

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Today is July 4. Back in 1776 I wonder what the odds would have been that our country would still be here 239 years later. We were then “ragtag and bobble” challenging the world’s most powerful empire. Could anyone then have predicted that we would succeed our mother country as superpower? Did any of those soldiers shivering at Valley Forge even dream of such a thing?

— Lisa

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The 141st Running of the Kentucky Derby ws <b>May 2, 2015</b> . American Pharoah won by a length.	
The 140th Running of the Preakness Stakes was <b>May 16, 2015</b> . American Pharoah won driving in driving rain.	
The 146th Running of the Belmont Stakes was <b>June 6, 2015</b> . <b>AMERICAN PHAROAH WON! HE WON THE TRIPLE CROWN!!!</b>	
The 90th Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is <b>August 8, 2015</b> at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.	
The 61st Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is <b>September 5, 2015</b> at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.	
The 123rd Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is <b>October 10, 2015</b> at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.	
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## Reviewer’s Notes

Theodore Beale, whether directly or under his *nom de chiot*, is not a member of Sasquan. Make of that what you will.

In 1978 futurist Peter Wagschal wrote an essay titled “Illiterates with Doctorates: The Future of Education In an Electronic Age”. By the time his infant son grew up, he explained, it would no longer be necessary to read to understand something; computer movies would impart information directly and without mediation and reading would be a dead art. In 2007 he enthused that he had been proven right.

Unfortunately.

Nowadays, conspiracy theories flourish on YouTube and the other video sites. The “Loose Change” video (for those who have mercifully thus far missed it, it claims that “9/11 was an inside job”) is showy, its production (young guys working in a basement versus the Establishment) so in touch with the zeitgeist, its theories so aligned with the political opinion trend, that Millennials are becoming more inclined to agree. Reading the NIST report on the World Trade Center requires knowing logic, science, and other so out-of-it old-timey things.

One of the interesting things to observe is the progression of an organization. When the Baker Street Irregulars were founded, their members included prominent literary figures as well as simple Sherlock Holmes fans. Nowadays, I think the most prominent member outside of dedicated Sherlock Holmes fans is Nicholas “A Fine Morocco Case” Meyer. Yes, he did *The Seven Percent Solution* (hence his investiture) but he also did scripts for two of the good STAR TREK™ movies. He has a reputation outside the BSI.

And so it is with the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Paranormal (formerly CSICOP, now CSI). When it was founded it had scientists (like Carl Sagan) and SF writers (like Isaac “The Remarkable Worm” Asimov — oops, that was his BSI investiture). Nowadays it’s made up of people known for being skeptics. Its influence on popular thought is nil; pseudo-scientific theories flourish and spread. For example, consider that anti-vaccination is popular among the forward-thinking people of California, the skeptics’ rightful social and intellectual equals. Such people count themselves skeptical about Big Pharma and the government, and wonder why self-designated skeptics are so foolish and naïve as to fall for that propaganda.

As of this printing no news on my court case. At least it went before a judge at the end of May, and she seemed to be less than pleased with the city’s case, but things still happen.

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



**Is This Really Necessary Department:**  
Fox is doing a reboot of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

Back in the good old Cold War Days, we have the story of “Rudolf I. Abel”, Francis Gary Powers, and the swap . . .

*Bridge of Spies*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBBuzHrZBro>

Apparently, there is a mention of Frederic Pryor, the third man traded (see *Bridge of Spies* by Giles Whittell (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 11 #3)).

Rhianna Pratchett, Sir PTerry’s daughter and heir, has announced that there will be no more Discworld books. After seeing all those books by DEAD BIG NAME WRITER and real author, I’m quite pleased to hear this. The “real author” always has his (or her) twist on the story, which is almost inevitably a different one from the original author’s.

However, I’m sure someone at the publisher’s is begging her to reconsider this rash act which will deprive them — **deprive her** of a revenue source.

In 1989 Ben Bova wrote *Cyberbooks*, a novel about all the problems and difficulties of an electronic device that enabled a reader to read a book on a screen. I have it on the Kindle app on my iPad. Who says SF doesn’t predict the future?

## OBITS

Lisa was going through some books and found an uncashed check. I thought I’d try to return it to the husband, so I did a search and found something shocking.

