovable in principle!* The theory *itself* says almost as much, but prefers to state that there are infinite solutions to the equations. Of

course, infinite solutions means there are no *preferred* solutions, which is no solution at all. It predicts nothing, it solves nothing, it explains nothing. The book goes on to show that so many of our most esoteric theories — dark matter, dark energy, branes, quantum loops, inflation, and so on — are all so tied together that if *one* goes, they all go. It might well be that our theoreticians will have to go back to 1950 and start over! Beware MOND!

(That's Modified Newtonian Dynamics to you — a rather intriguing theory that gravity weakens with distance only to a certain degree and then plateaus. Beyond umpty-ump thousands of light years, the gravitational slope flattens and remains level at all distances beyond. With MOND, a large system of independent stars such as a galaxy *will* rotate as a solid object. The problem with MOND is that there isn't the least shred of evidence for it.)

One very troubling factoid mentioned by the author is that there have been no significant advances in theoretical cosmology or particle physics in an entire generation. We've been living through the most unproductive twenty years of theoretical physics in modern history. Whether or not String Theory and the rest are right or wrong, that in itself is a worrisome bit of data, Mr. Data. It is heresy to the scientific establishment to reject the standard model. Yet most scientists believe they are in a state of almost constant theoretical revolution!

There are indications that — if premature — they may be right, nonetheless. With the operation of the LHC just begun, things are not adding up as they should. The Higgs particle doesn't seem to be there. The window of masses that theory predicts for it is closing fast, and only a narrow gap remains. If the Higgs doesn't turn up soon, it must be in some realm beyond human reach for the foreseeable future. Worse, the LHC seems to have observed neutrinos that arrived at the detectors before the speed of light allows. It may only be a calibration problem . . . but what if it *isn't*? At the other end of the measuring stick, light appears to have arrived from the edge of the observable universe at different speeds from different parts of the sky. Sure, tricky explanations have been given to show how dark matter might gravitationally lens light of different wavelengths, so that blue photons and red photons from the same source might arrive on Earth at different times. But photons from 14 billion light years in *this* direction instead of *that* direction? Nobody has a clue what this means.

My hope is that it means we might at last remove String Theory and Magic Invisible Phenomena as obstacles from our understanding of how the universe really works. Maybe we *are* on the verge of a revolution in thinking. Rubik's Cube Theory of Everything, anyone?

I'm serious. I'm going to write a paper. As soon as I've read up on the subject in Wikipedia, that is.

ALWAYS KICK THE TIRES!

Review of *Cars 2* by Taral Wayne

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1216475/>



I watched *Cars 2* the other night. To tell the truth, I was prepared for an inferior sequel. Nothing I had seen in the trailer suggested that it would be anything but “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” But I was not, I repeat *not*, prepared for how truly dreadful it was.

The *Rotten Tomatoes* rating was 38%. That would be a perfectly fine rating for a Don Bluth film, even a welcome turn for the better for the overworked *Madagascar* and *Open Season* franchises. But 38% is a good deal less than half what the audience should expect from Pixar. What went wrong?

One doesn't have to look much farther than Larry the Table Ham. In fact, its rather hard to see around him, he's so resolutely on center stage. Lightning McQueen... remember him, the star of the first *Cars*? He appears in the sequel mainly to affirm that Tow Mater is perfect as he is, and need never improve on being a pig-ignorant, redneck hillbilly.

Not everyone found *Cars 1* to their liking – the leap from people to talking cars is a hard one for many viewers who are not animation fans to begin with. Still, I found it magical. It didn't take me long to forget that these were metal shells on wheels that you run by filling with gasoline, and to accept them as an unfamiliar sort of human being. I even wondered what sort of car I would be, if I lived in this movie. (I was never able to settle on anything more flattering than a 1950 Studebaker Champion.) Each of the characters was lively and interesting, if not always deep. Used sparingly, even the rundown tow truck had his moments as a believable second-string character.

Cars 2 was nothing but a multi-million-dollar Saturday morning cartoon starring Tow Mater, a character likeable only in small doses. Every other character introduced in the first movie was given a walk-on part, a line or two, and then was gone until the credits began to roll.

Even McQueen was relegated to feeding his friend straight lines, while the “ugly American” ran amok in a frenzy of parochial stupidity.

Compare stories. In the first *Cars*, a conceited popular hero learns humility, and the value of life in a slower lane. In *Cars 2*, Tow Mater learns that it is okay to be stupid, intrusive and lost in one's own need for immediate gratification. Though the plot involves a sort of World Grand Prix, held in three different cities, strangely, even the race sequences recede into the background. Most of the plot is an absurd spy story that does less to add luster to the genre than Johnny English or Austin Powers. Characters that you forget are cars and not people are sacrificed to gimmicks such as rocket packs in the trunk, pop-up arsenals of automatic weaponry and paraglide wings that deploy by voice-activation. This was Inspector-Gadget-class espionage! At the exciting conclusion of the adventure, when the archvillain is revealed and his plot foiled, I had to ask myself, “Do I care?”

Nope. The story was far too contrived to give a damn, and the environmental lesson to be taught was much too conflicted to make any sense. So... the “green” fuel was a fake, check.

The villain was plotting to discredit it, check. Then he could sell regular petroleum that he just happened to own the world's largest reserve of. Let me think about that a moment... check. And that was why “green” fuel was good... because it was faked... Uh... Isn't there a lapse in the logic here, somewhere?

The animators went all out on creating the world for *Cars 2* using the three-dimensional technology of *Coraline*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Avatar* – so one wonders why it seemed so flat and static then. Even with spy cars swinging themselves around in the air like Doctor Octopus on a bender, and 300 k.p.h. race cars whizzing through the streets of Tokyo and the Mediterranean coast of Italy, *Cars 2* seemed more like a series of landscape paintings. You know the sort... they probably hung in your grandmother's house, in the hall or the kitchen. The light was always golden and the architecture clung picturesquely to rocky promontories. Like those paintings, the cities in *Cars 2* lived in front of your eye, lifelessly. Nobody lived there. Nothing was behind the lavishly detailed facades.

When Pixar made *Cars 1*, they were inspired. It was plain that the artists and animators had fallen in love with the world that created Route 66, the empire of the auto that once spread across the land and could only be found today in isolated pockets of Backwater U.S.A... in deep decay. They resurrected that world for the first *Cars*, and their love shows in the mundane details – dust, rust spots, oily rags, traffic cones, peeling pink stucco and flickering neon signs. The story built on those details to illustrate the worth of an older world, its vanished wonder and the fabric of lives once lived.

What insight did *Cars 2* impart to the audience? That spies are exciting, and that if someone is your friend their inappropriate behavior doesn't matter.

It's easy to guess what the inspiration for *Cars 2* was – not Route 66, not NASCAR, not even to embellish the success of the first movie.

Someone in the head office noticed that Tow Mater appealed to the under-12 audience, and if they made a movie around a guaranteed draw, they might have another hit on their hands. Pixar pandered to the lowest common denominator – the audience that made it possible to film 12 iterations of *Land Before Time* – to go to the cash register one more time with a property that had run out of marketing potential.

Cars 2 is the first Pixar film the studio should have been ashamed to put their name on. Let's hope it's their last. The reputation the studio earned for itself in its first ten films hasn't been thrown away – yet. It is probably not even in much danger as yet. But the history of any large organization shows that, inevitably, the corporate rot sets in – the suits begin to dominate creative thinking, which shifts from originality and serious purpose to bottom lines and targeted markets. Pixar is one step closer to becoming McPixar. Their next film should tell us how quickly we can expect the studio to arrive there.

THE ALCHEMISTS

by M. Caron and S. Hutin (1961)

Reviewed by Richard Dengrove

A friend of mine gave me this paperback. He came upon it in a used book store. I found it a popularization. Often popularizations don't rock the boat and they don't tell anything you didn't already know. All part of a dumbing down process. That it is calming and familiar is apparently attractive to the masses. Why, they ask, read a book you haven't read before?

It isn't attractive to me. Instead, I much prefer this popularization which fights topical tigers and sweeps up new facts in its wake. Having found such a book, I won't cross it off my list because the authors mark themselves as occultists who hold a candle for alchemy. Rather than following the party line, being believers has motivated them to dig up far more knowledge than many writing for a buck would.

In this review, I will first deal with what interested me most and then what interested me less. What interested me most was what got me angry. I admit, usually, anger makes me toss a book away, but Caron and Hutin filled me with good anger that made me think and do research.

What made me angry were Caron and Hutin's theories. Theories and explanations are not their forte. However, as I said, erudition is. And here the two are separate. Caron and Hutin aren't really interested in supporting theories with the vast amount of erudition they bring to play.

This is too bad because I can see problems with their theories right away. The biggy problem entails forgetting the historical context. Not that authors who marshal their facts haven't been equally guilty of the same vice.

For instance, Caron and Hutin are big on claiming that, to transmute lead into gold, alchemists had to be spiritual within themselves.

Men bound to matter would always come away empty handed from the quest. That is certainly what the alchemists believed – and, given the era being discussed, big deal.

Here, Caron and Hutin ignore the social context: what everyone had to proclaim. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, people had to proclaim that all skills required spirituality. Even that kissing cousin to modern science, natural philosophy contained a good shot of theology. In understanding nature, natural philosophers had to claim they had found God.

In addition, Caron and Hutin's explanations give me another bone to pick: namely, only the Traditionalists, who followed traditional formulas, could transmute lead into gold. Fat chance a Puffer would, who learned solely from experience.

Here they ignore another aspect of the social context: the canon did not actually provide you with the secret to transmuting lead into gold. The canon Traditionalists inherited was suitably vague, and often written in a code of puzzling allegories, where the author often admitted a vital key had been omitted. After reading it, Traditionalists had to descend to Puffery, as it were, and work the bellows, if only to discover the secret behind the canon.

In addition to finding fault with the spiritual context of alchemy and its dichotomy, I find fault with Caron and Hutin's origin for alchemy. Caron and Hutin doubt alchemy originated in China. They are in good company too: most scholars side with them. Their reasoning? There was no way for Chinese astrology to reach the West.

So how do I have alchemists piercing the impermeable wall between China and the outside world? They didn't have to. The Chinese had diplomatic and trade relations with Rome by 166 AD. Thus, when the first alchemical treatise in the West was written by Zosimus of Panopolis around 300 AD, a Chinese origin wouldn't have been spectacular. In fact, there is actual evidence that alchemy was dragged along the silk road from China. It isn't as if Chinese and Western alchemy are different animals. Despite himself, another author, Holmyard lets drop many parallels between the two: for example, the search for immortality, the transmutation into gold, the use of mercury, and the emphasis on spirit and perfection.

Having demolished – I hope – Caron and Hutin's ideas about spirituality, dichotomies and the origin of alchemy, I feel confident that Caron and Hutin are weak on explanation.

As I said earlier, that doesn't mean they do not reveal strength otherwise. For instance, their erudition is amazing for popularizers. They give information which the odds of finding in other popularizations is infinitesimal.

Such tidbits include info on the alchemists of the 19th and 20th Centuries. A side branch that nearly all popularizers and most experts omit. If they fascinate me, why not rate them on my interest meter higher than their explanations? These merely interest; the explanations actually got me angry. They raised

up real interest.

From the 19th Century, they discuss a Tiffereau and a Jollivet-Castelot. I was going to say wannabe alchemists, but what they really aspired to was being new Newtons. Even though one at least was an occultist, both believed they could transmute lead into gold using scientific principles. Thus, Caron and Hutton refer to them as Hyperchemists.

According to them, both gentlemen claimed at least one transmutation of lead into gold. However, replication eluded them. It didn't sound promising that Jollivet-Castelot's transmutation involved a cigar and cigarettes.

On the other hand, Tiffereau admitted replication eluded him. A mark in his favor; but, given his claims, not enough. It is not astonishing in the least their colleagues regarded both of them as nut cases.

On this subject, the authors Caron and Hutin cleave to their party-of-two line and accuse these Hyperchemists of having failed because they lacked spirituality.

They do not say the same about an alchemical denizen of the 20th Century. They only sing his praises. In addition, they rarely tell us much about him, and thus whet our imaginations.

My appetite whetted, I found out from Wikipedia that he started taking on disciples in 1921, he disappeared in 1926, and the Nazis and Allies both searched for him at the end World War II. This whetted my curiosity that much more. Unfortunately, further curiosity was to be unrequited.

I am talking about Fulcanelli. While I had never heard of him before, he apparently was a well-known modern advocate of Medieval and Renaissance alchemy. Strangely, his day job was as a physicist, according to Wikipedia.

What Caron and Hutin do say is he believed the spiritual side of transmutation far more important than the chemical side. And, for them, that enabled him to have actual transmutations under his belt. Transmutations Caron and Hutin betray not the slightest doubt about.

So much for the hyperchemists and a modern day thaumaturgist of the 19th and 20th Centuries. Since this book surveys alchemy overall, Caron and Hutin also give information about earlier eras. The notables then don't interest me as much as the hyperchemists or Fulcanelli. I have read about them often enough. However, though less the three moderns, they do interest me when Caron and Hutin go into depth.

Like they did on the 14th Century alchemist Nicholas Flamel. So much depth that they come away noticing that the actual evidence for his transmutations is slim to none. Most authors, even skeptical ones, have studied Flamel in less depth, and take a more favorable attitude toward his transmutations. Apparently, unlike Caron and Hutin, they do not realize that accounts of them come from much later sources.

