

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Chief Water Tender Peter Tomich, June 3, 1893-December 7, 1941. Greater love hath no man.

And the memory of
Sharon Christa McAuliffe
Gregory Jarvis
Judith A. Resnik,
Francis R. (Dick) Scobee,
Ronald E. McNair,
Mike J. Smith,
Ellison S. Onizuka,
Rick D. Husband,
William C. McCool,
Michael P. Anderson,
David M. Brown
Kalpana Chawla,
Laurel Blair Salton Clark
Ilan Ramon,
They have slipped the surly bonds of Earth.

— Lisa

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Joe's birthday is **December 24, 2018.**

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Reviewer's Notes

Looking at whatever passes for Rabid Puppies these days, they seem to have declared victory and withdrawn into their own circle. It may be just as well. Going body-camming your own obnoxiousness seems like an odd strategy.

The market is growing so large that it is possible to have a viable sales line of bash the mooks skiffy. It's a far cry from the days when it was possible to keep up with the field, and everyone knew what had just come out. With gains come losses.

Weren't the eighties grand? There were enough fans to justify conventions all over every weekend, and experienced con-runners to do it. Nowadays the big convention is a professional media extravaganza meant for consumers.

Things changed somehow in 2001. That year, there was a great fan program at Millennium Philcon. Two years later, in Toronto, there was hardly anything.

I think the sign was seeing Forrest J Ackerman. In Philadelphia he was zesty, reverberant, zealous, with the same child-like enthusiasm he had had since oh at least 1939. In Toronto, he was a shattered, wheelchair-ridden man who slowly acknowledged his friends.

Admittedly the legal problems with Roy Ferry (who robbed him blind and then transferred all his assets out of the country to duck out of paying a settlement) did not help. But there was no energy there any longer.

Beyond that there's the shift to ever more ephemeral forms of communication. Nobody cool answers emails any more, it's all on Twitter. Which makes me think of walking down the street past thousands of people all talking, and nobody listening. Did San Juan's reliance on a Twitter feed instead of progress reports contribute to its miniscule attendance?

It doesn't seem to be just SF. I remember the shrinkage of the Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium, which as it offered intelligent and thorough discussion of the Canon and Doyle's other works, along with an innovative presentation (their Readers' Theater) had smaller and smaller attendance.

Not that this affects me, since I can no longer afford to go out of town for conventions.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Henry Worsley's polar partner is striving to carry out the journey that killed him. Captain **Lou Rudd**, MBE, is attempting the solo unsupported Antarctic crossing on which Worsley contracted the problems that led to his death. Rudd accompanied Worsley on the Scott-Amundsen Centenary Race in 2011 and led the SPEAR 17 expedition in 2017, which crossed the continent albeit stopping at the southern edge of the Ross Ice Shelf.

<https://lourudd.com/>

Sergeant Major **Barry "Baz" Gray**, Royal Marines, is also attempting the crossing. After 26 years of mountain fighting and exploring he is attempting the crossing going from McMurdo Sound to Berkner Island.

<http://challengeantarctica.com/>

Endurance athlete **Jenny Davis** will be going solo from Hercules Inlet to the Pole, for the encouragement of women to go into STEM.

<http://jennydavis.co.uk/>

David Roberts's memoir *Limits of the Known* (2018; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 17 #3) has won the Boardman-Tasker Award for Mountain Literature. The award, named for British climbers Peter Boardman and Joe Tasker, who were highly accomplished in the field and had disappeared in 1982 on a climb of the Northeast Ridge of Mount Everest in an expedition with Sir Chris Bonington, is given "to the author or authors of the best literary work, whether fiction, non-fiction, drama or poetry, the central theme of which is concerned with the mountain environment," published in Britain during the period of August of the previous year to July of the current one.

Roberts was as honored to receive it as amazed that he had *lived* to receive it.

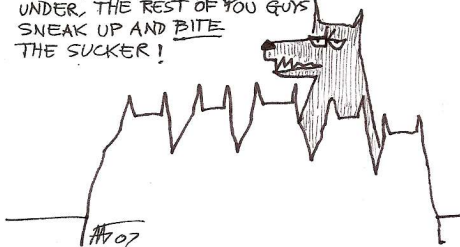
AFTER THE FOX
Review by Joseph T Major of
THE FOX

by Frederick Forsyth
(2018; G.P. Putnam's Sons;
ISBN 978-0525538484; \$28.00;
Penguin Group (Kindle); \$14.99)

After the Fox (1966) starred Peter Sellers as The Fox, a master criminal who is attempting to steal the products of a massive gold heist. His plan involves filming a fake movie, which will "just happen" to be at the site where the other thieves are unloading the gold.

In this book, the agencies of three nations are after the Fox. But this Fox is not a clever man of many disguises and a talent for deception. Rather he is a master hacker of master hackers, able to break into securer than secure NSA and CIA databases. And a 18-year-old kid with Asperger's Syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and parents whose marriage is disintegrating. Obviously not your standard Cyberpunk Kid.

OKAY. NOW WHILE MAURICE HAS THE MOOSE TRYING TO GUESS WHICH SHELL THE PEA IS UNDER, THE REST OF YOU GUYS SNEAK UP AND BITE THE SUCKER!



Enter Sir Adrian Weston, former DCSS, who refused promotion after the SIS was asked to affirm a dodgy claim. Still, he is very much trusted by the current P.M. When the Americans track down Luke Jennings, the master cracker, Sir Adrian decides that there are better things to do than immure him in a Supermax prison.

And, with much effort to (for example) *exactly recreate* his workroom, Luke Jennings becomes The Fox. His first hack is amusing, for some values of amusing.

The Russian navy still remembers the *Storozhevoy*. Not wanting to have another insurance agent write a novel about a defection with ship, they have installed complicated satellite remote-control means on board their most powerful ship, the battlecruiser *Admiral Nakhimov*. And to show off, they are sailing the *Admiral Nakhimov* down the English Channel, a Unternehmen Zerberus in reverse. However, it turns out embarrassing when the *Admiral Nakhimov* refuses to obey the helm and grounds on the Goodwin Sands. Oops.

Forsyth has always focused on processes, not on gear. Thus we have detailed descriptions of the efforts to find the Fox and terminate him, and of the means of deception and defense that foil these plots. It's nothing so simple as two hit men taking the two watercloset cubicles on either side of the Fox, then unintentionally

shooting each other as he stoops to get the lavatory paper (*The Pink Panther Strikes Again* (1976)).

One can understand why some of the less than pleased targets of The Fox's hacks might want to resort to executive action. As when the entire Iranian nuclear diffusion project suffers a catastrophic centerfuge malfunction. In *The Berlin Project* (2017 (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 16 #3)) it was only one centrifuge; this is several hundred, and Karl Cohen might understand.

And what happens to Kim Jong-un . . . one can't say "shouldn't happen to a dog", because his father ate them. As opposed to the Russian leader, an ex-KGB officer given to distributing pictures of himself riding a horse, bare-chested and macho. Or the American President, author of *The Art of the Deal*. I wonder who they are based on?

But the Fox is a weapon too powerful to let go and too dreadful to use. The result might be considered a little too mundane, but it is at least nonviolent.

THE REVOLUTION OF NIHILISM

Review by Joseph T Major of

SUBMISSION

par Michel Houellebecq

(Submission)

(2015; Farrar, Straus and Giroux;

ISBN 978-0374271572; \$34.99;

Macmillan (Kindle); \$9.99)

Trask went to the index of the ship's library and punched for *History, Old Terran*. There was plenty of that, thanks to Otto Harkaman. Then he punched for *Hitler, Adolf*. Harkaman was right; anything that could happen in a human society had already happened, in one form or another, somewhere and at some time. Hitler could help him understand Zasparr Makann.

By the time the ship came out, with the yellow sun of Tanith in the middle of the screen, he knew a great deal about Hitler, occasionally referred to as Schicklgruber, and he understood, with sorrow, how the lights of civilization on Marduk were going out.

— H. Beam Piper, *Space Viking*, Chapter 23

One of the books Lucas Trask could have read was *Die Revolution des Nihilismus*, by Hermann Rauschning (3 P.A.) [*The Revolution of Nihilism* (1939)]. Rauschning had flirted with Nazism briefly in the early 1930s but came to see it as a nihilist doctrine; one that destroyed and derogated all values, a doctrine of nothing.

François, the protagonist of *Submission*, is without belief. He has no religion, no nationalism, no purpose. He floats from academic term to academic term, teaching works that no longer mean anything to him to students he no longer cares about.

His personal life is similarly void and

vacant. He cannot form an attachment for longer than an academic term. He sees women in terms of their sexual convenience.

In 2022, this scholarly void finds a presidential election coming up. (Houellebeq uses real politicians in the fictional campaign; a dangerous thing to do.) In order to keep the National Front out, the other parties combine behind the Muslim candidate.

And with the election given him, he proceeds to Islamicize France — “Frankistan”? In the way that affects François directly, he is retired from his position at the Sorbonne at full pay, since the university will now only have Muslim teachers.

François watches this with massive unconcern. Finally, an acquaintance acquaints him with the absolute proof of the truth of Islam and the many values to be derived therefrom. He could not only have a job, but could afford and have three wives. He thinks about taking up the offer.

A number of reviewers objected to the character per se; they found François to be unpleasant and crude. That’s the point. He believes in nothing, so will believe in anything. That he is incapable of forming an adult relationship is a result of his character, a part of his characterization, as is his pornization of women.

(From the way the author presents the character’s academic work on Huysmans, I think it is possible to put forward a case for ending one’s reading in French literature with Jules Verne. I did read *Là-Bas* (1891) and noted that the most explicit part of it seemed to be how the protagonist’s *amée* never changed her bedsheets, so they were filthy dirty, which he found somewhat offputting.)

Houellebeq slips in some powerful comments as throwaway plot elements. For example, even before the election, François notes, without concern, that there are no Jewish organizations at the university. (Rather like the glee that Parsons exhibits in 1984 at the news that the chocolate ration is going to be raised to 25 grams from 30.)