Our old friend **Bruce W. Gardner**, sometime faned, wargamer, news writer, and bridge player, had died here in Louisville on **February 18, 2012**. He got *Alexiad* for a while, then as so often is the case, changed email and didn’t bother, or didn’t want, to tell.

It was a part of my life that’s now gone.

## MONARCHIST NEWS

The former Crown Prince of Sweden (until the Riksdag adopted Nümenorean succession laws) **Prince Carl Philip** married **Sofia Hellqvist** on **June 13, 2015**.

We note with sadness that **Sir Nicholas Winton, MBE**, unsung anonymous hero of the Czech *Kindertransport*, died **July 1, 2015** at the incredible age of 106 (born May 15, 1909):

This is why Adam was created alone. Whoever destroys the life of a single human being, it is as if he had destroyed an entire world; and whoever preserves the life of a single human being, it is as if he had preserved an entire world.

## THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

### THE MARTIAN

by Andy Weir

(Random House; 2011, 2014;  
ISBN 978-0-8041-3902-1; \$24.00;  
Random House (Kindle); 2014; \$9.99)  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3659388/>

There are certain men who, when faced with the choice of dying, or doing the impossible, elect to live. This story is written in honor of their kind.

— *The Flight of the Phoenix* by “Elleston Trevor” [Trevor Dudley Smith] (1964)

Martian explorer Mark Watney doesn’t have to worry about becoming one of the *Ghosts of Cape Sabine* (by Leonard F. Guttridge, 1970) because he’s alone on Mars and so there’s no one else to kill and eat him. However, unlike the diverse group in *The Moon is Hell!*, he’s alone. So he has to deal with Barsoom is Hell all by himself.

It all begins when a dust storm hits the base on Mars, and everyone has to pull out double quick for the shuttle back to Earth. Except, the high-gain radio antenna gets blown away, knocking down Watney, and the other explorers, plausibly enough, believe him dead and unrecoverable. This also explains why he can’t tell them otherwise, or even inform Earth that the reports of his demise are premature.

He’s not absolutely in a predicament like the guy in Sir Arthur C. Clarke’s “Transit of Earth” (*Playboy*, January 1971), who had to watch his colleagues die so he could live long enough to see the transit, after which he would join them. Another expedition will be coming, and Watney knows where. The base planning is very much out of Robert Zubrin (see *Mars on Earth* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #5) and *The Case for Mars* (1996, 2011; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 11 #1) for more on this) so there are even supplies coming. The problem, therefore, is surviving until they do. Under pressure, Watney finds a way to communicate, and then rescue plans kick

into high gear.

But equipment breaks down, plans change, improvisation and desperation become the norm — in short, the usual ways of the world. The ways where they can mean life or death.

It’s not just Watney’s own journal, though. The efforts required to save him show a similar cycle of equipment breaking down, plans changing, and improvisation and desperation becoming the norm. NASA pulls out the stops, others lend a hand, and the families agonize over the perils of life on the edge of the envelope being pushed out.

I am somewhat surprised that there doesn’t turn out to be a legal challenge somewhere. Surely, someone would find some pretext to drag everyone into court with huge legal briefs and all kinds of strange invented jurisdictions and exemptions. At least Weir is hoping for some sense, as there are no psychics remote-viewing Watney as he struggles for survival.

(He doesn’t do very well in the historical background, imagining a beautiful green princess slipping into his habitat. Yellow perhaps, black maybe, even white (and bald), but most likely red. “Dejah, could you find a girlfriend for this new Jasoomian?”)

The final rescue is a grand combination of improvisations and desperate efforts, leading to a daring takeoff in an improbably modified ship and then . . .

It now looks as if Weir’s novel will get to the screen this October. This is a pretty good accomplishment for something written and, at first, handed out for free. Weir draws from a variety of sources, using science to drive his plot. This did not arise from nowhere. The basic structure of the book parallels a scene in *Apollo 13* (1985) where Gene Krantz (Ed Harris) gives an order:

“Depends. You know the scene in *Apollo 13* where the guy says ‘We have to figure out how to connect **this** thing to **this** thing using **this** table full of parts or the astronauts will all die’?”

“Yeah?”

“*The Martian* is for people who wish the whole movie had just been more of that scene.”

<http://xkcd.com/1536/>

There was such a movie: *The Flight of the Phoenix* (1965). (There is no remake of 2004. You must remember this.) The movie was, in turn, based on a novel by the popular thriller writer “Elleston Trevor”.

