

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Today I read a book called *For Crew and Country* by John Wukovits about a World War II ship. I sat for a few minutes looking at those young faces. It is strange to think how young those sailors were at the time. Even if they survived the war many if not most are dead now. Those still alive are at least in their nineties. My father is now the only one still alive of all the crew of his destroyer. Before the ship sank in 1945 he had one chance in 314 of being the last one left. After she sank the odds dropped to 1 in 227. In the seventy-eight years since the odds in his favor dropped steadily. I wonder if someday I will be the last one born during the Cuban Missile Crisis left. We of that time are all now at least sixty. The odds against that are a lot longer than those my father had of being the last of his crew left. I shake the thoughts away as being pointless. Nothing, after all, will stop time from progressing.

— Lisa

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## Reviewer's Notes

It seems more and more that the Chengdu Worldcon is floundering. There are too many failings that an experienced con committee could avoid. For example, they distributed their first progress report in February. They are writing software to do things for which software is already available. And I won't mention their human rights problems.

There is a desire to make Worldcon a **Worldcon**, in far-flung foreign nations. Add to that the wish to have exotic venues (the Boat Bid started as a hoax, but it was taken very seriously) and you have overstretch. There is a great resource of experience on running cons in fandom. Amazingly, it is all volunteer, non-professional. Yet so far it has seemed to work. But there is always a first time.

One also has to consider overreach. There was the group of fans in Vancouver who went to Worldcon and decided they could do the same thing at home. All Vancouver fandom was at war over this overreach.

This does not portend well for the Cairo and Kampala bids. Do they have enough resources to be able to put on a working con? Even the Tel Aviv bid may have such shortages.

Home had problems. A little pipe in the cellar froze up over Christmas (when we had -1° F temperatures) and burst. So, evidently, did most of the rest of Louisville. I had to wait forever for the plumber at a cost of \$\$\$\$\$. And the hot-water heater had to be replaced *again* at \$\$\$\$\$. And taxes are coming.

Spring has come early this year. For example, on March 1 the high was 80° F. If summer temperatures are over 100° this will be disheartening.

My father too was a WWII vet. (He died fifty-one years ago.) They were the Greatest Generation, the men (and a few women) who were going to remake America. For a few years they brought prosperity to the land, while the foundations to end discrimination were laid. But they failed of their promise.

Now we sit in the declining, oppressed, obsessed world that their betters built.

— Joe

## 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]

Laur Flom, a “book artist” in Toronto, is woke. He is rebinding copies of the Harry Potter books, removing the name of the Potter Unperson, not only from the cover, but the title page and the copyright page.

She was made an unperson for having made transphobic statements, which have somehow vanished. (Journalist E. J. Rosetta was commissioned to write a piece on the topic of “The Twenty Transphobic [Potter Unperson] Quotes We’re Done With”, but couldn’t because *she couldn’t find any*.)

But not to worry. An AI has been developed which will write Harry Potter stories with no intervention by Potter Unperson. We love Big Person of Genderfluid Being.

... Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.

What was that you were saying about that only applying to the Stalinist Era, Dr. Asimov?

In a blast of Rooseveltian reading, I recently read Edmond Morris’s three-volume

life, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (1979), *Theodore Rex* (2001), and *Colonel Roosevelt* (2010) along with Tim Brady’s life of his oldest son, *His Father’s Son: The Life of General Ted Roosevelt, Jr.* (2017). There was a lot to note.

The President *really did* say “Pedicaris alive or Raisuli dead”. Alas, the Pedicaris in question was a middle-aged man of questionable American citizenship. (Sigh, so much for *The Wind and the Lion*.)

The Roosevelts had a prodigious capacity for getting injured. In 1918, the Colonel was deaf in one ear and blind in one eye, and still had abscesses from his South American journey. The future general was recovering from having a hole blown through his leg. Not just a wound, but an actual hole. (Younger brother Archie Roosevelt was labeled 100% disabled in the First World War. He managed to get back in service for the thrilling sequel because he was a Roosevelt — and was discharged having become 100% disabled **again**.)

## MONARCHICAL NEWS

We regret to report the death of **Basileus Konstantinos II of the Hellenes** on **January 10, 2023**. The king was born **June 2, 1940** to Princess Frederica of Hanover and Prince Paul of Greece and Denmark. Not surprisingly, the prince spent his youth in Egypt and Great Britain, due to the invasion of Greece.

He succeeded his father on **March 6, 1964** and married **Princess Anne-Marie of Denmark** on **September 18, 1964**. They had five children, **Princess Alexia, Crown Prince Pavlos, Prince Nikolaos, Princess Theodora, and Prince Philippos**.

The king was exiled after his failed attempt at a coup against the infamous Greek Colonels. He took up positions at the International Olympic Committee, the International Sailing Federation, and other sports associations.

He returned to Greece in 2013.

## A-VIKING WE SHALL GO

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE WAY OF THE SWORD-WORLDS**

(2021; Pequod Press;  
ISBN 978-0937912799; \$29.00;  
2021; Pequod Press (Kindle); \$7.99)  
by John F. Carr and Mike Robertson

If you’ve ever wondered how Otto Harkaman got to Gram, here’s the story. It begins with a member of a marginal family deciding to take a high-risk job with a chance for profit.

Harkaman rises to authority through daring and careful participation in several plundering raids. The authors lay out the structure of Space Viking society in some detail. It is very much a boom and bust career, and some of the boom may come from the prodigious employment of weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time, Harkaman grows. He begins to explore history, learning the patterns of the development of society, their rise and fall.

(One wonders how he would do in the Earthmannist Culture of Blish’s *Cities In Flight* (1950-1962).)

He accumulates the officers we see with him in *Space Viking* (1963) — and loses one of his group in a tragic miscalculation. Then he acquires the *Corisande*, and loses her in a civil war. Which brings him to the planet Gram, where a ruler with expansionist goals is glad to get an experienced and coordinated bridge crew for his new ship.

Before he can go to space the Trask-Karvall wedding and its tragic conclusion come . . . it is interesting, albeit a little lazy perhaps, to see the first few chapters of *Space Viking* retold from a different point of view.

