

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

I am trying to make a record of the book collection by writing down each title as I read them. It is a massive project, this listing of several thousand books. The odds are against my ever making a complete listing. The plan is to eventually have digital copies of favorites and others worth keeping. I have quite a few sentimental favorites. *Bride of the Delta Queen* by Janet Dailey. Children's horse books like the *Golden Stallion* series by Rutherford Montgomery. Many classic SF books, of course. Church history. I have only entered four electronic pages so far. But every day I have the goal of entering one notebook page into the electronic record so that the paper record is backed up. Already there are duplicate listings. I delete them whenever possible but they do not really matter. Amazon is kind enough to let me know when I have already acquired digital copies of books.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Chief Water-tender Peter Tomich of the USS *Utah*. Greater love hath no man that to give up his life for others.

— Lisa

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## Reviewer's Notes

Sometimes I wonder how long I can keep going. My health problems grow, and reinforce each other. I'm not asking for sympathy, a lot of others have worse problems. Not to mention house problems. I wonder sometimes if I'm going to make it. Then I wonder if it's worth it.

In one sense fanzine fandom is not failing, Just consult Guy Lillian's *Zine Dump* and realize that in spite of his wishes and urgings he is not getting all the fanzines being published.

But as a whole fanzine fandom is becoming pushed into its own realm. Consider, for example, that Dragon\*Con, the wave of the fannish future, where all the pros go to sign book contracts, has no fanzine programming that I know of.

Other fanzine publishers get advanced review copies or even the real book. Us? Two authors wrote and suggested that we buy their books and review them. One broke down and sent a copy, only to be disgusted because the review was not adulatory. The other I told I was not qualified to review the book because I didn't know the media background.

Now I know writers want good reviews. But I've (for example) avoided autographed copies because I felt it was a request for a good review. I don't like being put in such a situation.

— Joe

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**RANDOM JOTTINGS**

by Joe



Buy my books. (All available on Amazon.com for quite reasonable prices, except the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, which can be bought from Advent Publishers, or from ReAnimus Press in electronic format.)

<https://www.AdventPub.com/1531>

Advent Publishers  
P.O. Box 16143  
Golden, CO 80402-6003

<https://reanimus.com/store>

— Advt.

We congratulate **Lloyd Penney** for his having achieved the throne of Hugo. The Experimenter Publishing Company has announced that Lloyd will be the new editor of *Amazing Stories*. This is an astounding, astonishing, galactic thrilling wonder. Congratulations to Lloyd, and may his tenure be long and innovative!

<https://amazingstories.com/>

Italian extreme athlete Omar di Felice has had to abandon his solo crossing of Antarctica by the Weddell Sea — Pole — Ross Sea route. This happens to many, but what makes his attempt unique was that he was using a bicycle.

**OBITS**

Commentator, thinker, fan **Martin Morse Wooster** was killed in a hit-and-run accident on **November 12** in Williamsburg, Virginia. He had been attending an ale conference and was walking back to his hotel when he was killed.

His death leaves a great lacuna in Fandom. He was my good friend and I miss him.

**MONARCHICAL NEWS**

Someone's been reading too many thriller novels. **Prinz Heinrich XIII Reuß zu Kos-tritz** was arrested on December 7 for plotting

to take the Bundestag hostage and have himself installed as ruler of Germany. The Reuß family have disassociated the connection.

A cannon boomed somewhere, and the humming of innumerable saucer-shaped aircraft overhead wavered in a peculiarly flute-like fashion. The cannon boomed again. Of course! The guns were firing a salute to the brand-new son and heir of Napoleon the Fifth, born that morning and already King of Rome.

— *Time Tunnel*, "Murray Leinster"

Princess Olympia Napoléon and Prince Jean-Christophe Napoléon have announced the birth of **Prince Louis Charles Riprand Victor Jérôme Marie Napoléon** in Paris on **December 7, 2022**. The Imperial line has been secured for another generation.

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**YOU'RE SO VAIN**

by Joe

There was a partial eclipse of the sun on **October 25, 2022** visible through Europe and the Middle East, and past the Urals into Western Asia, with the maximum eclipse being at 61° 36' N. 77° 24' E. near Nizhnevartorsk, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, Russia. The eclipse is part of Saros 124, which began on March 6, 1049 and will end May 11, 2347.

There will be two solar eclipses in 2023. The first will be a hybrid eclipse on **April 20, 2023**. This is an exceedingly rare kind of eclipse, being annular near the beginning and end, and total for the middle of its path. It will be visible on the North West Cape of Australia, on Barrow Island, East Timor, and Damar Island and Paupa Province in Indonesia, with the maximum totality being 76 seconds at 9° 36' S 125° 48' E off the south coast of Timor. The eclipse is part of Saros 129, which began on October 3, 1103 and will end February 21, 2528.

The second will be an annular eclipse on **October 14, 2023**, visible in Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico (including Roswell), and Texas. It will then pass over Yucatan in Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Brazil. The longest period of annularity will be 5 minutes 17 seconds at 11° N 83° 6' W off the coast of Panama. The eclipse is part of Saros 134, which began June 22, 1248 and will end August 6, 2510.

NASA Eclipse website:  
<https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

Other useful eclipse websites:

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

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

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**OVERREACH**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE FALL OF NUMENOR:**  
*And Other Tales from the Second Age of Middle-Earth*

(2022; William Morrow;  
ISBN 978-0063280607; \$40;  
2022; William Morrow (Kindle); \$21.99)  
by J. R. R. Tolkien, edited by Bran Sibley

Another dream that troubled me originated in the huge pyramid of bones. I dreamed that they all stood up and marched past me in thousands and tens of thousands—in squadrons, companies, and armies—with the sunlight shining through their hollow ribs. On they rushed across the plain to Kôr, their imperial home; I saw the drawbridges fall before them, and heard their bones clank through the brazen gates. On they went, up the splendid streets, on past fountains, palaces, and temples such as the eye of man never saw. But there was no man to greet them in the market-place, and no woman's face appeared at the windows—only a bodiless voice went before them, calling: "*Fallen is Imperial Kôr! — fallen! —fallen! fallen!*" On, right through the city, marched those gleaming phalanxes, and the rattle of their bony tread echoed through the silent air as they pressed grimly on. They passed through the city and clomb the wall, and marched along the great roadway that was made upon the wall, till at length they once more reached the drawbridge. Then, as the sun was sinking, they returned again towards their sepulchre, and luridly his light shone in the sockets of their empty eyes, throwing gigantic shadows of their bones, that stretched away, and crept and crept like huge spiders' legs as their armies wound across the plain. Then they came to the cave, and once more one by one flung themselves in unending files through the hole into the pit of bones, and I awoke, shuddering, to see *She*, who had evidently been standing between my couch and Leo's, glide like a shadow from the room.

— *She*, by H. Rider Haggard

If Horace Holly and Leo Vincey (and poor Job) had gone to meet Galadriel instead of Ayesha bint Yarab, Holly might have dreamed of a great school of fish swimming through the ruins, following a bodiless voice crying, "*Fallen is Númenor! — fallen! — fallen! fallen!*"

But this is the story of Númenor the Down-fallen, its rise to beauty and calm, the turmoil that rose first without and then within, and finally the catastrophic destruction.

This work is brought together from a number of previously published sources. The

dominant thread is a letter Tolkien wrote to his friend Milton Waldman laying out the history.

As you know, after the end of the First Age, the two sons of Beren and Luthien were given a choice. Elrond became like the Elves, and Elros like Men. Elros and his followers went to a great island in the middle of the ocean, between the lands we know as Middle-earth and Valinor, the land of the Valar and the desired land of the Elves. There, he established a kingdom.

The animals and plants of the land are described. It seems to be a mild land, with few predators or otherwise inimical species. It was a pleasant place to live.

And so, for over four hundred years after the death of Elros, things went well. But Atanamir, the heir of the fifth king Tar-Meneldur, had a roving spirit. He went exploring the seas about Númenor, going to the North and the South and the East. Going west was strictly forbidden, the Ban of the Valar.

Because he was so often at sea, he did not fulfill other duties. Like, for example, marrying and siring an heir. When he did marry, his wife Erendis was bitter about those great wooden things he loved more than her, and when her daughter Ancalimë was born she withdrew to her estate and brought up her daughter, who became not fond of men.