The “connect **this** thing to **this** thing using **this**” is that an airplane has crashed in the Sahara desert in a sandstorm. The passengers and crew are thought to be all dead, and for a time they think so as well. Then one passenger says that, on the basis of his experience as an aircraft designer, they can improvise a flyable craft from the parts of the airplane and fly to safety.

The designer is an odd person, beginning with his name, “Stringer”. A stringer is part of an airplane, a structural element in the fuselage. Stringer is very remote and inhuman; he is often referred to as a robot. The more modern description of someone like this would be that he was a high-functioning autistic. What sort of person is Stringer?

... he was a dreamer, as many scientists are dreamers; he could concentrate on his obsession to a degree where nothing else existed for him. Planning to build an airplane from wreckage and with worn-out tools in the killing desert heat, he could say, “I see no problem.” Hearing that scream of pain from Otto Kepel when the hull had shifted, he could say, “There is no damage.” Goaded to a brainstorm by opposition, he could recover and resume his work and say, “I haven’t got time to die!”

Nothing existed — pain, heat, thirst, the desert, even the fear of death — nothing was real to him except his dream; and only a brain like his could build a machine like this *Phoenix* in this region of hell and give them all a chance of getting out. Student’s glasses and schoolkid haircut, pencil in hand, the designer sat absorbed in his designs.

— *The Flight of the Phoenix*

Damon Knight once in a parallel review contrasted Poul Anderson’s *The Enemy Stars* (1959) with *After the Rain* (1958) by John Bowen. The description of Arthur Renshaw, the hero and villain of the latter story, could do very well for Stringer: “[A] gray stick of a man, thin-lipped, thin-haired, eyes agleam with intelligence behind his spectacles . . . he is thoroughly awful, with the sort of grey, colorless awfulness that only a Briton could invent; and yet he is in fact the savior of the rest. Bowen makes it perfectly clear that without him, the others would have starved to death.” [*In Search of Wonder*]

Is it possible to have human beings, and not autistic robots like Stringer and Arthur Renshaw, be responsible for their survival under such conditions? Long before Andy Weir was born (1972), John W. Campbell himself took a flier at it. His last published fiction under his own name, “The Moon is Hell” (1951) presents such a circumstance. As pointed out, the closest parallel is to the Lady Franklin Bay Arctic Expedition of 1881-1884. A team of twenty-five men were dispatched to Lady Franklin Bay on Ellesmere Island. Due to increased pack ice and some spectacular incompetence on the part of the U.S. Government (particularly the Army and Navy blaming each other for not doing something about them while not doing anything themselves), by the time the expedition was finally recovered, eighteen of

the twenty-five men had died, and a nineteenth died on the voyage back. One man had been executed for stealing food.

The concept of “The Moon is Hell” is a Lunar expedition; a team of fifteen scientists and technicians fly to a location on the far side of the Moon, build a shelter using their ship for parts, and begin astronomical and selenological surveys. The relief expedition will fly out a year and eleven months later with a relief crew and the original explorers will return to Earth. (In the first few pages there is already an irony that Mark Watney would appreciate; the narrator complains, “We know all the motion pictures now, every move of every film.” The greater variety of entertainment Watney had available didn’t last him much longer.)

The relief ship crashes. To further the problem, the relief ship was supposed to stay for a month while its crew helped prepare the base for further settlement. And it was the only ship; building a new ship will take both time and money. Being on the far side turns out to be a disadvantage now, since the expedition has no radio contact with Earth.

They are thrust back on their own resources, and set about to connect **this** thing to **this** thing using **this** table full of parts. They have three obstacles to overcome. The first one is communicating with Earth, telling people that they are still alive. This entails some epic journeys to the lunar limb, the first one perhaps a little coincidental (the sole traveler, the expedition’s astronomer, runs out of air and deliberately freezes himself; yet he survives), the second not unlike some of those logic problems about getting across the desert, and finally, due to their innovations, by flight. Watney, of course, had to go and get the nearest Martian probe with a working radio, he having no radio antenna to use. (It nearly killed him, remember.)

The second problem is getting air. There is no recycling machine. Instead, there is a fortuitous deposit of gypsum, which can be broken down to make water, which can be electrolyzed to make oxygen, without the explosion that Watney sets off at one point.

