

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

My father’s house, the house where I grew up at, is for sale. I have spent several weekends helping clear it out. It was strange watching the house get emptier and emptier. So many memories. I have looked a few times at its pictures online but have found them hard to look at because it looks so empty. Soon another family will be living there and it will be their home. We had no choice really but to sell it when my father had to go to assisted living. It is one of the rules of life that you do not get to hang on to anything forever. I am trying to cut down on the amount of stuff Joe and I have but have not been able yet to rid myself of the desire to buy books. I am trying to switch to ebooks which take up very little physical space. (They do require machines to read them with.) I do not want to leave the younger kinfolks with a mess to clean out.

— Lisa

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The 149th Running of the Kentucky Derby was May 6, 2023 . Mage won in a drive from way behind.	
The 148th Running of the Preakness Stakes was May 20, 2023 . National Treasure won while Mage came in third.	
The 154th Running of the Belmont Stakes was June 10, 2023 . Arcangelo won while National Treasure faded badly.	

The 68th Running of the Yonkers Trot (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) will be **June 30, 2023** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.
 The 98th Running of the Hambletonian (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) will be **August 5, 2023** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.
 The 129th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) will be **October 8, 2023** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.
 The 68th Running of the Messenger Stakes (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be **June 30, 2023** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.
 The 67th Running of the Cane Pace (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be **August 5, 2021** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.
 The 78th Running of the Little Brown Jug (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be **September 21, 2023** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio.

Printed on June 28, 2023
 Deadline is **August 1, 2023**

Reviewer’s Notes

For a time it looked as though the Chengdu Worldcon was part of some plot to take over Worldcon. Those last-minute members for the vote certainly seemed to indicate that.
 But as it comes closer it seems that this is more some fans who were overreaching themselves. Having the convention venue in a building that is being built, for example.
 Other failures are very disturbing, and may call their ability into question. There is no membership list. And the Hugo nominations are delayed.
 They appear to be lacking in management experience. Which should make fans reconsider the Worldcons in exotic foreign sites, giving foreign fans the right to have their own. When the Cairo bid was in Jeddah, the organizers gave a complicated explanation of how they would have the Hugos ready for the early con (nominations in April, con and awards in May).
 Likewise, the Kampala bid looks very much like another case of “why don’t we have something like this?”. Working off the field of Afrofuturism?
 And the Tel-Aviv bid has the problem that there is an ingrained and deep strain of anti-semitism among the woke. This displayed itself for the first Tel-Aviv bid, as a reading of File770.com showed.
 It seems wrong for Worldcon not to be a **Worldcon**, but there are hazards and issues. The solutions seem to be worse than the problems.
 For example, there was the guy who proposed a new structure. The Worldcon would be the bidding country’s national SF con. The American National SF Con would be in Chicago. Never submitted it to the Business Meeting. Did he imagine that (the nonexistent) WSFS, Inc. would look over the matter and make a decision?

— 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.

A voyage for madwomen: On April 27, 2023 South African yachtswoman **Kirsten Newschäfer** sailing the yacht *Minnehaha* won the Golden Globe Race, completing a solo nonstop circumnavigation in 235 days. In addition she rescued a fellow Golden Globe contestant whose boat had sunk.

<https://goldengloberace.com/>

Somebody named Demetrious Polychron has taken up the mantle of Nick Perumov, having written a sequel to *The Lord of the Rings* titled *The Fellowship of the King*. He plans to bring out at least six more. However, the Tolkien Estate is suing him for infringement. Stay tuned.

Though he did begin the deal by suing Amazon.com and the Estate. He claims he wrote to Simon Tolkien (JRRT's grandson) expressing his love for the books.

The book has an odd distribution of reviews on Goodreads: three five-star and twelve one-star, some of the later vituperative. (Thanks to File770.com for the news.)

<https://radaronline.com/p/lord-of-the-rings-jr-r-tolkien-estate-trust-sues-author-sequel-a-mazon-show-250-million-battle/>

Tom Crean's South Pole Inn now has on exhibit an exact replica of the *James Caird*, the lifeboat on which Tom sailed with Ernest Shackleton to get rescue for the stranded men

of the *Endurance*.

<https://www.southpoleinn.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SouthPoleInn/>

Meanwhile, the Scott Polar Research Institute's copy of the *James Caird* is being repaired, having undergone the ravages of time and weather.

<https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/>

The original is still at Dulwich College:

<https://www.dulwich.org.uk/>

TSR has gone bankrupt, aborting its lawsuit against Wizards of the Coast. You say, "Huh?" Justin LaNasa, owner of a chain of tattoo parlors in North Carolina, founded a company called "TSR" and planned to publish a role-playing game. LaNasa claimed that Wizards of the Coast had abandoned several of its trademarked properties. WotC responded in court.

It didn't help that LaNasa's RPG had several racist comments. When LaNasa ran for the North Carolina House of Representatives, he used a campaign ad showing women wrestling in a tub of grits. Really.

<https://www.polygon.com/23759783/dnd-dun-geons-dragons-lawsuit-tsr-bankrupt-chapter-7>

OBITS

Bowling Green fan **Rickey Sheppard** died on **April 28, 2023**. His heart gave out. He had been a prime mover in the Western Kentucky University Science Fiction Society. In addition, he ran Hard to Find Books in Bowling Green, where many of us sat around reading the stock. He was a good friend.

Fanzine fandom has lost a great spirit. Los Angeles fane **Marty Cantor** died on **April 29, 2023**. He had been Official Editor of LASFAPA and APA-L. He pubbed ishes of several striking fanzines, of which I remember *Holier Than Thou* most favorably. Then there was *No Award* . . .

The last time I talked to Marty, not long before he died of cancer, he seemed willing to endure. I miss him.

Grant Conan McCormick, Louisville fan, computer expert, and sometime contributor to *Alexiad*, died **June 19, 2023** in Jewish Hospital in Louisville. He was born in Germany on **March 18, 1955** to an Air Force sergeant.

I met him in a chemistry class. I noticed that the man sitting next to me had a science fiction book on the top of a stack of books. We agreed to meet in the science library and so began a friendship that lasted nearly fifty years.

Grant joined FOSFA and the U of L Free University Science Fiction class. When he

graduated, he got a job as an evaluator for a contractor he knew, then went to a computer software developer. When that changed focus, he became a help-desk person.

He was utterly devoted to computing. Given half a chance he would plunge in and improve a system, thoroughly and efficiently.

His health gradually deteriorated. He had to move in with us. Diabetes led to more problems and a stroke even more. Finally, after he had neglected his health far too long, he had to be put in a nursing home.

The end came when he had trouble breathing, had extensive heart surgery, but finally could not go on,

He was part of my life for so long.

Lisa said:

There is a huge hole in our lives now with the loss of Grant. How do you put into words the loss of someone who has been such a big part of your life? I find that I do not know how to put into words the knowing I will never hear his cheery voice on the phone again.

Sue Francis said: "May he rest in peace."

B. J. Willinger said: "Saddened to hear of Grant's passing."

Richard H. E. Smith said: "Sorry to read this."

Chris Barkley said: "May his memory be a blessing and a continuing inspiration to his family, you and your friends."

Heath Row said: "I condole with you."

Andrew C. Murdoch said: "I'm so sorry, Joseph."

Becca Testerman said: "So sorry to hear this."

John Purcell said: "I am so sorry to hear this, Joe."

Julee Johnson-Tate said: "Our sympathies. Wishing you all peace."

Guy Lillian III said: "Joe, that's wretched news. You guys couldn't have been better friends to Grant; take heart in his memory."

Bob Roehm said: "I'm sad to hear this, but Grant's last few years were not happy ones. His often-unsung contributions to local sf fandom were important. His greeting whenever ever we met was always, 'How's your computer doing?' Thank you, Joe, for being his friend for all these years."

Elizabeth Sheppard said: "So sorry."

Charlotte Proctor said: "So sorry for your loss."