As do accounts of how he donated his virtue-begotten gold to build Cathedrals. As do accounts of his involvement with Jewish Kabbalists. And of the book with the mysterious

writing, which ultimately yielded the Magnum Opus, i.e., an authentic transmutation.

Now we come to the second person in the Flamel equation: his wife, Pernella. While she has a basis in historical fact, it remains puzzling why her reputation rivals his.

Other authors, Caron and Hutin write about in less depth but still some. For instance, the Medieval scholars Raymond Lully and Albertus Magnus.

Not so strangely, they show the same skepticism about their alchemical accomplishments. For instance, they come out and admit Lully wrote none of the alchemical works attributed to him. Rightly or wrongly, his reputation rests on a device to line up premises and make syllogisms.

As for Albertus Magnus, Caron and Hutin point out that that proto-scientist doubted transmutation could be done.

So much for Caron and Hutin's skepticism, astonishing in a popular work. And, I suspect, totally uncharacteristic of them. Not only is their norm to believe in wonders; but to act as antiquarians, who mix legend and fact, and leave their readers to sort it out.

This is what happens apparently when they haven't investigated a subject in depth. And, it shows when they relate dribs and drabs about broad areas. Here, personages of alchemical history receive little more than a paragraph. For that reason, I find these alchemists less interesting than their in-depth brethren.

This is especially true of those non-alchemical alchemists, the charlatans. Yes, Caron and Hutin do not deny what is obvious: alchemy, from the Middle Ages on, has been riddled with charlatans. They also admit some had the chutzpah to bilk imprudent crowned heads of state, and risk punishments. About which the less said about the better.

In fact, they start their list of charlatans with the 16th Century George Sabellicus, whom some have considered the historical Faust. If they had read further about him, they would have found that while he boasted of excelling in other arts, he didn't say anything in particular about alchemy.

A charlatan made in Sabellicus' silhouette if not his image was the 18th Century rogue, whom other authors have described as silver tongued about all things occult, mystical and magical, Cagliostro. There were some differences, though. For example, his repertoire did include alchemy.

Where Caron and Hutin fall down is on another aspect of his life. Unlike Sabellicus, he was able to build up from small confidence games to megawumpus sized ones. That included being involved in the Affair of the Diamond Neckless, which some historians claim contributed to the guillotining of Louis XVIth.

In addition, Caron and Hutin's list of charlatans include the 18th Century Casanova. You wouldn't know from their thumbnail sketch that he observed alchemy more than he practiced it; or wrote an incredible number of volumes about mischief he wrought ages 14-19.

He differed radically from Sabellicus and

Cagliostro in another way too: he was not always on the swindling end. Often he was as confused about alchemy as was his pigeon. That was especially true in one incident where a marquise, a lover of his, claimed to have transformed herself into a man through alchemy.

This is only the beginning, not the end. Caron and Hutin's list of charlatans includes a myriad of others as well. Of all of them, I can say that they would have written an even more interesting book by providing the details of a few of these charlatans' lives.

Of even less interest is the section on the alchemists tools. There, Caron and Hutin discuss apparatus with puzzling names. For instance, the athanor and aludel, furnaces; the pelican, a receptacle with two glass pipes leading back to it; the philosophical egg, a retort, which carried all the ingredients for a transmutation.

The pelican, I gather, did indeed resemble a pelican, and the philosophical egg did indeed resemble an egg.

What makes this topic less interesting is that while you know what the charlatans did, you aren't too certain about these widgets. By explaining their uses in alchemical experiments, perhaps a wouldbe writer could reverse this.

Another strategy for making this section more interesting would have been answering how these arcane modus operandi developed into the ancestors of the test tube and retort of modern chemistry. Something all authors I have read agree on; but none has traced it.

Less interesting than even the section on modus operandi is the one on the tomes that transmitted alchemical knowledge. They must have ended up mystifying wouldbe alchemists in an already mystifying subject. They certainly mystify us moderns. The alchemists' tools at least look useful.

What mystifies are the Allegories, metaphoric stories that were said to allude to the alchemical process. The rationale being that evil people (read low class) would not be able to penetrate them and the world would be safe. A typical Medieval attitude that seeped into the Renaissance and beyond.

Given the importance attributed to these Allegories, I can understand why Caron and Hutin want us to experience a few. Unfortunately, since they strike us as total jabberwocky, and didn't really strike the alchemists of old a lot better, they have reminded the reader more of a data dump than a learning experience.

Since I have ended by dealing with the least interesting aspect of this book, Allegories, I might be leaving you with a bad taste about it. Because it is a book I liked, I have saved one matter of interest till last even though it should have taken its rightful place after the hyperchemists, the illustrations.

Caron and Hutin more than make up for any crime against humanity in their book's copious, curious and often beautiful illustrations. They must have mined several libraries to pack this cheap paperback with these scintillating adornments.

With that upbeat note, I can tack an ending on this article. I have touched on Caron and Hutin's subjects from their hypotheses to alchemy's allegories, and added a high note afterward. I can summarize my feelings toward the book further by reiterating my words at the beginning: it is both learned and fun, although, as I said, I wouldn't take Caron and Hutin's explanations too seriously.

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

Report by Joseph T Major

Remaining are:

Poland

Józef Kowalski* (111) 22 Pulk Ułanów

United Kingdom

Florence Beatrice Patterson Green (110),
Women's Royal Air Force

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

According to a CNN article, the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, with some 2700 members out of the estimated 8000 survivors of the original 84,000 present, has voted to disband as of the end of the year, on the grounds that the membership is aging and members with the energy to serve as officers are hard to find.

THE POLAR EXPRESS

by Joe

The Polar Express (book by Chris van Allsburg (1985); movie by Robert Zemenkis (2004)) is about belief in the concept of Christmas. A boy who comes to believe (played when grown-up by Tom Hanks, who in an Alec Guinness moment also plays five other characters ["Kind Hearts and Santas"?) is taken by the Polar Express to the North Pole (although apparently they never get out of Nunavut).

The problem is that if I'd done it:

The Pullman porter would have been Matt Henson, and his assistants would have been Uutaq, Ukkujaaq, Iggiannuaq, and Sigluk ["Ootah, Ooqueah, Eggingwah, and Segloo"], the Inuit on the Polar Party.

Then the Hero Boy would have met the Railway President and Chairman, Robert E. Peary, and the Vice-Chairman, Richard E. Byrd. After which, he would have gone to the locomotive, which was being driven by Robert A. Bartlett, while the firemen, Umberto Nobile and Roald Amundsen, quarreled.

And before going back to his berth, he would have found a hobo riding the rods — Frederick A. Cook.

I am just a bit too esoteric, I guess.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There was a partial eclipse of the sun on November 25, 2011, visible in Antarctica and

the neighboring seas, including South Georgia, where two days later Frank Wild was buried in the Grytviken cemetery, and in Eastern Cape, Western Cape, and Northern Cape Provinces of South Africa, Tasmania, and most of New Zealand. The maximum duration was at 68° 36' S 82° 24' W, in the Bellinghousen Sea, off Alexander I Island. It was part of Saros 123, which began on August 16, 1087 and will end on October 8, 2367.

The next solar eclipse will be on May 20, 2012. It will be an annular eclipse, beginning off the coast of Guangxi [Kwangsi], passing through Guangzhou (Canton), Fujian, Taiwan, Kyushu, Shikoku, southern Honshu, Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and ending in Texas. The longest duration of annularity will be at sea south of the Aleutian Islands, at 48° 51' 53" N, 176° 29' 4" E, for 5 minutes 36.9 seconds. It will be part of Saros 128, which began on August 29, 984 and will end on November 1, 2282. It will also be the first of two solar eclipses in 2012.

The next solar eclipse after that will be a total eclipse, occurring on November 14-13, 2012 (the track crosses the International Date Line), visible on land in Australia (Northern Territory and Queensland). This eclipse will be part of Saros 133, which began on July 13, 1219 and will end on September 5, 2499.

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

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

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

FANZINES

Argentus #11

Steven H Silver

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<http://www.efanzines.com>

<http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argentus.html>

Askance #25 December 2011

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Banana Wings #47 September 2011

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Beyond Bree October 2011, November 2011

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beyondbree@yahoo.com

<http://www.cep.unt.edu/bree.html>

Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20
foreign, \$10/year electronic.

Dark Matter #5, #6

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The Drink Tank #293, #294, #295, #296, #297,

#298, #300

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eI #58 October 2011

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Fadeaway #25 October-November 2011, #26

December 2011-January 2012
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The Fanatical Fanactivist #4, #5

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<http://www.efanzines.com>

File 770:160

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Mikeglyer@cs.com
<http://file770.com/>

Fish Out of Water #452, #453, #454, #455,

#456, #457
 Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Avenue,
 Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA

The Fortnightly Fix #24

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

It Goes on the Shelf #33 November 2011

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 30047-4720
nedbrooks@sprynet.com
<http://home.sprynet.com/~nedbrooks/home.htm>

Joel's Debris #12

Joel A. Zakem,

The Knarley Knews #140

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MT Void V. 30 #15 October 7, 2011 — V. 30

#22 November 25, 2011
 Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge
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eleeper@optonline.net
mleeper@optonline.net
<http://lepers.us/mtvoid>

The New Port News #260

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My Back Pages #6

Rich Lynch, P.O. Box 3120, Gaithersburg,

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<http://www.efanzines.com>

One Swell Foop #5

Garth Spencer

Opuntia #71.1A October 2011, #71.1B

November 2011
 Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta
 T2P 2E7 CANADA

The Reluctant Famulus #84

November/December 2011
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 Owenton, KY 40359- USA
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Southern Fandom Confederation Update V. 1

#26
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Visions of Paradise #168, #169, #170

Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court,
 Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 USA
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We regret to report the death of Robert M.
 "Bob" Sabella on **December 3, 2011.**

WORLDCON BIDS

2014

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

NASFiC:

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

2015

Spokane
<http://spokanein2015.org/>

Orlando
<http://orlandoin2015.org/>

2016

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

2017

Japan
<http://nippon2017.org/>

New York

2018

New Orleans
neworleansin2018@gmail.com

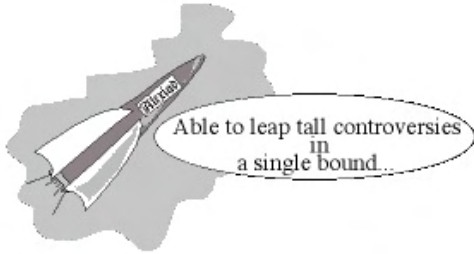
2019

2020

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

There is some concern over the Orlando bid, since the chairman announced the bid *before* he went to his first WorldCon ever. And other things. However, the Spokane bid has also been classified as "weak". Oh boy.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Henry L. Welch** October 8, 2011
 15290 Upper Ellen Road, Los Gatos, CA
 95033-7814 USA
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<http://tkk.welchcastle.com/>

Many thanks for these recent issues of *Alexiad*, which I have been horribly remiss in leaving in the to be LOCed pile for several months in some cases.

Herewith are some brief comments:
 No. 2

Rodford Edminston: Coleman has had versions of its two-burner gas stoves that burn both white gas (Coleman fuel) and unleaded gas. I have had one for over 20 years. They don't burn the unleaded quite as nicely as the white gas, but the cost savings is significant over the lifetime of the stove.

No. 3

Like many, I was deadily saddened to hear of the death of Terry Jeeves. He was generous with his art, his fanzine, and he allowed me to reprint his "Carry on Jeeves" series. He will be greatly missed.

No. 4

Our local Borders closed months ago (right after their announcement). We now have to go to the mall for a large book store.

Sounds like you had a good trip through Illinois.

Rodford Edminston complains about the incorrect use of technical terms. As for the flow of electrons, when electricity was first studied they had a 50-50 chance of getting right. They guessed that it was the positive charges that moved, hence the current is always drawn or described in the wrong direction. It actually doesn't matter which way you draw it, the math will correct any sign/direction errors. If this really bothers him, he should stay away from patents. Inventors can act as their own lexicographer and the attorneys who draft their patent applications often don't fully understand what they are writing about. Thus, patents often have words and phrases in them that are often confusing. During patent infringement trials, there is a special phase where the sides argue about what the words and terms mean, the judge rules, and it is almost never write. In fact, these rulings are overturned on appeal over half the time because the appellate court reviews the rulings de novo, meaning they start all over.

This is then all placed in front of a jury that knows even less about the technology. Welcome to my work world . . .

How do you say in legalese, "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."?

—JTM

From: **William H. Patterson** Oct. 10, 2011

Thanks for *Alexiad* 59. Reading it made me realize how very far out of things working for eleven years (and counting) on a single, complicated project has rendered me. The first-pass edits for the second volume of the Heinlein biography are just about finalized, and I am just starting to — well, not quite come to grips with, not yet, but at least dimly to sense the possibility of having to deal at some indefinite time in the future with the prospect of being fully occupied with something other than this biography. Say 2015-ish, if the experience with the first volume is any indication.