Indeed, the Moon appears to have a variety of useful minerals, some useful in ways not normally seen on Earth. You don’t see very many frozen mercury pickaxes, for example, yet the idea is perfectly valid. The technology was not so advanced then in the “real world” to make mining Helium-3 worth the bother. (It may be used in fusion plants.)

The expedition scavenges their base and move into the mine they have been digging, which with sealant becomes a quite acceptable base. The expedition’s chemist, meanwhile, is working on a way to create artificial food, the final problem, while most of the rest of the expedition members are mining or making solar power cells, not having a radioisotope thermoelectric generator to hand (but then they don’t have to mount cells on their tractor or go through a charge and rest cycle). They don’t have any raw potatoes to plant and grow, the

way Watney did in a fashion rather like what the castaways in *L’Île mystérieuse* (1874) did with the one grain of wheat. (Oh, all right; they planted it and tended it very carefully; when it sprouted, they took the ear apart and did the same for every grain, and again a couple of times until they had a decent crop, just as Watney planted the eyes of the potatoes, took the resulting potatoes and sliced them up and planted the eyes, until he had 400 sols worth of potatoes to eat.)

As time runs out, the decline in their strength becomes a limiting factor. There is some nutrient that the chemist has been unable to synthesize, and they are dying for want of it. The injured men are the first to go, followed by the expedition leader. And finally . . .

There isn’t that much in the way of characterization. Each member is defined more by his skills than his personality; there is no one as striking as Stringer or Watney, much less the differing survivors in *The Flight of the Phoenix*. Campbell eschewed most personality conflicts for a flat-out struggle to create a way to survive. There are some touches; early on, the bored men begin to tell a round-robin story about travels to the other planets. The narrator notes that for some reason everywhere they go there is an abundance of food. (The way the party left on Elephant Island while Shackleton sailed off to get help amused themselves by allocating the responsibility for a massive dinner they were going to buy once they got back to London.) The other is a takeoff from the Lady Franklin Bay expedition; one of the members is stealing food. Campbell gives the thief’s reasons, which aren’t all that surprising.

Yet, oddly enough, if Campbell could have seen *The Martian* (sending texts back through time?) he might have preferred it to his own work. This seems improbable, but consider: when H. Beam Piper submitted “When In the Course —”, a story about a group of interstellar venturers intervening in a war on the planet Freya caused by a desire for sulfur, Campbell rejected it. There were fifteen venturers and thus no core character, he said. Piper rewrote the story so there was only one outsider, and what did he get but *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* (*Analog*, November 1964, November 1965; Ace Books, 1965). You can see for yourself; the original “When In the Course —” was finally published in 1981.

It’s the same setup; “When In the Course —” has fifteen protagonists, *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* has one. “The Moon Is Hell” has thirteen protagonists; *The Martian* has one. Campbell just might have appreciated that.

So Campbell would probably have bought this book for *Astounding* or *Analog*, barring some realistic but a bit too strong for Miss Tarrant’s feelings incidents and comments. (For example, how Watney grew potatoes.)

As Watney prepares for his final escape, after a long arduous journey of improvisation, two lines from *The Flight of the Phoenix* come to mind, both from Albert Crow, the Cockney oil worker. One has to do with their

construction methods: “When we make a hole in a panel . . . we don’t cut it, we bash it out.” This is the method Watney used to work on the pre-positioned liftoff pod at the next Martian base, and he really bashed it out.

The other is when the survivors see the name *Phoenix* painted on the boom. One of them wonders about the connotations, and Crow replies, “Well, that’s the point, see? This bird catches alight, then it goes and lays an egg an’ another bird ‘atches out and flies off, an’ Bob’s y’r uncle. That’s what we’re goin’ to do.” Which is Watney’s goal.

As we read, or watch, Mark Watney connect **this** thing to **this** thing using **this**, making a hole in a panel by bashing it out, in order to live, we realize that this too human guy doesn’t have to say, “I haven’t got time to die!” The concept is so basic to his actions and his behaviors that he doesn’t have to.

(Some of this article is based on the review in *Alexiad V*. 13 #2.)

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### CIVILIZATION 7½

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **THREE BODY PROBLEM**

by Cixin Liu [Liu Tz’u-hsin]

(Tor; 2014; ISBN 978-0765377067; \$25.99;

Tor (Kindle); \$12.99)

**Hugo Nominee**

This book sees to have swept up awards left and right in its homeland. Now, thanks to translator Ken Liu, we can see for ourselves.