Debra Hussey said: "Sorry Joseph, I know you tried to do a lot for him."

Joyce Scrivner said: "Much sorrow and condolences. May your memories keep you warm."

And my beloved niece **Sarah Elizabeth Major Saysoukha** said: "Oh Uncle Joe, I'm so sorry for your loss. Grant was a good man."

His good friend, and ours, **Carolyn Clowes** said:

"I got down to the hospital just before 6:00.

Grant was still in the room, and they'd had no chance to tidy him up. I called Phil, who had been trying to reach me, then I sat with Grant for about half an hour and cried. I said goodbye for myself and for each of you.

"I was able to speak with Zack, Grant's nurse today. Grant had a bad morning, but then he settled down and fell asleep. Zack went in to check his drip and oxygen around 3:15, and saw the monitor suddenly tank. His heart just stopped. He did not seem to be conscious or in any pain. The desk knows about Neptune, but they didn't know a time for the pickup, so I didn't wait for them. I said one more goodbye to Grant. As I was leaving, Dr. Jameel called me to offer his sympathy to me and all Grant's loved ones. He said we would be in his family's prayers.

"I've never known anyone like Grant. He was a huge intellect and a gentle spirit. I never heard him feel sorry for himself or be angry or rude to anyone. He was generous and sweet and smart as a whip. He always tried to make the best of his circumstances, and he had a wonderfully wicked sense of humor. I am so glad I knew him. We all loved Grant, and we'll miss him forever."

Guy Lillian III said: "Carolyn is a fine lady, a good writer, a sister in the Saavik society (if there is such a thing) — and was like you a great friend to Grant. He was fortunate to have such a class act on his team."

MONARCHICAL NEWS

Who should have been at the Coronation?

The Salic heir, **Prinz Ernst August Prinz von Hannover**, is very ill with pancreatitis and throat cancer, not to mention rage issues. His son and heir, **Prinz Ernst August Erbprinz von Hannover**, is resolving various family issues. (Their descent is direct male-line from George III's son Ernst Duke of Cumberland.)

The Jacobite pretender, **Franz Herzog von Bayern**, is 89 years old. His heir, his brother, **Max-Emanuel Herzog in Bayern**, is not surprisingly also too old to travel, being 86. Oh, by the way, Prinz Franz is gay.

Or, if you believe that Charles II really did marry Lucy Walter, then **Richard Montagu Douglas Scott, Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry** is the real king. Unfortunately, his ancestor James Scott, Duke of Monmouth found out that that trick never worked.

Going back to the Wars of the Roses, the Yorkist pretender is **Simon Abney Hastings, Earl of Loudon**, a right bonzer Aussie. And the male-line Lancastrian descendant of the Plantagenets is **Henry John Fitzroy Somerset, Duke of Beaufort** and a singer with The Listening Device, and master of the Beaufort Hunt.

Finally, in more than one sense of the term, there is hospital therapist **Karin Vogel**, of Rostock, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany, who is the *last* person in the line of succession to the British throne.

MARTIN ST. JOHN STEVAS

Review by Joseph T Major of
DISLOCATED TO SUCCESS

(2016; Sea Lion Press;

ISBN 978-1539690917; \$15.34;

2016; Sea Lion Press (Kindle); \$4.99)

TOWARD THE GLITTERING SUNSET:

(*Dislocated to Success Book 2*)

(2018; Sea Lion Press;

ISBN 979-8368370576; \$15.34;

2018; Sea Lion Press (Kindle); \$6.20) and

A PELLUCID TWILIGHT:

(*Dislocated to Success Book 3*)

(2022; Sea Lion Press;

ISBN 979-8368378725; \$17.84;

2022; Sea Lion Press (Kindle); \$7.81)

"By Viscount Fawsley
as Dictated to Ian Bowen"

Norman St. John Stevas, Baron St. John of Fawsley, was a Tory, being Leader of the House of Commons, Minister for the Arts, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster before crossing up relations with Margaret Thatcher and becoming a back-bencher. After he retired from the House (being made Lord St. John of Fawsley) he became Master of Emmanuel College at Cambridge. (He was gay, which meant a suitable climate.)

But what of other worlds?

Ian Bowen wrote a time-line for alternate-history.com about a displacement in time; the entire United Kingdom was sent from 1980 to 1730, and had to deal with problems both internal and external. No make the serf pull on your boots, kick him in the teeth, and make him thank you for the personal attention, as the innovator of this sort of displacement would have it, either.

The time-line was amusing and disparate, having posts about the editorials of Jonathan Swift about Irish affairs, the journeys of Benjamin Franklin through the world, and the relationships of Crown Prince Freddie in Prussia, Sad Fred of Hannover, and other such royals.

One of the featured characters was Norman St. John Stevas, Viscount Fawsley, the post Dislocation Foreign Secretary. (The kingdom needed to be represented by nobility, understand.) When Bowen wanted to turn his timeline into a novel, he chose to have it be Fawsley's memoirs of the first ten turbulent years.

Which are indeed turbulent. There are problems with rationing, but overseas issues predominate. Like the wars with Spain and the Ottoman Empire. Or adjusting to the heterogeneity of nations in Europe and places eastward.

On a personal note, there is the incident where Michael Moorcock is nearly executed for blasphemy. *Behold the Man* was not quite in keeping with Catholic doctrine, and when he went on a tour he discovered that some of those places took it very seriously.

Throughout, Lord Fawsley manages the

foreign affairs of the sole superpower with calm, concern, and wit. For people who are tired of the old "they woke up and it was all a dream" story, this will displace you from your melancholia.

TRY YOUR LUCK WITH PROFESSOR CHALLENGER

Review by Joseph T Major of
I FEEL, THEREFORE I AM:

The Triumph of Woke Subjectivism

(2022; Bombardier Books;

ISBN 978-1637582855; \$15.44;

2022; Sea Lion Press (Kindle); \$5.99)

By Mark Goldblatt

"I suppose you are aware," said he, checking off points upon his fingers, "that the trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general, which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute source of sense in general?"

"Naturally," said I.

"And that the ideal reader abolishes within himself all barriers, all classes, all exclusions, by simple discard of that old specter: logical contradiction?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And that common sense carries the tyranny of goodwill, the obligation to think 'in common' with others, the domination of a pedagogical model, and most importantly — the exclusion of stupidity?"

"Why, surely!" I cried, and gloried in my own audacity.

"But what does that prove?" he asked, in a gentle, persuasive voice.

"Ah, what indeed?" I murmured.

"What does it prove?"

"Shall I tell you?" he cooed.

"Pray do."

"It proves," he roared, with a sudden blast of fury, "that you are the damndest imposter in London! Gibberish! That's what I have been talking to you, sir — philosophical gibberish!"

— Not from *The Lost World*

If Professor George Edward Challenger was at the modern academy, he might be regularly putting on a bout of MMA as answer to the theses and expressions of thought so common there.. Since Mark Goldblatt is not in the habit of throwing such people through the door, he has to reveal their utter philosophical gibberish by different means.

He begins by describing the development of subjectivism in previous eras. This treatment is so detailed that some may be bored. From there, he shows how those methods have pervaded intellectual thought and how destructive they have been to the world of knowledge. (He doesn't mention the mathematical revelation that $2 + 2 = 4$ is not necessarily valid in other cultures.)

From there he goes on to show how this

subjectivism has led to an intellectual breakdown, a culture where feelings are superior to facts.

This is one of the latest of books showing the errors of postmodern culture, going back to Sokal's and Bricmont's *Fashionable Nonsense* (1997), the book covering Alan Sokal's "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity", his deconstruction of Deconstruction, as it were.

Their effects have been zero. The theorist is free to utterly ignore any challenge to their theories as if it did not exist.

TRIPLE CROWN 2023

by Lisa

I learn that one of the Derby horses, Wild on Ice, will be ridden by a jockey my age. How can I not choose this horse to cheer on? I can't. And so I make Wild on Ice my Derby horse.