The concept of Robert Ferrigno’s *Prayers for the Assassin* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #4), a country having lost its culture and adopted Islam to fill the void, is similar and could have made a serious story. Ferrigno chose to tell a thriller story, of a Sinister Islamic Mastermind who cunningly oversaw the corruption of the Dar al-Harb. As a result, the story became just another thriller, void of anything except the thrill. And not even a Lucas Trask to blow him away, with as little feeling as shooting a snake.

Houellebeq’s emotionally dead character is in effect the symbol of the country. He believes in nothing, and so will believe in anything; just as the France he exists in has ended all its belief in anything, and far from the satisfying certainty of knowing the meaninglessness of human existence, has submitted to

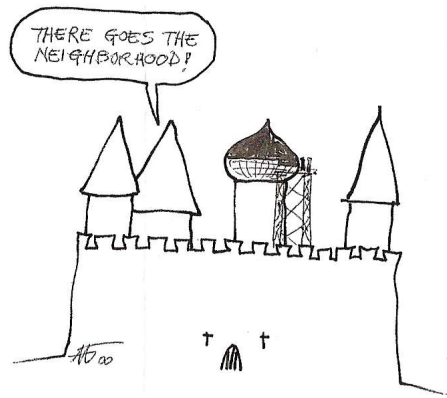
an alien doctrine. One thinks of the pathetic humans on Jack Vance’s *Planet of Adventure* (1968, 1969, 1970), the Pnumekin, Chaschmen, Dirdirmen, and Wankhmen, who try to look like the beings of the alien races they serve.

Houellebeq has downplayed some characteristics of the new land. There are no riots by disaffected youths in the bainlieux. Just as he avoids literary overreach. There is no massive invasion, in the style of *Le Camp des Saints* (1973). And nothing like Ferrigno; no massive nuclear bombing of key places, no Sinister Islamic Mastermind carrying out *Le Complot contre la France*.

The appositely named François is the very model of the country; a void, waiting to be filled, and finding its filling in a surrender of all the past. This is more terrifying than seeing a conspiracy.

“I’m sorry, Prince Edvard. You had a wonderful civilization here on Marduk. You could have made almost anything of it. But it’s too late now. You’ve torn down the gates; the barbarians are in.”

— H. Beam Piper, *Space Viking*, Chapter 22



IN SEARCH OF WONDER

Review by Joseph T Major of

ASTOUNDING:

John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard, and the Golden Age of Science Fiction

by Alec Nevala-Lee

(2018; Dey Street Books;

ISBN 978-0062571946; \$28.99;

HarperCollins (Kindle); \$15.99)

Perhaps the focus should have been on Campbell exclusively; his careers as a writer, his rise, dominance, and decline as an editor; his quirks and passions. There is copious biographical material on Heinlein, and verbose autobiographies by Asimov. And at first *ElRon* seems a little out of place, considering. At first one thinks that maybe there should have been material on A. E. van Vogt.

By setting Campbell off with his discoveries, and the guy he had to take, Nevala-Lee has told the other half of the story (to Damon Knight’s brilliant *The Futurians* (1977), that is).

There must be a beginning, and this tale begins in 1910, with the birth of a boy in New Jersey. Campbell had a prodigy-like schooling, for example reading his physics textbooks in the first few days of the semester. But then, he began to have issues, and dropped out before taking a degree, first from M.I.T. and then from Duke.

By then he was writing, though. His first stories were of the spot-weld-me-another-busbar superscience that was commonly seen as Doc Smith’s provenance. Then there came the shift, the wonder that created “Forgetfulness” (*Astounding Stories*, June 1937), the story of how humanity forgot about science, by the cryptic Don A. Stuart. (Campbell used many pseudonyms, one even to write to his own magazine, but that’s another story.)

Then came the call to edit. *Astounding Stories* had gone through transfigurations and transmigrations, and they were looking for a new man to head it up. Nevala-Lee gives us the details of those *Astounding Days* (1990, by Arthur C. Clarke) with Kay Tarrant and the rest of the gang.

And then he began to recruit new talent, except when handed one he was told to buy. Up until then, Lafayette Ronald Hubbard (and here was another man with a plethora of pseudonyms) had not been particularly hot on science fiction.

Nevala-Lee is unsparing in presenting his biography, which was not as he told it. And throughout the book, *ElRon*’s prevarications, terminological inexactitudes, and evasions are shown up in stark detail. Though one of those earlier stories, *Buckskin Brigades* (1937), for all that it is populated with stock pulp characters, does take the side of the indigenous people.

The lives of Asimov and Heinlein have been recounted, the first by himself, the second through the intermediary of Bill Patterson. Nevala-Lee freely grants that their works represent a thorough presentation of their lives. (But not a complete one, and he does cite Asimov’s attitude towards women, which was not the sort of thing that would be approved of today. Particularly the time he broke a woman’s bra strap snapping it.)

Their lives crossed and interacted. What justifies the inclusion of Hubbard is that Dianetics played a significant role in Campbell’s decline. He became too enamored of it, and from there to supporting contrarian views in general. Often these grated, and older writers drifted away, while newer ones were more deferential but less defined. Like, for example, Randall Garrett.

Then time began to lay its hand upon them. More isolated and rejected, Campbell denied his deteriorating health, until his heart gave out. The declines of Heinlein and Asimov are

well known. As for ElRon . . .

He was a prisoner of his own fears and his own actions. After leaving his notorious Sea Org, he wandered around America, in one hilarious incident being solicited to inquire into Scientology. His livelihood was secure, and in the time he had he returned to his roots, churning out gargantuan pulp epics, secure that they would not be rejected or edited. Apparently he really did write those million words of *Mission Earth* (1985-1987).

And he passed on.

All four of them were cremated, the ashes scattered in various significant places. The legacy, for good or ill, persists.

TALES FROM HUGO'S MOUNTAIN

Review by Joseph T Major of
AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF THE HUGOS:

A Personal Look Back at the Hugo Awards, 1953-2000

by Jo Walton

(2018; Tor; ISBN 978-0-7653-7908-5; \$31.99; Tor; ISBN 978-1-4668-6573-0; \$16.99 (Kindle))

I have read *They'd Rather Be Right* (1954; Hugo, 1955). It's about a device that can give people prolonged healthy and youthful lives — but only if they give up their fixed ideas (i.e. “They'd rather be right than live.”).

This is a collection of a set of postings on Tor.com by the 2012 Best Novel Hugo winner (*Among Others* (2011; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 11 #2)) on the earlier years of the Hugo Award.

Walton discusses the various books; the winners, the other nominees, the ones that should have been nominated, and other award winners. It is somewhat reminiscent of Asimov's comments about the authors in his various *The Hugo Winners* books.

She freely admits why she didn't read some books. (For example, she just could not find a copy of *They'd Rather Be Right*.) She disliked *Neuromancer* (1984), for example, but thought it a significant book all the same. The insight that John Varley's talent deserted him just before the ending of *Titan* (1979) is at first shocking but upon consideration it becomes obvious.

Some of the discussion is limited. The 1989 *The Guardsman* controversy, for example, where she jumps to a conclusion (that it was done by a group of enthusiastic New York fans) without going over the angry and sometimes nasty blow-up that resulted.

Similarly, she glosses over the controversy over the Hugo Award for *Stranger In a Strange Land* where, according to Earl Kemp, Heinlein demanded that he receive the award and made a perfect pest of himself in general. (His dramatic “surprise” entry to receive the award and the speech he gave explaining how he had traveled far and at great effort and inconvenience is somewhat undercut by

knowing that he had arrived in Chicago the day before and rehearsed the whole thing.) She finds the other nominees weak, and as noted above suggests others.

The chapters are reinforced by the discussion; various posters listing works that they preferred, suggesting nominees, and the like, Walton ends some (not all) chapters with a review of the winning book(s).

For commentary by one who has been there and done that it is worthwhile and striking. One wonders if there will be *An Informal History of the Hugos Part Two: A Personal Look Back at the Hugo Awards, 2001 — ??*

THE ISSUE AT HAND

Review by Joseph T Major of

TALKING SENSE ABOUT 'FIFTY SHADES OF GREY', or FANFIC, FEMINISM, & BDSM

(2012; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

and

THE EXASPERATING CASE OF DAVID WEBER, or: THE SLOW DEATH OF THE HONORVERSE

(2015; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

by John Lennard

John Lennard is the author of a number of scholarly works on Shakespeare. Which is to say that he is neither a marginal sort finding a niche, or an academic condescending to go slumming. (There is also a book by him on Tolkien, but there is *so much* on JRRT.)



In *Talking Sense about 'Fifty Shades of Grey'*, he lays out the origins of the book, from the Twilight fanfiction “Master of the Universe”, and discusses the milieu from which it emerges. He traces the history of fan fiction back to the Homeric era, though he admits that it really dates back to the beginning of mass printing, and discusses how it satisfies readers' desires to see the story elaborated and refined.

Lennard describes the differences between the original and the novel, showing how the dynamic between the characters shifted as the characters themselves changed. The difference is noticeable but the similarity is still there.

His discussion of the “availability” of the work is not as much as it could be, since it was noted in the seventies that the Gor books by “John Norman” (John Frederick Lange) had the same “availability”; women wishing to read

fiction about being a BDSM submissive could now go to a regular bookstore to get such material, instead of a sleazy porn shop. All the same, it shows an awareness of these values.

Which leads to other works. E. L. James claimed not to have read *Histoire d'O* (1954) though she had seen the movie (1975). (There is no mention of Jacqueline Carey's Kushiel series (2001-2008) with its religious order of submissives.)

Somewhat sarcastically, the cover renders the book's title as “Fifty Shade\$ of Grey”. It might be worth reading Dave Barry's review “Dave Barry Learns Everything You Need to Know About Being a Husband From Reading *50 Shades of Grey*” (*You Can Date Boys When You're Forty*, 2014) for a thorough and comic takedown of the book, noting the unrealism of the characters, the atrocious writing style . . . and the strange attraction the book has for women.