[I am referenced in the Wikipedia entry on *Space Viking*. — Advt]

## THE HOLLYWOOD HISTORY OF BATTLE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**NITPICKER’S GUIDE TO ANCIENT MILITARY**

(2023; Sergeant Frosty Publications;  
ISBN 979-8372394711; \$18.07;  
Sergeant Frosty Publications (Kindle); \$4.81)  
by David Flin

This is an analysis of what is wrong with the portrayals of those huge battles in adventure films. Moviemakers like to emphasize drama and spectacle, ending with the hero confronting the villain in a hand-to-hand struggle, over realism. With such disappointing results as the legions moving forward in line, forming testudo, then breaking ranks to fight the disorganized Germans as seen in the grand intro of *Gladiator* (2000).

Flin begins by pointing out how an army will reflect the society it exists in. He describes the cohesion and disintegration of armies — quite personally, as he took part in the re-enactment of Pickett’s Charge and nervously watched that massive horde in gray come thundering across the fields at him. Or matters of equipment:

The crossbow also has mythic attachments. This was despite it being banned by Pope Innocent II in 1139 as being: “Deathly and hateful to God and unfit to be used by Christians.” Of course, the ban also applied to bows and slings, and the restriction only applied for use against Christians, but what everybody remembers is that the crossbow was banned.

Of course, people paid about as much attention to this ban on a potent weapon as you might expect . . .

Unless your name is Bradley, I guess.

Next comes a discussion of the nature of troops, from raw to worn-out, with veteran and elite in there between. Scipio had taken a raw army and by careful planning managed to get it

enough experience to bring it to veteran, at which point he fought a decisive battle.

Next are the principles of operations. Flin's own experience in the Falklands are relevant. His verdict on that romantic hero Bonnie Prince Charlie is not to be to the liking of admirers of *Two Crowns for America* (1996), for example: "He was also a useless general who got his own army butchered because he chose an idiotic place to fight." And Flin shows how and why.

Then he goes to fiction, with a diversion into current affairs:

Some people have described the behaviour of the Russian troops in Ukraine as like "orcs". I have no intention of discussing the comparative behaviour of the troops but, from a purely military point of view regarding operational efficiency, that's hugely insulting to the orcs.

He finally gets to logistics and its problems. Basically, supporting a large army by wagon caravans just can't be done. The porters or pack mules or drought horses or oxen would end up eating the army out. And he highlights this with a discussion of a particularly pointless campaign in *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019).

He should have been a consultant to Peter Jackson. In *The Return of the King* (1955) Minas Tirith has a infrastructure, farms and other such, around the city. In the movie (2003), the city is surrounded by empty fields.

And then he quotes Theoden's orders to his subordinates, where he orders them to use their initiative and attack the enemy. The signals officer was clearly listening when the officers of the 11th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers got their orders of the day.

Then Flin discusses what's wrong with movies' armour and weapons, beginning with the contractual requirement that the lead actor doesn't wear a helmet into battle so his handsome face can be seen, and why that would result in Dead Hero very quickly. And there's more on such failings.

He winds up with a discussion of the failings of such depictions of battles in movies. After reading his analyses, I have to wonder what he would think of the climactic battle of *The Hour of the Dragon* (*Weird Tales*, December 1935 — April 1936; 1950), where Conan was fighting in a valley with no retreat, or Lessingham's army in *Mistress of Mistresses* (1935), where the front line is alternately veterans with two-handed swords and recruits with spears?

This is a book that writers should read, but they probably won't.

### INDIFFERENCE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**BEYOND BELIEF:**

*The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust*

(1985; Free Press; ISBN 978-0029191606; \$39.99; 1999; Touchstone (Kindle); \$15.99)  
by Deborah Lipstadt

### **THE JEWS SHOULD KEEP QUIET: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust**

(2019; Jewish Publication Society;  
ISBN 897-0827614703; \$39.95;  
Jewish Publication Society (Kindle);  
ISBN 0827615191; \$12.99)  
by Rafael Medoff

### **THE ABANDONMENT OF THE JEWS: America and the Holocaust**

(1984; Pantheon; ISBN 978-0394428130;  
2018; Plunkett Lake Press (Kindle); \$8.99)  
by David S. Wyman

After reading this, one suspects that if FDR had acted on what he thought Abdulaziz Ibn Saud wanted, the Jewish leaders and organizations of America would have eagerly praised it as a triumph of American Diplomacy — and sent the Orthodox first.

The United States was almost completely closed to Jewish refugees in the period before the war. Some of this was traditional anti-semitism, but there was a profound nativist influence that refused to allow even the minimal quotas to be filled.

There were conferences to determine what could be done with the refugees. These ended with a conclusion that the situation was too bad and there was nothing that could be done.

During the war, there were fears that any refugees might be German spies, so to protect the country, the refugees were denied access. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

As information about the Nazi extermination plan became available, the response was that there had been lying propaganda during the Big War and people weren't going to fall for it again. It seemed like . . . oh, you heard that before?

Jewish groups spoke with many voices during this period, promoting various actions to take. (Relocating refugees to Sitka, Alaska was not one of them.) This enabled the efforts to be dismissed, due to the conflict. The most vociferous organization, the Bergson Group, was shunned for its ties to the Irgun.

One matter proposed was bombing the gas chambers. The authors put the refusal down to anti-Semitism or at least indifference. This ignores the cockiness of air force commanders, who didn't like to be told to do things.

And meanwhile, Rabbi Wise, the prominent representative of Jewish interests, said as little as possible and did nothing. He didn't want to lose the good opinion of FDR.

When it all came out, everyone was just appalled, why that never should have or could have happened . . .

(2022; Riverhead Books;  
ISBN 978-0525537113; \$30.00;  
2022; Riverhead Books (Kindle); \$14.99)  
by Randall Munroe

This is trending more to the massively destructive sort of absurd idea. As might be seen by the first chapter, which discusses the consequences of having the Solar System be engulfed by soup to the orbit of Jupiter. (Hint: we wouldn't be around to see it.)

This follows the format of the earlier books, absurd question rigorously answered, illustrated by the author's stick-figure drawings as seen in the XKCD comic strip.

We have a wild and wacky set of questions, most of which should not be done at home. You wouldn't do well with a one-meter cube of iron at absolute zero in your living room.

An XKCD cartoon got a Hugo nomination. For those who want to go in to the depths of scientific strangeness, take a look at:

<https://xkcd.com/>

### NAMARIÉ

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**INTO THE GREAT EMPTINESS:  
Peril and Survival on the Greenland Ice  
Cap**

(2022; W. W. Norton & Company;  
ISBN 978-0393868111; \$30.00;  
2022; W. W. Norton & Company (Kindle);  
\$9.18)

by David Roberts

Shackleton had died in his cabin on the *Quest*. The ship had another polar voyage left in her, though, and Henry George "Gino" Watkins had a plan.