Moreover, and more potently, Erendis had made Ancalimë accustomed to the society of women; the cool, quiet, gentle life of Emerië without interruptions or alarms. Boys, like Ibal, shouted. Men rode up blowing horns at strange hours, and were fed with great noise. They begot children and left them in the care of women when they were troublesome. And though childbirth had less of ills and peril, Númenor was not an ‘earthly paradise’, and the weariness of labour or of all making was not taken away.

With but one child, Tar-Atanamir made her his heir. She was as firm in her course as he was, marrying late and only having a son as her last child.

Meanwhile, in Middle-earth, the Elves had begun to seek allies. The local Men were not quite up to par, but they tried.

Out East, a military buildup started in a land which came to be known as Mordor. It was well suited to be a sally-point, with easily defensible passes.

Then someone showed up to meet the Elven magic-smith Celebrimbor. This new student inspired him to more efforts and began to create magic items of his own. Specifically, rings.

(Somehow this sounds familiar.)

Sauron eventually perfected his art and forged a Ring for himself. This led the Elves to begin fighting him. However he could mobilize a larger army and he severely de-

feated the Elves. Celebrimbor realized he had erred, but too late to do anything about it, and Sauron had him tortured and killed.

Finally, the Númenorean king Tar-Minastir mobilized and sent a large army to Middle-earth. The remaining Elves joined in and Sauron’s army was nearly annihilated, but he got away.

After that the Númenoreans began to act colonial. They built fortress cities on the shore. The kings became greedy, and more to the point, wondered why the Elves would not share this eternal youth and why they couldn’t go get it. The explanation seemed to go in one ear and out the other. Perhaps not surprisingly Sauron began to corrupt them.

On Númenor, there seemed to have been a cultural decline. The twentieth king did not take a Sindarin name except for the official records (Tar-Herunúmen) but was named in Adunaic, Ar-Adúnakhôr.

The culture changed. Fewer people adhered to the old ways, and those who did became more insular.

This process led to a coup, as it would be put now, or an usurpation. The twenty-fifth monarch had a Sindarin name, Tar-Palantir. His brother had wanted to usurp the throne but died young. However, the brother had a son — and Tar-Palantir only had a daughter.

Thus, while Tar-Palantir’s daughter Tar-Miriël was the rightful successor, his nephew Ar-Pharazôn took control and married Tar-Miriël, who was renamed Ar-Zimraphel. Tar-Palantir had resumed the old ways, including giving the annual prayers at the Hallow of Eru and tending the White Tree. No more.

Ar-Pharazôn launched a giant expedition to Middle-earth and utterly defeated Sauron. And then took him into his confidence. This was a mistake.

The new ways got even harder. There was now a giant temple with human sacrifice. For some reason the Faithful, the ones who adhered to the ways established at the beginning of the era, were prime subjects.

Then Sauron managed to suggest that Ar-Pharazôn sail to Valinor and acquire the long lives of the Elves. This was not a good idea.

As you know from having read *LotR* the Númenorean fleet and army were destroyed, and Númenor was plunged under the ocean.

Much of this was given in earlier volumes of the History of Middle-earth. Collected in one volume, it comes across as a grim portrait of overreach and the consequent catastrophe. The Númenoreans were not satisfied with what they had and wanted to get what they were not allowed to have.

### TOTAL ESPIONAGE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**HITLER’S NEST OF VÍPERS:**

*The Rise of the Abwehr*

(2022; Frontline Books;

ISBN 978-1399086375; \$34.95;

2022; Frontline Books (Kindle); \$12.99)

by “Nigel West” [Rupert Allason]

*Total Espionage* by Curt Reiss (1941) depicted in grim detail the aims and works of the German spy service. Among their chiefs was one Lieutenant-Captain Canaris.

Reiss’s lurid portrait was perhaps a bit exaggerated. The coordination and cooperation between the Nazi *bonzen* he describes, for example, was not quite in accordance with their actual efforts.

The Abwehr called its operating stations “nests” [*Nester*]. This book is heavily based on an official British report on the efforts of these nests.

The Abwehr made a global effort, sending agents not only to France and then Britain, but also to the United States and then South America. While the reports do not touch on the results of their efforts, there are enough sources showing how ineffective they were.

The detail here is great if not mind-numbing. There is material about the staffers of the Nests, the ordinary organizers who dispatched the agents.

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### TOP TO BOTTOM

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**COLD:**

*Extreme Adventures at the Lowest  
Temperatures on Earth*

(2013; Simon & Schuster;

ISBN 978-1471127823; \$44.10;

2013; Simon & Schuster (Kindle); \$9.99)

by Raulph Fiennes

This book might be more trustworthy were it not for one or two events in the author’s life:

- 1) *The Feather Men*, a tale of the author’s life being saved by a group of Special Forces vigilantes. (Though he has apologized by re-issuing it as a novel.)
- 2) Working for Armand Hammer, the KGB’s world bagman (and great-grandfather of Arnie Hammer).

Sir Ran is a man who wants to explore. As a result of his choice, the tale is very much of bodies coming apart under extreme conditions. Those upset by descriptions of sores, frostbite, and other such chafes and abrasions may want to skip this book. At least he is not wanting to present only the good side of such exploration.

But after he was given a good-bye by his father’s old regiment, the Royal Scots Greys, he decided to do something new. Namely, cross the world from north to south and north again, reaching both poles. One does not simply walk into Antarctica, and the effort to fund and equip the Transglobe Expedition was immense.

Afterwards, Sir Ran began indulging in other matters. For example, he climbed Mount Everest, thus becoming the first three-poler, as they put it. He went on to do such dramatic fundraising stunts as to run a marathon on each continent within a week. (He had to settle for

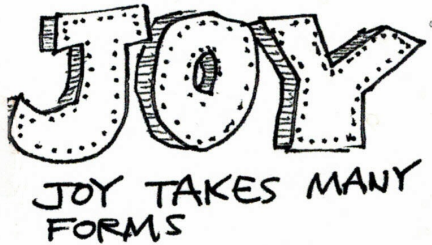
the Falklands in order to represent Antarctica.)

Many of his later expeditions contain descriptions of the reason that he had to drop out. A man above sixty with heart problems usually has good cause, not to mention the problems with those fingers that he had to partially amputate.

This is nevertheless a picture of a man who has endured substantial self-abuse in a quest to do things and see places. Best read by a nice warm fire.

### The Joy of High Tech

by Rodford Edmiston



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

Please note that while I am an engineer (BSCE) and do my research, I am not a professional in this field. Do not take anything here as gospel; check the facts I give. If you find a mistake, please let me know about it.

### When Was Arthur?

The ancient Romans were good record keepers. Even when they changed their calendar - which they did several times during the existence of the Kingdom and the Empire - they recorded what they had changed and why. Therefore, dating events using Roman records, while not simple, can be done with little argument for most periods during which records were made. Note that the information which follows in re. ancient Roman calendars is very abbreviated and greatly simplified, since it is not the main focus of this column. That focus is to present a historic framework in which Arthur may have operated. "May" because there is no scholarly consensus that an individual who could be reliably identified as Arthur even existed, and only vague ideas of when such a person could have lived.

For centuries, the Romans used a calendar attributed to Romulus, himself, with the first year being the official founding date of Rome. This calendar - despite repeated tinkering - had persistent problems. This was largely due to being based on a lunar calendar, and there is not an even number of lunar cycles in a seasonal year. The variations of this calendar were therefore uniformly too short for the actual, stellar year. This meant that sometimes

several days or even weeks were added to keep the calendrical year in synch with the seasons. The later Republican Calendar, for example, was a lunar calendar which had only 355 days. So, every two years they included an extra month.

Then came the Julian calendar, promoted by Julius and Augustus. Though this was a great improvement, it was also too short, though just a bit. Over several centuries it gradually became further and further out of synch with natural, seasonal events. It was eventually replaced in 1582 by the current (with minor modifications along the way) Gregorian calendar. (Note that Britain did not adopt this method of dating until 1752.)