I have done a little current reading, treading water, as it were, though the recent medical crisis interdicts future book purchases, I'm afraid. Am currently about halfway through *Reamde* and I may have some comments about it 'round about the time the next *Alexiad* is ready. Or not. For reasons that escape me completely, something about the texture of this book, unlike any other Stephenson book I've read so far (and I think I've read all but one [and, yes, I do include *The Big U* and *Zodiac* and the En ten archen ho *Command Line* book]), keeps reminding me of early Iain Banks (of *The Wasp Factory* and *Canal Zone* vintage), which is a darned peculiar thing to be put in mind of.

Before that, two others by writers whose output I also follow as fully as possible: *Rule 34* (Stross), which I thought perfectly fine but didn't really need to be written (I'd rather have seen the energy put into another *Laundry* book, as the cleverness quotient of that series seems ongoingly altogether higher), and *Fuzzy Nation* which ought not to have been written at all, and Scalzi should have known better as soon as he got the outline finished. Look, John Scalzi is a triff writer, but dumbing down *Little Fuzzy* is not merely a waste of his talents, it's a perversion thereof, and Scalzi Has Known Sin.

But it sold. If John F. Carr, Wolfgang Diehr, and T. L. Mancour can do it, John Scalzi can do it.

— JTM

The book also made me sad to realize *Little Fuzzy* was, if not exactly "typical," still representative in a way of the state of science fiction in 1962 and *Fuzzy Nation* is, again, not exactly typical, but still quite representative in a way of the state of science fiction in 2011.

Also read *Clockwork Rocket* (Egan), which was — strange in a way I find difficult to characterize. Egan has begun to become an orthogonal quid (since the characterization of "tertium quid" is far too linear to be applied

here).

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Oct. 10, 2011
 2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria,
 VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

My Loc for *Alexiad* August 2011 is late, as is often the case with my Locs. Too many fanzines and not enough time. I will see about sending you a full-scale article to compensate for the delay. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy my letter.

One comment I will discourse on comes from Lisa. She laments the decline of the paper book and the rise of the e-book. I agree we will someday live in a world without paper books. On the other hand, it might not sound the death knell of the small merchant, but ring in a rebirth. I know a number of small merchants sell their books through Amazon. I don't know about Barnes and Noble.

I have changed my mind about the ebook issue after actually experiencing an e-reader.

— LTM

As for the lack of browsing, which is the biggest complaint. No way can you feel the book on the web, like in a bookstore, unless we develop feelie-vision. However, maybe books could be displayed on the web under a subject classification with mucho info, and you could browse that way. That's a thought.

This finishes about books; how about an actual dinosaur, the newspaper serial? Yes, as late as the 1950s, I remember seeing a science fictional tale in the *New York Post*. Newspaper serials were even bigger earlier in the century.

The Hopkinsville paper, the Kentucky New Era, used to run a serial Christmas story at that time of year well into the sixties. They also had Flash Gordon.

Also, there is a connection between newspaper serials and Robert Hutchings Goddard, the rocket man, whom you discuss, and Thomas Alva Edison, Goddard read the newspaper serial "Edison's Conquest of Mars," published in 1898 a month or two after *War of the Worlds* was published in *Cosmopolitan*. If I remember correctly, Goddard's diary says he saved it, and took it out again in the 1920s to read it.

The problem with "Edison's Conquest of Mars" is the same as the problem with John Scalzi's *Fuzzy Nation*. The time, as you say, is past for more *Fuzzy* novels, just as it is for "Edison's Conquest." To do justice to the novels, you have to wrestle with the controversies of the '50s. Which couldn't be less relevant today.

On the other hand, those novels elude updating. All the updates of Wells' *Time Machine* and *War Of The Worlds* crash on that shoal. Unless movie makers are willing to deal with class warfare and ideas about racial

superiority: flashpoint issues during the 1890s but taboo now: they descend into fluff. And no one is interested in that either?

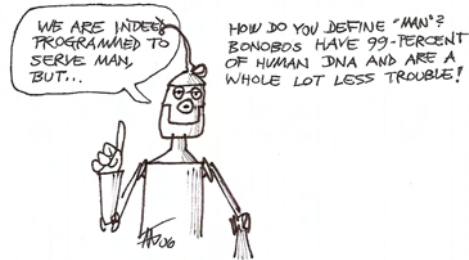
Another idea that is past is the Age of Matriarchy, supposedly destroyed by the Aryans, the inaugurators of our language group. Yes, an egalitarian, peaceful, nurturant age. Socialist? I don't know about that. I know two Marxist ladies in the '70s stuck a knife into that thesis, and turned it. They pointed out that no known society has ever practiced sexual equality although some have come within throwing distance. Men always receive at least a few more prerogatives.

However, the Marxist ladies labored in vain. It is difficult to kill a tradition, real or, like the Age of Matriarchy, imagined. I think Mike Brown found that out in *How I Killed Pluto*. Even though Pluto as a planet only dates from the '30s, it has become a tradition. As for Mike's facts showing it isn't a planet, who cares about stinkin' facts?

Tradition has its advantages, though. It can encourage fan, for instance, to be participants rather than consumers. To read, write, organize and make. Nevertheless, I doubt that that is the current problem with fandom. I have seen a lot of young participants in fandom. In fact, there may be more young fans than old fans who read, write, organize and make.

No, the problem with fandom does not entail a lack of young fans. Instead, it is caused by SF and Fantasy having gone mainstream. *Harry Potter*, the Green Hornet and *Avatar* play to audiences of millions.

That SF has gone mainstream means the young fans have been swamped by a mass of passive consumers who just sit there and expect to be entertained.



On matters of fandom, we have problems with the future; on other matters, we have problems with the past. Darrell Schweitzer mentioned two examples of that. In one, he speculates that New Jersey may yet become a tidal swamp. That inspired me to scream inside to relate its past. Wasn't it originally a tidal swamp? In fact, I hear the settlement of the Central Jersey Coast had to await effective anti-mosquito measures.

In addition, Darrell mentions how his father had a problem with the past, this time the far past. He really wanted to believe the comic strip *Prince Valiant*, set in King Arthur's time, was historically accurate. Darrell is so right. Anachronisms there have abounded like flies.

In addition to the anachronisms Darrell

mentions, I have two more. Didn't Prince Valiant sail to America five centuries before the Vikings? Also, Prince Valiant was supposed to rule Thule, usually presumed to be Iceland. As far as I can tell, Iceland was first settled two centuries after, in the 8th Century, and by monks. No knight errants there.

Messing with the past and the future is a vice; I doubt a desire for vengeance is. It's natural. When Bob Kennedy wished to desecrate bin Laden's body, it was only natural. Of course, we have to keep our desire for vengeance in check – if only to keep civilized.

Unlike the desire for revenge, the desire for relics isn't natural: the Ancient Jews and Ancient Romans believed that the dead were unclean and we should avoid all contact with them.

As well, some have posted another line of objections. For instance, later on, John Calvin objected not out of fear of the dead but that all the contradictory relics couldn't be real. This, Sue Burke infers. He declared if all the drops of milk attributed to the Virgin Mary and displayed in all churches were real she would have to be a cow.

In addition to people being dubious about relics, they are dubious about atomic energy. George Price laments that the Fukushima incident encouraged skepticism about atomic energy because we can turn to no alternative source. All the alternatives to atomic power jostling for position are 'unreasonable.'

Furthermore, I have heard atomic power need not be as dangerous as it is. For one thing, I hear some engineers have thought up the pebble bed reactor. When the atomic reactor heats up sufficiently, the metal on the pebble melts and stops the reaction. An army risking their lives to shut off a reactor, as in Japan, would not have been necessary.

Some may have questions about the pebble bed reactor I suggest, and that is OK because the world is stuffed to the gills with questions. For instance, Joe, do name some zombie romances. Also, Grant, in what issue did you describe measuring the Earth's temperature via its rotation?

Married with Zombie, Jesse Petersen; Bound: A Paranormal Romance, Shannon Mayer; Love with a Chance of Zombies, Delphine Dryden; I Fell in Love with a Zombie, Sean Kennedy; Graveyard Games, Shen Leigh; VAMPIRES, Zombies, and Ghosts, Oh My! . . . and that is just from the first page that pops up when you type "Zombie Romance Books" into Amazon's search function. I wonder when Chicks Dig Brains: A Celebration of Zombie Romances by the Women Who Love Them will come out.

Another question yet comes from Al du Pisani. It is one I have often heard from old timers. Is this the future we are supposed to be

living in? The science fiction of their youth talked about space ships and the colonization of the planets, and what do we have? Computers and cellphones. How boring!!

However, it is a trick comparison. The spaceships and the colonization of planets were literary; computers and cellphones are a reality. Reality is always duller. In fact, I remember cellphones being predicted in the '60s, and they were more exciting then because I read about it.

Cellphones were predicted in Space Cadet (1948; NHOL G.070), as was discussed in that valuable literary guide Heinlein's Children, available from Advent:Publishers and NESFA (Advt.).

November 23, 2011

This is my LOC for *Alexiad* Oct 2011. Not yet an e-zine, although I am contributing by e-mailing my LOC. It's fine with me. Of course, I'm not picky and it'd be fine if this was an e-zine and not a paper zine. However, I draw the line at Twitterzines.

What line should I draw for Baroness Orczy's *Scarlet Pimpernel* or *I Will Repay*. Attacks on the French Revolution, at one time, meant the attacker felt at home in bed with the Ancient Regime. It was an umbrella for all manner of reactionaries, monarchists, anti-Semites, despots. You were keeping bad company.

Of course, that be damned. The Terror of the French Revolution was bad and that is all there is to it. It was mindless, it avenged petty insults, and it was vicious. In the end, there was the guillotine.

In addition to attacking the French Revolution at its nadir, I would join with you in attacking Amazon for publishing without a transom. The problem is, as you point out, the only transom for a lot of publishers is Will It Sell. Right now, that means zombies, zombies and more zombies. Around 1980, the publishers' transom was sometimes the *Preppy Cat Cook Book*.

So little do editors care about literary matters that such matters have been thrown into the abyss. I remember a *Wall Street Journal* article where, with even many prestigious book men, you had to pay if you wanted your manuscript edited.

Publishers are not the only ones who are traveling down a dark path. We in general are. For one, with the spectre of climate change hanging over us. I agree with Darrell Schweitzer that we consume scads of carbon dioxide and that is making the Earth warmer. Whether it heats in a straightline or a loop-de-loop is irrelevant.

I disagree with him, however, that we can legislate away greenhouse gases. We're energy hogs. On that one point, at least, Taras Wolansky is right. We aren't going to return to the grass shacks. Never happen. It is vastly more practical to figure out how best to adjust to the warming trend.

However, in the controversy over global warming, no compromise is possible. You are either on the side of God or the Devil. That's typical. While both God and Satan reside within us, people like to choose scapegoats from outer Satans, and send them off into the wilderness.

Milt Stevens shows his officer nicknamed Captain Dingbat doing this when he claims there are Satanic cults in the hills of his precinct to justify more arms and ammo. Of course. Blatant Satanists rather than embodying evil are pathetic. More the symbol of the obnoxious than evil. One, not atypical acolyte went so far off the wall he once scribbled the graffiti "Hail Satin."

He could have been like the
dyslexic devil worshiper who sold
his soul to Santa.

—JTM

These days people see even greater threats than blatant Satanists. What is worse, they can't send these representatives of Satan into the wilderness because they are our next door neighbor. By the same token, they can't compromise with them either. They have to bludgeon them into submission. Which, for the most part, doesn't eliminate evil either.

In politics, usually compromise is de rigueur.

This is not to say I disagree with Taras Wolansky that Ronald Reagan won many victories in the Democratic Congress in the '80s. However, that was only after casting overboard his original program for dismantling the welfare state, and inaugurating a policy of sagacious compromise. What politicians won't do and constituencies won't allow these days. Reagan wouldn't have trucked at a tax increase if it meant massive budget cuts.

Another difficult maneuver these days is getting banks to deal with mortgagees on their mortgages, like Jim Stumm suggests. It could happen during the Depression but not now. The problem is that the mortgages are securitized. The banks do not own them, but a bunch of scattered investors, whom it is hard to get in touch with. In the banks' mind, it is better to just foreclose.

With no compromise and homes being foreclosed, we need a miracle such as Whoopee Goldberg claimed. Sheryl Birkhead and you Joe have pointed out that Whoopee's original name was Caryn Elaine Johnson. She claimed that her new name appeared to her in a miracle. A burning bush told her to change her name to Whoopee.

It is a name that has held her in good stead. Whoopee! is not only a good moniker for an entertainer, however, but a good exclamation. It only doesn't scan when you're saying good-bye. Thus, I guess Adios Amoeba! is going to have to do this time around.

From: **Cuyler "Ned" Brooks** Oct. 15, 2011
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Thanks for the zine. Interesting about finding that an ancient bully had passed on! I tried that with the chief bully at the prep school I went to (much later I learned that he had a relative on the board), but results were inconclusive. The state was right, and the birth-year is the same as mine and he died in 1985. But the middle initial was omitted. His henchman in evil however definitely seems to have shuffled off in 2005.

The guy was the son of the
secretary for someone important
in the school system. Keeping a
good secretary takes concessions.

— JTM

From: **Evelyn Leeper** October 18, 2011
leeper@optonline.net

I understand what you mean when you say, "[*The Valley of Gwangi*] was Ray Harryhausen's last prehistoric-themed film," but given that it takes place in the early 20th century, it seems odd to count it as "prehistoric-themed", but not to count *Clash of the Titans*.