Watkins was from a military family, but he didn't seem interested. He must have been extraordinarily convincing, for he managed to organize an expedition to Greenland with several men all older than him. Beyond that he had the strange ability to get people to do things and believe that it was their own idea.

Previously, he had led expeditions to Svalbard and to Labrador. Given that he was in his early twenties, this seems a profound achievement. And, unlike the hapless John Hornby, M.C., who had died two years before Watkins's Labrador expedition in the Canadian Northern Territories (See *Cold Burial* by Clive Powell-Williams (2002) for the story of Hornby's life and death) he did not seem to think that a catastrophe was an essential part of an expedition.

He made an expedition to Greenland in 1930 to pioneer an air route to Canada. The expedition didn't work out, it would have been useful during WWII. He had established a meteorological station on the ice cap. In a problematic event, when the first relief party could not leave two men to hold the station, one of them, Auguste Courtald, volunteered to hold it alone. He had a very hard time, marked by such events as his tent being snowed over.

### THEN 2

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**WHAT IF? 2:**

*Additional Serious Scientific Answers to  
Absurd Hypothetical Questions*

There's no record of his reading *Alone* (Richard Byrd's tale of his experiences in a similar situation (1934); at least Byrd had a roof over his head).

Watkins seemed an optimistic if not over-reaching personality. He had proposed an expedition to cross Antarctica, and then added that they should go climb Mount Everest along the way. Instead, he went back again in 1932 with a small party.

But, as the second expedition to Greenland was winding down, Watkins went off on a trek with two others. On August 20, they found that something was wrong, went looking, and found Watkins's kayak — without any trace of him.

He seems to have been a man of persuasiveness and audacity. Roberts does not attempt to figure him out, but merely to show what he did.

This is Roberts's last book. He had spent the last ten years of his life struggling against cancer, and it finally defeated him in 2021. On August 20, the same date that Gino died on.

Note: After Gino died, the expedition was taken over by John Rymill. In 1934, Rymill led the British Graham Land Expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula. They sailed there on the ship *Penola*. The captain of the *Penola* and the Second Mate were brothers, Robert and Lisle Ryder. Robert won the Victoria Cross at St. Nazaire. Lisle was murdered by the SS at Le Paradis.



DOBBIN'S MOM WAS SCARED BY A THOAT.

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**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/>

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**NASFiC BIDS**

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

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**WORLDCON**

2023  
Chengdu  
Year of the Water Rabbit  
October 18-22, 2023  
"6th International SF Convention"  
<http://en.chengduworldcon.com/>  
**New Dates**

The convention will be at the Chengdu Science Fiction Museum — which isn't finished!

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

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**NASFiC**

2023  
Winnipeg  
Pemmi-con 2023  
July 20-23, 2023  
<https://main.winnipegcon2023.ca/>

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**HUGO RECOMMENDATION**

by Joe

You can nominate a Best Dramatic Presentation that is not only fantasy, but was made using skiffy technology:

*The Shepherd* (2022) by Back Garden Films.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XV-ILCXGyxQ&t=185s>

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There was a time when someone who pro-claimed he never read anything except mystery

novels was considered a deep thinker, far above those pimply-faced kids who read sci-fi. Yet, from reading about real crimes, those works often come across as cliched. I would like to know if anyone has ever encountered:

- 1) A murder where the victim invited several people, all of whom disliked him, to his house for a weekend, and the only solution to the crime required a minute-by-minute reconstruction of the activities of everyone there, during which several Dark Secrets and Old Malfesances were unearthed.
- 2) A murder where the Obvious Killer was proven more and more guilty by every clue discovered during the course of the investigation, only to be exonerated by a surprise discovery.
- 3) A murder solved by a cynical hard-boiled hard-drinking private investigator who had solved a large number of them, mostly allegedly committed by passionate young trophy wives against their aging rich husbands.
- 4) A murder where the suspects, all with comparable motive, equal access to the murder method, and alibis of about the same plausibility, banded together to hire a private detective to solve the crime, even though he would inevitably find one (or more) of them guilty.(i)
- 5) A murder that was solved by an exotic talented amateur — a kindly nun with a cat, a 3' 7" dwarf, a priest/monk/rabbi, a cat! (ii)
- 6) A trial where the defendant's attorney got the real killer to blurt out a confession on the witness stand. (iii)
- 7) A murder solved by the officers of one particular police district, all of whom were bizarrely eccentric if not outright deranged. (iv)
  - i. Okay, so I've read too many Nero Wolfe books.
  - ii. Not to mention Anthony Boucher. Also, I can't say "high governmental official", because Sir Isaac Newton did solve counterfeiting cases when he was Master of the Royal Mint (yeah, he literally had a license to coin money).
  - iii. And seen too many episodes of *Perry Mason*.
  - iv. Or *Hill Street Blues*.

## Letters, we get letters

From: **John F. Hertz** December 13, 2022

Good as ever to see fanart by Gilliland and by Schirm.

I've reported that when an octogenarian I knew groaned, "All my friends are dying", I asked, "When was the last time you made any new friends?"

Fans have groaned, "The inflow channels are dry", to which I've responded, "We've let them get silted up. We should dredge them, and dig new ones."

As for you, what am I to think when even you write "escapes" for "escapers"?

There's never been any shortage of provocations to spew invective. Too bad "provocation" has one more syllable than "temptation" so won't scan in that song about yielding not.

*Mortuis nil nisi bonum* leads me to say how much I like *The Thurb Revolution* and its companions. I like Brother Wolansky's letter to *Scientific American* too, *absit omen*.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** January 9, 2023  
[darrells@comcast.net](mailto:darrells@comcast.net)

I think the reason that DragonCon doesn't have fanzine programming is that neither the administrators nor the great majority of attendees know that fanzine fandom as you and I have experienced it, ever existed. I know any number of people who have been active in numerous fanish activities for decades, who have no idea what a fanzine is and have never participated in one. The old, traditional fandom has crawled into a hole. This is why Corflu may seem geriatric these days. I suspect that most of the people who have ever heard of Walter Willis or ask who sawed Courtney's boat are at least in their sixties now. The culture has not been passed on.