At the time when Arthur may have lived, the Empire and its satellites used the Julian calendar. However, the Romans had left the British Isles decades before. Many of the administrators and rulers who took over after the Romans withdrew either did not understand the Julian calendar, or deliberately reverted to older methods local to the region where they lived. Often without stating in their writings how they were measuring the passage of time. This can make dating events which took place in the first few centuries after the Roman withdrawal in AD 410 problematic.

Add to all this the authors' frequent lack of any documentation to support what is written in surviving works (or their fragments) and the losses to history (including palimpsests, in which the ink was scraped off existing documents on precious vellum to allow writing something else, sometimes obliterating important writings so some noble could record his yearly harvests or favorite recipes) and the surprise is that we actually know so much about early post-Roman Briton. Especially in determining when some event took place.

Besides writings, there are multiple mentions of characters from Arthurian legend in various bardic poems, but these are even more difficult to date than the written material.

The first historic, unambiguous mention of Arthur was in about the year 828, in *Historia Brittonum* (*The History of the Britons*) a book probably written by Nennius, a Welsh chronicler. (This may actually have been a compilation or anthology, with Nennius either acting as editor or not involved at all. Nennius was known to have gathered "a heap" of documents.) In this account, Arthur was a warrior and warlord who was instrumental in the British victory at the Battle of Badon (aka the Siege of Badon Hill). However, when was this conflict? In fact, where was/is Badon? This name probably refers to a location which has traditionally been sited at one of the hills around Bath, but it may refer to Braydon, in Wiltshire, England. Or any of a few other candidates. Names have changed through the centuries. As has the language of England, which was Brittonic rather than English in the subject period. Words which had significant meanings in the original stories may have completely different connotations - or no connotations - today.

None of the other writers who produced various surviving documents during this era - before *Historia Brittonum* and for centuries after - mentioned Arthur in their works, even if they talked about the Battle of Badon. The monk and by some accounts saint) Gildas, who wrote of the fight in *De Excidio Conquestu Britanniae* (*On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain*), talks about the conflict in a work written in the mid-Sixth Century. This was within the lifetimes of some of the participants. Presumably, he spoke with at least some people who were there, or at least read what they had written about the event. Gildas says this battle occurred in the year of his birth, and adds that this was forty-four years earlier, but does not give that year or the year when he is writing! Neither does he mention Arthur, or anyone who could likely be him.

From clues within *De Excidio Conquestu Britanniae* it is thought to have been written in about AD 536. Information from this and other documents would seem to place the Battle of Badon sometime during the span from 493 to 516. Unfortunately, Gildas' Latin is confusing, and what he wrote sometimes contradicts other documents even when his writing seems to be clearly understood. It is possible that Gildas, being a cleric, was using for his dating the cycle of Easter celebrations held by the Church. Therefore, his mention of the battle occurring forty-four years and one month before he is writing about it may not refer to entire years of 365 and a bit days, as used by the Julian calendar. However, from the information in *Historia Brittonum* and other sources we can confidently date the Battle of Badon to AD 501 or a little earlier or later. Gildas does state flatly that the defeated enemy were Anglo-Saxons. As do other sources.

The Jutes, Angles and Saxons were related but somewhat culturally different groups, all from roughly the area today known as Jutland. All three groups are usually lumped together as Anglo-Saxons, even though in certain parts of Britain during certain periods the Jutes were by far more common than the other two groups combined. It didn't help that Vortigern - who is described as the King of Britain in some references - hired a group of "Saxons" as mercenaries to aid in enforcing his rule. After several years of service, either they rebelled over pay, or others from their homeland - attracted perhaps by the financial success of the mercenaries - began to cross the Channel. Most likely there was a combination of these events. Gildas *did* mention Vortigern, though some scholars contest that King's very existence, too.

Arthur *is* mentioned in multiple references in later works, as implied above. With each passing century after he was first named by Nennius, Arthur's role as a Christian leader fighting the pagan Saxons grew. In the earliest accounts Arthur is aiding or taking over from known and often well documented historical Kings who were fighting the Saxon invasion. Indeed, in later records Arthur is supposedly connected to verified historical Britons (such as



Ambrosius) and Saxons (such as Hengist). Eventually, he became almost solely responsible for successfully defending Britain against a Saxon invasion.

In many of these later works the authors are quoting — and amplifying on, like the modern game of Telephone — earlier materials, many of which do not mention Arthur by name or often at all. In this way, the legend of Arthur grew. He and his knights were soon replacing Celtic heroes in folk stories from Wales and other areas (that is, the old legends were retold with Arthur and/or one or more of his knights replacing the original pagan heroes). After a few centuries Arthur was promoted from warlord to King of all Britain.

So when did the real Arthur - or whatever person or persons the tales of Arthur are based on - live? We can only know roughly, and that is during a period from about 450 to about 550. What is known is that at multiple times in British history the occupants of the isles have faced invaders or potential invaders. So, having a hero who successfully fought off one set of invaders became culturally important.

Complicating matters, “Arthur,” “Merlin” (which means “blackbird” or “madman” depending on whether the name comes from ancient French or Welsh, and is likely derived from the Brythonic “Myrddin,” and who was apparently inserted into the Arthurian legends by the 12th-century British author Geoffrey of Monmouth), “Vortigern” (in Brythonic this word literally means “Great King” or “Overlord”) and likely many other historical and folkloric character names were probably titles, rather than common names. “Arthur” is likely derived from “Artorius” which has been claimed as Celtic, but may also have Etruscan or other roots. If it is of Celtic origins then “Artorius” is likely a latinization of “Artorijos.” As “Dracula” means “Son of the Dragon” “Artorijos” may mean “Son of the Bear.” Or something else. “Arthur” (or whatever the name or title originally was) may refer to a specific, famous Welsh warrior-King who was given the appellation due to his valor. Or his strength or toughness. Or his father’s physique. So there could have been multiple historical warriors and/or Kings who were given the appellation.

Some of the usual suspects of being inspirations for Arthur are such historical figures as Artuir mac Aedán, a son of the 6th-century King of Dál Riata in what is today Scotland; Ambrosius Aurelianus, who led a Romano-British resistance against the Saxons; Lucius Artorius Castus, a 2nd-century Roman commander of Sarmatian cavalry; the British King Riothamus, who fought alongside the last Gallo-Roman commanders against the Visigoths in an expedition to Gaul in the 5th century; and the Welsh Kings Owain Danwyn, Enniaun Girt, and Athrwys ap Meurig. (Some of those names drove my spelling checker a bit crazy.)

The Romans withdrew from Britain in AD 410, after centuries of ruling most of that land.

The power vacuum they left was filled — partially — by a series of native and foreign rulers. Few — or perhaps none — of whom actually ruled all of Britain for the first several centuries after the Roman withdrawal. So when searching for Arthur, be aware that you’re probably chasing a myth. Or perhaps several of them, lumped together later.

Is it any wonder I generally stick to engineering?

**WORLD FANTASY AWARDS**

Courtesy of File770.com

**NOVEL**

*The Jasmine Throne* by Tasha Suri (Orbit US/Orbit UK)

**NOVELLA**

*And What Can We Offer You Tonight* by Preme Mohamed (Neon Hemlock Press)

**SHORT FICTION**

“(emet)” by Lauren Ring (*The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, July/Aug 2021)

**ANTHOLOGY**

*The Year’s Best African Speculative Fiction* (2021), ed. Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki (Jembefola Press)

**COLLECTION**

*Midnight Doorways: Fables from Pakistan* by Usman T. Malik (Kitab)

**ARTIST**

Tran Nguyen

**SPECIAL AWARD – PROFESSIONAL**

Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda, for *Monstress* Volume Six: The Vow (Image Comics)

**SPECIAL AWARD – NON-PROFESSIONAL**

Tonia Ransom, for *Nightlight: A Horror Fiction Podcast*

**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT**

Samuel R. Delany  
Terri Windling

**WORLDCON BIDS**

2025  
Seattle  
Worldcon Seattle 2025

August 13-17, 2025

2026  
Los Angeles

Cairo, Egypt  
PharaohCon  
September 1-5, 2026

2027  
Tel Aviv  
August 2027

2028  
Brisbane, Australia  
Mid-August 2028  
<https://australia2025.com/>

Kampala, Uganda  
Kampcon: The 86th World Science Fiction Convention  
August 23-27, 2028  
<https://kampcon.org/>