Jim Stumm talks about the confusion of saying "the 12th century" rather than the "1100s". When we were in Italy, I noticed that the Italians name their centuries in the latter way. I was originally confused because when I saw (for example) "Ottocento", my first thought was "18th century", but "Ottocento" is "the 1800s", not "the 18th century".

I was quite surprised to read pretty much everywhere that Chris Garcia's reaction to winning the Hugo was genuine. It was so over-the-top that I was sure it was planned, much as Roberto Begnini's or Clifford Stoll's antics. (I know Stoll's are part of his schtick because when the occasion calls for something less frenetic, he is less frenetic.)

Chris was effusively celebrating
the rescue of the Best Fanzine
Hugo from the pod people.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** October 19, 2011
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In *Alexiad* V10 #5, Lisa talks about electronic books. She has acquired some sort of an electronic thingie with which she has stored 1852 books. That's a lot of books. It obviously is quite compact and must be very portable. However, I would have a problem with such a device. I like having my house filled with printed clutter. At the rate of 2000 books per ebook, I'd need to whole bleeping Library of Congress to feel comfortable.

I admit to always buying more books than I would ever get around to reading. It's the fannish way. With this new ebook technology, collectorism would be increased by an order of magnitude. Somehow, the whole thing sounds just too easy. There's got to be some sport to

collectorism. You've got to have something to brag about to fellow collectors.

The books are stored on my Amazon account. The actual electronic thingie I have only holds a thousand books. I have some 850 books on the physical electronic reader.

Too easy? Perhaps so. But I think that is outweighed by the way the new technology makes it possible to for some of SF's greatest writers to find new fans. I have now a small library of the world's greatest books. Many of these were free. I am currently 79% through *Anna Karenina*. This library fits in my purse. I'm not into collectorism. For me it is the actual words in the book that are important. What is important, collectorism or a machine that puts long out of print books from great authors into the hands of readers?

— LTM

Like Joseph, I frequently disagree with the results of the Hugo votes in fiction. As far as 2001 was concerned, I wasn't terribly displeased with the Harry Potter novel winning, although I think I preferred *Storm of Swords*. Of the other three novels I don't remember *Calculating God* at all, I thought *Sky Road* was stupid, and I gave up on *Midnight Robber* after 20 pages. I've read a lot of science fiction over the years, and it is undoubtedly harder to impress me than it is to impress a younger reader. On the other hand, some Hugo nominees have flaws I would have noticed when I was 16. I guess if the Hugo nominees weren't as they are, we would have to complain about the weather.

Back in the days when computer memory was incredibly expensive, there was very little of it in existence, so it didn't really make much difference. I once took apart a computer that had a zero megabyte hard drive, the original IBM PC. With that computer, the program was on one 750 KB floppy and your work was on another 750 KB floppy. It certainly didn't take much to impress folks back in themthar days.

I'm surprised Frederik Pohl would remember just one fan who didn't want to become a pro. I think the fans who had a strong desire to become pros were always in the minority. Egoboo may be nice, (if you get any as an aspiring pro) but wretched poverty never did look like all that much fun.

I hadn't heard of either a New York or a New Orleans worldcon bid. New York hasn't had a likely worldcon bid in over forty years.

Well, as for New York there
was always the problem with
Robert Sacks.

— JTM

From: **Pat & Roger Sims** October 19, 2011

Just finished reading the latest issue and

rather than add it to the stack of the others that I was going to reply to, decided this is it. First thanks for continuing to send it to us, altho haven't responded in ages! We read them faithfully and always say we must drop a note to Lisa and Joe, but....you know how that goes.

Before I forget, an early Happy Birthday to Lisa!

We wanted to let you know that we appreciated your noting that we were missed at the last ConCave (dealing with some medical issues, now resolved) and it looks like it's been dropped off our list of Cons we'll be attending on a regular basis. It's a bad time of the year for us Floridians, requires us to fly and ends up being a very expensive weekend. These things happen when you get older!

We both read your Zine cover to cover, always enjoy your travel reports and the book reviews. We even know most of letter writers still. And, hearing about the extended family is always fun. Our next Con will be our local one OASIS here in Orlando. But, hopefully we'll see you in Chicago next August.

I think I can say that you will be missed by everyone. We certainly will miss you. Chicago was a wonderful place and thanks to Dana & Mike we saw much more of it than we could ever hope for. See you there.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** October 19, 2011
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You sure make the e-readers sound good, Lisa. I'm still thinking about them. Btw, I remember *Island Stallion*. That was the SF story, wasn't it? And congrats on your Kobo bargain!

Island Stallion Races was the SF story. Aliens visit Flame's island and take Steve and Flame off to the races.

— LTM

I enjoyed the news in Random Jottings, Joe, especially the conspiracy theories mention. These people need to get a life! Mike Resnick's "Neutral Ground" sounds interesting. Good selection of reviews. You need to collect these somewhere so people can look them up.

They're on efanzines.com for your reading pleasure.

I always enjoy your trip reports. I'm glad you made it to the USS *Bush* reunion. Thanks for the Worldcon and awards news.

LOCs: John Purcell: I've come across the Parasol Protectorate books here and there, but haven't decided whether they're worth buying. I might have them on my Amazon wish list; I've put a few books there recently. Thanks to

Darrell Schweitzer for background on climate change (Here in Florida, we've seen zone changes.) and Gore Vidal's theories. (I've seen many documentaries on WWII, and I don't see how anyone could be accused of tricking the Japanese into attacking Pearl Harbor. The hard part was getting them to stop. Also, weren't they attacking other places in the US too?) I don't even want to think of the consequences of the US remaining neutral. *Pacific Empire*, an alternate history, had an interesting take on Japan taking Pearl Harbor — and presumably Hawaii — also Australia — over, as I recall, while we kept the rest of our country. I'd have to reread it to get everything straight, but Australia didn't take defeat lying down. . .

Thanks for *The Valley of Gwangi* URL, Joe — and the Harryhausen note. Lots more interesting tidbits, of course, including the S&L (Jim Stumm's LOC) letting people pay off their loan in hard times. I've been wondering why banks didn't do that?! The Spanish Bollywood report was fun. Oh, too much more to comment on, but re: the drunk urinating on the third rail reminds me of a friend telling me about his brother urinating on an electric fence. The results weren't fatal, just electrifying. Thanks again for a great issue.

Darwin Award, anyone?

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** October 19, 2011
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Thank you for *Alexiad* #10.5, the October issue. Lee enjoys the autumn, particularly the changing colors of the leaves, and we had been thinking about driving up to New England to enjoy the scenery. But first we went to visit our old friend, Mary Chamberlayne, about an hour's drive into the Virginia countryside. Sigh. It had been an uncommonly wet September, and while there were plenty of changing leaves on offer, they were muted, browns, bronzes, some yellows, with a touch of orange here and there, but no red to speak of. Not what you would call a vintage year for autumnal display, and since the weather patterns had been even worse up north, we decided maybe we would catch the changing of the leaves next year.

The other day I picked up Terry Pratchett's *Snuff* which is a Sam Vimes adventure, set in the countryside, during the unwanted vacation which his wife and Lord Vetinari insisted he

take. Lots of good stuff, including smuggling, troll-drug running, murder, genocide, the return of the Summoning Dark and Wee Mad Arthur, along with a bit of riverboat piloting strongly evocative of Mark Twain. Paced a bit leisurely at the start but recommended as Pratchett at the top of his game.

It is noted that Dainis Bisenieks is thinking about reading the book *Supervolcano*, subtitled *The Catastrophic Event That Changed the Course of Human History*, which pays particular attention to Toba, an eruption 74,000 years ago which was the biggest eruption in the last two million years. How big was the Toba eruption? Really, really big, ejecting 2,800 cubic kilometers dense rock equivalent, in contrast to Mount Tambora, which erupted in 1815, ejecting a measly 50 cubic kilometers. Tambora memorably produced The Year Without Summer, and crop failures all over the world. Toba produced six years of volcanic winter, and ushered in a thousand years of glacial maximum, hard times that reduced the human race to less than 3,000 individuals, the ancestors of we seven billion modern humans who turn out to be more closely related than we really care to imagine.

George Price mentions the Chicago man who was electrocuted urinating on the third rail. This was something recently investigated on *Mythbusters*, who were unable to make it happen, and therefore concluded that that particular myth was busted. He also wonders about changes in the Egyptians from antiquity to modern times, contrasting Arab Muslims with Egyptian Copts. Historically, most Egyptians converted to Islam, so the Arab influence was cultural rather than ethnic. On the Discovery Channel they showed the excavation of a tomb of a middle-ranking functionary of the Old Kingdom, in which a wooden statue was uncovered which was the spitting image of the local village headman. This anecdote suggests that the Egyptian genotype has been pretty stable.

Have you seen the pictures of the forensic reconstruction of Cheddar Man and of his second-nearest living relative, Adrian Targett of Cheddar, Somerset? It's not just Egypt that has genetic stability.

George also agrees with Taras Wolansky that we are never going to run out of fossil fuels, because "when reserves run low, that is the signal to step up exploration and find more." Well, no, Earth's reserves of fossil fuel may be larger than we imagine but they are still finite, and eventually we *will* run out. Taras also ruminates on AGW, anthropogenic global warming, for a bit, though he concedes that he doesn't "particularly pursue this one issue." The timescale for global warming is different from the timescale for humans, and even though we humans may be injecting however much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to produce whatever effect gets produced, it will happen

slowly enough so that the AGW skeptics will have time enough to change their minds gracefully. Taras allows that the recent opening of the Northwest Passage for a couple of months a year might prove one of the benefits of such global warming as appears to exist. Even better if the Northwest Passage should be open for six months or nine months or even year around, right? That would enable us to extract oil from under the Arctic Ocean, finding new oil reserves to replace the depleted old ones as George Price suggests.

In geological terms, this human combustion of fossil fuels will happen almost instantaneously, but in human terms it will take a leisurely two or three centuries to run its course. How far along this uncharted path have we gone? The mid-Pliocene warming period 3.3 - 3.0 million years ago was about 3 degrees Celsius warmer than the present, the sea level averaged 25 meters higher, and the carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere is estimated to have been 400 parts per million (ppm.) We will blow past that 400 ppm mark for carbon dioxide in three years, and may reach 500 ppm by the end of the century. When will the climate and sea level achieve their mid-Pliocene equilibrium? We don't know, but life is full of surprises so it will probably be sooner than our computer models predict. How long will it take all that carbon dioxide to wash out of the atmosphere? Maybe 100,000 years, a moment in geological time but off the scale for humans. Taras says that when dissident climatologists have results that undermine the AGW/disaster scenario they feel intimidated by the reported politicization of the vast majority (97 to 98 percent) of their fellow climatologists. The naive might imagine that the scientific facts had something to do with the case, rather than understanding that the community of climate scientists had converted *en masse* to anti-capitalistic liberalism.

Sue Burke's account of a Bollywood production being filmed in the Andalusian hinterlands was highly entertaining. It also suggests that Bollywood has found that making better films results in better profits, something that Steve Jobs demonstrated with Pixar.

From: **R-Lauraine Tutihasi** Oct. 21, 2011
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I've hedged my bets all around between the Kindle and Nook. I have the apps on my iPhone.

To Rodford Edmiston, I just want to say that I was taught in junior high that electrons move electricity. While that's technically not correct, it certainly keeps me from being confused about electricity.

To answer Sheryl Birkhead's question about organic milk, while irradiation might make sense, that is currently not being done. The pasteurization process for organic milk is done at a higher temperature than other milk. This is because organic milk must often be transported

longer distances than regular milk.

Of course *China Mountain Zhang* is fiction and somewhat outdated in its predictions. However, the Chinese seem to have a wait and conquer the world strategy. They are very patient. None of this quarterly results hangup for the Chinese. I'm sure they are rubbing their hands with glee as they see so much of the rest of the world being mired in financial crises. They'll just wait until the rest of us are hoisted with our own p tards and step in and take over.

I have to wonder, having read about Chinese "ghost cities" (entire towns without an inhabitant, built as a speculation by property developers). Just like Texas before the big bust.

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** October 22, 2011
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So I got the latest *Alexiad* in the mail last week; now it has been read, digested, and ready to be locced. This time I'm actually ahead of my usual loccing schedule. Heck of a deal, eh?

A couple things right off the bat got me to thinking. Lisa mused about her Kobo and the classics available thereon. I don't know yet if one of these e-readers is in my immediate future; I do believe that eventually it will be. In fact, discussions with my colleagues always lead to the conclusion that textbooks will eventually all go electronic, which will avert many a student hernia and other posture disorders in the future. I don't mind the change, it's just that I can't afford to purchase one of these e-readers at the moment. As always, as the technology improves and these critters evolve, prices will eventually drop into the mass affordability range, so I am content to wait.

Seeing a row of giant snails crawling along the street and then realizing it's kids taking all their textbooks to school in backpacks . . . is it a realization of JFK's wish for more fitness and vigah? With what I paid for college textbooks I would have appreciated such an economy. However, it does handicap the granting of large sums to ball players "to buy textbooks".

Kindle, Nook, Kobo and Sony all have free apps for home computers. Also, the price of the Kindle has just dropped to \$79 for the basic model.