While training for the race Wild on Ice is injured and the vets determine he cannot be saved. He is not the only horse to die on the track. Several others die. All the joy and magic of the Derby is gone for me. I debate not even watching the race but that Saturday we end up eating at a local sports bar and of course (what sports bar in Louisville would not be showing the Derby?) I end up watching the race after all. It's a rough start and my fingers clench. No horses go down, though, and I relax. The horses are in the stretch when I see a chestnut colt come flying into view. I point him out to Joe.

"There," I say. "The colt coming on the outside. He's the winner." Even as I say it I can see how far back this particular colt is and that his chances are not all that good. Even so the feeling that this is his day persists. Not until after the flying chestnut hits the finish line in the clear do I know that his name is Mage. What I do know is that this colt is all Thoroughbred and has given me back a little of Derby magic. It's a huge performance that in normal years would become the stuff of Derby legend, a fifteen to one longshot taking the Derby in such a decisive fashion. This is not a normal year. Too many horses have died.

In the Preakness Mage did not fire. Sigh. No Triple Crown this year but National Treasure did turn in an excellent performance to win the Preakness. Mage did not go on to the Belmont. That surprised me for I had thought the Belmont's longer distance would have been better for him, based on the way he blazed through the stretch in the Derby.

In the Belmont, Forte, who had been scratched from the Derby with a bruised foot, was favored but it was Arcangelo who went home with the wreath of white carnations put around the winner of the Belmont Stakes. For the first time in many years I did not watch the race. I feared that I would see horses die.

Horses did die on the Belmont track but none during the big race. Churchill Downs is closed while the cause of so many horse deaths is being investigated. Its races have been moved to Ellis Park in my hometown of Henderson, Kentucky. I hope Ellis Park has a better record for equine safety. I still love Thoroughbred racing but of late I have found it hard to close my mind as to how bad it can be for the horses involved.

NEBULA AWARD WINNERS

Courtesy of File770.com

NEBULA AWARD FOR NOVEL

Babel, R.F. Kuang (Harper Voyager US; Harper Voyager UK)

NEBULA AWARD FOR NOVELLA

Even Though I Knew the End, C.L. Polk (Tordotcom)

NEBULA AWARD FOR NOVELETTE

"If You Find Yourself Speaking to God, Address God with the Informal You", John Chu (*Uncanny* 7-8/22)

NEBULA AWARD FOR SHORT STORY

"Rabbit Test", Samantha Mills (*Uncanny* 11-12/22)

ANDRE NORTON NEBULA AWARD FOR MIDDLE GRADE AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Ruby Finley vs. the Interstellar Invasion, K. Tempest Bradford (Farrar, Straus, Giroux)

RAY BRADBURY NEBULA AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

Everything Everywhere All at Once, Dan Kwan, Daniel Scheinert (A24, AGBO, IAC Films)

NEBULA AWARD FOR GAME WRITING

Elden Ring, Hidetaka Miyazaki, George R.R. Martin (FromSoftware, Bandai Namco)

The previously announced honorees were also presented with their awards:

SFWA DAMON KNIGHT MEMORIAL GRAND MASTER

Robin McKinley

INFINITY AWARD

Octavia E. Butler (posthumously)

KEVIN O'DONNELL, JR. SERVICE TO SFWA AWARD

Mishell Baker

KATE WILHELM SOLSTICE AWARD

Cerece Rennie Murphy
Greg Bear (posthumously)

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

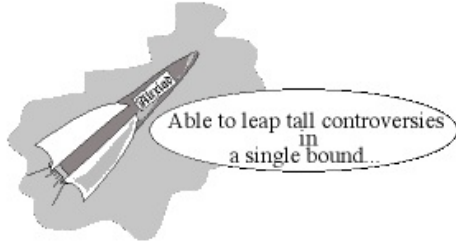
2023
Chengdu
Year of the Water Rabbit
October 18-22, 2023
"6th International SF Convention"
<http://en.chengduworldcon.com/>

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: **Dale Speirs** April 26, 2023
opuntia57@hotmail.com

The April 2023 issue had various comments about climate change by loccers. Firstly, the warning that temperatures are rising several degrees per decade hold no terror for me. Set aside the fact that Homo sapiens evolved during far more serious droughts.

I live in Calgary, which has summer temperatures of +30C and winter temperatures of -30C. I should worry about 5 degrees over a decade? I have a programmable thermostat which keeps my house at 24C when I am home and drops it to 22C after I leave the house for the day. Two degrees a day, not per decade.

When I was a young boy and it were all green fields around here, people fretted about global thermonuclear war. Far too many were convinced the bombs would carpet the Earth by the 1980s at the latest. Many young couples decided not to have children since they would only die horrible deaths from radiation poisoning.

Science fiction, both literary and movies, used post-atomic war disaster as topics for decades. Nothing happened. No giant ants roamed Hiroshima, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, or Fukushima. Now cli-fi is the fad, none of which will last anymore than post-apocalyptic fiction of the 1950s and 1960s.

And there was a definite lack of radiation-created superheroes. (Or even strange mutants, with extra eyes or no limbs.) The people who put on homemade superhero costumes and sat around nuclear power plants waiting for a life-altering accident were profoundly disappointed.

Meanwhile, Cowtown trundles along. Our readercon When Words Collide will have its final performance on the weekend of August 4 to 6, 2023. The venue will be a small suburban hotel, with a cap of 1,000 members. Details from whenwordscollide.org Alas, the

Old Guard are tired and will retire without successors to pick up the torch and carry on. *Sic transit gloria litera scripta.*

Bronson Alpha has hit hard, and there's no way to get to Bronson Beta.

This coming weekend, as I type this letter, is April 28 to 30, when the Calgary Comic Expo will take over not a hotel but the Stampede rodeo grounds. All the downtown hotels are booked solid as 200,000 ticket buyers (not members) flood the city. The grounds are served by two LRT stations, and all the hotels located on the lines far out into the suburbs are also fully booked.

There will be a public parade of cosplayers on April 28 through the downtown core. I'll run photos in my zine *Opuntia*. (Available as a free pdf from either fanac.org or efanzines.com) Calgary's mayor Jyoti Gondek will ride in the parade. She knows where the votes are. She won't be at When Words Collide. No television cameras there.

I met several of you Kentucky folk at the 1994 Winnipeg Worldcon, chaired by John Mansfield. He was to have been a Guest of Honour at the forthcoming Pemmi-Con. Alas, he died in hospice care on April 19, survived by his wife Linda. There is a memorial notice at main.pemmi-con.ca

This has been a bad few months. Condolences to Linda and all.

—JTM

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** April 26, 2023
darrells@comcast.net

Some quick comments.

You ask my opinion of gender transition for children under one year of age. My question in return is, is this a real thing, or something you got off Fox News? I have certainly heard nothing about it from real news sources. I can't see any reason why it should be done, because an infant is too young to express any desire in the matter. It would surely be morally wrong for parents to just arbitrarily decide they wanted a boy instead of a girl (or vice versa) and have the kid "fixed," but I am not convinced that this is a real issue. Remember that it is a basic technique of propaganda to get people worked up about things that are not real and not happening. Republicans use Critical Race Theory (which they cannot define) this way. They don't know what it is, but it sure scares the rubes. Drag queens have been around for a very long time, and suddenly they are made scary too. We have also seen the invention of the concept of "grooming," which appeals to the fears of ignorant parents who think that kids can be "turned into homosexuals" but such influences. Therefore such parents can tell themselves that it is "not their fault" that their kid turned out to be gay. Of course if you ever ask a gay person,

they will tell you that the tendency is inborn and they usually become aware of it around the time of puberty. But propaganda does not rely on facts, just fear. A couple generations back some parents were equally terrified of their kids being left-handed.

How about two-year-olds?