It’s quite a diverse volume; featuring the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the rise of the feline society (as in “It doesn’t matter whether a cat is white or black, as long as it catches mice.”), and a computer game that could have been designed by Sid Meier during a prolonged fever hallucination.

The beginning, for example, is a gruesome discussion of how Physics is wrong according to Mao Thought. I guess Liu can say this now; he certainly couldn’t have done so here in America during the Cultural Revolution, or he’d have been condemned as a right-wing shill.

It’s not surprising that the old-thought guy’s daughter escapes into the CETI program, which doesn’t have Red Guard thugs running wild. (Their nuclear weapons program didn’t, either.) And she listens and listens . . .

In later, current times, a gamer gets dragged into this very strange and powerful online game. While the people are human, many famous ones from many countries, there setting is very strange, with people dehydrating to endure Stable Eras and Chaotic Eras until the civilization collapses.

And then things start to get really strange . . .

Science Fiction has become popular in China, though with such a population a comparatively small percentage of it can still be a larger group than any other country’s. *The Three Body Problem* has won a number of

awards in China. Now it’s up for one more. For an imaginative look into one different civilization, and one entirely alien one, this is a fascinating introduction.

And then, we’ll be waiting for it . . . **To Be Continued.**

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### LORD VALENTINE’S CASTLE

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **THE GOBLIN EMPEROR**

by “Katherine Addison” [Sarah Monette]

(Tor; 2014; ISBN 978-0765326997; \$8.99;

Tor (Kindle); \$8.99)

**Hugo Nominee**

The conspirators against Valentine the Coronal (*Lord Valentine’s Castle* (1980)) seem to have been half-hearted. They had discovered the means for the perfect identity theft; the body of the Coronal was now occupied by the mind of the King of Dreams, while the mind of Valentine was stuffed into the body of some unfortunate sod.

But they didn’t pick someone who would die soon and get rid of the problem. They didn’t even keep the mind-blanked Coronal under their control. Instead they turned him loose, and he came to himself and raised an army to chuck them out.

He might have regretted it. Courts tend to be laden with intrigue and deceit. And other things, as when the government fell apart halfway through *Valentine Pontifex* (1983).

The hapless Galactic Emperor profiled in *Birthright: The Book of Man* might wish the mind-swappers of Majipoo would come take him away. Mike Resnick’s incisive tale of an Emperor praised as meaning well and damned for being a tyrant would be a good example for both Valentine and the emperor of this book, Maia. His reign is dominated by events that he had nothing to do with and could not control, so his well-meaning is meaningless.

Maia is rusticated to a far-off castle, alone after his mother died, under the control of an abusive and mean-spirited pedagogue. Then his father and his two half-brothers (the emperor got married *six times*; he just didn’t seem to have any luck with women) are killed when their airship crashes. (Hey, steampunk!)

It’s off to the capital he goes, and in an appallingly short period of time Maia has to pick a regnal name, be crowned, and bury his father and half-brothers. The empire has protocol and procedure that make Videssos (as in Harry Turtledove) look like a bunch of mud-floored huts at a crossroads, one of which has three rooms (he can keep the pigs in their own room during the winter!) and the lord keeps his sword over the fireplace to show he’s in charge when he’s not behind the plow with the vassals.

I’m surprised there’s only one coup attempt (by Maia’s father’s next wife, who tries to force him to abdicate in favor of her grandson, the heir) and one assassination attempt (by a guy who talks too damn much). Maia survives both. The investigation into the sudden demise of the royal family finds behind it an idealistic band of

rebels united against a tyrannical empire striking for freedom (*Narodnya Volya* [Народная воля, “the People’s Will”] anyone?).

Having endured, if not prevailed, Maia decides to have a steampunk drawbridge (actually, it folds back to open up) built. And then . . .

Maia is a nice guy, but I’d think his going to this court would be the equivalent of sticking his head into a woodchipper. And all the bits about the elves and goblins (Maia is half-and-half) is supererogatory.

I suppose this book is Volume One of a series.