The Exasperating Case of David Weber can be read as a *cri de coeur* from a devoted fan, disappointed by the turn the series writing has taken. Lennard's principal concern seems to be that the series is being cluttered with trivia; with detailed descriptions of technology and politics being thrust into action sequences, with needless descriptions being deployed at length, and with a proliferation of minor characters (all with the same detailed descriptions of their political views).

(David Langford found a similar problem in Anne McCaffrey's Pern series, with too many named minor characters. At least there were no politics left on Pern after Fax was killed. On the other hand, the dragons and fire lizards almost outdo the treecats.)

He begins with a description of the parallels; of how Weber drew on the Horatio Hornblower series by “C. S. Forester” (Cecil Lewis Troughton Smith) with generous additions from the life of Lord Nelson. The parallels are often too labored.

As said, he finds the writing style too cluttered. He gives an example of how a particular passage might be edited, and finds a 25% reduction in its length is possible. (The examples of earlier authors who became too important to be edited might usefully be cited here.)

The infodump problem is another example of this textual bloat. Lennard gives several examples, such as entire passages being repeated in different books. Or, a detailed (and unnecessary) description of Nimitz the treecat communicating with another treecat. (He cites the parody, “How David Weber Orders a Pizza” (2011) in this context.)

Some further research on the era might be useful. Lennard cites an example where Saint-Just, the Havenite leader, sends out commissioners to overwatch a Havenite fleet, comparing it to Soviet political officers. But the French Revolution (“Saint-Just” indeed, not to mention the even more preposterous “Rob S. Pierre”) had that; the fleet escorting the grain

convoy from America had the *representative en mission* Jean-Bon Saint-André monitoring the actions of the fleet commander Louis Villaret de Joyeuse for revolutionary zeal, which was held to have contributed to the French loss in the Battle of the Glorious First of June (mentioned, with a quite different perspective, in *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers: Tour du monde sous-marin* (1869-70, 1871) [*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*]).

The example that comes to mind is Mark Twain's two essays on James Fenimore Cooper, "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses" (1895) and "Cooper's Prose Style" (1895, 1946). Several of Twain's points apply.

(One could also critique the opposition politicians, either the crude Havenites, or the wimpy progressives who win elections in Manticore and proceed to cut the naval budget. It seems all very reminiscent of Harold Gray's cowardly rodential foes whose principal purpose in the story was to whimper "Yii!" before Punjab cut their heads off with his scimitar.)

There is a new Honor Harrington novel, *Uncompromising Honor* (2018). Lennard could have predicted one thing; it is 961 pages long.

These analyses of two significant bodies of work make for a more useful understanding of their appeal, and their problems. Could Lennard take up Game of Thrones next?

THE HEART OF THE ANTARCTIC

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE WHITE DARKNESS

by David Grann

(2018; Doubleday;

ISBN 978-0385544573; \$20.00;

Random House (Kindle); \$11.99)

There isn't much of a place in this world any longer for people like Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Worsley, and that is the problem of society, not of him and his.

When he was a young man, he found a book that was his Book of Gold (to quote Gene Wolfe); *The Heart of the Antarctic* (1911), and he chose to pattern itself on its harum-scarum author and topic. Fortunately, he found his place, joining the British Army and ending up in the SAS, where leadership on the Shackleton model is highly esteemed.

Along the way he read about the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, and found he had family ties. After serving in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Washington, and other hazardous duty assignments, he decided to go somewhere where it was safe. And in 2008 he recreated Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition, except with the prospect of transport home he went on from Shackleton's farthest South all the way to the Pole. He followed that up by participating in the South Pole centennial race, taking Amundsen's route and winning (and without dogs, too).

Finally retired, he decided to go for it, and

undertook a solo unassisted crossing of the continent. The definitions tend to vary, note. He crossed from Berkner Island on the Filchner Ice Shelf to the Pole, then went on, planning to complete the crossing in eighty days.

But with ten days left, he collapsed. He called for help, was extracted, and flown to Punta Arenas in Chile, where he died of multiple organ failure caused by peritonitis on January 24, 2016.

His wife and children buried his ashes at Grytviken on South Georgia, in the cemetery where Shackleton is buried.

To rework Xenophon:

These, I take it, were the characteristic acts of a man whose affections are set on exploring. When it is open to him to enjoy peace with honour, no shame, no injury attached, still he prefers exploring; when he may live at home at ease, he insists on toil, if only it may end in adventure; when it is given to him to keep his riches without risk, he would rather lessen his fortune by the pastime of journeying. To put it briefly, exploring was his mistress; just as another man will spend his fortune on a favourite, or to gratify some pleasure, so he chose to squander his substance on exploring.

In an earlier time, Worsley might have gone to the pole with his relative and Shackleton. In a later one, he might be exploring strange new worlds, seeking out new life and new civilisations, boldly going where no one had gone before. These days, he simply did not fit.

On a warm day I went out looking for roly-polies in the tiny front yard. I lifted several rocks but saw none of the critters I sought. The last stone I lifted had a big surprise for me. There was a snake under it. I stared down at it and marveled at its incredible eyes, a jeweled blend of blue, amber and gold. As a side note I marked that its stripes ran lengthwise. It is very thick-bodied, which made me wonder if it were poisonous. Poisonous or not, I could not bring myself to smash the life from those jeweled eyes with a rock, especially when the snake makes no move to attack me. I check for rattles and when I see none I carefully replace the stone.

At the library I describe the snake to Librarian K. She eases my mind by saying the lengthwise stripes belonged most likely to a garter snake and that the thick body probably meant the snake was gravid. It seems poisonous snakes also have flat eyes, not jeweled ones. I can stop worrying that my softheartedness could have bad consequences and enjoy the memory of an encounter with a garter snake.

— Lisa

On a warm day I bring in the bookdrop and a few minutes later get called up to the desk. It seems a stowaway hitched a ride into the library and has perched its grasshopper self on a book.

It would be one of the jumping critters.

Spiders are usually much easier to remove. If you can coax them onto a piece of paper it is not difficult to keep them on the paper. Jumping critters will jump off. They require stronger restraint.

I find a small baggie and stalk the grasshopper. I am able to get the baggie over it. A clerk congratulates me but I know the congratulations are premature. The grasshopper is contained, true, but I have still to get the baggie sealed. I am about to ask for a piece of paper to slide under the baggie in order to get the grasshopper off the desk when the grasshopper climbs up the baggie. I seal the baggie and walk fast outside to the nearest greenery where I release the trespasser. It is a pity that we cannot keep it for the terrarium but jumping critters just will not stay in a terrarium.

— Lisa

The Joy of High Tech
by Rodford Edmiston



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

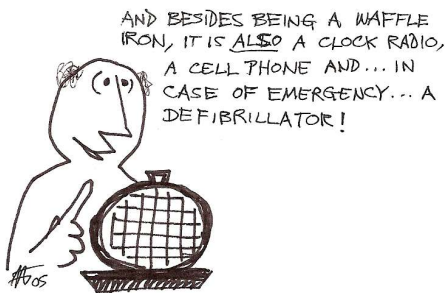
Getting High

As this is written, we just had a Soyuz launch vehicle failure with a fortunately successful abort. This underlines that getting from the surface of the Earth into space is still a difficult, expensive and dangerous enterprise. Even though we're not doing it the way SF pioneers such as Jules Verne (huge cannon) or Herbert George Wells (antigravity) chronicled. (Though, honestly, if antigravity worked the way Wells described that would almost be pleasant. Unfortunately, it doesn't.) Right now, we're stuck with using chemical energy, via rocket. Which means they still sometimes literally blow up in our faces. If only there were another way...

Konstantin Eduardovich Tsiolkovsky (Russian: *tsi* *o* *l* *o* *k* *o* *v* *s* *k* *y*), thank you Wikipedia) was a small-town high school mathematics teacher. However, thanks to the efforts of one his own teachers, he developed early in his life a fascination with space and the exploration of it. He not only evaluated — through mathematics and thought experiments — various methods of reaching space, but also some of the engineering details necessary for living and working there. Though he

early on concluded that rockets were the only practical technology available for reaching orbit, he evaluated other methods. One of these was the orbital tower, inspired in part by the Eiffel Tower, completed when he was 38 years old.

Tsiolkovsky knew that at a certain altitude above the Earth the orbital period was the same as the planet's rotational rate. (Arthur C. Clarke later used this idea to invent the communications satellite.) If you could get to that altitude you could avoid much of the energy expenditure needed to first gain low orbital velocity. You'd only need to supply the change in potential energy. So if you had a tower that high, with an elevator...



Tsiolkovsky knew that no materials were strong enough to build such a tower, but he defined the mathematics required for its operations. However, many materials are far stronger in tension than in compression. What if you treated the distance between geosynchronous orbit and the ground as something to be spanned by a tension structure, rather than a compression one? You just need a counterweight a bit past geosynchronous orbit, to keep the structure taut.

There are several materials — some more practical than others — which have sufficient tensile strength to span that gap. As these have been studied and production methods developed the concept of the orbital elevator (or beanstalk) has become more practical. Several organizations are today evaluating the engineering and economics of eventually building a working beanstalk; though, as usual, science fiction went there first. In *Fountains of Paradise* Clarke proposes a form of diamond whisker as the material. Since that novel was written other substances have been discovered which are even stronger. These days, the target material is Buckytubes (Buckminsterfullerene); these are carbon nanotubes, hollow strands of carbon atoms with fantastic tensile strength. This material can already be made in the laboratory, and the lengths being produced are gradually approaching values which would make a beanstalk possible.