<https://abc11.com/duke-gender-clinic-hospital-transgender-identity/989285/>

As for climate change, of course we can see it happening all around us. You know about the floods, storms, wildfires, etc. If you follow scientific news, you know all about the polar ice sheets melting at an unprecedented rate and sea levels rising. Your various correspondents are probably correct that India and China will continue to develop fossil fuel industries because these lead to short-term profits. The Indians will be the first to suffer. They need to read the first chapter of Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry of the Future*. What I think will happen is that the catastrophes will continue to occur, and get worse. Millions will die. Millions more will be displaced. It will lead to major social upheavals, including revolutions. Meanwhile the rich and powerful will try to ride it out, and just let the peasants die. This may not work out well for them.

Your memory of 1980s fanzines is very different from mine. I never read a piece of slash fiction. To me the '70s and '80s were the glory days of magazines like *Science Fiction Review*, *Thrust/Quantum*, *Fantasy Newsletter*, etc., not to mention such traditional fanzines as Marty Cantor's *Holier Than Thou* or Linda Bushyager's *Granfalloon* and later *Duprass*. Most of the content was non-fiction, often very good commentary and journalism. It was the era in which many of the best "fanzines" became semi-professional. The first three named all paid for material. There was a brief period in which I was making the majority of my income from "fanzine writing," mostly for *Science Fiction Review*. Although people who did not read them did not know this, the fiction magazines of the era also became semi-professional, no longer publishing fumbling imitations of pro fiction by amateurs, but stories of genuine merit, sometimes by long-time pros. This developed into what we call the "small press magazine" of today and became a genuine alternative market for writers the newsstand prozines could not (or would not) accommodate, such as Thomas Ligotti, Charles de Lint, Charles Saunders, or even yours truly, not to mention returning old-timers like H. Warner Munn or Joseph Payne Brennan. I am talking about magazines like *Whispers*, *Weirdbook*, *Shayol*, *Fantasy Crossroads*, *Fantasy Tales*, etc.

If you think that the fanzines of the period were mostly "fanfic, often slash," then either you inhabited a different universe or you were looking in the wrong place. I wish we had as many fanzines now as we had then. But it was also an era in which, as I have noted, most fans

no longer communicated through fanzines. This was why Locus won the Hugo most years. It had a larger circulation and was the one publication on the ballot that most voters were familiar with. But the traditional fannish fanzine subculture was still flourishing. This was the era in which Moshe Feder tried to institute the Faan Awards so that "best fanzine" awards could be given to actual fanzines again.

I saw a different universe. Fan fictionzines were widespread. Some writers would print up their stories in perfect-bound books. And send them to the original production company, which would carefully store them away, lest a writer see them. They didn't want to be hit with an intellectual-property lawsuit. Dale Speirs wrote about a guy who claimed he had invented the Ewoks, and sued LucasFilms for royalties. And it goes on. Demetrious Polychron sued Amazon claiming they had stolen ideas from his (unauthorized) LotR sequel. And now we have *All the Young Dudes*, which is replacing Rowling's works as canon.

—JTM

From: **Nic Farey** April 27, 2023
fareynic@gmail.com

Thanks as always Joe, and for reporting the FAAn awards - couple of small corrections there:

You missed Genzine winner *Portable Storage* (ed. William Breiding)

Also *This Here...* has an ellipsis after the title (but I do try not to be outraged when people ignore it)

Alan White's 'Best Cover' win was specifically for *BEAM 17*

'1957...' (Best Special Publication) was compiled and edited by Rob Hansen

I think N3F may have reported as you did and I pointed the same things out to George Phillis.

Thanks for the correction.

— JTM

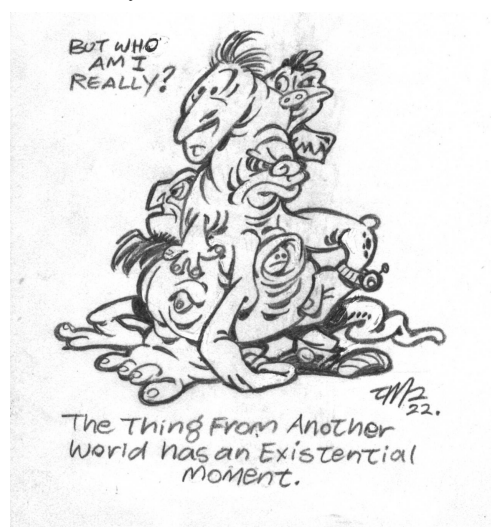
From: **Garth Spencer** May 6, 2023

Thank you for *Alexiad* #128. It is past time to show that I have actually received and actually read and enjoyed your zine!

Lisa's short editorial reflecting on past and present technology sparked a few thoughts of my own. Of course we have a lot of appliances that would amaze our grandparents, and of course we take them for granted; it is less a matter of course that we have to apply the old buyer's principle, caveat emptor, and not greet

every new application with enthusiasm. There was an episode of an SF series that alluded to this, when a young Nikola Tesla is diverted by a temporal castaway's cell phone – the castaway was naturally far more concerned with somehow being cast out of the 21st century and how to get back. (Sanctuary, I believe the series was.) Like Lisa, I have been warned about having too many apps on my phone; I have experienced the consequences.

Joseph's short editorial makes a point that needs repeating – we seem to have a *lot* of alleged self-help/pop psychology that looks like highly-promoted nonsense; and a *lot* of popular nonsense getting air time on radio and TV, even on channels ostensibly specializing in history and science documentaries. Granted that there's always been a market for this material, are we really seeing more soft-headedness these days, or simply a lot more promotion? Do you wonder why, sometimes?



Back in the fifties and sixties, psychological cults were popular. Instead of citing the one closest to SF, you might be interested in searching for R. D. Rosen's *Psychobabble* (1977), a book about some of those.

Your article "Masquerade" entertained me. Just before my voice broke I became fascinated by codes and ciphers and cryptography generally. Mind you, this was well before the field became an exercise for computer programmers; I was just as fascinated by foreign alphabets and systems of symbols. Learning that some hoaxes and frauds had been published in the form of treasure hunts entertained me, but ... there's something ultimately disappointing in stories of treasure hunts with archaeological trappings; they hold no real surprises.

Have you read David Kahn's *The Codebreakers* (1967, 1996)?

—JTM

Joseph's review of *The Dirty Tricks Department* and Rodford Edmiston's latest "The Joy of High Tech" column brought some questions into focus: if SF fandom just missed being a fandom of wannabe mad scientists, each with his own home lab, what are the classic texts on engineering and invention they should turn to? Where is the fabled "Rubber Handbook" that summarizes everything an engineer needs to refer to, even for recreating civilization? What set of industrial processes – not just, what basic set of machine shop tools – does a community need to reproduce, if it is cut off from outside communication and transportation indefinitely? Maybe this ventures outside the scope of Mr. Edmiston's subject; maybe not.

I would have thought (harking back to the beginning of Mr. Edmiston's column this issue) that some of the most important inventions of the 20th century were not so much engineering, as conceptual inventions. Consider Shannon's mathematical definition of information, or the concept of complex systems, including mathematically chaotic systems.

These are definitely post-Victorian conceptions, and popular culture – even academic cultures – are still absorbing them. I invite you to consider the ramifications: that it takes a combination of several factors to cause certain kinds of events; that some few events, such as weather patterns, are hideously sensitive to slight variations in initial conditions; that other events, such as nuclear and volcanic explosions, are "robust" in the sense that they will predictably cause widespread effects on weather; that you cannot do just one thing with engineering such as fracking, damming, mining, you will inevitably have "side effects" – contaminated aquifers, an epidemic of river delta parasites, damage to forestry and agriculture, desertification – that you can neither foresee, nor can you always eliminate them.

Which is why I have not yet disclosed my proposal to drive nuclear-powered electric railways from the cities of southern Canada to the farthest reaches of Nunavut.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** May 22, 2023
 2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA
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Alexiad April 2023.. [Lisa's Editorial.] I was never told not to have too many apps. Nonetheless, one app I liked, "Angry Birds" with sound, was discontinued because it was claimed to take up too much charge.