**They take part in Twitter wars,  
which are quicker hence nastier.**

I must beg to differ with George Price. I think that the next generation will conclude that climate change is a tragic example of government underreach. They will curse us because we knew what was happening and chose to do nothing effective. Already climate catastrophes are happening all around us, floods, fires, droughts, super-storms. What I am afraid of is that if we fail to take firm action now – of which the Green New Deal is only a beginning – governments will have to take draconian action later. As we begin to lose cities and coastlines, as millions are displaced and made refugees within their own countries, it's going to be lifeboat rules. Anything which goes against the survival of all will be severely punished. I could well imagine a future in which fossil fuels are totally banned, and it's a prison offense to water your lawn (or in places like Nevada, to even have a lawn). Those idiots

who rig up trucks to belch out huge clouds of black smoke could face the death penalty. Movement and housing will be strictly controlled and rationed. Food could become scarce. Some cities (like New York) may survive behind sea walls, but a lot will have to be abandoned. As the water runs out in southern California, much of that may have to be abandoned. People in these circumstances are likely to reach for extreme solutions, some of them (inevitably) offered by demagogues. It does not, after all, follow that when people are confronted with inescapable catastrophe that they will do the rational thing. I could well imagine climate police, the equivalent of Red Guards, enforcing absurd regulations in addition to necessary ones. Our descendants won't thank us for this.

To follow up on what I said about the World Fantasy Convention, the New Orleans one came off fairly well. It was small. WFC has been small for some years now. I don't have exact numbers. I was impressed that it was so international. I've never met a fantasy writer from Pakistan before but I chattered with Usman Malik. Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki was there from Nigeria. (The WFC has a tradition of tipping off award winners if necessary to make sure they are in attendance.) I had a nice time. This is not a dying convention. I suspect all conventions are going to be a bit reduced in the Covid Era, but they will continue. We wore masks, even on the panels. There were some virtual panelists, which I suspect will be a permanent feature, because this way you can have a panelist from halfway around the world, who couldn't otherwise make it from, say, Australia.

I am also able to report that the French Quarter is still there, and Bourbon Street is still a monument to public drunkenness, even on a Saturday afternoon in November. Mango daiqueris seemed to be the thing, and I might have tried one except that they cost between \$13 and about \$25. The bars along Bourbon Street only let you use the rest room if you buy a drink first (most post signs to this effect), which of course makes you need to use another rest room, which makes you buy another drink farther down, etc. I went to the Voodoo Museum, which was worth the visit. I am of an age where I can still walk half an hour to and from the hotel, but my bladder capacity (never very good even when I was younger) made it essential that I remembered where the public rest room in the French Market is, from my last visit 22 years ago. Yes, it is still there. On an environmental note, I report that the water level in the Mississippi is down considerably. I wanted to refresh my memory about whether you really did walk UP a flight of stairs to get to the river. Yes, you go up to the levee, and when the water level is normal, it is indeed above the street level in the French Quarter, but now, I think, if the levee broke, it would only make a puddle.

By way of conventions, I look at those future worldcon bids wondering if I shall ever attend a worldcon again. The DC one was so unwelcoming that I skipped it, which would

have been inconceivable for me ten years ago. I cannot take the idea of worldcons in Egypt or Uganda seriously, if only because the condition of the world may not support them. Some of those later ones are beyond my range. Texas in 2031. I will be 79. My wife will be 83. Probably not. I will keep going to World Fantasy as long as I can, and StokerCon when it is within range.

**Unfortunately we could not  
take the idea of a worldcon in  
China seriously, and look what  
happened.**

—JTM

From: **George Phillis** January 9, 2023  
[phillies@4liberty.net](mailto:phillies@4liberty.net)

As always, *Alexiad* was an interesting read. I sympathize with your shortage of books to review, so by way of thanks for what you are doing I attach several of mine. I am always grateful for reviews, but understand that I may not get one.

**Thank you for your gift.**

I am sorry to read that DragonCon has no fanzine programming. That's disappointing. It's surely not that they are short of attendees to man panels. The National Fantasy Fan Federation is more attached to fanzines. Our Laureate Awards are currently up to five fanzine awards, namely best non-N3F Fanzine, Best N3F Fanzine, Best fanzine writer, best fanzine artist, and best fanzine editor.

N3F Fanzines are facing the challenges you mentioned. In the last year, the N3F's last living founding member and two major contributors expired. The lead contributor to Fan-Activity Gazette has been elected LASFS Scribe and proposes to revive *De Profundis*, the LASFS zine; he will write much less for us. I, of course, am a stripling youth of 75, so I have some years to go yet.

**And once upon a time the N3F  
was thought of as a batch of clue-  
less neos that no trufan would  
ever have anything to do with.  
How times change!**

—JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** January 10, 2023  
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON  
CANADA M9C 2B2  
[penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 126. I may be a little early with this, but when it comes to time for fanzines, I have to grab what minutes I can get. Some comments are bound to follow.

Our ages continue to rise, and that's a part of our continuing health problems (we are taking nutritional supplements to keep our vitamin intake up, and we are now taking lutein/zeaxanthin supplements to try to keep

our eyes well), and also our apparent irrelevance to some SF cons. How do we see DragonCon, and a huge media convention, or a gathering point for pros who don't like Worldcon?

**It's a huge commercial enterprise. The convention-goers have made the transition from participant to consumer.**

Thank you for your warm comments on my new position with *Amazing*. I still have the odd WTF? moment as I consider what I am doing, and what position I now hold. You're not the first to use the term 'the throne of Hugo', but really, after the departure of the previous editor-in-chief, and the change in management, it would seem I was...convenient. This is the kind of position you don't even think about because you know it's not coming to you...until it does. Now to see if I have risen past my level of competence. Right now, I have been learning how to get around the main website and the submissions website, how to access the stories that have been submitted, and make some recommendations about what we publish. At this point, while the position of editor-in-chief has that cachet to it, the one with the most work to do is Kermit Woodall, who was the art director and webmaster before all this happened, and now, he is also the publisher. He has placed all of this under the term Manager. With some luck, I will be able to learn how to run the whole thing, and I hope that will come with time. We will be trying a Kickstarter campaign again in the new year (the last one failed), and I am hopeful that I will be the e-i-c of at least one *Amazing Stories* magazine.

The Tolkien histories...so much of the history he created was in *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and other books on Middle-Earth...I could get a multi-volume history of Middle-Earth within and without the books we collect. There is something about this history that grabs me like no other history text could. The good Professor was the King of the Completists, and good for him that his son Christopher worked toward completion as much as he could. Two lifetimes was not enough to fill this fictional history.