Most plans call for starting by a putting a spool in low Earth orbit and unreeling it, with tidal forces causing a weight at the upper end

to rise as a weight on the lower end descends. Once that first, small cable is established a lightweight climber will go up, unrolling more cable on the way which will be added to the original. Repeat with gradually heavier climbers carrying heavier cables until you have built a strong enough cable to handle cargo. The climbers remain at the upper end - further out than geosynchronous altitude - to help form the counterweight. Not surprisingly, this process of building a beanstalk is referred to as bootstrapping. :-) Most current plans have individual beanstalks far smaller than those in Clarke's story, but more of them. The bottom anchor would likely be a modified oil drilling platform in the distant ocean, far from shipping. This would be self-propelled, so it could tow the lower part of the cable out of the way of major storms or orbital debris. (Yes. The part of the cable crossing low Earth orbit counts as "lower." :-)

A beanstalk would be an impressive structure, and an impressive sight. Imagine standing at the Earth-based anchor and staring upward, watching this — according to current designs — flat ribbon ascending into the sky to the vanishing point and beyond, with no visible means of support.

Still, even if the technical issues of the beanstalk are solved we'll probably need rockets of some sort to get that first reel of cable into space. (In Clarke's story, the material had to be manufactured in space. Buckytubes can be made down here.) Even once beanstalks are built we'll need launch vehicles for some usages. Then there's the situation of continued major need for rockets if there are some serious technical — or political — problems with the beanstalk.

In 2005 the European Space Agency published an anthology of stories about the beanstalk concept, which had one of my short stories among them. The book is available from Lulu.

(Amazon has the book, but only the first edition and for a collector's price.)

Conventional launch vehicles continue to improve. However, the improvement is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. We now know enough about rockets and propellants that any sort of sudden increase in performance is very unlikely. Not even barring the use of more exotic propellants than liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen. Which, trust me, are both pretty exotic. However, when chemistry isn't enough, physics can be.

A laser thermal rocket throws the normal limitations for rockets out the window. In fact, they can use a chemically inert reaction mass, such as water. Most proposals, though, use chemically reacting propellants, for several reasons. These launch systems would use ground-based lasers to add energy to the reaction mass in any of several ways. The simplest is to just aim the laser straight up the exhaust into the combustion chamber. This has some limitations, of course, and points out one reason most of these schemes involve chemically active propellants. If you lose the laser — even if

only because the rocket is tipping over at altitude to build up speed for orbit — you still have thrust. A conical aerospike would be a particularly good engine design for this, since the laser beams could shine up the middle and through a window in the combustion chamber without having to go through the exhaust. A linear aerospike would also work, depending on the details of laser and engine design.

Some of these concepts use a continuous power laser. However, it is easier to get high peak power using pulses. Additionally, pulsed laser beams propagate better through the air, with lower losses. Also, with very sharp, intense pulses you can create Laser Supported Detonation waves. These are not only a more efficient method of using lasers to add energy to the reaction mass, they can even cause chemical changes which increase thrust, depending on what reaction mass you are using.

Even solid materials could be used for reaction mass in this way, through laser-induced rapid surface ablation. A sharp laser pulse dumps enough energy into the surface of the material that it vaporizes extremely rapidly, with little of the energy being transferred to the material beneath.

People have been working on airbreathing first stages — and even complete vehicles with multi-cycle engines which breathe air during the first part of launch and turn pure rocket when higher — for several decades. Such configurations are often proposed for single-stage to orbit concepts. The airbreathing liftoff idea is attractive; you use oxygen from the air while it's dense enough, doing away with carrying the oxidizer needed early on. However, airbreathing engines are heavier than pure rockets of the same thrust (in part due to air only being part oxygen) and combined cycle engines are even heavier. You can remove some of that weight by going with slightly reduced engine efficiency. Which is also a bad thing for a launch vehicle.

Using lower thrust during the airbreathing stage and instead adding aerodynamic lift also helps. Horizontal takeoff requires less thrust for a vehicle which generates aerodynamic lift than does vertical launch. The vehicle starts generating lift once it begins moving through the air, even if the thrust is lower than the vehicle weight at this stage. (Something used in the movie version of *When Worlds Collide*.) However, the gain in efficiency from low-thrust airbreathing engines must be balanced against the increased period in which aerodynamic drag is significant. A horizontal takeoff launch vehicle headed directly for orbit must climb pretty steeply.

If you have an existing aircraft capable of high-altitude flight you can modify one of those to use as a first stage. In this case, the time needed to get to launch altitude is less important. This approach is promising enough that several companies and even entire national industries are backing development of it.

In fact, there have for decades been many actual operations which put objects into space

using an aircraft as the first stage. Even the Bell X-1 used a modified B-29 to get reasonably high before most of its flights. While none of the flights by the X-1 or its derivatives reached space (at that time defined as an altitude of fifty miles; today one hundred kilometers is used) those paved the way for aerospace craft which did, such as the X-15 rocket plane. In 1984 a modified F-15 fighter launched an anti-satellite missile in a test. In 1990 Orbital Sciences became the first private space launch company when it launched a payload into orbit using a three-stage Pegasus rocket. This was dropped from a B-52; one of those used for the X-15 launches, in fact. A similar system, using a Lockheed L-1011, is still in operation.

Such air launches continue to be used for high-speed vehicle and propulsion system test flights. This includes several successful flights by a scramjet powered vehicle. If the scramjet can be made practical that could provide an airbreathing "second stage" for launch vehicles. Theoretically, a craft propelled in this way could even reach orbital velocity, by rotating upside down so that as the centripetal force increases it can use lift to stay in the atmosphere longer. Once going fast enough, the vehicle can rotate back upright and fly out of the atmosphere. Rockets are used for both attitude control and to obtain the desired final orbit.

There are many other technologies which might be useful for getting from the ground into space. Electromagnetic launchers of various types have been extensively and repeatedly examined. However, many proposals require already having access to space to implement.

The rotating tether can be thought of as a short beanstalk with a center of mass in low Earth orbit and which alternately dips its ends into the atmosphere. There a fast-flying airbreathing (and perhaps rocket boosted) payload is grabbed and lofted as that end of the cable swings upwards, heading back into space. Bodies in space can be captured and swung into the atmosphere, maintaining the rotational momentum of the object. Meanwhile, the rotating tether continues to circle the Earth.

The launch loop is an endless loop with one focus on the ground, where it is powered to overcome losses from atmospheric drag and transferring momentum to payloads, to fling them into space. It works like that trick where a rotating sprocket hurls a drive chain upwards, until it reaches its physical limit and turns downward. Except that the launch loop is much larger, and moving at a significant portion of orbital velocity.

Related to this is the orbital ring. This is a ring around the Earth at the height of low orbit but which moves at well above orbital velocity. Fast enough that centripetal acceleration provides enough support for two (or more) opposed elevators from the surface to a magnetically coupled upper end. The distance of

the elevator ride is much shorter than that of geosynchronous. Like the Ringworld, though, it would be unstable and require constant position holding through some means.

The space fountain is similar to both of the above concepts. It has one end on the ground, with a station in space supported above the atmosphere by magnetic fields acting on the upper portion of the moving loop.

The slingatron is a large disc — perhaps more than a kilometer across — which does not rotate with respect to the Earth. However, it is on an eccentric shaft which moves the entire disc in a small (compared to the size of the disc) circle. A spiral path leads from the center of the disc to the edge. Introduce a payload at the center and each "sling" moves it further outwards and increases its speed. At the exit it is at or close to orbital velocity.

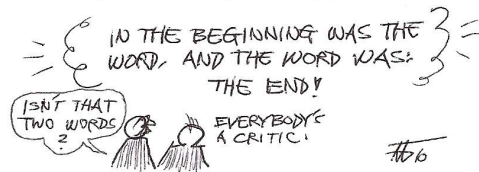
Even the old idea of a space launch canon has been experimented with as a first stage for small payloads. Gerald Bull's Project HARP (High Altitude Research Program) of the Sixties set an altitude record for canon-launched projectiles. It was intended to be the first stage for a Martlet solid propellant rocket. Three installations were built for this research. In November of 1966 the third gun — operating in Yuma, Arizona — fired a 180 kg Martlet 2 projectile at a muzzle velocity 2,100 m/s. This reached an altitude of 180 km, a record which still stands as of 2018. (I have not been able to determine if the solid rocket motor of the Martlet 2 was actually fired in this test.)

There are many more concepts involving real physics than have been explored here. There are also many involving speculative physics which are far less likely to even be taken seriously. Let's just say that, while rockets are it for now and the near future, at least for the upper part of the launch, looking further ahead reveals multiple possibilities.

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**Windycon 45
November 9 to 11, 2018
Westin Lombard Yorktown Center
Lombard, Illinois
Report by Sue Burke**

**THE AUTHOR DEATH
OF THE UNIVERSE**



Friday, November 9

Since the hotel is located out in the suburbs southwest of O'Hare Airport and highly inconvenient to mass transit, I talked my husband into dropping me off on his way to work. By coincidence, the ride coincided with Chicago's first snowfall and took more than an hour. (A friend kindly gave me a ride home on Sunday.) The hotel provided a very early check-in, and the 14th floor offered a fine view of big, fat snowflakes falling onto Yorktown Center's mall roofs and parking lots. I relaxed in the room until things got busy in the late afternoon.

Registration went smoothly, and after chatting at some fan booths, I attended my first panel, "Flash Fiction for Fun and Profit," which offered useful hints for how to write and sell very short stories. The next one, "And Now for Something Completely Different," featured panelists who weren't sure what to do with the topic: "A discussion of unique and unusual genres in science fiction, graphic novels, and comics." Instead they talked about marketing categories and how nothing can be completely different and new, which isn't really a problem. As one panelist pointed out, "You don't go to a play by Shakespeare to find out how it ends."

The opening ceremony at 7 p.m. introduced the convention's theme, *Unlikely Heros*, and the guests of honor: Faith Hunter, author; Galen Dara, artist; Kevin Roche, costuming (also the outgoing Worldcon chair, sporting a giant zebra-striped mohawk); Jen Midkiff, music; Bobbi Armbruster, fan; Andrew Trembley, toastmaster; and additional guests including Mike Resnick, Alex and Phyllis Eisenstein, Eric Flint, and Jody Lynn Nye. The charity, an annual feature of Windycons, was the DuPage County Habitat for Humanity.