Reviewers Notes. I think how to be a 'real man' or 'real woman' is something older people see as the problem of younger people. A real man or woman being a carbon copy of them.

You broach that skeptics have not succeeded in converting believers into skeptics.

The problem is that that people prefer religion or romance to science and yet they don't say it's not science. On the other hand, I know some believers in Ancient Aliens, while believing, ridicule advocates of Ancient Aliens for other shenanigans. There's no accounting for taste.

Lisa. Bad Storms. The tornadoes didn't come where you live and they didn't come where I live. That's regarded as good news these days.

Joe. Franco could make his family into nobility – if not royalty – and he did.

The title was awarded by Juan Carlos.



You're So Vain. The eclipse won't get to my area those two times. On the other hand, I am not much of an astronomer.

Masquerade. I haven't heard of people looking for buried treasure for a long time. That, of course, doesn't mean that they haven't. However, it can't be like the old days when wealthy people didn't trust banks and buried their wealth.

Superman Smashes the Klan. World War II had ended and he couldn't smash the Nazis anymore. At least, the authors of the comic recognized there was a similarity between the Nazis and the Klan.

It was based on a 1946 story arc on the radio drama "The Adventures of Superman".

Shipwreck. Too bad we have to hide wrecks to prevent them from being taken by

modern bucaners.

Of Spies and Stratagems. I agree when spies are not reigned in, they degenerate into the equivalent of boys having fun. I am wondering whether being unregulated was the reason for the incompetence of Nazi spies. And maybe German spies in the first World War.

The Joy of High Tech. Rodford Edmiston. He's right that a lot of inventions had precursors. However, before they were truly invented, other inventions had to be made to use them; or other other uses had to be thought up.

Letters, We Get Letters. Al du Pisani. It's crazy that a modern nation, South Africa, has to live with power blackouts for part of the day. One would think that, even with a coalition, most voters would still vote for no blackouts, and overthrow that ridiculous monopoly.

Darrell Schweitzer. I don't know what to do about people wanting to be the opposite sex. It is treated like a great cause or the ultimate of sexual deviance. In short, it's a signal that I'm too old and thus not with it.

About Heinlein, no doubt about it that the *Sixth Column* represents prejudice but from another time when it was considered OK. I think that, far from being, banned we should keep editions of the books where the author didn't know he was being racist. He took the attitude of his time. And maybe we should be humble about it: that people in past times had different views from us and our views may go the way of past views.

About the Romans beating the Britons, yes, a lot military tactics are also not what we think. If we take the obvious at face value, we may lose.

About the difference between old fandom and current APAs, there weren't people calling others enemies of the people for the words they use.

Garth Spencer. I agree World War I and II vets wanted to normalize their world after their wars; but it wasn't normal normal but the way they thought things should be. Time had passed the old normal.

About wokeness, both on left and right, it is the belief that if you change the words people use, and you change their ideas. Of course, that's ridiculous. The words were created by the ideas.

Also, I agree film makers get nonsensical when they try to film wars. However, they can get away with it. The exception was one of Mussolini's sons: he fell afoul when, in a movie set in Ancient Roman times, he neglected to take wristwatches away from the actors.

About us old fans, new fans don't want to associate with us. We're old farts. A group I was in wanted younger members desperately; but, when they found we were all old farts, they left.

George W. Price. Keep up finding the proper words. I am too lazy to look things up like that.

I disagree with you on people's attitudes toward nuclear plants recently. They seem to be more in favor of them than they were a decade or so ago. It is dawning that building them is the

only practical replacement for fossil fuels.

Thanks for agreeing with me on people's attitude toward advertising.

Lloyd Penney. Children's books have always been censored. Buy one thirty years later and you might not recognize it.

Also, you are somewhere where you have young fan friends. Good for you. I haven't been that lucky with young people – except for my relatives.

Also, too bad you don't have a paying job as editor of *Amazing Stories*. Who knows you might someday. Especially if you know how to build a website. The future I am afraid, is not in paper.

In the end, you're tired but you still have written a decent letter.

Taras Wolansky. Why George Orwell didn't attack Nazis is simple: we had defeated them. George attacked the clear and dangerous enemy he knew. *1984* was published in 1948 and *Animal Farm* in 1945. Of course, it depends on when it was published in 1945.

August 17, 1945.

Roosevelt. He gets blamed for being a Nazi and he gets blamed for getting us into a war with the Nazis. I am sure he maneuvered us into that war. Being Jewish, I am not unhappy that he did. By the way, I did meet Jewish refugees from the war after the war. They got here somehow.

I imagine it would take more than galoshes to live in Florida if the Earth heated up to conditions like the Cretaceous, about a 100 million years ago. Florida was actually underwater then; so, at the very least, we would need a bathing suit and flippers.

Myself. As I have been doing, I'll just comment on your comments, Joe. About the cost of Chinese science fiction, I don't know what \$12 billion dollars spent for Chinese science fiction means. Per year? Per a number of years? Per month? I do remember a Chinese science fiction which got to the US and which had the Empress Wu in it.

The article said, "China's sci-fi industry reports 82.96B yuan revenue in 2021". It was on the Chengdu Worldcon site. 82.96 billion yuan is about USA\$12 billion.

—JTM

I have never understood why FDR gets blamed for getting us into war with the Nazis. Hitler's treaty with Japan did not obligate him to war if Japan was the aggressor. It was Hitler, not FDR, who declared war. It was not enough war for him to be fighting both England and the Soviets, and in the case of the Soviets, he had viciously turned on Stalin, who although a murderous bastard,

was keeping faith with him.

Nor did we go to war with the smartest Fascist dictator, Francisco Franco of Spain. He did not bother us and therefore we did not bother him. (I base my estimate of his intelligence on the fact that he was the only Fascist leader who died of old age and in his bed.)

—LTM

About Afro-Futurism, I don't think that has anything to do with science fiction.

About Horace Gold taking one facet to its extreme, it may be good for satire. For science fiction in general, we're better off if the future has several differences from our current era. At least, several differences.

About the Latin Empire in Constantinople, so after the Doge of Venice suggested it, the Crusaders decided they would conquer the current Eastern Empire and make it their own. I doubt they were going to share it with the prince who wanted his father overthrown.

"Hornblower and the Skeered o' Nuthin'." Given history otherwise remained the same as ours, since Fulton had invented a decent steam boat (1806) by the time of the Napoleonic Wars (1800-1815), an American captain could have had one.

From: **Lloyd G. Daub** May 25, 2023
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Thank you again for keeping me on the mailing list. Alas that once again I have nothing to LOC about. If the population of SFans is shrinking and splintering (and the splinters shrinking further), my niche—my splinter — is probably one of the most shrunken. Hence I will merely write my Lensman sequels for my own amusement.

I continue to wish you and Lisa all the best.

Clear ether.

—JTM

From: **George W. Price** May 26, 2023
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April Alexiad (#128)

Joe's review of John Lisle's *The Dirty Tricks Department* refers to "the War of the Rebellion (or whatever we have to call it now)." I was raised in the North, so I have always thought of it as the Civil War. But I am open to other possibilities, such as the War for Southern Independence, the Slaveholder Rebellion, or maybe even the Anti-Lincoln War.

However, "the Civil War" also seems appropriate in a quite different sense: The war was fought in a relatively civil way, without very many serious atrocities. The Fort Pillow

massacre seems to have been the worst. And prisoner-of-war camps on both sides were miserable by modern standards.

But captured "rebels" were not executed, as they might well have been — read Rafael Sabatini's *Captain Blood* for a realistic view of how English rebels led by the Duke of Monmouth in 1685 were dealt with at the "Bloody Assizes" after they were defeated at Sedgemoor. Many hundreds were burned, hanged, or sold into slavery.