2029  
Dublin  
<http://dublin2029.ie>

2031  
Texas  
<https://alamo-sf.org/>

**NASFiC BIDS**

2024  
Buffalo, NY  
<https://buffalonasfic2024.org/>

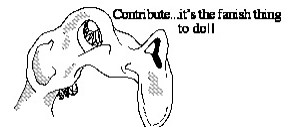
**WORLDCON**

2023  
Chengdu  
Year of the Water Rabbit  
August 16-20, 2023  
“6th International SF Convention”  
<http://en.chengduworldcon.com/>

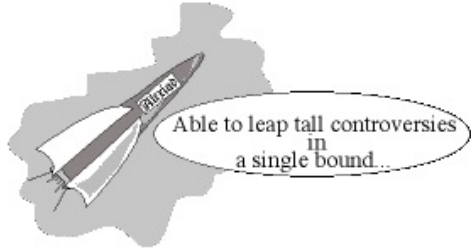
2024  
Glasgow  
August 8-12, 2024  
<http://glasgow2024.org/>

**NASFiC**

2023  
Winnipeg  
Pemmi-con 2023  
July 20-23, 2023  
<https://main.winnipegin2023.ca/>



## Letters, we get letters



From: **Nic Farey** October 20, 2022  
[fareynic@gmail.com](mailto:fareynic@gmail.com)

David M. Shea writes (letters): “William Breiding received a FAAN Award for Portable Storage. I had better not say I correspond regularly with William, lest CorfluCult rescind the award. Unfortunately I lost touch with Nic Farey long ago.”

David, then writing under his former nom de guerre of “E B Frohvet” was a regular and valued correspondent to the first series of *This Here...* (1999-2001), since which apparently his fixed notion and denigration of a perceived “CorfluCult” (sic) hasn’t changed, and as you’re well aware I’m not much impressed by a rigidity of thinking which remains in an over 20-year-old rut. We “lost touch”, of course, when *TH...* went entirely online, since I get the impression that David only responds to printed material, though if he does have a secret email address I’d be happy to add him to my distribution list and welcome him to the virtual fold.

His throwaway comment (intended to be humorous?), though, is both ignorant and arrogant, I’m afraid. The problem with only interacting with print fanzines (as valid a personal choice as that may be) is that the correspondent has zero knowledge of developments elsewhere, a lack of knowledge which is cruelly evident here. Portable Storage did indeed scoop the ‘Best Genzine’ FAAn award for work published in 2021 (given in 2022) but also did so the previous year. I myself have now administered the awards three times (2018, 2021 and 2022) and will do so again in 2023 and likely also 2024. I describe the FAAns now as being “sponsored” by Corflu, from which they are, in theory at least, technically independent as anyone with an interest in fanzines can vote, not just Corflu members. The suggestion that an award might be “rescinded” (for which there is no mechanism or precedent) because a publication got a letter from Shea is about as delusional as it gets. (I correspond regularly with William too — perhaps that’s an offset?)

Thanks, Joe, for providing my address, and we’ll see if that bears fruit, as I would be genuinely interested in hearing from David again, though first he has to switch on the internet...

Good arrers!

From: **Steve Green** October 20, 2022  
[steve.green@ghostwords.co.uk](mailto:steve.green@ghostwords.co.uk)

You’re quite justified, Joe, in your concerns over the heavy toll the past thirty months have taken upon the health of our community, both physical and mental. The widespread and draconian use of lockdowns flew in the face of previously accepted ‘herd immunity’ protocols and has left economies in disarray across the globe. Fortunately, I’d taken steps several years earlier to fortify my immune system, and declined the entreaties of the pharmaceutical industry to become an unpaid lab rat (a decision I feel increasingly confident in every time one of their executives is forced to admit how little they knew and how much they invented).

As you say, Science must always be open to challenge. Regrettably, many reputable voices were silenced whenever they spoke out against the prevalent narrative, and only now are their views receiving mainstream attention. This is at the heart of the distrust you write of.

*See War Against the Weak* by Edwin Black (2012). Scientific authorities accepted the principles of eugenics. The science was settled. Then came Aktion T-4.

—JTM

Warm regards to you both.

From: **Dale Speirs** October 20, 2022  
[opuntia57@hotmail.com](mailto:opuntia57@hotmail.com)

Re: the ascent of King Charles III. In Canada we always got a laugh at American journals of quality such as *National Enquirer* (do they still publish?) declaring that the Queen had cut Charles out of the lineup or fears that Camilla would reign (she can’t; a consort cannot inherit the throne or the estate). In fact, the reigning monarch has no say about the heir, who is determined by the Act of Succession and by statute law consent of the dominions such as Canada and Australia. The monarchy will continue in Britain because it is too good of a tourist draw.

There was an alternate history posting about Charles having secretly married Camilla, which meant that her son by Tom Parker-Bowles was heir. The poster had to pile up the circumstances to establish that the marriage was legal and secret. Then there was the one who wrote about a son of Diana and Dodi al-Fayed claiming the throne. It makes “Prince Michael of Albany” look reasonable.

The moaning about the aging of science fiction fandom is duplicated among stamp collectors. The Calgary Philatelic Society hosted a national stamp convention on the Labour Day weekend. The number of show

volunteers under the age of 50 could be counted on one hand. I am 67 and was one of the younger volunteers. It isn’t that there aren’t any younger stamp collectors. The hobby is still going strong but the next generation only buys stamps online and blogs instead of attending club meetings.

It was like that at the model railroad exhibition at the Horse Park’s Christmas show. There weren’t any young model railroaders.

—JTM

Calgary’s annual readercon When Words Collide will be going live in 2023. Visit [www.whenwordscollide.org](http://www.whenwordscollide.org) The majority of attendees come from away, so by then airline fares should be down to affordable levels. I look forward to a resumption of normality and being able to associate with them that has read a book.

From: **Mike Glycer** October 22, 2022  
[mikeglyer@cs.com](mailto:mikeglyer@cs.com)

Thanks Joe.

George W. Price’s letter about Advent’s history with Panshin’s *Heinlein in Dimension*, it seems to me, skips a step between Advent succumbing to Heinlein’s threats about its original plan to publish the book, and then returning to do so a couple years later. That is the step where Panshin published much of the material in fanzines. Since Heinlein didn’t sue anybody after that happened, Advent knew its risks were correspondingly much less than originally feared.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** Nov. 1, 2022  
[darrells@comcast.net](mailto:darrells@comcast.net)

Thanks for the newest issue, which I can comment on briefly before plunging southward into the distant, inner reaches of the Solar System for the World Fantasy Convention (which is in New Orleans, somewhere near the orbit of Venus). I’ll see if this particular convention is “dying,” or making some sort of comeback in the Late Covid Era. Last year in Canada doesn’t count. There were border-crossing problems, testing requirements, and you had to lie to the Canadian authorities about where you would quarantine if you tested positive while there. (You had to give a Canadian address. Of course what any sensible American with a car would have done in that situation is check out of the hotel and head straight for the border.)

Are conventions dying, or just some of them? I gather that the attendance in Chicago this year was at acceptable levels, and it wasn’t all old geezers in walkers. Corflu may have a problem because it is devoted to a now nearly invisible fan culture that the general con-going public never even suspected existed. I certainly know people who have been active in “fan-

dom” for decades and have never participated in or likely even seen a fanzine. But how did Dragon Con go this year? Any idea of the numbers? Covid has admittedly had a dampening effect. This year’s Necronomicon Providence had only about 2200 people rather than the usual 3000. Capclave was small, allegedly about 200, but if there were that many I never saw them all in one place. There were a lot of people I was hoping to see who were not there. I went to Pulpfest in Pittsburgh again this year, and it seemed “normal” to me but I have only been to two consecutive Pulpfests, so I perhaps have not seen it in its full glory. But it was not exactly crickets chirping either. (I went as a dealer again and did well.) We’re having an in-person Philcon again this year. I am writing the writing workshop, as I have for the last 30-some years.

In response to Taras Wolansky, I cannot even say that the “problem” with my “presentation style” at Balticon was even political. It probably was. I may have crossed some line which was only spelled out in the most recent edition of the Newspeak Dictionary, which the Ministry of Truth had failed to provide, and since the Ministry cannot be wrong, I must be. But I cannot say, because do not know what the incident was or if anything actually happened. But it is not as if I am a raving gun-nut or Trumpofascist or climate-change denier or whatever. I regard gender identity as a private matter. I am not usually controversial. So, who knows? I do know that the woman who caused such trouble with Stephanie Burke has been relieved of her duties for a while, which is some progress. Will they ever want me back? We shall see.