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### THRAXAS, WE’RE NEEDED

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **RED MOON**

by Elizabeth Kelly

“Second Generation Series Book One”  
(Amazon Digital Services; Priceless)

Fantastic Romances have the problem that they often are run like a lazy D&D™ campaign. There’s no real distinction between the races, and characters like Makri from the *Thraxas* books, who is half-human, quarter-Elf, and quarter-Orc, are commonplace, except nobody is mad at anybody (as opposed to Makri, who is mad at a *whole lot* of people.)

Lord Tristan is a werewolf. Avery is a slave, but she is a Red, with the sinister power to heal. After Avery heals Tristan’s daughter’s companion, Tristan buys her and in spite of the obliquity, takes her home.

They are drawn to each other and have **Hot Sex™**. Tristan’s mother disapproves. Tristan and Avery have **Hot Sex™**. Tristan’s mother sets up a betrothal with a proper werewolfess. Tristan and Avery have **Hot Sex™**. Tristan doesn’t want the chosen one, he only wants Avery. Tristan and Avery have . . . oh, you guessed it.

I had to wonder if the author was trying to get sales to horny boys as well. This is the common method of having a free initial volume to draw in interest and get money when the series is . . . **To Be Continued.**

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### MAROONED

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **GEMINI 17**

by Brad R. Torgerson

(2012; Silent Forge Press/Amazon Digital Services; \$1.19)

Martin Caidin’s progression in writing would have pleased Hugo Gernsback; he started out writing about science, particularly space science, and then segued into space thriller writing — not so much speculations per se as more the commonplace adventure novel of the future. Thus we have the two versions of *Marooned*. In the original version (1964), the astronaut is stuck in orbit in a Mercury capsule and NASA has to get a Gemini off the pad in double-quick time, before the astronaut

dies in space, or worse yet, is rescued by the Russians.

Shift this to a lunar flyby and the marooned astronaut a cosmonaut (with some interesting personal issues) and you've got this story. There were proposals for Lunar Gemini, so that's entirely justified.

There seem to be entirely too many coincidences (he might want to get the phone number of ERB, Inc.) to be credible, but the story is interesting enough; it's adequate, but not great.

Considering what happened to Caidin — after a climactic novel involving a US-Soviet war on the Moon that gets ended by a massive Chinese invasion (*No Man's World* (1967)), he went on to claiming psychic powers — Torgerson has a bad example not to follow. Instead he went to the dogs.

**TRIPLE CROWN**

... But leading by half a length came Kimon's team with its yellow-robed charioteer and the neat-footed mares, their chestnut sides dappled with foam, their nostrils flaring scarlet, but game to the last, stepping off from the finishing post as prettily as deer.

We turned round to acclaim the owner. He stood up smiling, and lifted an arm to the cheers. In the thrill of the race, I had lost all thought of politics, which are made by men, while beauty and bravery are from the gods. It was not till Anakreon poked me in the ribs that I remembered.

The chief of the judges mounted the platform with the herald. At Olympia, the herald himself is the victor of a heralds' contest held beforehand. This one was a first-class trumpeter with a ringing voice. "In the name of Olympian Zeus, the winner of the four-horse chariot race is Kimon, son of Stesagoras, of Athens."

This time, Kimon of the god-descended Philead clan had claimed his victory for himself.

The chariot drew up before the podium, the mares jingling their harness as they got the air back into their lungs. Above them stood the wiry dark Sicilian, in the stillness this moment demands. He had been through it twice before; from where I sat I could see his eye already stealing down to the foam-flecked mares, with the fondness of a father, longing for all this to be over, waiting to caress them, to give them the little drink they must have before the deep one; to see them rubbed down, and put into their blankets. But he was only the charioteer, and must await the crowning of the victor.

Even at Olympia, I have seldom

heard such cheering. People were standing on their seats, tearing the wreaths from their heads to fling flowers and oak-sprays at the podium. In the whole long history of the games, over the centuries, it had only been done once before, three victories running with the same team. It would become a legend. — Mary Renault, *The Praise Singer*, Pages 215-216

Belmont Day was tremendous. The gates slammed open. The Pharoah doesn't come away well but it's a long race. Within a few jumps the Pharoah has taken control of the race. He never loses it. Frosted makes a run in the stretch but never comes close. I begin yelling, "Go! Go! Go!" And go the Pharoah does, straight down the stretch and into racing history. He makes it look easy, this prize many noble horses have sought since Affirmed last won the Triple Crown in 1978, 37 years ago.