Of course the Federal Government refused to recognize the Confederacy as a legitimate government. Nevertheless, the Union army generally accorded prisoners "the honors of war," and the Confederates usually reciprocated. This was inconsistent legally, but much more humane. Sometimes decency does prevail.

Darrell Schweitzer gives me some startling news when he says, "I can think of four trans people among my friends or acquaintances, all of them in their sixties or seventies, so it isn't just a recent fad."

Now that is the very first time I have ever seen any real evidence that the "trans" phenomenon is not "just a recent fad." As far as I've ever heard, in several thousand years of history before our time, "gender dysphoria" was never seriously noticed and discussed. Presumably that's because its victims kept silent for fear of scorn and persecution.

To be sure, this revelation does not mean that I now accept all the absurd ways by which we are expected to make transgender people feel better about themselves. I still say that biological males should not be admitted to women's locker rooms and showers, nor allowed to compete in women's sports. Providing single-occupancy washrooms is about as far as I will go.

Likewise, pronouns and related forms of address and reference should be strictly according to one's biological sex.

To me, this is primarily about factual accuracy and realism. A male remains a man no matter how desperately he wants to be a woman. At the present state of biological science, there is no way — not even a theoretical possibility — of changing anyone's actual sex. It is set in the DNA, and that's that.

I very strongly oppose any surgical or hormonal treatment of youngsters to make them look more like the sex they want to be. Such changes cannot be more than cosmetic, and that is not a good enough reason. A female who has breast reduction surgery does not become a man; she only becomes a flat-chested woman.

I see it as serious malpractice for a physician to make such changes on minors, and even worse if the alterations are irreversible. What if it turns out that the gender dysphoria was only a passing adolescent confusion? Oh, too bad, the parts won't grow back. The law should allow no irreversible changes before age eighteen, or maybe even twenty-five or thirty.

Mr. Schweitzer might ask his four elderly

trans acquaintances how they would have reacted if, at the age of thirty, they had been offered surgery that would make them look more like the sex they wanted to be. Do they now regret that it wasn't available?

The editor asks Schweitzer what he thinks about "gender transition treatment for children less than a year old." I presume that's only a rhetorical question, but it reminds me of the growing acceptance of pretending that the attending physician at a birth "assigns" a gender to the baby. Now that is triple-distilled nonsense!

I was being rhetorical, but it seems some places are offering gender transitions for two-year-olds.

According to the figures I've seen, he — or she — needs to "assign" gender in about one case in 4,000. For the 3,999 who are not so grossly malformed, the physician need only "observe and report" the visibly obvious sex.

C'mon now, don't we all really know that human sex is absolutely binary? But how we feel about the unchangeable sex that nature has given each of us is quite something else — and those very real and painful emotional problems are what all the fuss is about.



Garth Spencer says to the editor, "About your books: When I checked out your link to

Advent Publishers, I learned that they were not in fact publishers of fannish volumes such as *All Our Yesterdays* or *A Wealth of Fable*. I guess I had somehow confused them with NESFA Press.”

The confusion is understandable. As head of Advent, I published Harry Warner Jr.’s *All Our Yesterdays* in 1969 in hardcover and 1971 in paperback. When sales tapered off, I let it go out of print. An online check indicates that NESFA published a new edition in 2004, after Warner’s death.

Back in 1962 Advent – then still run by Earl Kemp – published Robert Bloch’s very fannish *The Eighth Stage of Fandom*. After Advent let it go out of print, NESFA may have brought out a new edition – I’m not sure.

NESFA could have done that because it was Advent’s custom to copyright each book in the name of the author. Once Advent let it fall out of print, the rights automatically reverted to the author, and he (or his estate) was then free to resell it to some other publisher.

Advent had nothing to do with Warner’s *A Wealth of Fable*. I have never seen it, but online comments say that it is a history of science fiction fandom in the Fifties, a sequel to *All Our Yesterdays*, which covers the Forties.

They were selling a mimeographed copy of about the first third of the book at MidAmeriCon One. Then they put out mimeoed copies of the rest. When it was published in full in hardback I got a copy. There was going to be a history of fandom in the sixties but the effort was broken up by one very disputative participant.

—JTM



Mr. Spencer did not see any of this on the present Advent website because when Andrew Burt took over the Advent name and inventory from me a few years ago, he did not include any of the old titles that were already out of print.

I think I will suggest that he consider bringing out new editions – at least as e-books – for all those old out-of-print books. Of course, since the copyrights have all reverted

to the authors, Burt will have to deal directly with them or their estates. I will have nothing to do with it except possibly to supply file copies for scanning.

Shifting to a very different subject, Mr. Spencer says of Heinlein’s juveniles, “I had to put up with the difference between Heinlein’s future Terran settings ... which always seemed just like the Eisenhower era, if not Teddy Roosevelt’s; and the teenagers and twentysomethings in the juveniles seemed to come from those eras, too. Make of this what you may.”

What I make of it is that Spencer has touched on a fundamental and probably unavoidable lack of realism in most science fiction. A story which accurately portrayed a future society would almost surely be incomprehensible and/or infuriating and/or morally disgusting to readers.

The obvious example is the treatment of sex. What would a typical Victorian reader in 1880 make of a story laid in 2023 which – just in passing, not as the main theme – described our sexual customs accurately and in detail? When he or she realized that women were expected to be sexually active outside of marriage, he or she would surely be shocked and probably outraged – and maybe also titillated. And our Victorian reader would for damned sure be distracted from the story line. Whatever point the author intended to make would hardly even be noticed.

For a less extreme example, suppose a 1920 reader saw a story set in 2023 with great background detail on how the automobile has shaped our culture, both economically and socially. That would be far less disturbing, but still very distracting.

Readability requires that science fiction stories be written with enough futuristic changes in background detail to let the reader believe they are happening in the future – Heinlein was a master at that – but not so much as to distract from whatever point the author is trying to make.

And so we wind up with works like Doc Smith’s seminal (and to me greatly enjoyable) Lensman series – filled with superscience, intergalactic in scope, laid a thousand or more years in the future – and with all the Earth human characters thinking, behaving, and talking just like 1930s Americans.

Are there any convincing and practical alternatives?

From: **Taras Wolansky** June 10, 2023
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Thanks for the April issue of *Alexiad*.
 Joe: “When CSICOP, the predecessor of CSI, was founded, it had scientists, journalists, and a few conjurers. Now CSI seems to consist of professional skeptics, some of them conjurers.”

I checked the list of CSI Fellows on the inside front cover of the latest *Skeptical In-*

quirer, and it seems to be, still, heavily weighted toward academics. Some of the more familiar names are: Marcia Angell, Susan Blackmore, Richard Dawkins, Daniel C. Dennett, Ann Druyan, Douglas R. Hofstadter, Ray Hyman, Elizabeth Loftus, Michael E. Mann, David Morrison, Joe Nickell, Lee Nisbet, Bill Nye, James E. Oberg, Clifford A. Pickover, Steven Pinker, Jill Tarter, Carol Tavris, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and Marilyn Vos Savant.

“*The Week* ... reports on the progress of *The Winds of Winter* ... [by] George R.R. Martin”. Be assured, if Martin can’t finish it, his literary executors will. My guess would be Brandon Sanderson.

The Bard from Life of the Party is out of the running, then? But I can see any of a thousand writers on AOOO ready to step up and fill in.

By the way, I can no longer take *The Week* seriously, not since they referred to the January 6 committee as “bipartisan” on several occasions; merely because the Democrats brought in a couple of Republican turncoats, in their last weeks before they were booted out of Congress.

In the latest issue, *The Week* circles even closer to the drain. (I’ve been getting some sample issues for free.) In a full page analysis of the incomplete border wall, they simultaneously argue that the wall has no effect; and that it is pushing illegal immigrants to take other, more dangerous paths across the border.