The convention featured a wide variety of panels, concerts, filking, children's programming, video and board game rooms, book clubs, an ongoing LED kit workshop (learn to solder!), costuming workshops (make chain mail!) and a Masquerade costume contest. A Klingon Assault Group operated a jail-and-bail to raise funds for Habitat. The Royal Manticoran Navy, which is the Honor Harrington Fan Association, raffled off games and a Kindle to fund roof repairs for the Rantoul, Illinois, public library.

An 8 p.m. panel discussed "Evil Computers" and concluded that the real evil lay in malicious programmers. I wandered around for the next hour, then moderated a panel on "Science in the Kitchen." We intentionally tiptoed around the issue of GMOs and instead talked about such topics as industrial versus home cooking, vat-grown meat, and urban hydroponics.

By then most organized activities were over, so it was time to roam from party to party on the top three floors of the hotel and eat, drink, and chat. The spacious con suite also served free beer and wine. I went to bed after midnight, but many people stayed up later.

Saturday, November 10

I spent Saturday morning in the Writer's Workshop offering advice (sage, I hope) to up-and-coming authors. The three in my group had sound stories, although I recommended a clearer emotional focus.

In the Dealer's Room, I bought a pair of earrings for myself and a shirt for my husband featuring the words "Still Flat, We Checked" embroidered over a NASA-style red, white, and blue meatball. Through sheer force of will, I tried to avoid buying a book or two, but eventually I came home with one. In the Art Show, I bid on a piece and took a selfie with the Tiki Dalek that Kevin Roche brought, a tropical beach version of the Doctor Who nemesis.

After a panel on "Villains, Monsters, and Motherhood," I took a lunch break in the Con Suite, which was serving Chicago hot dogs with the traditional poppy-seed buns and all the "dragged through the garden" toppings, as well as ketchup for clueless out-of-town guests (an authentic Chicago hot dog does not use ketchup). In the line, I met a man who had attended every single Windycon since 1973. "It's like family," he said. That's something a lot of other people said during the weekend, from con co-chair Daniel "gundo" Gunderson on down.

The committee for Chicago's 2022 Worldcon bid met to ratify its bylaws, elect its board and officers, and review progress; a downtown hotel looks likely. I attended a couple of panels, "Which Witch Is Yours?" and "Heroes East vs. West."

I also participated in a couple of panels. At "¿Cómo Estás? Translation Challenges," we discussed odd differences between various languages. At "Animal Typecasting," we compared real animals to the compliant and stereotypical animals often seen in media, the kind of misrepresentation that inspired some people who saw the film *Pocahontas* to get baby racoons as a pet, with disastrous results.

I attended the Writers and Donuts gathering to chat with other writers and eat donuts (provided by Richard Chwedyk), then it was time for the serious business of visiting and comparing parties. I met a 30-year-old woman who had been coming to Windycon her whole life: her parents met there, they brought her as an infant, and she met her husband there, so for her the con and her family are inseparable. The Chicago 2022 convention bid party's entertainment included an origami sheet that could be folded (with a lot of complex steps) into a rocket (befitting the bid's slogan, "Take to the Stars"), but even with my still being pretty sober and having experienced help, my wrinkled, misshapen rocket would have crashed at takeoff.

Sunday, November 11

I learned my Art Show bid was outbid, which was sort of okay, since it was a charity auction item and the funds went to Habitat for Humanity. At the panel "The Sequel Is Finally

Here!" Eric Flint provided his usual phlegmatic and wise commentary. (I ought to buy one of his books and see if I like his writing as much as I like him.) "Fantasy Chicago" discussed the weird things in the city, including (semi)secret tunnels between buildings, ghosts, and some very odd museums.

I was supposed to be a panelist on "Autonomous Cars: awesome or awful?" but the moderator didn't show up and, to my surprise, things took a loud, contentious turn even before the panel started. So I proclaimed myself moderator and spent the hour using the classroom management skills I learned teaching teenagers to smooth out the debate, making order and fun out of chaos and yelling. Both the panelist and the audience were evenly and deeply split between feasible versus unfeasible, safe versus unsafe, and an improvement versus an impoverishment to people's lives.

It was almost time to go home. At the closing ceremony, gundo announced that through various means, more than \$1,700 had been raised for Habitat for Humanity. Galen Dara, whose art decorated the program book and Windycon website, won Best in Show in the Art Show. Party awards were selected by popular vote: Best Food and Snacks, Royal Manticoran Navy; Best Alcoholic Drink, Bar Fleet; Best Non-Alcoholic Drink, Bar Fleet; and Best Party, Moulin Rouge.

From what I could tell, everything had gone smoothly. I had fun, met interesting people, learned new things, drank tasty drinks, sold a couple copies of my book, and relaxed.

Next year's Windycon will be November 15 to 17, again at the Westin Lombard, with the theme *Space Opera*. Guests of honor are Elizabeth Moon, author; Mitchell Bently, artist; Chris Barkley, fan; Harp Twins, music; and Lee Martindale, toastmistress.

WORLDCON BIDS

- 2021 Washington, D.C. <http://dcin2021.org/>
- 2022 Chicago <https://chicagoworldconbid.org/>
- 2023 Chengdu
Nice, France <http://worldconinfrance.org/en/>
New Orleans
- 2024 United Kingdom <http://www.ukin2024.org/>
- 2025 Seattle
Perth, Australia

NASFiC BIDS

- 2020 Columbus, Ohio

WORLDCON

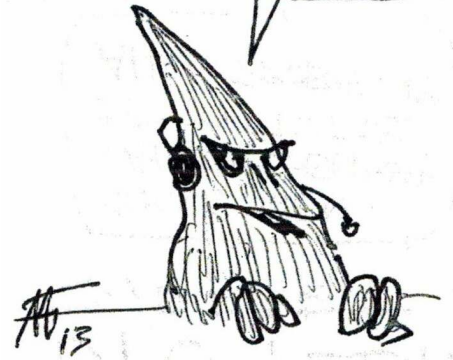
- 2020 ConNZealand
Wellington, New Zealand
July 29-August 2, 2020
<http://ConNZealand.nz/>

NASFiC

- 2019 Layton, Utah
July 4-7, 2019
<https://www.spikecon.org/>

UFO TECH SUPPORT

OKAY, THEN... WHICH OPENING DID YOU PUT THE ANAL PROBE IN?



HEALTH NEWS

Dr. K., the internist, recommended a new steroid to treat my Crohn's. I got swollen feet and cellulitis, paying \$\$\$ in doctors' visits and different prescriptions. The cellulitis still hasn't cleared up and they are talking wound clinic. Another doctor to look forward to. Not to mention more spending.

 Letters, we get letters

From: **James D. Nicoll** October 20, 2018
jdnicoll@panix.com

About your Heinlein book; will it be available in ebook form?

ReAnimus Press has acquired Advent:Publishers and is issuing its entire output in electronic format. In chronological order of publication, which means that *Heinlein's Children* is at the bottom of the list. Keep watching.
 — JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** November 2, 2018
 1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON
 M9C 2B2 CANADA
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<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Many thanks for issue 101 of *Alexiad*. It is a cold and rainy day out, and it's been cold and rainy all week, so it's a good day to stay inside, stay warm, have a cup of coffee or two (fully caffeinated am I), and write up some locs.

We are all of the age where we may be having some health problems. I am trying my best to keep my blood sugar down, and my left leg is giving me a few problems, but such is middle age, I guess. At what point do you actually become a senior citizen? I turn 60 in about seven months, and I already qualify for some senior discounts.

The big moment for me will be Christmas Eve 2019, when I turn 65. Then 1) I go on Medicare, 2) I get the "Homestead Exemption" on the property tax.

This very morning, I was listening to CBC's q, a great show on music and popular culture, also broadcast on NPR. One of the folks Tom Power interviewed was LeVar Burton, of *Roots*, *Reading Rainbow* and *ST:TNG*. Burton said he was a voracious reader of SF as a kid, which got him leaning towards SF and reading. He said he was extremely pleased to read so many good books centered on Afro-futurism, and excellent authors such as Nnedi Okorafor and N.K. Jemisin. I was pleasantly surprised by this interview. Both mothers of Tom Power and LeVar Burton were English teachers.

So was mine.

My loc... Thank you for sending me a .pdf of *Ah! Sweet Idiocy!* It has indeed dated, but still, it is a marker of history in our fun hobby. You are right, it's a transition from participant to consumer, but we have tried to reverse that transition, and for the most part, we've been

successful. We rarely, if ever, go to the big pro-run conventions in town. We are not willing to be mere consumers. The 4-6 month assignment Yvonne took may wind up being permanent, and she says she is willing to take it and go as far as she can with it. My own search for work has been going since March, and has been mostly futile, and the temptation to retire early is always there, but it wouldn't be fair to Yvonne.

Laney gave a darker version of fandom than, for example, Harry Warner in *All Our Yesterdays* (1969), which also covers that period, albeit for All Fandom, not just LA Fandom.
 — JTM

Minimalism probably doesn't work well for fannish packrats like us, but it does have to be done. We are looking at moving within the next year or two, and we know we have to literally lighten up. The tough part is deciding where and what. When we do move, we might have to get ourselves a storage locker to store a lot of what we have until we've moved the basic to the new place.

I spend a lot of time sorting out keeper books from ones I don't care if I read again. I am not having much success. The coming cold will also make things difficult. It has to be done, though. Like you I can see moving in the future and there is no sense paying to store books I don't want. I am reading a book by someone who is trying to go a year without buying luxuries. I don't think I could do that but I do think it would be a good idea to sharply curtail the buying of luxuries.
 — LTM

For once, I am very early in responding to your fine zine, so I will continue on in doing that so I can go on to other responsibilities. The new *Amazing Stories* is owned by Steve Davidson, and with a fundraising effort, the first paper issue, edited by Toronto fan and author Ira Nayman, was issued at the last Worldcon. I volunteered my services as copyeditor and proofreader to Ira, and he quickly took me up on it. If things work out, my byline should appear as a copyeditor/proofreader in the masthead of the second issue.