**"It's a gift!"**

*Leaf By Niggle*

From Middle-Earth to Camelot...the tales of Arthur may or may not be completely fictional, depending on where you look. Perhaps this is why the stories of King Arthur are still with us.

I've written elsewhere about how SF cons have died here, and we have discussed with some that any rebirth of the cons may have to be done through a Legion or church hall, but there is little interest there, and little money to book hotel function space. Some seem loathe to discuss the revival of the cons.

**Just remember, the second science fiction convention took**

**place at Milt Rothman's house. (The first being *The Coming Race* and *Vril-ya Bazaar and Fete* in London at the Royal Albert Hall.)**

—JTM

We are getting ready to meet up with our favourite mystery writer, Maureen Jennings, so I must rush this off to you. Take care, stay healthy and happy, and keep going with *Alexiad*.

From: **George W. Price** January 20, 2023  
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December *Alexiad* (#126).

Rodford Edmiston's "Joy of High Tech" recounts the history behind the King Arthur legends. I offer an apocryphal tale that I heard from a Jewish friend. (Why mention his being Jewish? You'll see.)

King Arthur and his son the Prince were inspecting the Knights of the Round Table. They slowly walked down the line of knights standing at attention, noticing how each man and his horse were decked out in their finest.

Their clothing was clean and neat and of the best quality. Each man's armor and weapons were polished and gleaming. The horses were beautifully caparisoned, with fine saddles and well-oiled reins and other leatherwork.

And then the King and the Prince came to the last man in the line. What a shock!

The horse looked like it had never met a currycomb – its coat was shaggy and full of cockleburs. The knight's armor and sword were dingy and rusty; his clothing was both dirty and ill-fitting; and he wore an insolent grin very unsuited to the occasion.

The Prince stared open-mouthed at this apparition for a long moment. Then he turned to King Arthur and said, "Father! Why is this knight different from all other knights?"

**Because he was Sir S. Baldrick, and he had a cunning plan.**

Which brings me to one of my pet peeves: the words "antisemitic," "antisemitism," and "antisemite."

These are prime examples of using pretentiously academic language instead of the plain and blunt words that are more fitting. It's something like saying "sanitary engineer" when you really mean "garbageman" – only worse, because garbageman is a respectable job.

It is also grossly inaccurate. The ethnic term "Semite" denotes several groups besides Jews. For the most obvious example, Arabs are Semites. Thus Israel is surrounded by countries where many people dislike or even hate Jews. Should we call such people "Semitic antisemites"? Or "antisemitic Semites"? How absurd!

Prejudice against Jews is an ugly reality; let's not try to pretty it up with euphemistic language. The right and honest words are

"anti-Jewish," "anti-Jewism," and "anti-Jewist." (My spellcheck refuses to accept the last two – that's part of what should change.)

**It's the next-to-latest euphemism. The latest is "Zionist".**

\*\*\*\*\*

Congratulations to Lloyd Penney on his appointment to be Editor-in-Chief at *Amazing Stories*.

\*\*\*\*\*

I drew a lot of comment on my history of Advent's dealings with Robert Heinlein and Alexei Panshin leading up to the publication of *Heinlein in Dimension*.

Mike Glycer suggests that my account "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."

This is quite logical, but I don't remember thinking anything like that at the time. Even if I had, it might not have mattered – I would have figured that what Heinlein would tolerate appearing scattered in dribs and drabs in various fanzines might well be intolerable when packed into one big indigestible lump in a book. So I would have incorporated Advent anyway, just as a precaution.

Darrell Schweitzer says 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."

*Alexiad's* editor interjects that Heinlein was concerned that "Panshin was trying to write a biography. He didn't want his privacy invaded." That seems reasonable. Too bad we'll never know what Heinlein really thought.

Schweitzer also says quite a bit about just when Heinlein began to go bad. (We all seem to agree that Heinlein did indeed go bad – his later books came nowhere near the standard of his earlier work.) I agree with many of Schweitzer's judgments, though not all.

For me, the turning point was *Stranger in a Strange Land*. That was the first Heinlein book that I did not wholeheartedly enjoy. I do not remember specific points that I disliked – but it was the first Heinlein that I have never felt the slightest urge to reread.

**I had heard somewhere that the book had begun as a razor-sharp satire of the failings of society, with Smith being a minor character. It might have been better that way. But Bill Patterson told me I had heard wrong and I think he would have known.**

—JTM

Judging by how often I have reread them, in whole or in part, my two favorites have been *The Puppet Masters* and *Starship Troopers*.

Or perhaps I shouldn't count *Starship Troopers*, because it is a special case: It tickles my conservative political prejudices, though as a story I must admit that it is rather disjointed. I understand that Heinlein wrote it quickly and at white heat because he was so highly pissed off at antiwar polemics he had encountered.

Schweitzer says, "I don't think Heinlein will be remembered primarily for his juveniles," and doubts if kids relate to them anymore. Some of the juveniles, he says, "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." I'll go with that.

Joe Major's *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles* should find a valuable place as a history of the period. And we can let someone else chronicle *The Decline and Fall of Robert A. Heinlein*.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Jan. 24, 2023  
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I'm ready for *Alexiad* 12/2022.

Joe. No way do I have your organization skills. When I want to refer to some source or another, I place it in alphabetical order. In fact, I have several piles of books and other sources in alphabetical order. Usually by author.

Reviewer's Notes. I have two comments on your reviewer's notes. First comment. There are two reasons wannabe writers don't send you their books. For one thing, publishing is a money making proposition and you're not offering any money. Nor are you a big wig who could offer prestige. One thing you could do is praise them to the hilt and increase their ego. However, they want it guaranteed. Since you haven't agreed to do that, they have no use for you.

In short, they're not in our world. If I should ever finish my book, I'll give you a copy and you could rip it apart. I don't care if it makes me world famous or not.

My second comment is on Lloyd's editorship. He, it seems, had to wait for a plague for people to exploit his abilities. Bad for the public and him, but good, in that way, for Lloyd. He deserves to be editor of the new *Amazing* after being unemployed for some time.

Omar di Felice. I wonder what made him think he could ride a bike across Antarctica. Did he think there were roads connecting everything?

Napoleon. An heir to that family which hasn't ruled a nation since Napoleon III. I'm sure some Frenchmen see the days of Napoleon I and Napoleon III as halcyon.

Overreach. The belief has been when we have riches we grow soft. In short, history as told by older people who have forgotten, or would like to hide, the vices of their youth.