Taras is a bit naïve to assume that only Leftists are intolerant. Fanatics are fanatics. Admittedly we have had few out-and-out Nazis in fandom, and had fewer of them in the old days when Milt Rothman was friends with Chandler Davis, but I certainly don’t see any indication that Trumpland or Putinland is any more welcoming and tolerant than Wokeland. Whenever any group becomes obsessed with the One Truth, they tend to demand adherence to that truth by all in their company.

As for why there is distrust in science, this is because the general public is close to illiterate in scientific matters, has no understanding of the scientific method, and therefore assumes that all questions are “settled.” Some are. The Earth moves around the Sun. That is not going to change. Gravity works. Vaccines work. The Earth is not flat. As for the expected ice age, there may have been some studies that suggested that, but there have also been warnings about global warming from industrial activity for a century now. We called this the Greenhouse Effect back in the 1960s and ‘70s. Nowadays we can see it happening all around us, with droughts, floods, wildfires, the ice-caps melting, etc. If you have lived in the same place for the past 50 years you can remember when the climate was quite different from what it is today. So to deny this now is to deny the evi-

dence of your own senses. If you are a little more observant you can see plant and insect species shifting, or dying out. If you work in medicine, you can see tropical diseases moving north. I wonder how long it will be before we have alligators in Virginia or southern New Jersey.

But of course science changes all the time. Back in the 1930s it was the prevailing theory that planetary formation was very rare, that solar systems only resulted when one star brushed against another and ripped off some material, which then formed into planets. Nowadays we know by direct observation that this is not true, and that most stars have planets. Does the general public even know that this change ever took place? Probably not.

Regarding Panshin and Heinlein, George Price’s letter is extremely enlightening about why precisely Heinlein had a bug up his ass about Panshin, but I also suspect that some of it was that Heinlein was not part of the general literary culture, did not understand what criticism is about, and so did not understand what an honor it was to be the first science fiction author to be the subject of a book-length study. He didn’t get it, and his behavior was churlish. It also may be that Heinlein (who did pretty much demand worship) thought too highly of himself to allow that any mere mortal could touch on such a lofty subject as his work.

**It was as much his concern that Panshin was trying to write a biography. He didn’t want his privacy invaded. From what Bill Patterson could say, long after Heinlein was dead, there were a few embarrassing moments, such as his first wife, or those wild days in New York.**

I will share an anecdote I heard from Jerry Pournelle. I was on a panel with Jerry at Balticon many years ago (before the Ministry of Truth took it over) and he told how he had made the acquaintance of Heinlein, become his friend, stayed as a guest at his house, etc. Heinlein was the perfect host, fascinating and infinitely gracious. But this came at a cost. If you were Heinlein’s “friend” like that, you owed him, and someday he might call in the obligation. For Jerry this happened when Heinlein called him up, having heard that he (Pournelle) was speaking at some convention where Panshin was also to speak. “I would regard it as a very great favor,” said Heinlein, in the manner of a mafia don, “If you would see to it that he does not.” Pournelle was completely flustered. What could he do? He couldn’t refuse a favor to Mister Heinlein, but at the same time he had no ability to intervene with the con committee, and hitting Panshin over the head with a lead pipe probably wouldn’t have been a good idea. Fortunately the crisis was averted when Panshin didn’t show up. Pournelle added that this was because Panshin was a hippie and probably too stoned to remember, which is a slur on Pournelle’s part. (I sus-

pect Pournelle would not have lasted very long at conventions in the Woke era.) It was a common prejudice of his generation that long hair on an adult male meant a shortage of brain power. The answer to that of course is that fashion is just fashion and it always changes. Louis XIV was the definitive longhair, and despite his faults, he could not be accused of being unintelligent.

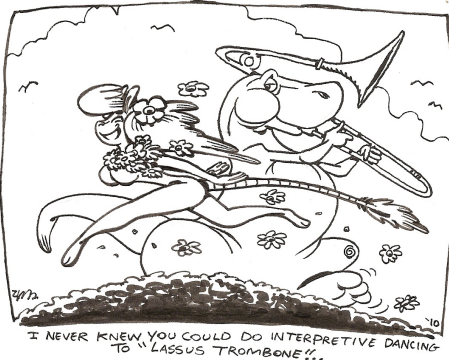
By the way, I don’t think Heinlein will be remembered primarily for his juveniles. Do kids read them anymore? Or are they just read by the initial audience, now 60 or 70-something Baby Boomers? Is there anything in any of these books that a modern-day adolescent could relate to? I think some of the juveniles, like *Have Spacesuit or Citizen of the Galaxy*, may survive, but not because they are kids’ books, but because they are strong stories for readers of any age. Certainly what is going to matter is the first half of Heinlein’s career, not the second. I once led a discussion group at a Lunacon called “When Did Heinlein Go Bad?” Everybody agreed that he had, and that his later books were rubbish, with *Friday* being a partial return to form. But after that, nothing. Otherwise people seemed to agree that he was a good, even great writer up to the end of the 1950s, and the breaking points for his going bad tended to be before or after *Starship Troopers* and before or after *Stranger*. Everyone agreed that the next three, *Podkayne, Farnham*, and *Glory Road*, were all disasters. Most people cited *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* as the last good Heinlein book. That came out in 1965. Heinlein’s last novel, *To Sail Beyond the Sunset*, appeared in 1987. We will mercifully overlook his posthumous works and dismiss *Variable Star* as apocrypha, akin to August Derleth’s “collaborations” with Lovecraft written from a line or two in Lovecraft’s Commonplace Book. But that still means that from 1970 through 1987, everything Heinlein published, with the possible exception of *Friday*, diminished his reputation a little bit more, as had much of what he had written before that, such as the catastrophic *Farnham’s Freehold*. That’s a legacy that is going to need some pruning, surely. I note that his presence in the bookstores has largely vanished. I suspect his cultural impact will go too, as generations of SF readers and even writers grow up without having read him.

A 60-something friend of mine told me a story a few years ago, which I may even have related in the pages of *Alexiad* before, but I will give you the short version again. A young lady (20-something) in his local SF club asked the older members, “Why does Heinlein have such a good reputation when he writes such bad books?” They asked her what she had read? It was all the lafe, blathery ones, *Time Enough for Love*, *The Number of the Beast* etc. If that’s all you’ve read it would be very hard to believe that the same writer could have written *Double Star*.

I would say he began to “go



bad" when he didn't have to defend his statements. No matter how problematic Campbell or Alice Dalgleish were themselves, they could say, "But what do you mean by this?" and he would have to justify it. Then he became the guy everyone wanted to read, and no wanted to lose his books by offending him. (Thus Fred Pohl and the Algis Budrys review of *Stranger*.)



As for the Chinese Worldcon, certainly I am not going. Imagine what would happen if there's a Covid lockdown during the con. Imagine being stuck at a con for weeks ... Something like that just happened at the Shanghai Disneyland. It was suddenly announced that the park was closed and no one would be allowed to enter or leave. There was a rush for the gates, but they were already secured. No one gets out unless they can show more than one negative Covid test. This is going to take days or weeks. What a nightmare scenario, to be trapped in Chinese Disneyland forever. The good news is that the rides are still running. So ... have fun.

"Imagine being stuck at a con for weeks." You mean like the Boat Bid?

—JTM

From: **David M. Shea** September 14, 2022  
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive Unit 506,  
Ellicott City, MD 21042-5988

On November 12, 1878, Princess Louise (the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria) visited Liverpool with her husband, John, Marquess of Lorne. In fact, the couple were merely passing through, to board the ship which would carry them to Canada; where the Marquess would take up the post of Governor-General. However, royal visits to Liverpool were rare; the city fathers decided to make the most of the limited opportunity. Thousands lined the streets to glimpse the princess. The facade of the Royal Adelphi Hotel was decorated with flags: a Royal Standard, a Union Jack, a St.

George's Ensign, and — even at the time no one seemed quite sure why — a large American flag.