New Triple Crown List

- Sir Barton, 1919
- Gallant Fox, 1930
- Omaha, 1935
- War Admiral, 1937
- Whirlaway, 1941
- Count Fleet, 1943
- Assault, 1946
- Citation, 1948
- Secretariat, 1973
- Seattle Slew, 1977
- Affirmed, 1978
- American Pharoah, 2015

It is great to add a new name to the list after all these years. I was fifteen when Affirmed won the Crown. I've waited more than three times the age I was then to see another.

**THE JOY OF HIGH TECH**

by Rodford Edmiston

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



**Unintended Consequences**

This column took a \*lot\* of work and time. Less due to the total amount of research required than the wide variety of fields involved.

**Warfare**

The Civil War (or The War Between the States here in Kentucky or The War of Northern Aggression further south) produced unintended consequences in many areas. These included — but weren't limited to — the political, the medical, the financial and the economical. In the medical arena nothing except for some medications and medical practices was completely new. Some techniques and medicines had been used in the War of 1812 in the US and the Napoleonic War in Europe, and those were only a bit different from what had been used in the Revolutionary War. You can see the incremental changes in military technology and tactics, as well as in the practice of medicine. However, in part because it was a civil war, the Civil War brought many things to a new plateau, the way doctors worked on soldiers among them. However, one factor which changed the way the Civil War was fought was then recent developments in non-military technology.

Communication was a factor in this. Abraham Lincoln was arguably the best-informed national leader during wartime to that time. He actually had a room at the Washington telegraph office, where copies of all military reports and dispatches from war correspondents were sent. He spent hours there most days during the War, reading messages and sending them. He knew what was going on, sometimes within minutes, usually within hours. Lincoln made informed decisions and set policies accordingly.

Early hydrogen balloons were used by the North to observe the enemy. Some even had small telegraph sets to relay what they saw to the handlers on the ground.

Railroads changed how troops and supplies were moved. Due to this, one of the main targets of Northern troops attacking in the South was the railroads. (Have you seen *The Horse Soldiers* with John Wayne and William Holden?)

Something else new for this conflict was the high percentage of the physically and mentally injured who survived the War. Due to then recent medical advances, more wounded veterans survived serious injuries and returned to the general population than in any previous war. Of course, even with the advances more soldiers still died from infection than the direct effects of their wounds. Both those numbers together being dwarfed by the casualties from contagious diseases.

One of the side effects of the "modern" medical practices used during the wars of this era included the unintended consequence of opiate addiction. Relief from pain was considered an unmitigated blessing. Even late in the Nineteenth Century the problem of drug addiction among soldiers was relatively minor, but it was new and received some attention. However, it was only one medical complication. These effects together greatly stimulated medical research; people wanted to know why what worked worked and what

didn't didn't. As well as what could be done to remove or reduce the effects of these side effects of medical advances. Medical research became much more organized and pragmatic.

Perhaps connected with the higher survival rate of injured soldiers was an increased incidence of veterans "acting peculiar." There are many accounts of men returned from the Civil War changed, even when physically healthy. Often these individuals were incapable of handling their own affairs, including those who before the War had been successful businessmen or teachers. Whether wars during this period drove the development of psychotherapy is unknown. However, many people noticed these "new" mental problems and sought both explanations and cures.

Other, subsequent wars around the world further spurred the research into treating the injuries and illnesses of soldiers. (Supposedly, Roger Zelazny claimed in one of his stories that the physician most responsible for advances in wound treatment in the late 19th century was Dr. Richard J. Gatling. I don't recall seeing the line but can believe Zelazny wrote that or something like it.) Governments generally accepted and supported research into physical treatment of wounds and illnesses. Even the most hidebound leaders realized that the more fighting men they could keep fit or return to service the better for their war efforts. Recognizing the need to treat mental wounds has taken much longer.

Then came the Great War (World War One to us) where many of these developments were first applied on a large scale. The Spanish Influenza still killed more soldiers and civilians than the War itself (and greatly contributed to the War ending when it did) but so many horribly injured men survived that society began struggling to deal with them as they returned to civilian life. For the first time, great efforts were expended on cosmetic improvements, both surgical and prosthetic. Artists began working to develop presentable appliances for those missing eyes or jaws. Surgeons learned new techniques for not only restoring function but appearance.

While cosmetic surgery has benefitted millions, it has also led to numerous abuses. (I will make no judgements about the late Michael Jackson.)