However, I suspect empires fall because the weather and land have not been cooperative. Of course, that is ignored by all because it proves no moral lesson.

Total Espionage. Germany was known for its spies. Apparently, they never spied that well. However, fear of all things German made people think it had great spies.

Just after the World War started, the British Security Service sent out a technician to search for suspicious wireless transmissions. He got tired of being arrested as a German spy and asked for an army officer to escort him. The next report was, "Have arrested two German spies, one in British uniform".

The Joy of High Tech. Who was King Arthur? Arthur a myth or reality? Many believe he was a real king. Such is the power of great myths. One fact I disagree with in Rodford's article is that we know nothing about Arthur before Nennius. I hear Arthur was mentioned very early as a battle general who led the Celtic kings into battle against the Germanic Saxons. He may not have had, or wanted, land and castles. Otherwise, I suspect Rodford is very close to the truth.

Now for the letters.

Nic Farey. Yup, progress or regress happens and we have to accept it even if it isn't a 'real something.' I went computer in the 1990s, and I'm prepared for web APAs in the 2020's.

Dale Speirs. I guess I can get more mileage on this old chestnut. I remember *Mad Magazine* did a parody of the *National Enquirer*. The headline read: "Eight year old gives birth to fifteen year old."

Darrell Schweitzer. The right has its own way of being woke too. Right now, both right woke and left woke believes words can hurt you. I believe if you pay attention to words and what they really mean, they can make you stronger. At least, inside yourself. You can see misplaced words that mean the downfall of both' arguments. Sometimes, you can even come up with a strategy against them.

As for science, scientists are people like the rest of us and they have their own prejudices. Scientists of the future will prove them wrong too, but they will have their own prejudices. Do I have my own prejudices? Yes, all over the place.

About Heinlein, I thought some of his early '60s books were imaginative as long as I didn't have to agree with him. Heinlein's downfall came when he decided to go off on tangents. Ultimately, there was someone Heinlein needed more than even a heart specialist, an editor.

David M. Shea. As for *Fadeaway*, its editor, Bob Jennings, was too busy during the Covid epidemic, making money from comics, hobbies and other things. Now that that is over with, I suspect he will return to editing *Fadeaway*. Contact him again if you have another idea for an article.

My Letter. Answering Joe Major about my letter. I suspect that the armed forces are trying to get the perfect officer right now because there is no war and less need for officers. In a crisis, 'perfection' will go by the boards and we will get wild and woolly officers like Commander McBragg.

As for Joe Major. If I really wanted to know what's happening, I would subscribe to *File 770*.

<https://file770.com/>

Heath Row. Great, you comment on both "The Joy of High Tech" and Leigh Kimmel's articles. They don't get much comment. One thing I disagree with, though, is what you say about Kimmel. Her articles do more than just report about cons: she reports about an aspect of cons we all ignore, the dealers' room. Having said that, I was not saying that to be disagreeable but to accentuate a point I was making.

Lloyd Penney. I'm growing old too. I have CLL, Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia. Chances are I have ten more years to live. I don't know if it's a blessing that one of its side effects is to make me lose weight. On the other hand, I am taking a pill called Calquence each day to die from something else. That has the effect of turning my arms purple. In any event, I'm gaining some weight and I'm not as purple.

On the other hand still, you have gotten employment in old age. A lot of people want you to do their editing. Good luck. I hope you make enough so that you could go to that August con.

George Price. A number of comments here. One is about science. It is hard to deny that there has been progress because of science. No doubt about it. We could do things which, before, we couldn't do. Notably, there has been a computer revolution recently, and there have been other revolutions. While many inventions were created by non-scientists. It was scientists who came up with principles. On the other hand, you're right: scientists are people. They get carried away in fads and fallacies.

Another comment concerns what you said about the "Midas Plague." It was very appropriate for its time. People were worried that ad men were 'forcing' us to buy things. The society in the "Midas Plague" was the end all and be-all of that. Of course, we really weren't having goods forced down our throats. However, it was so convincing at the time people have remembered "The Midas Plague."

That was a theme that Pohl returned to. Consider, for example, "The Tunnel Under the World" (*Galaxy*, January 1955), about a testing venue for ad campaigns.

—JTM

Yet another comment concerns Shakespeare being written by Bacon and assorted nobles being Jack the Ripper. It's a good point that this

was snobbery by the original partisans of Bacon and the assorted 'Jack the Rippers.' My only problem is that it started a fashion for people to doubt authors wrote their works. Many non-nobles took up the cudgels for those causes. In addition, there was a backlash. I wish I could remember who the local racing form was attributed to. Also, he used 'tell tale' symbols in the racing form to prove it.

Robert S. Kennedy. I disagree with Joe's comment about the Orthodox churches. For the most part, the Orthodox churches have bowed to Caesaropapism, the emperor above the pope. Whoever ruled Earth ruled heaven. About the canonization of Nicholas II, he was only canonized after the fall of Communism. The current regime couldn't care less.

With that, I have finished my comments.

From: **Heath Row** February 14, 2023  
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Won't you be my Valentines? I hope that your health and housing concerns have lightened somewhat. Regardless of the challenges, you will make it — and you are worth it. I don't offer my sympathy, but my empathy. Thank you for continuing to read, write, and publish *Alexiad*, which is always a joy to receive. While preparing a box of materials to donate to the special collection at DePaul University yesterday, I came across some older issues of *Alexiad* dating to when you first hit my radar and I first reached out to you. I'm glad to have you in my thoughts even though I've not been the most consistent reader or correspondent.

Your remarks on fanzine fandom were interesting. Might it be that — gasp, shock, horror — our bailiwick is slouching toward fringe fandom, while we rightfully consider ourselves at its center?

Earlier this week, I sent a little game I'd whipped up, inspired by Bingo, to encourage active fandom amongst the ranks of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, to a couple of faneds for comment and feedback. One of them almost didn't recognize Bingo as a game and had the audacity to suggest that my examples of fanac were . . . antique. Hrothgar might be right, but it gave me pause: Antique and not yet 50? One shudders to think of it. I quite like our bailiwick.

Having once edited *The National Fantasy Fan* for the N3F, including its "Re: The Review Section" I also empathize with your comments on reviewing books. In the late 2000s, I worked with a number of publishers to secure review copies, seek Neffer volunteers to read and review, and mail books to the takers. Now I'd rather just read what I like and review what I read. Or reprint what another has reviewed, having read what they like. One does feel beholden to at least review a book, if it's sent by a publisher or author, and I didn't even real y like that responsibility. (I experienced it more when reviewing records for mundane fanzines.) One can't read or review everything, and one

can't constantly fall prey to the backlog. Fanzines are not gonna pub themselves.