Done! Thank you for this issue, and I hope you and Lisa have a great weekend. See you with 102.

From: **Timothy Lane** November 10, 2018
timothylane51@gmail.com

I see some links in the reviews this issue. A lot of Piper-related material, which is always worthwhile. One correction I have is that "Joe

Doppelberg's doppelganger" in *What Mad Universe* is named Doppelle, not Doppel. Our copy, like most of what we had accumulated, was left behind when we sold our house, but I was able to find a review via the wikipedia entry that confirmed the name.

Nice version of the "Sorcerer's Apprentice". Maybe I should play my mp3 image of *Fantasia* sometime soon. It's been a long while.

I've had bagels and cream cheese at various events (they used to have them, along with doughnuts, at the Sunday morning sessions at the Holmes-Doyle symposium in Dayton), but the San Jose worldcon even added lox. Most impressive. I've hardly ever had that.

I assume from his comments that Joseph's reaction to the Wellington bid is the same as mine. Will a city the size of Wellington in an island country the size of New Zealand be able to handle a Worldcon?

Steve Francis observed that the New Zealand national convention had about a hundred attendees. If ConTucky (or whatever he would have called the 1993 Louisville Worldcon) had won, we all would have been drafted. Look at the San Juan NASFIC and draw your own conclusion.
 — JTM

To answer Lloyd Penney's question, we can't put a man on the moon today because some government idiot decided we would never need the Saturn V rocket again, so they don't have anything able to get us there. I can also second his comment on not recognizing most of the Hugo nominees.

I actually did meet Ellison at the Dragon-Con NASFIC, and even got to witness one of his explosions in the green room (not directed at me). I haven't read much by him, though a collection of his (*A Touch of Infinity*) was one of the first SF books I read. It was half of an Ace double (the other half I never read) for which Ellison reportedly got royalty reports showing that the two works had different sales. My reaction to the two works entirely reflected their covers.

I checked the wikipedia entry on the Indian caste system. They have a lengthy discussion, since this is a very complex issue involving a variety of different forms of castes that have evolved since it began around 1500 BC. It did change somewhat under the British, so the details today probably owe a great deal to the Raj. But if they hadn't taken over, there'd still be an extensive caste system.

In 1962, Alabama failed to redistrict in time, and having lost a seat after the 1960 census, couldn't just keep its old one. So they all ran at-large. The incumbents basically ran against each other (there seem to have been no challengers, at least in the Democratic primary) and the low man lost.

As I mentioned last issue (and earlier in this

issue), we had to leave virtually everything behind when we sold our house, so I can well understand Robert Kennedy's feelings. There were so many books I wished we could keep.

From: **John Purcell** November 11, 2018
3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA
askance73@gmail.com

Joe and Lisa, I am so supremely sorry to have fallen so far behind in writing letters of comment this year. It would be so easy to chalk this up to being so busy on the home front thanks to my teaching load (once again I have an extra class due to high enrollment), which means more prep and grading time, and also doing more at home since my darling wife Valerie has landed a full-time teaching job at Bryan High School, which is located a mere 2 miles from my campus. So we are not physically far apart, but being a first year teacher is really eating up loads of her extra time, so I am compensating by doing cooking, cleaning, laundry, all the pet crap (literally), and so on. Will I get a medal for all this?

Probably not, but she definitely appreciates it.

In any event, congratulations on reaching a milestone event with the one-hundredth issue of *Alexiad*. That is phenomenal, my friend, and I commend you and Lisa on the dedication the two of you have to this fanzine. Not many stand-alone fanzines reach that mark: I can think of many APA zines and club zines that have reached this mark, but an individual genzine? Not that many are still running that long, at least as far that I can recall offhand. The landmark newszine *File 770* comes immediately to mind, and beyond that, I'll have to do some digging. No matter what, well done, and I applaud the two of you. If I was handing out fannish achievement ribbons for dedication to the field, you would each receive one.

For that matter, my own fanzine is behind schedule thanks to that aforementioned business. *Askance* #45 is almost done, thank Ghu, and I hope to get that finished once and for all this coming week. Yeesh, but the time certainly flies by.

Well, let's see what I can comment on in this issue of yours. Oh, yeah! Joe's wondering on page one if something was wrong that resulted in hardly any letters coming in strikes a familiar chord with me. As many other fine fannish minds have opined, this might be the result of being an online fanzine as opposed to a paper fanzine. As you know, I also produce a paper fanzine, *Askew*, that comes out on an irregular schedule, and that does seem to receive more commentary than the online *Askance*. From my end of things, that correlation appears to hold true. Thanks to the rising cost of producing a hard copy zine and mailing it out, more and more people are resorting to going online, in addition to reducing the number of printed copies to contributors with

some extras for trading with others, or simply to have some on file. It is, we have to admit, an interesting hypothesis.

Speaking of letter column, Taras Wolansky addressed me about conspiracy theories, which are always a lot of fun to think through and debunk. People will believe the craziest things, that's for sure, and the crazier, the better. My favorite conspiracy theory is the hollow earth concept. I have a copy of a book — it's around here somewhere — on this topic, and it is fascinating reading. Explorers even tried to find the opening at the north pole that would lead into our planet's innards and lost their lives in the process. Well, some did. Now that I'm thinking about that book I want to go find it and mention the title. Hang on. Be right back.

Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle. I found it! *The Hollow Earth*, by Raymond Bernard (2009), from Adventures Unlimited Press. My search was not even ten minutes long, so I am impressed. Thankfully it didn't get sucked into one of those micro-worm holes that randomly float around our house making a sock, favorite shirt or necktie, cheese slicer, or even a cat disappear. Fortunately the cats are adept at using these micro-worm holes. Drives my wife nuts.

You mean . . . we can't get to Pellucidar that way?

— JTM

Nope, hubby, just down the rabbit hole.

— LTM

Perhaps it is time to wrap this up so that I can do a bit more writing on *Askance* 45 tonight before doing some more grading. Or perhaps not on the grading. Sometimes you have to do fun things to give your mind a break.

Take care, and give Lisa a hug from us.

From: **George W. Price** November 13, 2018
4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL 60630-3333 USA
price4418@comcast.net

October *Alexiad*:

The discussion of the Sidewise Awards mentions several 1942 stories from *Astounding*. I was surprised to see that the magazine title citations included a hyphen, thus:

Astounding Science-Fiction.

I did not recall that the title had a hyphen (which is not correct usage), so I checked in my collection. And by golly there it was. Apparently Campbell and Street & Smith had their own ideas on usage.

However, this creates a problem in *Alexiad*, whose style does not use hyphenation. Your word processing program won't even allow a line to break on a hard hyphen. So in the Sidewise listing for "Waldo," it didn't break the line after "Science-" and drop "Fiction" to the next line. Instead it also dropped "Science-" to the

next line, forcing the preceding line to have ungodly wide word spaces and stretched-out letter spacing.

Joe, as I recall, several years ago I suggested that *Alexiad* should use hyphenation, and you replied that your word processing program couldn't do that. This puzzles me — I really cannot fathom a word processing program that does not hyphenate. That's like having a car that won't go into reverse. Except that type setters need to hyphenate far more often than cars need to back up.

Have I misunderstood something? Does your program's user manual actually say that it can't hyphenate? Perhaps a toggle that will turn it on is hidden away in there someplace.

It might also be that you got an incomplete version, or simply that the program is faulty and not working right. In any case, I think *Alexiad* would look a lot better with proper hyphenation.

A subset of the nutty Left gets its knickers in a twist over such trivialities as using American Indian names and imagery for sports teams. They see this as mockery, and call it "cultural appropriation." I've always assumed that it was an admiring tribute to the fighting abilities of the Indians. Come to think of it, maybe these leftists consider it an insult to be respected for being ferocious fighters. (Oh, how barbarous!)

While getting excited over such minor matters, the Left has apparently not even noticed a much greater cultural aggression: Western clothing has conquered the world!

Look at crowd scenes in Japan or Indonesia or Nigeria or wherever, and usually you can't tell you're not looking at American or European cities unless there are signs in Asian or African languages. Nearly everywhere, all those "quaint native costumes" have vanished in favor of Western dress. And this is just as true in places that were never under the brutal heel of Western imperialists.

Now why should this be? I suppose that it is partly because Western clothing may be better suited to industrialized societies — flowing robes are not safe in factories with spinning machinery, and also might get caught in the foot pedals in cars. (Saudi dignitaries still wear those robes — but I'll bet their chauffeurs wear trousers.)

The "cultural appropriation" idiots cannot of course ever let themselves believe that Western clothing may be adopted in admiring emulation of the West for being far and away the most successful society in the modern world, in terms of providing a healthy, wealthy, and dignified life to the vast majority of its people. Here's to "cultural appropriation"! Long may it flourish!

Only straight cis-gender whites can commit cultural appropriation.

—JTM

From: **Lloyd Daub** November 13, 2018
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Congratulations to you both for beginning the second hundred issues of *Alexiad*.

Consider me a member of the cataract brigade. Although in my case the optometrist says there is but one, in the left eye, and I have likely two years yet before the problem affects my overall vision. Right now it is only noticeable when I use only the left eye by itself. As in visits to the optometrist. Otherwise I notice no change in vision quality from that source.

After they did my right eye, I could see the difference in colors. Everything seen through the left eye was yellowish.

— JTM

(Old joke—Lady Godiva announces she will ride naked through the streets. Citizens are warned that anyone peeking during the ride will be struck blind. Gramps announces he will look anyway—“I’m gonna risk one eye!” I know now which one I would choose to risk.)

Lop-sided vision seems to be par for the course with me. My face is lop-sided. My hearing is out-of-balance too. Why not my vision? Likely all this explains my general clumsiness. And the fact that I throw left and bat right.