— LTM

Then Joe wondered on the bottom right of page one about his changing reading tastes and deciding that the Internet is A Good Thing. First, the reading taste comment. Of course, your choice of reading material matures over time, and you simply don't agree with the mass market, a condition that I believe most

intelligent, long-time science fiction readers develop. Nothing wrong with that. I have only read the first Harry Potter novel and liked it, but as you and I know, Hugo voting doesn't necessarily mean that such-and-such novel is the definitive "best" of the year. If anything, it's the "most popular" or "most widely read/known" book of the year. Case in point, the latest batch of Hugo novels. I have read many folks' impression of Connie Willis' *Blackout/All Clear*, and the consensus is that it was good, but not her best work. Many commented that it did not win the Hugo because of its merits, but because Willis is so well known, which is sadly how many people vote on their ballots. Now, I like her writing, and have yet to read *Blackout/All Clear*; chances are I'll get to that at some point next month (I hope). Getting back to your "taste" comment, though, my preferences are definitely changing. In fact, most of my recent reading has been Steampunk or contemporary literature, and I've been enjoying what I read. Sometimes I dip back into the classics and favorite writers for a change of pace, but I have definitely developed a penchant for more experimental literature this year. I like it, and that's all that really matters. So enjoy what you read, Joe, and don't sweat the masses. Unless, of course, they're gathering on your front porch; then it's time to hightail your keester out of there.

As for the Internet and finding names from your past, that is a fun game to play. So you found out that one of the kids who bullied you in school died in 1993? Well, taken from another angle, odds are that person may have left behind a family, which is sad. Your comment "Who says the Internet is all bad?" implies that you're glad he's gone. I trust you are being tongue-in-cheek there; I really can't imagine you holding a grudge for who knows how many years against someone who probably forgot all about those school days. I don't worry about people in my past; 'taint worth the trouble. Even so, it is interesting to note that one can search out names and places from years gone by and see who and what's still there. It has been a long time since I've done that; the last time I did I learned that my high school has changed dramatically in both size and internal structure. The building is still there, but it's been remodeled quite a bit, and the student population is significantly smaller: when I graduated it held only grades 10-12 and had 2400 students. Now it's grades 9-12 with little over half that size (1600 students). The population shift in St. Louis Park, MN accounts for this change, and that's something else the Internet is good for — research.

Oh, my. I think I prattled on there for too long. Let's just say that Internet surfing can be fun and enlightening.

Too bad about Borders Bookstores going out of business. College Station, Texas may have a Borders Bookstore at some point in the past, but if it did, that must have been before I moved here in 2001. To the Internet!

I am going to have to get a copy of "Lee at the Alamo" by Harry Turtledove. Sounds interesting. So this is available on Kindle?

Hmm. Or can I download it from Tor.com to my home computer? Have to admit, the price tag of the story is good — 99 cents.

There's a block of Turtledove short stories on Tor.com which are better received than his long series. As Laurraine said, you can download the Kindle computer app (or the Kindle smartphone app) from Amazon.com and read Kindle works without having a Kindle.

The reunion report reminded me that my dad's World War II shipmates on the USS *Kitkun Bay* have an annual reunion, too. The 2011 one was held in Virginia Beach in September, and Valerie and I are on their mailing list. Not many of dad's shipmates are still alive, sad to say. Most of those remaining are in their 80s, with a couple now in their 90s. For the most part the reunion is for families of the servicemen, and I'd like to go to one so I can talk to a couple of dad's shipmates before they're gone. We have written to them and received some feedback. Maybe that could be the basis of a brief article. I will have to think about that idea.

Kitkun Bay (CVE-71) got a Presidential Unit Citation for her service in Taffy 3 in the Battle off Samar. If I were you I would get to the next reunion by any means possible. If it's in Virginia Beach again, you can look up my relatives there, too, or at least their place.

<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/carriers/cve71.txt>

— JTM

The final thing I'd like to comment on is Johnny Carruthers' article about the WSFS business meeting and their rules. Fascinating reading, and I'd like to thank Johnny for this. It gave me an appreciation of the inner workings of a WorldCon and how changes can be proposed and acted upon. The business meeting at Renovation sounds like it was quite busy and involved many key policy proposals. Very interesting reading. It will likewise be interesting to see if Cheryl Morgan responds to this article. I would like to get her perspective on this particular topic, that is if she's willing to discuss it. At this stage, it is probably best dropped since a conclusion was reached. Other things are in the works, it appears, to be addressed at Chicon 7, which I won't be attending. That being said, I really should go to the worldcon website and get a supporting membership. If I can't be there, at least I could have voting privileges this way. One of the perks, don'tcha know.

A well-packed issue, Joe and Lisa, full of comment hooks and the usual fine letter-column. Lots of good conversations going on in the locs, some of which I can follow, others that are a bit beyond my ken. Oh, well.

Still, a solid issue and I thank you.

At least it provoked me to write to you earlier this time around. Good job!

From: **Brad W. Foster** October 25, 2011
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Best Fan Artist Hugo Winner

New *Alexiad* in this week, and continuing to amaze me at the sheer volume of books, let around the variety of subjects, that you seem to devour! I note in her opening Editorial that Lisa now has 1,852 books to read on her electro-book. My guess would be that will last about . . .oh, what, a year and a half?

Thanks for the congrats on the Hugo win. Though, going by the final voting numbers, I would say I didn't so much win it, as mine was the name used to keep it from going to someone else — and just barely. Next year will be interesting . . .Speaking of fannish art (the proper kind — that is sent to fanzines, don'tcha know!), I've got two pieces attached here for you, unless I forget to do so before hitting "Send". I know — why don't I just do that attaching stuff right now?

....

There, 'tis done. (Or is that "tis" done, with the apostrophe? sigh)

Yeah, this is one of the odder emails I've sent out this week.

Thank you for the two pieces.

— JTM

From: **Rodney Leighton** 2011
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CANADA

Everyone I know, almost, is embracing new technology. Sister came to visit awhile ago and brought with her one of those kindle things; instead of reading one of the novels I thought she would or the numerous magazines I thought might interest her, she usually read her kindle. I could never understand how she could read a book while peeling mushrooms, washing dishes or virtually everything else and that is a neat bitty gadget, must be a lot lighter than a novel.

Joe Major being perhaps the most voracious reader I have ever known has really embraced technology. His wife even works in a library. Yet they apparently have a bunch of these thing In the latest *Alexiad* Joe has taken to reviewing books he read on the kindle thing.

In the notes, he asks: "Who says the Internet is all bad?". Not me. Being barely able to keep my head above water, with things breaking, buildings falling down and the roof leaking, there is no way I could get a computer and internet if I wanted to. My friend Lyn, who is one of the few people I know who still writes long letters frequently now has a website. If I

had the necessary things I could go to www.lynnmconchie.com and read about what she has been up to and a whole range of things; tales of the cat and book reviews and various stuff.

Me, I much prefer to await the letters and read them that way and read any of her books she chooses to send me. Sister may use her computer and internet connections to buy me a copy of the Bret Hart/ Shawn Michaels DVD which WWE is going to release shortly and which I read about in the most recent issue of the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter*. Or perhaps the book by Jerry Jarrett.

And my friend Chuck uses his computer and internet and puts tv shows on dvd discs and ships them to me. Currently I am watching a show called *New Tricks*; a BBC production about a hot female cop and 3 retired male cops who solve open cases, unsolved crimes. It was not that good at the start but is getting better all the time, very good plots and storylines and acting.

So, the powers that be decreed that no one in Canada could watch tv unless we paid for it. The 2 stations I had vanished. Well. Sister thought that since I have been watching hockey games for decades I should do something to see that I could do so and did some research. Found out that for a bit under 50 bucks a month I could watch all the hockey I could stand, including every game my fave Montreal Canadiens play. I could also watch what passes for pro wrestling. I did a bit of checking and found that for a bit under \$200 I could get tv: one station, CBC from Charlottetown. That would give me the same hockey I have had.

Well, being that at that time I was unemployed, with no idea when work might start and poge almost about at an end, I decided to not do anything tv wise for awhile. As it happened, by buying an occasional newspaper and listening to the radio I find that Les Habs are playing like shit; losing every game and watching them would be frustrating and anger producing.

I skip various portions of WON but I read all the reports on WWE and TNA. Curiously, this has the effect of making me not want to watch their shows. I don't suppose that is the result Dave would wish for and if someone were to put some of their shows on dvd and send them to me I would be delighted to receive them and would watch them. Same for hockey games.

2 television sets. No television reception. Weird, innit?

So, work started really well, got bad, disappeared and has now started again. Boss has said he has enough money to go to Christmas or major snowfall, whichever comes first. Wants me to work every day. I have to work every day it is possible. Try to generate some money.

One result of this is that I do not expect to have time or energy to use this machine. And sometimes I hate the poor old thing. And sometimes I can't stand the thought of typing. Interesting that I used to be bothered that people didn't write or didn't write for ages and now I am doing the same thing. If it is work and or

aggravating, it's no fun, right?

So, here's the plan: I am going to launch a new *Leighton Look*, possibly with a different title or even no title. When work ends for this year I will go to Truro and find a helpful person to manipulate the computer and file for a new poezy claim. While there I will stop at Staples and get some copies of whatever I have and will then mail those copies off to people. If you are reading this you will likely get a copy although I might restrict distribution to due to various factors. This is probably the only thing anyone will receive from me the rest of this year.

I am now toying with the idea of resurrecting the *Look* or something like that next year. It could be a way of continuing to receive some zines without trying to write a loc which is becoming harder and harder to do and perhaps keeping in touch, sort of, with friends who don't have time to write or don't want to or perhaps like me find writing to be a chore. Probably will restrict distribution to people I have heard from in some fashion; probably a quarterly thing.

Then again ... most of you have seen this sort of thing before.

I took sister back to P.E.I, this trip. First time I had been there for 8 years. Crossing the bridge my head was full of thoughts of my mother who loved the water, who used to gaze at the water when we crossed the thing, what she could see of it and the last time I was on that bridge was bringing sister and her belongings over to live with father after mother died. We had loaded the bed of the truck with stuff and placed suitcases in the club cab portion of my truck. Arrived at her place and unloaded the stuff from the back, with help from her landlady and her brother. They have a restaurant in the village which they are really proud of. Sister wanted to take me there for lunch. Well, I haven't eaten in a restaurant in something like 25 years; I have some physical problems and some psychological problems. Well, we will give it a try. So we arrived. And waited. And waited. Finally a menu; much later food. I had been craving homemade baked beans and everything in the restaurant is supposed to be homemade. So I ordered baked beans and fish cakes. Started on the beans and muttered something about coming out of a can; sister's friend said, no, everything is home made. Since she is a nice attractive woman who has been very good to sister I kept quiet. But either the beans were out of a Graves can or the cook uses their recipe; the bread roll was nowhere near as good as those my 80 something year old aunt made for me and the fish cakes were not that great. Chocolate torte was delicious. But what do I know about restaurants. So we went back to their place and walked around the property and I headed home and 20 km. into New Brunswick I stopped for a drink and a piss and noted out of the corner of my eye, guess what?? Suitcases! Turned around and headed back to the damned island. No thoughts of Mum this time, probably because I was so pissed off at myself. So after 8 years of avoiding the place and the bridge I crossed it twice in one day; 4 times, twice each way.

It's only a couple of hours away. I used to visit sister other places she lived; she's the only sibling I have any contact with. Not going to have time this fall and I am not going to P.E.I, in the winter, barring an emergency. But maybe next spring I will go over and give the restaurant another tried. Shouldn't condemn it on the basis of one visit, right?

I am off to take saws to get fixed; buy some stuff; some KFC and perhaps some Chinese food.

There is an increasingly prevalent — I almost want to say "arrogance" — attitude that anyone who is not connected to the Internet does not exist.

— JTM

From: **Alexander R. Slate** November 8, 2011
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George Price is both correct and incorrect regarding the definition of the term assault rifle. The AR-15s and others like it are not assault rifles, though they do fall under the definition of "assault weapons". Given the typical persons 'oh-so-careful' use of the English language it is certainly easy to see where a lot of the confusion can come in. So the use of the term, while incorrect, is not necessarily one resulting from a conspiracy against the second ammendment. George is incorrect that an assault rifle must be fully automatic is not correct. The term assault rifle was actually originally created to cover sub-machine guns and sub-machine pistols. In fact assault rifles must be capable of selective fire (having both sem-automatic and automatic fire modes). Weapons with only automatic fire mode are machine guns. What differentiates battle rifles from assault rifles is the amount of force applied (known as stopping power). Assault rifles fall between battle rifles such as the Kalishnikov and M-16 and pistols.

Regarding the term inflation. Again, George is correct concerning the original definition. However, the meaning of terms evolve and inflation in the 70's came to mean the cost increase of goods. Therefore the political catchphrase of the 70's WIN, for Whip Inflation Now — the invention of the Nixon Administration, no lily-livered liberals they. Inflation is something that happens, and sometimes the growth of the money supply precedes and causes it and sometimes it follows and is not the cause. Inflation is a symptom, not the disease.

Meanwhile thanks for the issue. Didn't take me an insanely long time to respond this go round.