Review of *The Jack Vance Treasury*: You note that one of the included stories, the classic novella, “The Dragon Masters” (1962), won the Hugo Award; but while mentioning another story in the book, “The Last Castle” (1966), you left out that it won the Hugo and the Nebula. Incidentally, most writers would have added enough filler to these stories to pad them out to novel length, but Vance never did. In the ensuing years, they were frequently published as standalone books anyway.

Darrell Schweitzer: I reread the first half of the uncut *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Overall, it struck me as a good screwball comedy. Also, its cynicism about politics is weirdly ahead of its time.

I don’t remember the edited version well enough to say which is better. However, I’m pretty sure we didn’t need eleven (11) pages of Jubal Harshaw lecturing his handyman, for objecting to Mike’s belief in ritual cannibalism. Eleven lines would have been more than enough.

The unedited version is too wordy. However, it does clarify a scene which had been interpreted as “homosexual panic” and was really showing off.

On the other hand, it may help us understand the fact that, when Heinlein depicted

super high-tech Africans engaging in cannibalism, a few years later in *Farnham's Freehold*, his attitude was more approving than not.

Since the early 1970s, the climate has gotten not "steadily warmer" but unsteadily warmer; that is, two steps forward, one step back. There's a reason why all the talk was of global cooling in the 1970s: because temperatures had actually been trending slightly downward since the 1930s.

After 1990, of course, the talk was of global warming, but the "hottest year on record" was almost invariably within the error bar related to each year's estimate. In other words, it was reasonable to say there was an overall trend upward, on the scale of decades, but it varied from year to year.

On trans issues, you're engaging in what has been called "nut hunting", which is really a variant of the Straw Man argument. For example, segregationists pointed to civil rights activists who were Stalinists, as if they all were. Ted Kaczynski speaks for all envoirs. The Democrat activist who tried to murder a dozen Republican Congressmen represents all Bernie Sanders supporters. The guy who ran over a demonstrator in 2017 is the archetypal Trump supporter.

By an odd coincidence, Ted Kaczynski died today, June 10. The Babylon Bee said that his funeral had the problem that no one would open the invitations. ©

—JTM

However, I have not heard of any effort whatsoever to prevent adults from transitioning. These particular "nuts" may be fictional. And the guy who supposedly said it's OK to kill trans people because they "don't exist" sounds even phonier: the hard-line position on trans is not that they don't exist, but that it's a mental disorder.

Trans activists understand that giving puberty blockers to children, and castrating or amputating the breasts of teenagers, are very unpopular, so they try to muddy the waters as much as they can.

I agree with the philosopher, Sam Harris, that transitioning is the way to happiness for some people. However, while gender dysphoria has always existed, it has always been overwhelmingly male to female. The reason people are talking about social contagion is that, for the first time, groups of teenage girls are showing up and insisting they are really boys.

Someday we'll be able to convert testicles into ovaries, and back again. Until then, "gender affirmation therapy" should be the last resort. Also, I think it's reprehensible to tell gay kids they're not gay: they're in the "wrong body", and we can fix that (snip snip).

Garth Spencer: Actually, H. Beam Piper was rather advanced. Jo Walton recently singled out the portrait of a woman scientist in

Piper's 1957 story, "Omnilingual", for presenting women scientists as, simply, normal, unexceptional.

In *The Cosmic Computer* (1963) we see a society that's sort of the melting pot on steroids. Two memorable supporting characters are Luther Chen-Wong and Mohammed Matsui; then there's Colonel Klem Zareff, who is sort of a typical Kentucky colonel, except he is black.

Richard A. Dengrove: "Life flourished in the Cretaceous era, and there was far more carbon in the air". The figure, 1000 ppm, or more than double what we're going for today, comes to mind. No doubt the high CO2 level helped plants recover from being grazed on by dinosaurs.

From: **AL du Pisani** June 12, 2023
du.pisani@kilos40.co.za

It is heading toward Winter here. Where I am now, at the coast, is much milder than in Johannesburg – so have not really been cold.

I enjoy life here. Still trying to figure out where I am going to end up. My initial feeling was for a small place close to here, but I was not impressed with what I saw

on a reconnaissance. I am slowly making new connections and am starting to attend activities again. But, like many other things in the country, it is negatively impacted by loadshedding.

There had been one day this year that there were no scheduled electricity downtime anywhere in the country. Sometimes, through the luck of the draw, I would experience an entire day without loadshedding, as my area have none scheduled during the time that loadshedding is in effect. But it is horrendous how much of my living is impacted by planning to live around times of no electricity.

[Soap opera of the Eskom CEO resigning, being poisoned, talking about the corruption he experienced, and leaving the country. And of the ministers denying that he told them anything, trying to accuse him of trying to overturn the government, and trying to nail him for anything omitted.]



And the Government appears to be unwilling or incapable of fixing the problem, or allowing anybody else to fix the problem. Except at small scale, where very expensive grid tied systems of solar panels, batteries, inverters and management computers and software allow a single house to experience uninterrupted electricity. My mother's place nearby have such a system, and it it a treat to carry on largely regardless of what Eskom is doing.

My mother bought the place as a holiday residence, with the intention of moving to it where she got old. She is 83, and not yet interested in moving.

Unfortunately, the place I stay in does not allow for such a system. Explainable, where you realise that the core of the house was originally built during the Second World War as temporary wartime accommodation at the then air training school in George. Improvements and additions was in materials which kept the original character of the house.

It is amazing to be living in a time where SpaceX is building the biggest rocket ever sort of in the open. The first flight was actually more successful than it seemed, but it took industry insiders to explain why. And the pace at which repairs and improvements of the launch facilities has been made is astounding – I knew then Elon Musk said that he'll be ready to fly in two months that it was unlikely. And it looks like my own judgement of not before October, mostly driven by regulatory oversight and politics may be too pessimistic. (I actually did a small presentation to SFSA exactly one month after the flight – Not a month later and a lot has changed.)

One hopes it isn't a "Rocket of 1955".
— JTM

It is utterly strange to realise that for the first time this year I bought and read a conventional SF novel. Most of what I have been reading are light novels translated from the Japanese, or similarly styled stories, quite often having heavy Asian and gaming influences.

I feel like the lockdown years turned me into much more of a hermit than I have ever been. The state of electricity and some of the governance and political insanity worldwide is damping down any urge I have to travel. Except for a yearning to visit Japan once again.

I hope that life is if not getting better, at least not getting worse.

From: **John F. Hertz** June 2, 2023
236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409; Los Angeles, CA 90057

Good as ever to see Schirm's fanart in *Alexiad* 128 (vol. 22, no. 2).

Indeed a sword doesn't run out of bullets. Or gunpowder. Or, in some SF stories, whatever is used by an energy weapon. I believe pistols were called the Great Equalizer because they didn't require the physical strength needed

to wield a sword; they required some skill, but arguably less; however they're more complicated.

Haven't yet read the 2013 Vance collection (T. Dowling & J. Strahan eds.) from Subterranean Press. He was *inter alia* one of our poets — I mean his prose was poetic. The novella "Moon Moth", which you mention, has musical instruments and masks. As well as mystery and mentation.

Heinlein was helpful in editing Niven & Pournelle's *Mote in God's Eye* — well after his own *Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*. It's easier to see things in others. One reason for partnerships.

And those of Heinlein's books which were edited seem to have gained by the supervision, in spite of RAH's dislike of Campbell's, Dalgleish's, and Gold's efforts.

—JTM

WAHF:
Lee Muncy, James D. Nicoll, Cathy Palmer-Lister, George Phillis with thanks.

GRANT'S LAST DAYS

by Joe

We had not been seeing Grant very often, having fallen out of the habit when the nursing home was closed off because of Covid. He was communicating with his brother and his family, but less so.

We had been surprised that Grant had a brother at all. Technically, a half-brother, from their father's first marriage. Phil had come to their father's funeral (it was when Lisa and I got married, which is why he wasn't there) and dropped out of communication afterwards, so I was pleased that he had some family ties.