I read and enjoyed your book reviews, particularly appreciating the mix of fiction and nonfiction.

Rodford Edmiston's column was interesting, reminding me in spirit of Henry Grynnssten's Wild Ideas. But the lettercol is where the action is!

Nic Farey's correspondence about perceived miscommunication related to a FAAn Award winner reminded of the N3F's own recent gaffe of not duly informing al Laureate Award winners as part of our process. File, perhaps, under responsibilities similar to those of the book reviewer, the beholden. In this case, however, what's on exhibit might be the gap between PDF fanzines and physical fanzines. If only there were just One Zine to in the darkness bind us.

To Dale Speirs's question: Yes, the *National Enquirer* stil publishes. The best of the American tabloids, *Weekly World News*, however, does not. Speirs's discussion of aging philatelists reminded me of parallel discussion with C.D. Carson in APA-L recently about numismatists. I wonder what our corollary to "[T]he next generation only buys stamps online and blogs instead of attending club meetings" is. Is it fandom that's at risk, or organized fandom? I'm tempted to invoke Robert D. Putnam.

**The nice thing about *Weekly World News* was that it was absolutely separated from reality.**

Darrel Schweitzer's query about con attendance rang similar bells. At some point, I plan to write a Loscon 48 report for The Science Fact & Science Fiction Concatenation — down, backlog! — which will get me up to speed on its attending membership count. This weekend, I'll go to the Gallifrey One Doctor Who con as well as OrcCon, a local roleplaying game event. I'll be curious to gauge their attendance levels, as well. "[T]he attendance in Chicago this year was at acceptable levels, and it wasn't all old geezers in walkers," Schweitzer wrote. I wonder what the transitional challenge is. Does it relate to the aging of volunteers at fan-run cons? (Again, an issue for organized fandom, perhaps.) The mainstream embrace of professional cons that focus more on spectacle than active participation? Yes, COVID-19 affected con attendance generally, but I wonder if it's more an effect of the fracturing of fandom. Without the One Zine to in the darkness bind us (or Discord server, as the case might be), we can all participate in fandom in our own ways, never meeting one another. Fanzines might no longer be the nexus, even if available in PDF form.

I don't know what happened at Balticon — do I want to know? — but I received a postcard mailer for Balticon 57 yesterday, which was serendipitous. And Neffer Sam Lubel is chairing Balticon 58, so I'll at least be a supporting member, if possible. Schweitzer's speculation on Robert A. Heinlein's juveniles reminded me that I need to get around to reading Isaac

Asimov's Paul French works — down, backlog! Imagine an alternate world in which Asimov is remembered primarily for his juveniles. Like Schweitzer and perhaps Evelyn and Mark Leepers (*MT Void* #2260), I won't be going to the Worldcon in Chengdu. My reasons aren't as political as they are pragmatic: I tend to participate in local cons. My only Worldcon to date was participating in CoNZealand online during the pandemic.

David M. Shea's remarks on fanfiction and authors worth copying made me wonder whether fanfic volume is driven more by mainstream popularity than by an author's quality of writing. His dismissal of the Lensman series struck a chord. I began rereading E.E. Smith's Triplanetary last night. I'm not going to suggest that one should read the series, or feel loss not having done so — this is my second attempt with the first book, and I'm only about 50 pages in. But I am tempted to try to insinuate questions like "Are we Arisians, or are we Eddorians?" in conversation and correspondence. Arisians are no Slans, but I like to think most fen are Arisians.

While I have not read Robert Theobald's *Teg's 1994*, I have located it on the Internet Archive and will do so. I appreciate the recommendation!

George W. Price's LOC reminded me of Cyril M. Kornbluth's "The Marching Morons" (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #53) from the April 1951 *Galaxy Science Fiction* and Frederik Pohl's anthology *Shadow of Tomorrow*. It's worth rereading when considering government by experts or self-seeking politicians.

**It anticipated "Idiocracy". The producers did not do anything about this.**

—JTM

Putting it on a tight beam,

From: **Joy V. Smith** February 22, 2023  
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In case you're interested, here's an article that includes five of my SF books: <https://sciencefictionreads.net/2023/02/22/fiv-e-sci-fi-books-from-joy-smith/>

From: **Taras Wolansky** February 22, 2023  
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Thanks for a couple of great issues of *Alexiad* since I wrote you last.

After I missed the December deadline, I figured I would simply LoC both issues for the February deadline — and then I ended up missing that as well. My apologies!

In any case here's commentary on the October issue; December to follow shortly.



**Joe:** “There is a distrust of science.“ Or is it a distrust of *scientists*? We’ve learned the hard way that just because somebody is a legit expert in some field doesn’t mean he’s going to tell us the truth.

**Review of *The Great Steamboat Race*, by John Brunner:** One of the essays in Thomas Sowell’s magisterial *Black Rednecks and White Liberals* concerns the hilariously idiotic and dangerous antics of whites in the Old South, especially as relating to steamboat races. Sowell suggests that southern blacks picked up bad habits from the whites they lived among; thus, “black rednecks”.

You know you’re a redneck if the last thing you remember saying is, “Looka here, I seen this on Jackass!!!”

Incidentally, another chapter in the book, about the true history of slavery, is an absolute must read. You will never again think about slavery in the same way.

**Lisa:** On remembering the Cuban missile crisis, it’s 60 years from one mentally impaired President (due to mood-altering medications) to another mentally impaired President (due to age-related mental decline partially ameliorated by medications).

**David M Shea:** “Men’s hemoglobin transfers oxygen slightly better than women’s hemoglobin.” Actually, it’s the same hemoglobin; it’s just that the level of hemoglobin is higher in men than in women.

**Richard A. Dengrove:** The attack on Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade seems to have been instigated by the son of the deposed emperor, with the intent of restoring the dynasty. Of course, Venice and Byzantium had been bitter rivals for many years before that.

**Review of *Civilizations* by Laurent Binet:** From your description, it appears that this book winning the Sidewise Award was a disgrace. Political correctness outweighing, well, correctness, also known as telling the truth. Incidentally, Esther Friesner wrote a story many years ago, about how Native Americans cross the Atlantic and conquer Spain, except in her version it was the Aztecs and not the Incas. That story was also kind of a disgrace, ignoring the fact that, as soon as the Aztecs landed, 90% of them would get sick and die of Old World diseases they had never encountered before.