From: **Lloyd Penney** November 9, 2011
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Thank you for the 59th *Alexiad*, and I look

forward to scanning down the pages to see what to comment on. First thing I see is choosing between the Kindle and the Kobo. Kobo's head office is in Toronto; the company was spun off from the Chapters/Indigo chain of book stores here. Yesterday, Kobo sold itself to a Japanese holding company for about \$350 million, if I recall. Head office will stay in Toronto. I shall not yet purchase an e-reader, my Palm Tungsten is fine for now, and I still have a row of paper books to get through.

I know my own tastes have changed; while I am content to keep reading SF, none of the SF shows on television appeal to me in the slightest. The last movie I saw was *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*. Now, part of that is the fact I still work evenings, so much of what happens on television and in the movie houses is still unavailable to me. Still, I am not feeling like I am missing anything. Reading tastes are in the 60s, 70s and 80s SF, books that can be cheaply purchased and enjoyed. Vampires and zombies? Meh . . .

Perhaps in the next *Twilight* book it will turn out that Bella's child was really fathered by Jacob, and then she gets infected and turned into a zombie. Zombie vampire werewolf; how can you lose with a combination like that?

I have seen 2 and 5Tb servers available here and there at the computer stores downtown. I use a 500Gb drive for backup. 640k should be enough for everyone, right, Uncle Bill? No more Borders in Louisville . . . we still have Chapters, Indigo, Coles, World's Biggest Bookstore, and an independent chain, BMV. What's suffering around here are the used book stores slowly but surely going away. I keep an eye on those that are left.

We were at the Reno Worldcon, but we did not go to the business meetings. I cared once; not so much now. As much as we enjoy Worldcons, we are kind of weaning ourselves away from them. We want to go to the London Worldcon (should they win) because we enjoy Worldcon and want to go to London. We plan to skip Chicon 7 and LoneStarCon 3 in hopes of saving enough to go to London, but even that looks iffy. After London? No more for us. (Yes, we've said that before. We mean it this time.)

Everyone is nominating Chris Garcia for Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form. Watch him get it, too. I enjoy *Girl Genius* as well, and I try my best to keep up with it. Three Hugos for Phil and Kaja are well-deserved, and they show their class by taking their fine comic out of future contention.

I would like to think so, but we also all hoped that "I Passionately Desire You to Form a Carnal Connection with Me, Ray Bradbury" would get it, too. There are just too many episodes of *Doctor Who*.

As Joy Smith says, I thought *Babylon 5* was great. And, I have not seen it rerun anywhere. Is

the show not available for syndication, or is it simply too awkward a format for evening showings on the usual rerun channel? Not even our own SF channel, Space, is running it, and it does make me wonder what's wrong . . . too expensive, perhaps?

Rodney Leighton's article reflects a conversation I had with Taral recently . . . there's not much Canadian involvement in fanzines, be it publishing, writing, loccking or artwork. I'd say there's about 20 of us involved in fanzines to one degree or another, but that's about it, and that number doesn't say much about any kind of community. Graeme Cameron has created a set of Canadian fanzine fanac awards, but it may be just a few years before we've all got one of them.

There used to be a number of fine Canadian faneds, people like Andrew Murdoch, Benoit Girard, or Scott Patri (well, "fine" may not be quite the proper phrase, but "interesting" he certainly was) who just dried up and blew away into the Void of Gafia. Just like all the former East-Bloc fans who sprang up, generated wonderful fanac, and then were gone.

— JTM

The morning is flashing past, so I must get on with other commitments before going downtown. Many thanks, take care, and see you with the 60th issue.

From: **Jim Stumm** September 3, 2011
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-0029 USA

Alexis Gilliland: Vehicle fuel will never be insufficient to meet the world demand because, if the price of fuel increases greatly, demand will fall. People will increasingly, albeit reluctantly, choose to ride motor scooters that get 100 mpg or so, or mopeds, or bicycles. But what is more likely to happen is, if the price of oil rises too high, some alternative fuel will replace gasoline and diesel as the preferred vehicle fuel. Non-petroleum fuel contenders include ethanol, methanol, natural gas (methane) compressed or liquified (LNG), hydrogen, and batteries.

Besides freeing up fossil fuels for transportation, atomic energy can also power vehicles more directly and replace fossil fuels entirely. I mean the electricity from nuclear power plants can be used to recharge electric vehicles, or it can split water by hydrolysis to produce hydrogen to power vehicles. Besides uranium, thorium is also abundant and it's a promising nuclear fuel being developed especially in India. Other types of reactors can be fueled using existing spent fuel rods, thus doing away with most of the nuclear waste "problem," which is mostly political, not technical. Atomic energy resources are abundant enough to provide for all present energy demands for more than 1000 years. As

for the popular opposition to nuclear power, that's already fading due to concerns about increasing CO₂. And if a time comes when Americans are given the choice: either we build many more nuclear power plants, or you can trade in your car for a bicycle, opposition to nuclear power will shrink to insignificance at an amazing rate.

About those 1372 climate scientists who were surveyed, was that, the 1372 who remained after all known skeptics had been struck off the list? I also wonder how many of those 1372 believed that their grant money would dry up if they expressed skeptical views. But the more important point is that science is not democratic. In science, one Galileo with the evidence on his side trumps any number of eminent Aristotelians.

As we here in Buffalo enjoy a 70 degree summery day in November, I'm reminded that moderate warming will be mostly beneficial to us here in northern cities and southern Canada. But this is something we never hear from global warming alarmists, who always mention only the bad effects. In truth, moderate warming would have both good and bad effects for different people in different places. I understand why alarmists mention only bad effects, and those with as much hysterical exaggeration as they think they can get away with, to promote political activism. But still, it's fundamentally deceptive to mention only half the story, a tactic also frequently used by lying mass media.

George W. Price: In Buffalo there's a bus route that ends at a street named Paradise, so that's what the sign on the bus reads. Whenever I see it I think: there's the bus to Paradise, an alternative, I suppose, to Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven."

Okay, you've been to Paradise.
But have you ever been to you?

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 20, 2011
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Thank you for Vol. 10, No. 5.

A number of issues ago I mentioned two books by an English author Toby Frost—*Space Captain Smith* and *God Emperor of Didcot*. My reason for mentioning them was that they are just fun reads. Now, thanks to my requesting it from the Camarillo Library on Interlibrary Loan the library actually purchased the third book in the series—*Wrath of the Lemming Men* (2009). It's another fun read. None of the books have any US indicated publisher, just the English publisher. There must be an SF Fan buying books for the Camarillo Library.

I was very disappointed in the final book in the Merchant Princes series (Book 6), *The Trade of Queens*, by Charles Stross (2010). Perhaps I should have been wary on noticing its recommendation by Paul Krugman. Anyway my general impression is that Stross just wanted to finish the series. Also, he left one or two side

stories hanging and they just seemed to disappear.

Then the latest book in the Safehold Series by David Weber arrived from the SFBC and all was right with the world. *How Firm A Foundation* (2011) is number 5 and I can hardly wait for the next book. I do, however, hope that Weber finishes the series in just a couple of more books.

This was followed by *The Unincorporated Woman* by Dani Kollin & Eytan Kollin (2011) and *SNUFF* by Terry Pratchett (2011). Both also from the SFBC. Life is good.

So, now I'll recommend another book that I very much enjoyed—*View From the Imperium* by Jody Lynn Nye (2011). Anne McCaffrey and David Drake both give it praise and I agree.

I recently read that Vladimir Putin is again going to become President of Russia. Why doesn't he just declare himself Czar? He could name himself Czar Vlad I.

Vladimir III. Vladimir Monomakh was Vladimir II. He will have to summon a zemsky sobor to ratify his election. Glory Glory to Vladimir III, the Great, the Terrible, Tsar of Muscovy!

— JTM

Joe: Well, you have done it again. Another fine art piece to go with commentary in my letter.

From: **Timothy Lane** November 25, 2011
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The article on the Scarlet Pimpernel was certainly quite interesting. The series has lived on in popular culture in several ways. For example, I recall the Purple Pumpernickel from the old Huckleberry Hound cartoons. Of even greater interest may be C. E. Lucas-Philips using the title *The Spanish Pimpernel* for his book about the prison-rescuing adventures of Christopher Lance during the Spanish Civil War. (He operated mainly in Madrid, so the Loyalists liked him as much as Chauvelin liked Percy Blakeney — except that Lance was real. I've read about him in one or two general histories of the Spanish Civil War.) After a year or so, Lance escaped to the Nationalists, and Lucas-Philips mentions him meeting Jose Millan Astray. The latter comes off much better there than he does in, say, Hugh Thomas's history.

"Lee at the Alamo" also sounds quite good. Interestingly, Bruce Catton briefly speculated about similar possibilities in *The Coming Fury* (General Twiggs spent much of the winter away from Texas, so if he had been a bit later getting back, Lee would have received the surrender demand). But Catton only wondered idly what might have happened; he never tried to answer the question.

Darrell Schweitzer: I must say, that was a most impressive example of (if you'll pardon

the mixed metaphor) beating a dead straw man. You devoted 7 whole paragraphs (close to half your LOC) to the argument that the world is in fact warming, and we skeptics must be idiots for refusing to agree. The only problem is that no one is denying that there is warming going on. (Heck, I don't even think Rick Perry denied it.)

We nevertheless disagree with some aspect of the Gorescam litany. It may be a belief that the warming is largely natural and cyclic (which seems to be the view of most of the *Alexiad* skeptics), or that the results won't be catastrophic and are best dealt with when they happen (which is the view of Greenpeace skeptic Bjorn Lomborg). It's important to realize that resources are limited, and those devoted to slightly slowing down non-catastrophic warming could instead be used for other purposes (including many you would support). It's a superb illustration of Taras Wolansky's point (from the previous issue) that you keep making the same errors over and over because you can't be bothered to read the responses to your LOCs.

In case you're curious, I can explain using a pair of sentences from my article on Global Warming for *The Encyclopedia of Environmental Issues*. Explaining the significance of the issue, I said, "If the anthropogenic, catastrophic theory of global warming is correct, or if the theory is wrong but major political/economic decisions are made in the belief that it is [true], there will be extremely harmful consequences." The bracketed word is one that should have been there; something always seems to slip through no matter how much we proofread. And the first paragraph begins, "According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the overall global temperature during the Twentieth Century increased by a little under one degree Celsius." Similar points have been made (repeatedly) by Grant McCormick and Taras Wolansky in their comments on the subject.

Well, I don't want to be unfriendly, so as compensation for all I've had to say, I will give you a bonus climate scare — but, coming as it does from me, a real one. Warming weather allows many insects, including disease vectors, to spread to higher latitudes and altitudes.

The former matters little; diseases such as malaria and yellow fever can already occur well to the north in America, for example, but are stopped by excellent pest control. Higher altitudes are another matter; this means that diseases such as dengue fever are spreading to high-altitude tropical areas that do not have excellent pest control. I learned this while researching my article on Climate Change and Human Health for *The Encyclopedia of Environmental Issues*.

Alexis Gilliland: I have encountered the poll of climate scientists you mention in your LOC, but you're the first to provide a citation. Unfortunately, you're also the victim of a bit of sleight of hand, probably by the pollster. I mentioned the alarmist litany to Darrell, and this seems to be a good time to give it: The world is warming due primarily to anthropogenic

greenhouse gases, the results will be catastrophic in 50 years or so, and therefore we must apply totalitarian controls on the mass use of energy (controls apparently not needed for the elite advocates, such as Al Gore, who uses more electricity in a month than most families do in a year). By contrast, the poll only found agreement that the world is warming, and that some part of the warming is anthropogenic. (Note that anthropogenic warming could include causes other than greenhouse gases, such as land use. Farmland is warmer than forests, and urban areas are warmer than farmland.)

Thus, the 1300+ climate scientists who agreed with the consensus include not only alarmists, but also most skeptics. (Their position is also mine, for example.) What I find most interesting is that 30 or 40 climate scientists — professionals who know more about this than you or I or Darrell or any other *Alexiad* reader — actually disagree with the consensus. And, of course, I would assume you know enough about science to know that consensus is hardly proof. The overwhelming majority of professionals specializing in the field are likelier to be right than the tiny majority, but not always.

Robert Kennedy: I agree that Roosevelt was seeking to get the US into the war in late 1941. However, one thing to remember about *Cruise of the Lanikai* is that Roosevelt wouldn't have needed any such maneuver if he had been certain that Japan would attack us. Clearly, at least at the point where he sent those orders, he wasn't.

I have noticed that Pearl Harbor researchers (see for example the Pearl Harbor Attacked site) don't even bother to mention *The Cruise of the Lanikai*.

Pearl Harbor Attacked
<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/>

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** November 26, 2011
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Men wept and said freedom had at last arrived: on October 20, the same day that Gadaffi was killed, Spain's Basque terrorists declared a "definitive end to its armed activity." The group called ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* or "Basque Homeland and Freedom") had been fighting for independence for 43 years and killed 829 people — 58 since I moved to Spain in 1999.

Hundreds of public officials, including many small-town aldermen and women, can now live without bodyguards. They're free to take out the garbage at night, not trapped inside because a sniper might be aiming at their back door. The rest of us need not fear that our car or our lives will be destroyed by a bomb in some random

place like a parking garage at an airport.

How did democracy win? There was no war on terror in Spain, and ETA members were not considered any sort of enemy combatants. That would have elevated them to the rank of soldier, which is a noble calling that they aspired to but were denied. ETA was a criminal organization, and its members were mere felons.