I was formerly in the 7th Congressional District, represented by Mr. Mfume. I am now informed I am in the 3rd District, which is (up to the election) represented by Mr. Sarbanes. My district for state senate, house of delegates, and county council remains the same. I voted. I am not obliged to say for whom I voted.

On "Harry Potter" fanatic: I would think there are many writers whose work is more deserving of being copied. On a related note, thanks to Lloyd Penney for his comment on my article on *Fadeaway* 67. As the zine has, true to its title, faded away, Lloyd's remarks are the first and only feedback I have gotten on the piece.

As for the actual British crown, the large red stone on the front, known for years as the "Prince's Ruby", is actually a red spinel.

"The Reproductive System" somehow called to mind Delany's *The Jewels of Apor*; where a priestess is elected to be the "goddess incarnate" until such time as she has a daughter. I was left wondering what would happen if she had a son, or was infertile, or just not interested in men. (Bravo to Taras Wolansky for pointing out an error in *Scientific American*. Which, as it happens, is the American Periodical the longest in regular publication.)

I tend to agree with Panshin that Heinlein's "juveniles" are the works for which he will mostly remembered. But the admittedly choppy style of *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* did not bother me. A while ago I tried to re-read *Podkayne*, for the first time in years. Got about halfway through and just could not maintain interest in the story.

Just remember, Clark is the protagonist. Podkayne is only the narrator.

—JTM

Many more awards than I wished to know about.

In tennis, one's nationality is a matter of choice. Elena Rybakina is a Russian and lives in Moscow. However, early in her career, she got less support from the Russian federation of the sport, and re-aligned to Kazakhstan, which was more willing to provide support. The Spanish player Garbiné Mugruza was born in South America — I forget where — but transferred his allegiance to Spain, a far more important country in the sport with many academies. The American player Sophia Kenin was born in Russia but her parents brought her to the U.S. as a child; she regards herself as a American and plays with a red-white-and-blue star-spangled racket.

No, I never read the "Lensmen" stories either, and feel no loss about it.

Of musicians performing under difficult conditions; the legendary pioneer of early folk/country, Mother Maybelle Carter, was scheduled to do a show in Wheeling, West

Virginia. During the day a major blizzard blew through the town. Three people made it to the show. The musician introduced herself: "I'm Maybelle Carter. I play guitar, banjo, fiddle, autoharp, and harmonica. How come there's so many of me and so few of you?" But she stayed and played and sang.

Emmylou Harris recorded Harold Carter Family standard "Hello Stranger" on the *Luxury Liner* album with Nicolette Larson and Fayssoux Sterling singing harmony.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Nov. 9, 2022  
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA  
[RichD22426@aol.com](mailto:RichD22426@aol.com)

This responds to Alexiad 10/2202.

Are you old at 60? Being old or young is the luck of the draw. I seem to remember children who had signs of being old. So I am lucky to be 77, and part of me is old and other parts are younger.

"Reviewer's Notes" Distrust of Science. Of course, it changed because new facts are found, like you say. Also. It changed because, let's face it, a new generation of scientists will have different views. Sometimes, it's hard to tell the real science from current opinions.

Yale Stewart is right. Why not? The young Avengers and the old Harry Potters. As long as it's not young God, it's OK.

"Monarchical News" That's big right now with the death of Queen Elizabeth. The words you quote about that sound like we were living in the 17th Century or at least the 18th. Thinking about it, though, that's not a bad idea: that we're attached to the past. It's OK as long as we don't fight a war over everything "not like they did then." Remember the War of Jenkins Ear.

"The Reproductive System" Getting everything for free. Why not if robots do all the work and are programmed so they won't rebel against their human masters. Better than making exact duplicates of human beings who are treated like dirt. Not like in *The People Makers* by Damon Knight.

"Mittot, Mittot" Were the Spaniards able to conquer Peru so easily because other tribes hated them and sided with the Spaniards? I gather that was how Cortes conquered Mexico.

"Hamilton" Ah, in an alternate America, Hamilton was overthrown as President because he didn't really believe in democracy. That fits in with his views and perhaps his personality.

"The World of Commander McBragg" A lot of problems are caused by the fact we are looking for spotless leaders. Unfortunately, nobody's perfect. As you say, realism means that we have to accept people's flaws. Like Commander Spicer-Simson "McBragg".

The problem with the contemporary armed forces is that for promotion, an officer has to have a perfect resumé with the right periods of command, staff, and



education, unmarked by any errors or transgressions. All initiative, imagination, and special knowledge seem to be expunged along the way. Spicer-Simson would have received a bad evaluation and been pushed out. It is impossible to get promoted without being evaluated as a one-in-100 officer; yet for some reason the armed forces don't seem to have this overwhelmingly skilled and able leadership.

“Correction” Taras Wolansky points out that Samuel Delany predated Sheree Thomas and Octavia Butler as the first Black of some fame in science fiction. In fact, he was nominated for SF’s highest awards.

“Vivo La Douche” Taral Wayne makes his point that the movie “Vivo” was a mess.

However, often motion pictures that lacked any virtues have been made for kids. On the other hand, I didn’t think “Santa Claus Conquers Mars”, a movie pointed to for this, was that bad.

“Heinlein’s Fine Lines” I think more highly of Panshin’s book *Heinlein in Dimension*. He didn’t trash Heinlein as I was led to believe. In addition, I suspect, during Heinlein’s later days, he needed an editor even more than a heart surgeon.

“Archon 49” It sounds like the hotel Leigh Kimmel stayed at is not one I would like to patronize. I haven’t seen cockroaches at a hotel in a long time. At least the food served in that hotel restaurant didn’t seem that bad.

Now for the letters.

“George W. Price” I can’t do justice to this letter. I can, however, ask what Heinlein had against Panshin. Perhaps he was afraid of anyone knowing about his life. Which is strange because his books and stories indirectly tell a lot about him.

“David M. Shea.” I can tell David why Leigh Kimmel is always talking about the dealer’s room. She and her family are trying to make money there.

“Lloyd Penney” I haven’t noticed cons going “the way of the Dodo” except for CapClave, which has the dodo as its symbol. I guess, like with fans, cons in different areas prosper and gaffiate. Maybe cons in your part of Canada will rise again.

“Taras Wolansky” In Roman Catholicism, the pope has ruled. Rarely has the Pope bowed to the Emperor. It helped that the Roman empire dissolved and, at times, the Pope had his own small empire. On the other hand, in the East, an emperor ruled for the longest time. Hence, the leader of Orthodoxy had to bow to him. Then, when the Eastern Empire was conquered by the Turks, the leaders of Orthodoxy didn’t rule any land of theirs so they had to bow to any tyrant who did.

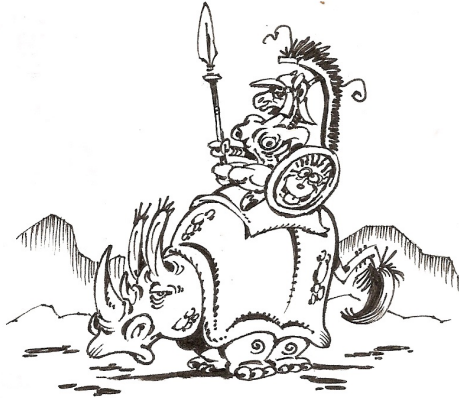
“Myself” I don’t know how you are doing in the genealogy department. However, you do very well in the fan department. You are now

how I find out what’s going on in big name fandom.

You should check [File770.com](http://File770.com).  
Mike Glycer does an exhaustive job  
of recording news.

—JTM

BACOVER. “From Ye Coach Styled Desire” “Ever and always I hath depended upon the kindness of strangers.” The end.



From: **Heath Row** November 11, 2022  
4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA  
90230

After Loretta Lynn’s death, my wife and I watched *Coal Miner’s Daughter* again. Based on Lynn’s book by the same title, it’s a strong story of self-discovery, the dangers of success, and resilience. Her family life was by no means easy — with her marriage at a relatively young age, family preceding her music career, and her husband’s alcoholism and infidelity — and the movie, while it touches on some aspects of that, shies away from addressing all of it too directly. It continues to astound me that Sissy Spacek and Beverly D’Angelo did their own singing while portraying Lynn and Patsy Cline, another wonderful singer. With their support, no less!