Recurring lament in LOCs:

Add me also to the brigade of being out of touch with today’s SF fandom and SF in general. Hugos, conventions, books, fanzines, Star Wars, Star Trek, Dr. Who ... None of them need my dollars or eyeballs [lopsided] and don’t care they are without them. And I don’t even bother with more recent things in entertainment like *Game of Thrones* or *Walking Dead*. Like with the comic-book movies now popular, I am not their target audience. Not even a near-miss. They don’t need me and don’t care about what I write about. At least I save the money and enjoy other things.

I agree with Timothy Lane’s lament that alternate histories are not careful enough about making sense. It’s one thing to ponder a change in circumstance, but another to therefore assume everyone will change their attitudes or talents in response. The alternate historian must also be aware of events that will not change with the alternation—things that are independent of the change element, that is. Japan’s aggression and FDR’s reaction to it — and therefore the clash — were not affected much by anything happening in Europe. A difference in degree, but not in kind. I daresay the loss or regaining of trade with the Roman empire’s timeline had little effect on Imperial China. So that this Medi-

terranean empire living or never existing did not create an AH in Asia. (Or perhaps I have found a new research project.)

When things are changed also matters. Hitler dying on the Munich street changes many events in Germany and Europe. Hitler dying between 1936 and 1941 does not change events or personalities in Asia or America. I can write a long piece on the changes in one hemisphere without seeing anything to change the course of the authentic timeline when it comes to war in the Pacific. Japan was emboldened by what Hitler did to the Dutch and French (after not dying in Munich or in one of the assassination plots), but the Japanese Army would have reacted to FDR’s diplomacy the same way as we know they did from 1933 on. And the two-ocean navy was also on the way regardless of Hitler’s lifespan, or of a different AH discussed a couple of *Alexiads* ago.

(Hmm... Whether Stalin attempts Poland War II after a pre-war Führer death, or Russo-Japanese War II instead. Both? Hmm... Atomic energy happens anyway, just later. And Stalin did not need the spies on the Los Alamos project to get the Bomb, either. But he would have had the only one. Just later. Hmmm...)

Another writing project for another time. I continue to wish Sue Burke well with the new book, and repeat my private best wishes to Robert Kennedy in his new location. And best wishes to you all.

From: **John Hertz** November 9, 2018
236 S. Coronado St., N. 409 Los Angeles, CA 90057 USA

If as we sometimes say All Knowledge Is Contained in Fanzines — or perhaps Is Held By Fanziners — maybe you or some reader can help me with Hitler’s monkeys. They’re on pp. 33-34 of Ben MacIntyre’s *Operation Mincemeat* (U.S. paperback ed. 2011).

In October 1941, [Admiral John] Godfrey ordered [Ewen] Montagu to investigate why the Germans had suddenly imported one thousand rhesus monkeys.... The mystery ... remains unsolved.

I read Montagu’s account of Mincemeat, *The Man Who Never Was* (1953), in 4th Grade (and haven’t seen the 1996 U.S. Naval Inst. Press ed’n). MacIntyre’s is fuller, partly from the benefit of six further decades.

Kuttner’s Galloway and/or Gallegher stories deserve your praise. They’re not only ingenious, and comical, but also well made. In current work I recommend Powers’ *Alternate Routes*.

At Worldcon 76, I not only announced that June & Len Moffatt, my-longest-time friends in fandom, had been placed posthumously in the First Fandom Hall of Fame, but also I had to accept the Big Heart for Mike Glyer, who was at the con but couldn’t believe hints that he ought to attend Opening Ceremonies, where these awards had been unwisely scheduled

instead of on Hugo Night.

The Exhibit Hall was indeed spectacular. Applause for Jill Eastlake, who was in charge of it Sue Burke, did you see our Rotsler Award display, or the Christine Valada Portrait Project?

About the fan-category Hugos, six years ago I said in *Banana Wings* 61 we were like someone with a spade in hand looking at the ground and crying “Why doesn’t that hole get dug?” We’re still at it, or not at it. We don’t nominate, and the ballot shows the result. Afterward if an entire category seems wrong we could vote No Award — not Marty Cantor’s fanzine, which anyhow hasn’t appeared recently — but we can’t be bothered to do that either. Amanda Ambrose used to sing “If you don’t like me walking on you, get up off the floor.”

I see your point. I remember the (in)famous “No Award” ad decrying the poor quality of nominees for the Best Fanzine. Out of twenty-five signatories, only eight had nominated, and if all had nominated one or more “worthy fanzines” they would have got on the ballot. In response, when it was noted that all the TAFF nominees were signatories, Lan Laskowski ran an ad imitating its layout, calling for a “Hold Over Funds” vote for TAFF.

— JTM

I was glad to see Tim Lane in the lettercol. I seldom agree with him much, or with *FOSFAX*, which hasn’t appeared recently, but I’m not in fandom to be agreed with.

From: **Sue Burke** November 26, 2018
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Congratulations to Lisa for her weight loss, and even more kudos for seven long years of perseverance.

I am not sure how much credit I actually deserve. I did it pretty much at gunpoint. I was given a choice, lose weight or lose feet and I chose to keep my feet. I have been rewarded by keeping the diabetes in check. Too, I have learned that my mother was right when she said that nothing tastes as good as skinny feels. I have no evidence save my own experience as to this but I believe that sugar kills taste buds. I seem to taste much more fully on the low sugar diet than I did before. I find that an orange is as sweet as any candy

bar ever was. If someone were to wave a magic wand and make the diabetes go away I would not change my lifestyle much. Until it was gone I did not realize how much the tire around my waist was sapping my energy.

— Lisa

Joe, the Flemish make waffles rather much like the Walloons do. The Fleming have made penicillin and novels, among other things. These are nice distinctions, as someone has probably already said.

My sympathies to Robert S. Kennedy for sorting out a house. I've had to do that to move overseas and back. As you say, part of life disappears, and it is missed.

Thank you to AL du Pisani for his description of American SF as literature of hope, surviving, and thriving. I'll try to live up to that. Also, I fully believe the Spanish could pull off underwater dancing somehow.

Thank you to Taras Wolansky for your kind words about *Semiosis*. In fact, some people did suggest making a book out of each chapter, but I resisted. Those characters did nothing more exciting in their lives than what they did in their respective chapters, and Elmore Leonard once advised writers to leave out the parts that readers would skip.

That's a personal thing. Most of Weber's Honorverse novels would be novelettes if my reading preferences were the judge, and yet his fans demand his huge infodumps and want more more more.

— JTM

And Taras, I'd have been happy to sign your book even if it was damaged. That's proof the book was a part of your life, and life is messy. I'd have been even more delighted to meet you in person – and you, too, John Hertz. Worldcons are wonderful, but also too big to be able to meet everyone.

Even Windycon, at one-fifth the size, is too big to meet everyone, but I had fun at the most recent one anyway. My report, editor willing, is in this issue.

Life has been quiet otherwise. I've sat and written as the leaves fell off the trees, so now the sun shines in my eyes in the afternoon when I'm trying to work. The words have piled up just like the leaves, and I feel satisfied.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 29, 2018
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My thanks for Vol. 17 No. 5 (October 2018, Whole Number101).

Please note my new address. The Email remains the same.

This is a really nice Continuing Care Retirement Community. My apartment has a small living room, a den where I have my computer and other things, a bath room, a full kitchen, and a washer and dryer so I don't have to go to some central location to wash clothes.

Sue Burke: Thank you for the San Jose Worldcon report.

George W. Price: You are, of course, correct about Gerrymandering being done by both major political parties. You are no doubt aware that Gerrymander is named after Governor Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts who in 1812 had a district drawn which looked like a salamander. So his name was combined with salamander and the result was Gerrymander. Gerry had it drawn that way to have a safe Democrat district.

By the way in the apparent discussion over murders by regimes, R. J. Rummel lists something like 100,845,000 by Communism and 20,946,000 by Nazi's. I highly recommend his book *DEATH BY GOVERNMENT* (Transaction Publishers, 1994/1995). Also, his *POWER KILLS* (transaction Publishers, 1997).

Well, that's about it. I still have a lot of boxes to unload and right now I am having some medical problems. But the medical problems should clear up shortly.

Good luck in your new home.

— JTM

From: **Taras Wolansky** December 1, 2018
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Alexiad 17:5 (October 2018):

Joe: "Donald A. Wollheim was the fannish deity Ghu." I thought he was the High Priest.

He was both.

In Mark Skipper's 1978 novel, *Paperback Writer*, "the [reunited] Beatles ... ended up being the opening band for Peter Frampton". Talk about how quickly a novel can become dated. Peter Frampton's stardom was so evanescent that, between the time the contracts were signed, and the movie, *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, was released, also in 1978, the studio was desperate to deemphasize Frampton's participation as much as possible.

"The Sad Puppies web address has been taken over by an Italian company." Or did you mean to say Rabid Puppies? No.

Retro-Hugo Awards: I was pleased by one "Anson Macdonald" victory and not so pleased by another. I think of "Waldo" as an interesting but failed experiment, a fantasy about engineering. On the other hand, I commend the voters for choosing the thought-provoking *Beyond This Horizon* as best novel. The book is almost 80 years old, yet it seems torn from last week's headlines. In the West, scientists have developed tools to permit parents to select the best possible child they can have. While in Asia,

they are performing outright genetic engineering on human babies. This is precisely the backstory of Heinlein's novel.

"N.K. Jemisin made a snarky comment in her [Hugo Award] acceptance speech about how it was that women were sweeping the awards." I guess she would rather believe that than the truth!

Lisa: "I am trying to deal with the reality that a lot of [books] will end up in the dumpster." I had considerable success getting rid of stuff at Philcon, a few weeks ago. Even VHS tapes, which I had thought about just throwing away. I had planned to sneak to the freebie table in the wee hours to deposit them, so no one would witness my shame. (Shame I still had VHS tapes, that is!) But as it happened, I was not the only one who brought some.

Sue Burke (Worldcon San Jose report): "I came to the [Mexican writers] reading to enjoy the music of the language of Cervantes". My sister-in-law is half-Colombian, and taught Spanish in public high school for years. She would always tell me how much Spanish differs from country to country. Which makes me wonder, would Mexican writers really be using a form of Spanish that would resemble what Cervantes used?