What defeated them was dogged police work. Time and again its leaders and members were identified, arrested, and sent to prison — ordinary prisons: 400 arrests in the last eight years. Its weapons caches were discovered and disposed of. Its funding was cut off. "They had no chance to breathe," one police commissioner said.

Much remains to be settled with the band and its supporters, and now that can happen. You can't negotiate with someone who has a gun pointed at your head, and now Spain is free.

Meanwhile, the euro's fate has been steadily drifting toward failure, and at every point difficult but effective solutions have been discarded. No solution has been "politically possible," and so, by elimination, the only politically acceptable course is disaster. But that should be no surprise. Democratically elected politicians aren't in charge of the economy anymore. As Churchill said, democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others — and now Goldman Sachs rules the world: corpocracy. Can capitalism and democracy coexist?

As a result, the Spanish equivalent of Occupy Wall Street retains its overwhelming majority support. A new prime minister was elected on November 20, and though he said a change in government would restore investor confidence, Spain's bond yields promptly jumped, and the spread between them and the German bund widened to more than 400 basis points. Investors know any Spanish politician can actually do very little.

By the way, it's not true that all the sequels to *Amadis of Gaul* were more or less rewrites of the book. Only the successful ones were. The tedious, moralizing sequels like *Lisuarte de Grecia* by Juan Díaz, published in 1526, did not sell well at all.

From: **George W. Price** November 27, 2011
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October *Alexiad*:

Darrell Schweitzer and Robert Kennedy both bring up the allegations that President Franklin Roosevelt and his close advisers knew in advance that Japan was about to attack us.

Schweitzer says that Gore Vidal "has become increasingly a crackpot in his old age" — for example, Vidal "does indeed seem to believe that Roosevelt for sinister purposes suckered the country into entry into World War II by allowing the Pearl Harbor attack to happen."

My own take is that Roosevelt's purpose was laudable, but his method was indeed sinister, in that it was deceptive and

underhanded. He recognized the terrible danger of letting Hitler run unchecked, and realized that the U.S.A. had to join the war against the Nazis. However, the temper of the country was dead set against intervention, due to bad memories of how we had been suckered into the First World War for no good purpose. So Roosevelt looked for a “back door” into the war.

Seventy years later, I still wish that he could have found a way more in keeping with constitutional democracy. Should he have worked harder and longer to make intervention politically acceptable? How much longer would it have taken? And how much tougher would the war have been if we had delayed entry until popular support had been achieved? What if the USSR had fallen by then?

As it was, Hitler was desperately careful to give us no provocation, and refused to respond to our provocations (such as informing the Royal Navy of U-boats our navy detected). So FDR instead provoked the Japanese — who were allied with the Nazis — by demanding that they call off their conquest of China. He embargoed the shipment of oil that was vital to Japan’s economy. The Japanese obliged and gave Mr. Roosevelt his war, rather than see their empire shrink back to the home islands. (Considering how well the Japanese did after we forcibly dismantled their empire, we might wonder how they would have fared had they abandoned the road of conquest in 1941.)

Ironically, Roosevelt’s apparent strategy depended on Hitler being a man of his word and honoring his mutual-defense treaty with Japan. Maybe Harry Turtledove could write a story in which Hitler refused to go to war with the U.S. in aid of Japan. Then Roosevelt would have had a war with Japan, which he didn’t particularly want, and still no war with the Nazis.

I recently saw it suggested that Hitler really did want war with the U.S., but only if Japan came in too, so that the Japanese fleet would make up for the weakness of the German navy. If so, he got what he wanted.

I think it is well-proven that, because we had broken their diplomatic code, FDR did indeed know that Japan was about to declare war. And while he did warn military commanders that war was imminent, he did not make the warnings urgent, to expect all-out attack at any moment.

Not quite. While there were a number of items that indicated that the Japanese were ending negotiations (the Fourteen-Part Message, the Winds Message) or indicating aggression (the TRICYCLE Memorandum) there was nothing definite.

Fourteen-Part Message:

http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/myths/14_part.html

What I have never seen is any evidence that Roosevelt and his clique (or co-conspirators, if you prefer) had any idea that the Japanese would strike Pearl Harbor, or that any attack would be so devastating.

More likely, as Robert Kennedy suggests, he thought the Japanese would attack the Philippines. Kennedy points out that it would make no strategic sense for them to hit the Philippines without also trying to destroy our fleet at Pearl Harbor. True, but then I don’t think anyone has ever accused Roosevelt and his cronies of having good strategic sense, however much they fancied themselves as great strategists. They may even have been foolish enough to think that the Japanese would start with a gentlemanly declaration of war, without a surprise attack.

We might also wonder what the world would be like if Roosevelt had found a way to destroy the Nazis without also having a war with Japan. Would Imperial Japan still dominate China and the Far East? No Red China?

* * * * *

Mr. Schweitzer also pokes some fun at the climate-change deniers. My own skepticism concerns how much of the very real changes are due to human activity. While visiting my sister-in-law in Phoenix several years ago, I noticed a book of Colonial American history on her shelf. Published about 1995, well before global warming became a huge issue, it casually mentioned how much the changing climate had influenced colonial exploration and settlement. Temperatures were at a historic low around 1600, the end of the “Little Ice Age,” and have been in a warming trend ever since, it said.

Well! Four hundred years of warming could hardly have been triggered by the Industrial Revolution that didn’t start until two hundred years later, so the vital questions become: (1) How much of the warming has been due to human activity? (2) How much is reversible by reducing our carbon dioxide emissions? (3) Is the presumed improvement worth the self-inflicted damage to our economy? I have yet to see any substantive discussion of this by the Warmists. Until I do, I must presume that they don’t really much care, and that the alleged crisis is primarily an excuse to seize control of our economy. As we might say, socialism by other means.

* * * * *

Taras Wolansky, commenting on “The Joy of High Tech,” says that “the people who named the electrical poles” were Benjamin Franklin.” The story that I heard was that two early scientists in Poland were arguing about what a battery electrode should be named. One strongly said “positive!” and the other just as firmly insisted on “negative!” They were very stubborn and wouldn’t compromise, so ever since then every battery has had both a positive Pole and a negative Pole.

* * * * *

I agree with Jim Stumm that it is clearer to refer to centuries as “the 1800s” or “the 1900s” rather than “Nineteenth Century” and “Twentieth Century.” That saves us from having

to explain why most “18xx” years are in the Nineteenth Century, and that the last year of the Nineteenth Century is 1900, not 1899. But anybody can see that 1899 is the last year of the 1800s. We went through a lot of this twelve years ago, when most people assumed that 2000 just had to be the first year of the new century. That four-digit rollover was irresistible.

My own pet peeve is about pronouncing the years of this century. I hold that the year 2001 should be spoken as “Twenty-oh-one,” not “Two thousand and one” (Stanley Kubrick not withstanding), and this year is “Twenty-eleven.” Why? Well, for the same reason that 1999 is pronounced “Nineteen ninety-nine,” not “One thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine.” Of course, this only applies to year dates, not to numbers in writing checks or doing calculations, where one is conveying arithmetic magnitudes.



From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Nov. 25, 2011
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Many thanks for *Alexiad*. I wish Darrell Schweitzer would stop using the phrase “climate change denier” to describe those of us who are skeptical about the idea that human behaviour is primarily responsible for rising temperatures. First off, the phrase is nonsensical. To “deny” climate change is to deny the difference between winter and summer. Moreover, environmentalists use the phrase as a wat to somehow equate climate change skeptics with Holocaust deniers. But there’s no comparison between the two, because the Holocaust is a historical fact and climate change is a speculative theory about the future.

I’m pretty much persuaded by Bjorn Lomborg to take a middle stand on climate change. I believe the planet is getting warmer although perhaps not as fast as environmentalists believe. (Don’t the records show that the warmest year was 1998, and then temperatures fell a bit and then were flat for the next ten years?) But there might be a less expensive solution than what the greens want — massive energy taxes and gigantic subsidies to companies like Solyndra. Painting rooftops white might work. So might spending more money on dams and barriers. But Lomborg argues that it might be better, instead of

spending huge sums on policies that might not actually reduce global temperatures all that much to use the money to help Third Worlders get better medicine and food. (We don't have the money to do both.)

About bookstores: I recently heard a Canadian Broadcasting story that implied that Nashville had no bookstores in its city limits until author Ann Patchett decided to start a small one. The existing bookstores were chains that went out of business. One reason she started the business was that there was no place in Nashville where authors could promote their books.

There is one Barnes & Noble, in the Opryland Mall, but it was flooded out in last year's storm and is rebuilding. There's another B&N in Goodlettsville, north of the city.

Jim Stumm is right that a URL is a really bad way to steer people to an article. As an editor, I always try to give the reader the title and author of a piece. That way you can search for them faster. URLs in and of themselves aren't useful ways to find an article; titles and authors are.

Like, d00d, don't you subscribe to their Twitter feed? URLs are like soooooooooo five minutes ago.
— JTM

Taras Wolansky compares the intelligence of JFK and Khrushchev. But when Kennedy met Khrushchev, wasn't he heavily doped up on the notorious "vitamin cocktails" of his physician, "Dr. Feelgood"? And we still don't know what was in these "vitamin cocktails"? Any assessment of John F. Kennedy's intelligence has to include the fact that the man was taking powerful, mind-altering drugs during most of his presidency.

From: **Taras Wolansky** December 1, 2011
100 Montgomery Street., #24-H, Jersey City, NJ 07302-3787 USA
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Alexiad, October 2011.

Joe: When *Pimpernel Smith*, starring the incomparable Leslie Howard, was shown, with some regularity, on local TV in New York in the 1970s, it was invariably under that evocative title, and not under the lackluster *Mister V.*, a name I've never heard before.

If Howard had lived, he should have played Capt. Horatio Hornblower (instead of a miscast Gregory Peck) opposite Deborah Kerr (instead of a grotesquely miscast Virginia Mayo).

Review of James Butler's *The End of History*: "Butler seems to be having a bunch of non-related [historical] points of departure". Sounds like he tried to explain his alternative history, instead of merely providing hints. Let the reader imagine whatever scenario seems most plausible to him.

Nope, it was different people in different places and totally unrelated changes.

Review of 1612, directed by Vladimir Khotinenko: "One reviewer complained that the movie dehumanizes the Poles; for example, their leader never has a name, just 'The Hetman'. Perhaps so but I thought that I heard him addressed repeatedly as 'Pan Gedemin'". Since Russians usually substitute "G" for "H" (which they don't have), "Pan Gedemin" may simply be Russian for "Lord Hetman".

"All through the movie there have been scenes of a unicorn walking through the woods." Perhaps the *Blade Runner* reference is appropriate for a movie in which, it seems, every character is a fake or fraud of some kind!

Worldcon News: "Just as 'Best Dramatic Presentation Short Form' was 'The Buffy Award' (and then *Buffy* was canceled just in time to miss it)." Actually *Buffy* won the first one; then after that the *Doctor Who* claque mostly took over.

By the way, Bill Patterson's biography of Heinlein may have lost (again, to the *Doctor Who* claque), because of a terrible choice of what excerpt to put in the online Hugo package: the introduction, in which Patterson makes a lot of grand assertions about Heinlein's cultural and literary importance, but backs up none of them (yet). He should have selected some jaw-dropping revelation as his sample.

Like, maybe, the bit about Heinlein's first marriage.

Darrell Schweitzer: The most bizarre aspect of the design of the Fukushima reactors is that, with this vast source of energy right at hand, the coolant pumps to keep it going were run off diesel generators in the basement!

I'm sure you recognize that anecdotes about local warming do not address the issue of what causes that warming, even assuming that the anecdotes are accurate, and representative of the world as a whole.

The Tony Auth cartoon you describe sounds pretty funny. Which makes it rather atypical for him: I just looked at his work since the end of September and, boy, humor is in short supply. Even when he has a clever idea (see 11/6) he bungles the caption.

I hesitate to call him a liberal, as he's a bit to the left of that. Just in the last couple of months, three cartoons praising the "Occupy Wall Street" movement and two attacking banks (next, the Cross of Gold?); about a half-dozen attacking the G.O.P. and one defending Obama. One (11/11) that's a bit obscure but seems to be an attack on the Catholic Church; another (10/5) seems to be attacking the natural gas industry — no, it's an attack on the Republican Governor of Pennsylvania.

Remember, news stories are collections of selected anecdotes: some facts are left in, others are left out. Unfortunately, the reportage on environmental subjects is particularly slanted. For example, I was feeling sorry for those

Greenland Eskimos who, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* article you cited, were being inconvenienced by melting ice. Then I read the following line in the Wikipedia article on Greenland and burst out laughing: "Nearly all Greenlanders live along the fjords in the south-west of the main island, which has a relatively mild climate." Go North, Young Inuit!

Another fact in the *PI* article reveals the power of climate and, perhaps, hints at what a warmer world will be like. It states that the population of Greenland is 56,000 people. Greenland is 600 times the size of Long Island — which has a population 130 times as large.

I was reading a travelogue about transiting the Northwest Passage in the sixties. (One of the participants was the historian Robin Lane Fox, who brought and worked on the only manuscript for his *Alexander the Great* (1973).) At one point, the party went with some Inuit on an umiak, a large boat made by skins on a wooden frame. It had an outboard motor. One of the southerners wondered why, to which the Inuk replied that anyone who didn't have a motor was a fool who liked wearing himself out paddling.