Reviewer’s Notes resonated with comments made by Bil Plott in *Sporadic #74* — as well as Lloyd Penney’s letter of comment in this. As fen continue to age — stop it, already! — what will become of our beloved sf apae, sf clubs, cons, and fanzines? Even at not yet 50, I often find myself on the young side of fan groups and wonder what might be done, by us, to welcome and help develop the next generation of fen. They’re out there; they might just not be hanging out with us already. And they might not like the same approach to correspondence culture that appeals to us. I’m not sure we need to worry about the Death of Fandom — it exists beyond and outside our preferred gathering places already; it exists without us individually, but not collectively — but we might have to be concerned about the Death of Fandom as We Know It. I prefer this particular view of fandom

— sending letters of comment to fanzines — than an online-only fandom in which people say less more often rather than more less often. So here I am, offering a letter of comment on *Alexiad* Vol. 21 #5.

Your reviews of Damon Knight’s *A for Anything* and John Brunner’s *The Great Steamboat Race* offer insightful combinations of plot synopsis, commentary and critique, and contextualization within the broader literature. And they make me want to read the books, which is perhaps the most important reason I read such reviews. Having recently read Philip Jose Farmer’s “Riders of the Purple Wage” (*Faculae & Filigree* #15), I particularly appreciated your mention of the Triple Revolution and Robert Theobald’s potential response to Farmer. I also recently enjoyed Brian Aldiss’s *Non-Stop*.

What do you think of *Teg’s*  
1994?

Rodford Edmiston’s “The Joy of High Tech” struck a chord with me. Whether comparing current astronomical events to historic records or determining what people of the past ate via the residue inside pots or the dental calculus of human remains, small details can lead to big discoveries — as well as hoaxes, in the case of mistaken footprints. I am reminded of the *Tyrannosaurus rex* footprints found near Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico in the 1980 — which are apparently legitimate, though I had my doubts when I saw them myself — and the hodag of northern Wisconsin — which was delightfully not.

Taral Wayne’s review of *Vivo* made me wince and chuckle — what a fun review to read — and it did not inspire me at all to seek out the animated musical. In fact, I shall avoid it like COVID-19. I know it’s apples and oranges, different animated musicals entirely, but my family did enjoy *Encanto*, especially the song “Pressure Drop,” which was quite the earworm. My teenage son was delighted that I’d sing the song enthusiastically unprompted, amazed that I would like such a thing.

Reading Leigh Kimmel’s report on Archon 45 was a kick, even though it focused mostly on the dealer’s room, which makes sense given the contributor’s experience. (David Shea’s LOC was perhaps less kind than my initial reaction! Count me among those who might be interested in more from a con report. The solution, of course, is to write our own damn con reports.) I look forward to Loscon 48 at the end of the month. It’ll be my first con as a volunteer, and I look forward to finding a balance between engaging in the programming, which is why I go to cons, and volunteering with the hospitality team in the con suite and with John Hertz in the Fanzine Lounge. (Perhaps Shea knows Sam Lubell, who’s chairing Balticon in 2024. I seem to have missed out on some con drama that seems similar to the Loscon 45 incident involving Gregory Benford.)

Your roundup of award listings was helpful and informative. Thank you for including the National Fantasy Fan Federation's Laureate Awards among them. (I currently chair the N3F's directorate.) In recent weeks, even more awards and nominees have been announced: the World Fantasy Awards, the Shirley Jackson Awards, and the Saturn Awards. So many books, movies, and television shows to explore.

In the letter column, George W. Price's detailed letter piqued my interest in your book about the Robert Heinlein juveniles, as well as Alexei Panshin's *Heinlein in Dimension* as reviewed by Thomas E. Simmons in this. I've not read Heinlein widely, but my interest in him is increasing.

*HiD* is available from Reanimus Press for Kindle and in print.

<https://reanimus.com/store/?item=1532>

—JTM

I've also not yet read any of E.E. "Doc" Smith's Lensman books, though I have *Triplanetary* ready at hand. For all the books I have read, there are, oh, so many that I haven't yet. Reading this issue of *Alexiad* and the most recent *Portable Storage* this week, I've wondered why I spend so much time reading and responding to fanzines instead of focusing more on books and other forms of fan writing. The answer, of course, is to learn about and prioritize what I should read next.

On to the next read. I hope this letter finds you two well, happy and healthy.

Putting it on a tight beam,

From: **Lloyd Penney** November 14, 2022  
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON  
CANADA M9C 2B2  
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Thank you for the newest *Alexiad*, no. 125. I hope you will find that turning 60 is all right if you simply consider it just a number. Next year, I will be 64, and while I am experiencing the usual geriatric problems of that age, such as major joints not being happy with me for some reason, I figure that comes with the territory, and accept it, and carry on.

We are realizing that if Fandom Is Us, we may be the last of the lot. There are no young Turks pestering us for a chance to run things, or new fanwriters, telling us we are old-fashioned. As the pandemic carries on, at least in my area, fan-run conventions have been reduced to the big anime convention in town. Chances to meet up with friends from out of town are rare. As you say in the letter column, everyone appreciated the efforts put in to running the local conventions, but no one today would put the effort to do it. By the looks of it, the closest traditional SF con that is the closest to us is Astronomicon in Rochester, NY. It happened a couple of weekends ago, and we didn't go...not enough money, but a distrust of lax COVID

management. We were right...I have seen reports of at least three cases of COVID caught at the con. Maybe next year...

And there is Charles' sigil. I feel old because Elizabeth was the only queen I'd known as a Canadian citizen. I am sure that Charles will be frugal, but I also think he might be a little heavy handed, given how much trouble his sibling and their wives and children have caused.

NASFiC... Buffalo, New York is bidding for the 2024 NASFiC. No operating name just yet, but the website is [buffalonasfic2024.org](http://buffalonasfic2024.org), and the e-mail is [info@buffalonasfic2024.org](mailto:info@buffalonasfic2024.org). I know a lot of the people on this committee, but we have not made any decisions about whether we can afford to go. Proposed date is August 15-18, 2024.

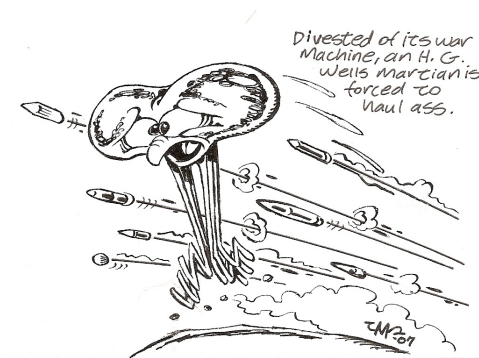
We mourn the passing of Alexei Panshin here...there's also the passing of Martin Morse Wooster, and many more just lately. We have to get used to it, but it just seems our numbers are passing very quickly.

Rich Dengrove's letter...I may not be making much money these days, but it has been four years since I worked in an office of any kind. I work occasionally at a business magazine office in Toronto's east end, copyediting their paper magazine and their two e-zines, and I do have a British client who pays me to copyedit his quarterly book. The next one is due shortly. And now comes the editor-in-chief position with *Amazing Stories*.

So much to get done, so I am storming ahead, and picking it up as quickly as I can. Wish me luck, for I think I shall need it. Thank you for this issue, and keep them coming.

We wish you luck as you ascend to Hugo's throne.

—JTM



From: **George W. Price** November 20, 2022  
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October *Alexiad* (#125):

"Reviewer's Notes" sees "a distrust of science," and cites cases of perceived dangers supposedly requiring "scientific control of

politics and the economy." Past examples were a need for eugenic engineering to prevent breeding mental defectives, and later the danger from "the forthcoming ice age."

And always we were told that "the science is settled." When it transpired that the science wasn't really settled at all, that quite likely provoked a distrust of science.

This meshes with the rise of progressivism, originally advertised as "government by experts" instead of by self-seeking politicians pandering to ignorance, greed, and special interests. And somehow, the progressives always turn out to be exactly the "experts" we need.

The obvious – though of course unspoken – attitude is, "I am more intelligent, better educated, less selfish, and more altruistic than you are, and I know what's good for you better than you do. This entitles me to rule over you. All for your own good, of course."

The attitude is not new – it used to be called "paternalism." As in, "Father knows best."