February 24, 2023

Thanks for the December issue.

Hanging out with Martin Morse Wooster, at conventions in the DC area and some worldcons, was something I always looked forward to. I will miss him. Whenever we ran into each other, he would greet me with a grin, and propose that we talk some (political) “heresy”. I gather that most of his friends in fandom were of the opposite persuasion so he couldn’t talk to them on certain subjects, even though these were the subjects which dominated his professional life as a writer and edi-

tor.

I used to talk to him about that sort of thing, too.

**Rodford Edmiston:** Thanks for the opportunity to don my Arthurian hat once again.

It may have been John Morris, in his history of Dark Age Britain, *The Age of Arthur*, who pointed out St. Gildas’ *The Ruin and Conquest of Britain* (written ca. 550 A.D.) is actually just *The Ruin of Britain*. It was written during the brief Indian summer of Celtic Britain, which had been won by, well, somebody’s victory over the Saxons at Mons Badonicus or Badon Hill. Gildas treats it as the climactic battle of the war but does not say who the commander was (though all traditions agree that it was Arthur).

Based on so-called Saints’ Lives written by monks during the Dark Ages which present Arthur in a negative light, John Morris suggests Gildas left out the name — while mentioning an earlier Romano-British leader, Ambrosius Aurelianus — because the monks resented paying taxes to keep Arthur’s army in the field.

A piece of evidence that Arthur was real is that the name appears in genealogies in the sixth century, and then disappears from the historical record until it turns up in the Domesday Book, 500 years later. In other words, the name Arthur became fashionable among aristocrats not long after “somebody” crushed the Saxons at Badon Hill.

Morris speculates that Arthur was a descendent of the military family called Artorius in Roman records. He points out that Romanized aristocrats are known to have led efforts against barbarian invaders in other parts of the collapsing empire.

The name Merlin is derived from the British bard, Myrddin — poets were indistinguishable from sorcerers in the Celtic imagination — which Geoffrey of Monmouth modified in his pastiche of the old stories because the original name sounds like a dirty word in Norman French.

**Darrell Schweitzer:** For a dead SF writer Heinlein is actually doing pretty well in Barnes & Noble, usually about half a dozen volumes, some of them new trade paperback editions.

I was at a “when did Heinlein go wrong” panel at a convention, when a young woman in the audience stood up and said “What are you talking about? I love late Heinlein!”

I’m not sure I gave some of the books a fair shake, having read them only once. It’s like the way the later Beatles albums were disappointing at the time but, when I hear the songs now, I appreciate them more. My recollections of some of the later Heinlein novels are favorable.

But then again, who reads *Tom Sawyer, Detective* or *Tom Sawyer in Europe* today? These late potboilers did not hurt the reputation of Mark Twain very much.

It’s easy to start a fascist organization in the United States, notorious Louisiana Governor Huey Long is supposed to have said, as long as you call it “anti-fascist”!

The “fascist” smear is used as a blank check to behave unethically or even illegally, to beat up or even kill people, as Antifa does. “Fighting fascism” becomes the justification for behaving like, well, fascist bullyboys.

“Taras is a bit naïve to assume that only leftists are intolerant.” I don’t recall saying that precisely. It’s certainly true, however, that the woke left usually controls the high ground: universities, foundations, media, social media, corporations, the Federal bureaucracy, increasingly the public schools, even the military. The left is in a far better position to implement intolerant policies, as the Twitter files have shown.

Here’s a fascinating example. Women prisoners — including transgender women — are suing to stop the State of California from forcing them to share a cell with fake transgender women, including rapists (!!), transferred from men’s prisons. But they’re having trouble raising money for their lawsuit, because they’ve been banned from all the major crowdfunding sites. Why? Because woke dogma says there are no fake transgenders; that is, everything else people say about themselves may be questioned, but not claims of gender identity.

“Vaccines work.” I think you meant to say some vaccines work and some do not. During the AIDS epidemic, for example, the government spent billions trying to develop a vaccine, but never got one that worked. On the other hand, COVID vaccines work, but not very well, if we need boosters every few months.

I guess you’ve forgotten the spate of “coming Ice Age” stories published in the 1970s, like Wilson Tucker’s *Ice and Iron*. Global temperatures had actually been falling (slightly) from the Forties through the Seventies, so global cooling was the dominant paradigm — until temperatures started rising again, of course.

I remember them all too well.  
There was a new Ice Age coming.  
The science was settled.

—JTM

On the one hand, regular changes in the Earth’s orbit (the Milankovitch cycles) were promoting cooling, even as increasing CO2 promoted warming. By the late Eighties, I think, most climatologists finally came around to the view that the warming effect would predominate.

#### WAHF:

Lloyd G. Daub, with various items of interest.

Gary Flispart, Guy Lillian, Garth Spencer, and Marc Schirmeister with thanks for their Christmas greetings.

AL du Pisani with a letter for nextish.

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## IT'S A PARATIME LIFE

Verkan Vall sat at the bar in the establishment and consumed a distilled liquor. He was here on a survey, to see what ordinary life was in this Fourth Level timeline. It was a break from his more dangerous efforts. Tortha Karf did not say, but it was clear he knew, about the devastating breakup of his relationship with Hadron Dalla.

While he took his latest sip — there would be imported liquor companies wanting to hear of a desirable tipple, and the Paratime Service had considered charging them for the information — he listened to a conversation not too far from him.

One better-dressed man was telling a dire story. He was manager of a financial institution that had suffered a shortfall of funds, and was deciding his life was over.

The man next to him was more carelessly dressed. He was trying to calm down the banker. After listening to his claims about himself, Vall wondered if he was all that good as a therapist; he was making outrageously improbable claims. Someone acting like that on the Home Time-Line would find himself in the custody of BuPsynHyg.

The banker finally said, "I wish I had never been born." They left.

Vall felt queasy in the morning. It wasn't the alcoholic beverages. Had there been a conveyor accident nearby?

He got up, cleaned up, dressed, and went to the establishment. It was closed for the holiday. Fourth Level timelines were like that. But then the banker came by, shouting out religious greetings to all and sundry.

Vall stood there, wondering what change in his fortunes had provoked that particular display. Sighing, he set out to find someplace to eat.

— Not by H. Beam Piper or Frank Capra

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