"That [Saturday] afternoon, a group of self-described 'patriots' held a rally in front of the convention to protest ... something". I actually saw some of that from a window one or two floors above, having stumbled upon the scene while looking for a staircase or escalator to a higher floor. It was just a few people standing around — but I figure after both sides edit their selfies they will have something impressive-looking to post on social media for their friends!

It was (allegedly) toleration of child molestation. The supporters of SF As I t Usta Be were reviving the Boondoggle.

"Ada Palmer said a wise thing: It's not the death of a character that affects the readers, it's the mourning for the character in the story." I don't think that's usually true. Indeed, if a character dies alone and unmourned, readers who have grown attached to the character might find that even more painful.

Tim Lane: "The Army relied heavily on Indian scouts to fight other Indians." In Clint Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers*, about the Battle of Iwo Jima, a Native American soldier (Adam Beach) is asked whether it felt strange for him to fight for the U.S. Army. No, he says; his tribe sided with the Americans way back.

When the Americans are offering you a protected reservation and free food, while your fellow Native Americans are promising to exterminate your tribe, it's not surprising which deal you take.

George W. Price: "The conquerors [of ancient India] set up the caste system ... with the dark-skinned Dravidians being on the very

bottom.” I think the Dravidians were only in the south of India, so they couldn’t be the bottom caste in the north. On the one hand, low-caste Indians are not usually shown as very dark-skinned; on the other, the darkest Indians I ever met — who were the darkest anything I ever met — in metropolitan New York were upper middle class.

Quite right, though, in all races light skin is considered desirable in women. Sometimes, but usually not, this goes even to the extent of preferring white women to women of one’s own race.

“Americans have also distinguished between lighter and darker blacks.” The libertarian scholar, Anne Wortham, who was rather dark-skinned, told of how in college she was forced to take an examination a second time under observation because the administration believed she must have cheated.

The punchline: this was at Howard University. The light-skinned blacks who ran the place couldn’t believe a dark-skinned black aced the exam! (Spike Lee actually made a movie about the light-dark conflict, set at a fictitious university modeled on Howard. I still remember Siskel and Ebert apologizing for repeating the word the light-skinned blacks used to refer to the dark-skinned ones.) This may be why black conservatives tend toward the dusky: because they understand that racism isn’t limited to whites.

Sue Burke: “a pharmaceutical corporation’s deliberate campaign to sell opioids, knowing beforehand how addictive and destructive (and profitable) they would be, and lying about it?” (You sound like Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson; though lately he’s been talking more about the flood of opioids across our southern border.) You’ll have to be more specific before I can respond in any particular way. I will, however, note that opioids are heavily regulated by the government, and can be legally obtained only by doctor’s prescription; and whose prescribing behavior is also heavily regulated.

Nevertheless those “heavily regulated” doctors prescribe opioids quite liberally, and illegal purchases are readily available.

That’s in the U.S., anyway. I know Spain is different. Literally the only thing I remember from the Spanish movie, *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down*, is where the protagonist buys penicillin without a prescription. I was so envious! Years earlier, I had had a problem with excruciating inflammations between my teeth. (Eventually I flossed my gums into submission.) Each time, I had to find a dentist and get an Rx before I could go to a drugstore.

Once, during a Philcon, I found this octogenarian dentist in his office on a Sunday. His neighborhood had, let’s say, undergone a demographic transition and he got robbed a lot, but he felt he was still needed where he was.

“By my account, I’ve spent more than 200 hours promoting my book”. In *Freakonomics*, the authors calculated that the average low-level drug dealer makes the minimum wage. I wonder what the calculation would be for beginning authors. [;)]

Oh well. Most writers do it for the egoboo! Lloyd Penney: “if we can put a man on the moon, why can’t we put a man on the moon today? We’re too busy fighting wars, especially political ones.” In reality, it’s uncontrollable entitlement spending taking over the budget of just about every country, or at least every democracy, and crowding everything else out. For example, why the British had to scrap or sell their navy.

*Far-called, our navies melt away—
On dune and headland sinks the fire—
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!*

“It looks like Chengdu, China may be bidding for the 2023 Worldcon.” Holy 1936 Berlin Olympics, Batman!

In Tom Veal’s “Moskva 1995: Igor’s Campaign” (*Again, Alternate Worldcons, 1996*) the Moscow 1995 Worldcon ends up with Worldcon being owned by a Russian company, because of a complex set of stock manipulations.

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** December 3, 2018
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I am three-quarters through the end of year weekend death-march. Where I have something major on every weekend, and cannot fully rest. This is so that everybody can fit in their year end functions and events before 16 December, the Day of the Vow, aka the remembrance of the Battle of Blood River, which serves as the unofficial start to the December holiday season.

So the summer holidays start at about 16 December, and continues until the first weekend in January. This year starts of early, with the last working day of 14 December. And while this is usually a half-day, this year my department is implementing a new HR system, and have to deal with all the downstream systems and applications getting HR information. Earlier today I mused that I have probably not been that busy, just to realize that I have been solidly busy for four hours. But this first day of implementation should be the worst day of the first phase. The second phase start on 13 December, and is scheduled to last two days. I have been instructed to be available during my holiday, should it be needed.

Even with all of this, I am in better shape than I have been in a long time, health wise. Plenty of room for improvement, of course. But still much better than before.

And at least some of the improvement is due to reading for about 45 minutes before sleeping — enough time to calm me down and relax. I am making my way slowly through the Dresden files, have read Jane Yellowrock, and keep on finding little obscure authors who write stuff I like. And my patience with bad books are much less than before — I find that I am getting quite ruthless in tossing out books started that do not engage me.

I am starting to contemplate formal retirement, not as something I would like to do, but as something that will be thrust upon me. An unfortunate experience where a friend of mine had to move because he simply could not afford to stay in this part of Johannesburg, have also influenced me. I may face the same problem in the future, and need to start preparing. Still, I expect that whatever I plan, life will turn out another way — It always has. Sometimes good, sometimes bad. But I survived and am in so many ways blessed.

I hope that life will treat you in survivable ways. That there will always be something to read. And a friend to share conversation.

Best wishes to you for the new year.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** December 9, 2018
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Thanks for taking the time to send me the issues I missed.. I see that I have *Alexiad* issues through 98. Btw, #99 didn’t make it through the time portal; it got corrupted on the way.

I enjoyed the reviews and all the info in #100, including the alternate Game of Thrones timelines with more massacres, etc.! Lots of alternate history elsewhere, I see. Thanks to Sue Burke for her reviews of the Hugo award stories. Re: LOCs: I like your response regarding conspiracy theories: “Why haven’t they taken care of you yet?” Btw, while looking something up on the Snopes website, I got distracted by the Clinton murders theories. Good rebuttal there. (A friend told me years ago that Clinton was a murderer because someone told her that she’d witnessed one . . . And she’s alive — Why?)

More interesting spy background in #101. I enjoyed the 1943 Retro Hugos award winners list and Sue Burke’s WorldCon report. (Where can I find the little essay about describing how if I were a plant, I would rule the Earth? I’d love to put that on my Pinterest board about sentient plant books.) And thanks to everyone for their contributions.

WAHF:

Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.

Steve Fahrenstalk, **Taras Wolansky**, with thanks.

STAR WARS: EPISODE VIII II/III

... Luke looked into the sun. It was time. All those years ago, Obi-Wan had said "Let go." He let go. His body dissolved, he was one with the Force and the Force was with him.

He felt relief. The burdens were gone, it would be the task of ... whom?

His memories were confused, disturbed. One life was true, another wasn't, and yet whenever he tried to focus on a time it would fade away.

There was a woman. She had come to kill him, she had become his partner. Yet when he tried to see her, she faded away.

His old comrades. Han had been betrayed. Han was alive, still with Leia, with a family. Yet neither story seemed to be in focus.

There were wars. The New Republic was beleaguered. But who was the leader of the other side? Every time he tried to see who it was, the person seemed to fade away.

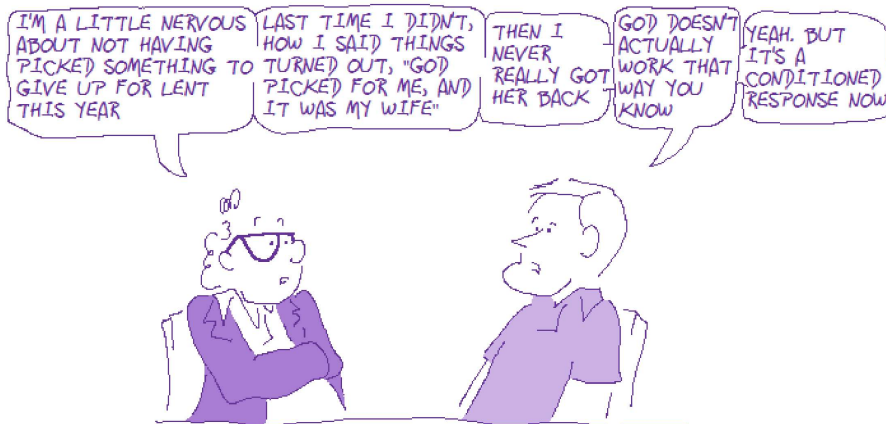
Was this how the Force was? All the things that might have happened, all the things that did not happen, all the things that would happen? He had no center. He drifted, seeing all the things that had happened, that might have happened, that could happen. Something was controlling it, something beyond his comprehension.

There was a fixed form in all this now, something, some Force-entity, that had come into being, come into his life. It was black, clad in red, with great round ears and eyes, and a pointed nose. Was this a Jedi Master of Masters? Or something altogether different? Every time he tried to put a finger on it, tried to resolve the mystery, it faded.

There was a sound in the Force, a chant, something of power and of dominion. He was drawn to it, inexorably:

"Who's the leader of the club that's made for you and me ..."

— Not by George Lucas or the Poopy Panda Pals.



<http://arthurkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

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This is issue **Whole Number One Hundred and Two (102)**.

Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

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

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