Climate change is the latest example of progressive overreach. The science is not entirely settled, but even if it were, that would still leave lots of room to argue over how to meet the danger.

For obvious example, the world should keep right on using fossil fuels, even though they really do add to global warming. Damage from the extra warming will be trivial compared to the social and economic disruption if we abandon oil and natural gas. Solar power and wind energy aren't really available yet in anywhere near the quantity and reliability we absolutely must have.

Yes, it is deeply ironic that we must keep using fossil fuels to survive and repair the damage done by using fossil fuels.

We can argue later whether solar and wind can ever pick up the full load.

Oh, and "The science is settled" most often really means "My mind is made up; don't confuse me with contrary facts."

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Joe's commentary on *The People Maker*, by Damon Knight, looks at stories portraying economies of abundance rather than scarcity.

Mostly they grievously misunderstand what "scarcity" means in economics. It is not about relative wealth and poverty. A resource is "scarce" if there is less available than would be used if it cost nothing.

By historical standards, our society has abundance beyond imagining, but economics is still a major factor, because we still must choose between competing uses for finite resources.

Joe's discussion made me think of Frederik Pohl's dystopian novella "The Midas Plague" (*Galaxy*, April 1954). Fully automated facilities turn out so much of everything that "the poor" are defined as those condemned to consume voraciously in an endless struggle to use up all the stuff being produced.

Overproduction is their great fear.

It struck me when I was reading the story that it gave no reason why they couldn't simply throttle back or turn off that runaway production system. The possibility was never even considered. That made it the very epitome of an "idiot plot."

Some forty years later I met Fred Pohl in person, and I asked him about that. (I politely did not say "idiot plot.") He replied that he did indeed recognize that central plot defect even as he wrote the story, but that was what Galaxy editor Horace Gold wanted, so that was what he got.

Pohl did not say if he had pointed out the defect to Gold (and I did not ask).

**Pohl had once heard Robert Theobald lecture about the "Triple Revolution" and noted that it was rather like "The Midas Plague". I'm not quite sure how to take that now.**

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In "The World of Commander McBragg," Joe reviews Peter Shankland's *The Phantom Flotilla*. During the First World War a British officer was assigned a project in the Belgian Congo that "required transporting two gunboats overland, since the river system was less than navigable."

I immediately thought of a passage in one of Thomas Sowell's many socioeconomic books – I forget which. He suggested that the backwardness of cultures in central Africa, compared to those of Asia, Europe, and North Africa, could be largely attributed to the severe lack of navigable rivers.

There were big rivers, but they were broken up by many waterfalls and rapids, making travel and exploration extremely difficult. So extensive trade routes never developed, and neither did cultural exchange. Each little tribe was on its own, which is not the best way to rise to civilization.

I don't recall if Sowell made a point of it, but I expect there were also very few wars of conquest, which are quite effective in spreading new technology.

\*\*\*\*\*

David M. Shea says that "We have four lakes in Columbus/Ellicott City, though I once said that anyone who lives in Chicago would call Wilde Lake 'A pond with delusions of grandeur.'"

As one who has lived a long life in Chicago, I see his point, though I have never heard Chicagoans denigrate other cities for not being on a really big lake.

They are called the "Great" Lakes because they truly are huge – practically inland seas.

Chicago extends some 26 miles north to south, and about 20 of those miles are lakefront. (Chicagoans say "lakefront," not "lake-

side" or "lake shore" – except for Lake Shore Drive.) Most of it is parks and beaches, with only a few short stretches where housing comes almost down to the water.

There are marinas on the lakefront, but no longer any industrial port facilities; those are now a mile or more inland up the Chicago River and the Calumet River connecting to the lake.

In one obvious way it is indeed like living by an ocean: You can't see the other side. The state of Michigan is only about 55 miles east of Chicago, but it is well below the horizon, so visually it might just as well be 500 or 5,000 miles.

Lake Michigan also has extensive – and mostly beneficial – effects on Chicago's weather. That great mass of water moderates temperatures in the city. I say "temperatures" (plural) because the effect is so great that weather reports and forecasts routinely give two or three temperatures – one for the lakefront and a mile or two inland, and the others – as much as ten degrees different – for the eight or ten miles of city farther from the lake.

There's also a minor downside: The "lake effect" can make the weather very changeable and hard to predict – we never know how far inland the effect will extend.

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Taras Wolansky mentions encountering an "Oxfordian" – "a believer in the crank hypothesis that the Earl of Oxford actually wrote Shakespeare's works."

Yes, I've heard of them. Their delusion appears to be a prime example of class snobbery. They simply cannot accept that a commoner with scanty formal education could possibly have produced such magnificent writing. The real author just had to be a very learned and astute gentleman, and therefore presumably a man of noble birth. I never bothered to find out why Oxford got tapped for the honour.

**Charles Beauclerk the writer is an Oxfordian. Considering he is descended from the Earls of Oxford (the first Duke of St. Albans married Diana de Vere, the Oxford heiress) it's not really that surprising.**

Well, it is just barely possible that Shakespeare was only a front man. I wonder how the Oxfordians would react if we found definitive proof that it was neither Will Shakespeare nor the Earl of Oxford – the genius was really Anne Hathaway Shakespeare, giving manuscripts to her husband when he visited her at Stratford-upon-Avon.

**J. C. Squires, the editor of *If It Had Happened Otherwise* (1931) had answered Baconians with "If It Had Been Discovered in 1930 that Bacon Really Did Write Shakespeare" where he had it turn**

**out that while Bacon had written Shakespeare, Shakespeare had written Bacon.**

—JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Dec. 12, 2022  
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Thank for Vol. 21 No.5 (October 2022, Whole Number 125).

Things are good here. We're wide open and visitors can come in without having to be checked for temperature, etc. No masks. The weather has had a hard time making up its mind. One day we get some snow. Then a couple of days later it will rain. However, right now it snowed last night and hasn't stopped.

Taras Wolansky: In your comments to Darrel Schweitzer you make mention of the Russian Orthodox Church supporting Putin's invasion of Ukraine. It is my understanding that then Russian Orthodox Church has always supported the rulers of Russia including the Soviet Union. Of course the Soviet rulers controlled the Church. I remember one time at the World Council of Churches the Russian Church representative was identified as KGB.

**The Russian Orthodox Church in America was quite independent. They canonized Nicholas II and his family. "Anna Anderson" had one of those ikons.**

—JTM

Your comments on Wokeism are valid. Linguist John McWhorter claims that it is a religion. He convinced me. I call it The Holy Church of Wokeism Revealed. Maybe that should be unHoly. For the record McWhorter identifies himself as a Liberal and states flatly that he has never voted for a Republican. I would identify him as more of a Classical Liberal.

I now have another two-dollar bill that was received with a political donation request. I didn't respond, but kept the bill.

Well, that's it for now. Nothing much happening here.

**WAHF:**

**Lloyd G. Daub**, with various items of interest.  
**Martin Morse Wooster**, the same, but no longer.  
**Ted Lapkin, George Phillis, Lacy Thomas, Taral Wayne** with thanks.



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### AT THE BBC

The crowd filled the square outside the great BBC building. There had been much excitement since the announcement of the forthcoming regeneration. The betting parlours had been packed. The odds for a type were high, but many were bidding on actual actors who would take on the role.

The great screen above the door was showing the former Doctors. There would be Hartnell over a great "1", Troughton over a great "2", and so on (including the War Doctor), all accompanied by multicoloured flashes and sparkles. The "14" filled the screen, without an image, and then the count reverted to "1". The excitement was tense.

There was a roar as the door opened wide. It was Tom Baker himself. Cheers greeted the renowned fourth Doctor. He stepped briskly for a man his age, and went to a podium. He raised hand and the crowd fell silent. "We have a Doctor!" he cried and a roar of applause greeted the statement.

The doors gaped wider, and a TARDIS came out on a track. There was a hush so strong that it could be cut with a knife.

Now the TARDIS door swung open, and Baker cried, "We present to you David Tennant, the Fourteenth Doctor!"

The former Tenth Doctor stood there, proud and stiff. After a moment the Thirteenth Doctor, Jodie Whittaker, stepped out and stood beside him. "I proclaim my regeneration!" she cried.

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**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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