Struggling to explain growing skepticism about anthropogenic global warming (mostly a "boy who cried wolf" effect), warmists have concocted dark conspiracies of oil companies who spread misinformation; though where they spread it is a little vague, as the warmists control the high ground of the media. I see TV commercials from oil companies nearly every day: how many of them express doubts about global warming, anthropogenic or otherwise? Answer: none. Instead, they tout each company's own "green" credentials.

Why? This has to do with the economic concept of externalities, which few people seem to understand. It doesn't pay for an oil company to fight the global warming scare, because that oil company would pay the costs of the campaign, while the vast majority of the benefits (if any) would be shared with the rest of the fossil fuel industry, of which that one firm is a tiny part. Instead, each company tries to present a positive image of itself, thereby internalizing the benefits.

That's an example of a positive externality; negative externality is why corporations make or sponsor movies and TV shows that portray corporations in an unfavorable light. Each such corporation gets all the profits of those movies and TV shows, while the bad effects of the propaganda — mind pollution, as it were — are shared with all corporations and the country as a whole.

Alexis Gilliland: I especially liked the cartoon on page 18. Was that "Construction Shack" by Clifford Simak in which explorers find the plans — the botched plans — for the solar system? Then there's the great "Far Side"

cartoon in which “God as a kid tries to create a chicken”. (Feathers everywhere.)

IMHO, genetically engineered micro-organisms producing biofuels will eventually price fossil fuels out of the market. There was a major breakthrough announced just a few days ago.

“Global warming, of which Taras appears to be cautiously skeptical”: rather, I remain aware of the uncertainties in the science — the course of global warming does not run smooth — and the demagoguery of many global warming activists. I am least skeptical of the raw fact that temperatures have (irregularly) trended upward since the middle of the 19th century. I am most skeptical of the doomsday scenarios — warm times are usually good times for Earth’s biosphere — and the draconian solutions proposed; which assume, among other things, that there will be no relevant technological progress. In fact, it’s happening all around us right now.

By the way, you get points for thinking in shades of gray (which takes more processing power, as it were), rather than black and white. For some people, AGW is either 100% TRUE or 100% FALSE. Then they present evidence that it’s not 100% FALSE, and conclude it must therefore be 100% TRUE.

“A 2010 study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science surveyed 1,372 climate scientists to find that 97 to 98 percent agreed that humans were contributing to global warming.” Let us set aside the likelihood that most so-called climate skeptics would tend to agree that humans are making *some* contribution to global warming. When I looked this up, I was surprised to find the survey flimsier than I expected. For one thing, it isn’t a survey of 1,372 climate scientists (a suspiciously low number, by the way). It’s a literature survey of the published papers of 1,372 climate scientists. Thus, on the one hand, skeptical scientists are less likely to have been selected for the 1,372 in the first place; on the other, articles with a skeptical tendency even from the 1,372 would have more trouble getting into print in the surveyed climate journals. And on top of that, let’s remember the late Stephen Schneider’s advice to climatologists, to keep their doubts about global warming to themselves, and to sensationalize as much as their personal ethics will permit.

All in all, I’m surprised it was only 97-98%!
George W. Price: I seem to recall that the Mythbusters tried to recreate the story of the homeless man electrocuted for answering the call of nature in the vicinity of the third rail, but were unable to. How good is your source?

You’ve heard of the latest Mythbusters demonstration: “What would happen if you fired a cannonball into a suburban home?”

On the awfulness of public rail transit: In October I decided to experiment with using rail to get from upstate New York to my office in New Jersey. I took advantage of NJ Transit’s

interactive route finder. Except that every time I selected the destinations from their menu, I got an error message telling me I had misspelled one of the names (which, remember, I had selected from a menu). After considerable frustration I found where they had pdf’s of the paper schedules. Turns out all the rail lines north of the NJ border had been knocked out by the hurricane, months earlier, which is why I was getting those misleading error messages. (I hear the line just went back into service a couple of days ago.) Now, you’d think they would post such important information prominently.

This parallels my experience when I attended the Glasgow Worldcon in 1995. I had selected a hotel close to the underground so that I might use it to get to the convention center. It was only as I was actually trying to change trains that I saw a small paper sign on the gate, informing me that the line I needed had been flooded out months earlier.

Speaking of conventions, *John Purcell* mentions Fencon in Texas. This reminds me of something funny that happened at the Fencon party at Philcon, a couple of weeks ago. I picked up this year’s Fencon “program” (i.e., souvenir) book and leafed to the page on Art GoH Stephane Martiniere, whom I’ve voted for the Hugo the last few years.

There was something odd about the article. Eventually I realized, every time the context indicated that the title of a work was about to be mentioned, that title was simply missing. I puzzled over this for a moment or two, and then noticed there were no italics anywhere on the page.

Aha, I thought: the titles were missing because they were italicized, and the software couldn’t handle italics. But then I looked through the rest of the book: italics (and titles) were missing, it seemed, only from the Martiniere page.

There was something else unique about that page: it was the only one that included vowels with accents; for example, in the name of Martiniere’s art school in France. I concluded that, to get the accents, they fiddled the character set, inadvertently making italics unprintable.

When I pointed all this out to one of the Fencon people, he was amazed — because no one had reported *anything* wrong with the book. Which may suggest something about just how many con goers read convention “program” books.

Earlier that day, I had a hard time answering when somebody asked me what I do for a living. It occurred to me now that what I had just done was a significant part of what I do for a living!

Martin Morse Wooster: *Chicks Dig Time Lords* is my nomination for the most disgraceful Hugo winner of the year; “[Bleep] Me, Ray Bradbury”, the most disgraceful nominee.

Just you wait till Chicks Dig Highlanders: A Celebration of Diana Gabaldon’s *Outlander* by the Women Who Love It wins.

—JTM

Next year, let’s have our own award ceremony: the Nugos! One category could be Literary Awards Voted by People Who Don’t Read.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** November 25, 2011
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143-3310 USA

I’ve been re-reading the books on cosmology on my shelves: *Coming of Age in the Milky Way* by Timothy Ferros (1988, and showing its age); *The Inflationary Universe* by Alan Guth (1997); and *The Big Bang* by Joseph Silk (3rd ed. 2000). I took a few side glances at my cherished copy of *Watchers of the Skies* by Willy Ley (1963), which I now find rather diffuse and slanted toward planetary astronomy; and at *Matter, Earth, and Sky* by George Gamow (1958), which I think I must give up cherishing. So much more is now understood!

The history of science records failures to put two and two together; even Newton made some boo-boos. Unless the histories I have read conceal it from me, there’s an idea that should have been firmly established by about 1800, awaiting only accumulated data and indeed the means of obtaining the data. Once gravitation was understood, it was clear that the stars couldn’t just sit there; they had to be moving about the center of mass of the visible agglomeration (the Milky Way). If the system was lenticular, the motions had to be in a preferred plane, and it made sense for the whole system to have net angular momentum. Where that momentum came from is an interesting question, but about origins (or eternity) only pure speculation was then possible. In any event, such a system (and most astronomers thought it was the only one) could maintain itself forever and ever.

Gravitational collapse. From a standing start, everything might just crunch together at the center. But introduce random motions, and things swoosh in and swoosh out again. You get something like a globular cluster.

In the 20th century, the home galaxy was shown, from accumulated data, to rotate; but this cannot, should not have been a surprise. And then we had Einstein, and De Sitter, and Hubble, until we arrive at the advanced state of bafflement that we have today. If we can imagine, merely imagine, other universes with other fine-tuned constants than the ones we have, is there any hope of a theory to tell us what the universe *must* be like?

Feeling a desire to know more about the Magellanic clouds, I was gratified to find a piece in the December *National Geographic*, with a modicum of information and some nice pictures.

As I stroll out, I keep an eye out for long-lost coins on rain-washed ground. An interesting repertoire of finds this year: a wartime nickel-free 5¢; a buffalo nickel, 1916, no worse than discolored; a worn and corroded Liberty Head nickel, 1907; an even worse

Shield Nickel — the last two not really “collectable”. Also an Indian head cent, a “Mercury” dime, and a quarter of 1950. I am content to keep a small hoard of silver, a few dozen assorted coins, including several Dutch guilders and a bit of Canadian. Me and Scrooge McDuck . . .

It is scarcely believable, but I’ve just read of somebody who has amassed several hundred thousand nickels . . . having, after all, a metal value exceeding their face value. Just how he might cash in when the crunch comes is a bit hard to imagine. I’ve read somewhere about an outfit that, some years ago, separated out bronze cents from coated zinc ones, until the gummint put a stop to it. The Royal Canadian Mint (if I have the name right) is reportedly doing the same, withdrawing bronze and nickel as well. I recall how in postwar Germany all the small change was the cheap wartime stuff; not one prewar coin did I ever see in circulation.

I just read about someone who hoards copper pennies, waiting for the law banning melting them down to be repealed. It’s getting to sound like the guy in *Galactic Pot-Healer* who somehow had several dollars in silver coins, at a time when small change was all cardboard.

— JTM

latched on to the hot topic I mentioned in my last letter and written *Supervolcano Erupts*, a saga To Be Continued.

I recall being a refugee in 1944, with no more than my mother and I could carry; what she took of food, I don’t recall. Jars of lard, in those days, were about as concentrated as you could get.



Is it even possible nowadays now to have umlauts and everything else? In *The Battle of Britain* by Hough and Richards (1989) there were none (and the usual quota of typos). Editors wishing to restore umlauts should beware of surnames in fixed form using ae or oe. By contrast, I have seen the Commandant of Auschwitz as HöB.

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



WAHF:
 Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.
 Guy Lillian, John Purcell, Steven Silver, Lloyd Penney, Steve Green, Charlotte Proctor, Julee Johnson-Tate, Sue Burke, and Carol Clarke with happy anniversary greetings.

As a hedge against inflation, one might well hoard other commodities with a shelf life, but I do not share that mentality. One might reflect on the schizophrenia of those who are both buyers and sellers of gold and silver. Is it a good time to sell, or a good time to buy? But the dealers take their cut either way. There was a previous bubble in precious metals.

Now, when absolute, unmitigated disaster strikes . . . I see that Harry Turtledove has

THE MAN WHO WOULD LIVE ON

... Bond took a drag on his Royal Blend cigarette and looked over at the American pilot. The man had spent the previous evening entangled with two women he had found in a bar near the docks of Kingston. In the afternoon, he was supposed to fly Bond in a seaplane to meet with the would-be defector from SMERSH, Captain Karla, in a little village on the Miskito Coast.

Karla had dispatched an emissary to the Service; a woman who claimed to be his psychic advisor. She had said she had detected a hardening of attitudes among the higher ranks of SMERSH, and on her advise he was going over to their side. Hence this.

Commander Smith was a fabulist, he had concluded. He had described in lurid detail a number of experiences he had had in the War. If he were credible (which Bond firmly doubted), he had made the most kills of any pilot in the attack on Pearl Harbour, been wounded in the battles for the Dutch East Indies, rescued several lost missionaries in the Philippines, carried out a number of commando raids on the mainland of Japan, and scouted out the atom-bomb targets.

His pale, ginger-topped rangy figure would make him stand out fatally in a Japanese crowd, and the excuse Smith had made about his heroic record being suppressed by certain family connexions was in Bond's experience the hallmark of a poseur. There had been other experiences recounted to him that he had found less than credible. That queer tale young Scrubb had told, before his unfortunate demise in the railway accident, for example . . .

"I said, ain't you coming along?" Smith said. The characteristic unpleasant look of unbridled lechery that generally occupied his face had hardened at Bond's silence.

Bond crushed out the cigarette and took a drink of the strong black Oolong tea that the resort's management had provided for their guests. "Commander, not if you are going to get yourself drunk before flying this mission."

The warmth the tea generated in his body made Bond think of the peculiar countersign that Karla had insisted on. Bond was to say, "What will you have to drink?" and if he were not under control Karla would reply, "Tea. Earl Grey. Hot." The Americans drank tea iced, as Felix Leiter had once attempted to make him consume, and he thought the falling-off of standards a sign of their gradual decline into chaos.

Smith took offense at the formality. "Don't go getting your back up. I said you can call me 'Woody'."

"A not inappropriate name, but perhaps a bit too revelatory."

Bond's attempt at disdain seemed to have had the opposite result. Smith's rangy face broke into a wider and more sensual leer, and he said, "Buddy, you don't know the half of it."

Bond reached over and picked up the flat black gunmetal cigarette case, thought of either opening it for another smoke or throwing it into Smith's smarmy visage, and discarded both thoughts as ill-advised if not unworthy. "And I would rather not," he said.

"I bet we're kin. Are you kin to the Howards?"

Bond lifted one eyebrow. "The Duke of Norfolk? I should say not. I am a Scots peasant and I shall remain a Scots peasant." What was it with these Americans? That man Bauer who had tried to establish a connexion with the de Greystocks for him, for example.

"I'm sure you are!" Then he got up and went out the door, singing. Or it was supposed to be singing, but resembled more the dying sounds of a gut-shot panther, "I'm gonna live for-eeever! I'm gonna learn how to fly!"

Bond had hoped he had already known that.

— Not by Robert A. Heinlein or Fleming, Ian Fleming

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The New iPhone

By Paul Gadzikowski