Phil got back in touch and tried to help Grant as best he could. We felt better that he had someone.

But Grant became weaker and weaker. He was sometimes very explicit about his physical failures.

Then, he began to have trouble breathing. He was taken to the hospital, where he had three stents put into his coronary arteries and had a balloon clear some more.

He was very confused when he awoke. He was not sure where he was. They released him after a couple of days. Carolyn visited him and saw that he was improving, but still confused.

I went to see him on Saturday. He was tired and perhaps a bit confused (asking how the cats were, for example). He was on supplemental oxygen. I didn't stay very long.

Then he took a turn for the worse and was returned to the hospital. He improved slightly at first but went into decline and died on Monday, June 19.

It is like a great hole has been torn in my life. Fifty years ago (almost) I looked at the stack of books the student next over in the classroom where the chemistry course was. There was a science fiction book on top. I introduced myself.

We did things. When the bus line offered free rides to encourage more riders, we went all over town. We went to the bookstores in the malls in the east part of town together. We went to see *Star Wars* films together, and the day we went to see *The Empire Strikes Back*, got out in the middle of a rainstorm, and heard tornado warnings over the radio stuck.

When I got work in Louisville again, we would go out to eat on Friday nights. Then we would go to those bookstores (had our own vehicles by then). Grant found restaurants and we would eat there.

Grant declined, though. He had some diabetic problems, along with a decaying trailer, and moved in with us. For a while it was wonderful. We would go out to Saturday breakfast with him, and he paid. He would watch and feed the cats while we were at cons. He set up our current Wi-Fi system. He found useful software and other desirable things.

But . . . he had a stroke. We noticed it when we went downstairs and saw that he had pulled down several stacks of books in the night, going to the bathroom. When we talked to him about it, he went again and fell, bending a faucet in the tub. It took all day to get him to agree to go to the hospital.

He recovered, after a fashion, and went back to work. Then he managed to wreck his car. Not very soon afterwards he lost his job, because he had had to take so much time off for health reasons. I would have to take off from work to go get him. He had a cast to take the pressure off a sore on his feet, but it caused leg cramps. He was using the bus company's handicapped service, but that had to be scheduled. So they weren't getting their worth out of him.

There came a time when he took to bed and did not get out. Instead of eating with us, he had us get clam strips. And they had to be Captain D's clam strips, though Moby Dick ones would do.

He was sleeping with a space heater keeping him warm. And finally . . . he had to go to the hospital again, with diabetic problems. He had a leg amputation, and had to go to a nursing home.

At least, we thought, he would eat regularly and take his medicine. And he seemed to have done that. But gradually he ran down.

Carolyn Clowes watched over him. Dale and Tammi Harris cleaned out his room after he was gone, as they had helped us clean out his room after he moved out of our house.

Grant gave me a book: *All My Friends Are Dead*, by Jory John and Avery Monsen (2010). For him, that was a descriptive work: Bruce Gardner, Todd Fluhr, Charley May, Tim Lane, the people he was friends with, were all gone. He had become withdrawn.

I called him frequently. I paid for a cell phone for him, so he would have a little more accessibility. That closed down, too.

Funeral services are problematic. Grant did have a plot in St. Anthony's Cemetery but arranging the burial is difficult. His financial affairs are problematic.

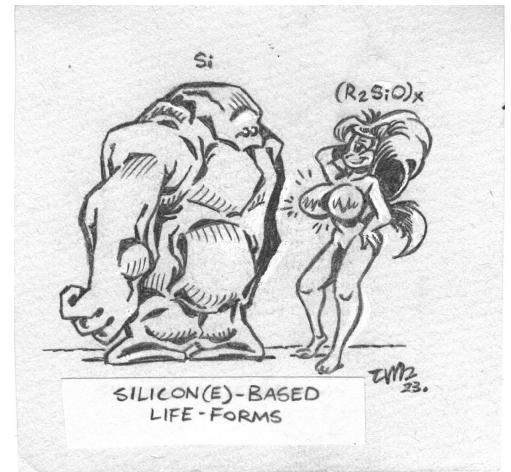
I have lost someone to talk to, someone who understood. I will have to go on.

AL-XIETY

by Lloyd G. Daub
Apologies to Mel Brooks

AI--xiety
Whenever you're near
AI--xiety
It's you that I fear
My PC's afraid to run it
It's crashed before
But then you take command
My will is mine no more

AI--xiety
It's just as I feared
AI-xiety
My brain waves are weird
You've made it clear to me
I've got to give in
AI--xiety
You win!



THE AMERICAN BLACK CHAMBER

by Edgar Allan Poe

It was the dreary and desolate year of 19__ . Bereft of companionship, deprived of release, the wells of poesy dry for the moment, I sat about my lodgings in black contemplation.

A message then arrived. I had numbered among my circle of correspondents one Herbert Yardley, a petty telegraphic clerk of the federal government, yet with certain other interests withal. The missive from Yardley requested the pleasure of my company at my earliest convenience.

I replied that I would be in Washington City that day next, and made my arrangements to travel thither. I was received at the railway station by a constable with a private message from Yardley, explaining that I was requested to meet him in an office of the State Department. This much disturbed me.

Yardley was there. He appeared cheerful enough, offering refreshments and discussing petty matters while I was to recover my stability. Soon enough, he bade the attendants depart, and revealed unto me the reason for this summons.

The federal government had determined to establish a bureau for the decrypting of communications from foreign governments, and empowered Yardley to create it. By way of illustration, he portrayed himself as a physician, given facilities for the treatment of a dire plague, burdened with patients, but lacking in physicians. I was inveigled to enter the services of this bureau.

I pondered the question in deep thought. Surely, I would be made to retain conveyance of my experiences in the deepest of security, upon pains of being immured in a prison so strict and frightful that death would be preferable. And yet — and yet! The prospects of being compensated for the application of my mental efforts to the works of the most experienced and skilled of encipherers dazzled my mind. After much painful and troubled ratiocination, I accepted the offer.

In some small time, Yardley had assembled a company of about a half-dozen decypherers, and thrice as many clerks, transcribers, and messengers. The terms under which the bureau was formed forbade its establishment in Washington City, and with many misgivings upon my part we relegated ourselves to the crude and inhospitable venue of New-York, to a facility at ___ East ___ th Street.

By way of explanation of such matters, the facility was styled the offices of the Code Compiling Company. And indeed we prepared codes for the use of merchants, who were wishing to transact the affairs of their businesses over the new telegraph, sending messages that had been compressed, and were economical in their transmission . . .

. . . the strain upon my psyche was a great and wearing burden. One even, I was beset by a grotesque and oppressive dream.

I was burdened by a great bag laden with rocks. I found myself upon a beach of such pebbles, long and desolate, under a sky of jetty black, washed by a pearlescent blue and white sea. The rocks of the beach presented a strange and appalling view, and yet I set to examine them. Betimes I found one that matched entirely the form of a rock that I bore in the sack. When such an event manifested itself, I could fling the two rocks into the ocean, and thusly lighten my great and wearisome burden . . .

. . . Our greatest effort was expended upon the codes of Japan. That empire was expending effort upon a dire plan to expand their fleet until it dominated the Pacific.

For the explanation of those who peruse this memoir, the Japanese tongue is written, not with letters as is this language, or symbols as the great scholar Champollion hath descried, but marks delineating a syllable in their tongue.

Our loyal and devoted clerks expended much effort on known texts of the Japanese tongue, creating many records that bore the symbol for a syllable, and the ones that preceded and superseded it. Such was the laborious statistical analysis required to descry the forms that the text beneath the ciphers followed.

This effort exhausted our labors for many involved and weary months. But finally, we descried a item of text beneath the cipher, which led to a second, and thuswise until the riddle was unriddled.

My strength utterly at end, I was required to take an absence from my labors and repaired to Baltimore, where I spent much time sitting at the grave of my beloved wife, seeking to justify my recent deeds to her . . .

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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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