### Polio

Polio has been around for thousands of years. There is an Egyptian stele (an inscribed and — originally — painted stone slab) dating from about the 15th century B.C.E. which depicts a young man with an atrophied leg, the trademark sign of polio. Though the effects were described in antiquity, attributing these to a specific disease does not seem to have occurred until the late Eighteenth Century, when British physician Michael Underwood called it a "debility of the lower extremities." There are actually many illnesses which produce similar effects, most caused by viruses (it is likely that Franklin Roosevelt

actually had one of these other viruses) but like polio until relatively recently they rarely caused serious problems. So why is polio so infamous?

Before the 20th century polio primarily affected very young children, who were still partially protected by their mother's antibodies and could easily recover from the damage the disease caused. They were able to recover with little long term effect, and nobody really noticed lower leg paralysis in a child who wasn't walking yet. To put it bluntly, polio was lost in the noise, unless you were or were related to the rare cases where it caused a permanent disability.

Then it suddenly began affecting thousands in the United States. At a time when we appeared to be conquering — through modern water treatment and vaccinations — ancient diseases which annually killed millions suddenly here was a minor illness which was no longer minor.

The polio outbreak was an unintended consequence of the treatment of drinking and — especially — waste water. This was caused by lots of things making life cleaner for all, largely through water being chlorinated. The most significant factor was sewage treatment, not water treatment. Poliomyelitis, formed from the Greek words meaning "inflammation of the gray matter," is caused by an intestinal virus. Excreted in feces, the virus passes from person to person by infected water in swimming pools, lakes, and the like. It can also be transmitted if those affected with the virus fail to wash their hands after changing diapers or using the bathroom and then handle other people's food, water or dishwater. The virus can survive up to two months outside the body. However, chlorine is especially effective against the polio virus.

Cleaner water and better hygiene meant that instead of getting polio when they were under 3 — when they would have little trouble with it and gain lifelong immunity from the exposure — people were first getting it in their teens or later, when it resulted in a significantly nastier disease. This is similar to chicken pox, which is nothing but annoying to most five year olds can be very serious if you catch it much later than that.

Note that millions of lives were saved and millions more kept from permanent disability by modern water quality measures. The polio outbreak was an unintended side effect, and compared to the benefits of water treatment a minor one. However, while diphtheria and cholera were old enemies now in retreat, the sudden surge of polio was frightening and mysterious.

### Horse Dung

People have a nostalgic view of the pre-automobile city. They seem to think that adopting cars, trucks and busses made the environment of large cities worse, at least as far as pollution was concerned. However, removing horses from city streets also removed their dung. By 1900 animal waste in major cities was

a huge problem. Automobiles removed that problem. Of course, doing so also removed much of the need for street sweepers (at that time these were literally people who were employed to sweep the streets; not the later machines) so not everyone was happy with the reduction of dung.

### Tetraethyl Lead

Henry Ford had to actually reduce the compression ratio — and thus the power output — of the Model T engine because so much of the gasoline sold in the United States in the early part of the Twentieth Century was of such poor quality. The answer was tetraethyl lead, usually referred to as ethyl. This was a potent anti-knock additive for gasoline. Of course, using this meant automobiles spewed toxic lead compounds into the air. Even at the time of adoption this was opposed, with things like grain alcohol being recommended instead. However, politics and publicity campaigns carried the day, and we had to put up with decades of lead poisoning our air, our water and our children. Ironically, one of the major proponents of tetraethyl lead — who went so far as to wash his hands in it at a publicity event — eventually died of what appeared from the symptoms to be lead poisoning.

Lead exposure affects brain development of infants and children in specific and clearly identifiable ways. These alterations in brain structure are closely connected with alterations in behavior; unfavorable alterations. Adult brains — and behavior — are also adversely affected by exposure to lead, but the young are far more susceptible. Arguably, a half-century or so of increasing violent crime was at least partly due to leaded gasoline. Once tetraethyl lead was banned there was a twenty-year lag, then a decline in crime as the infants now not exposed to lead grew to maturity. Naturally, there are many other factors involved, even in just lead exposure. Banning lead in paints (many lead compounds taste sweet; see below about Roman sapa) was another major contributor in reducing blood lead levels in infants and children.

On a side note, the development of 100 octane racing gasoline in the US and Britain helped us win World War II. Germany had to contend with fuel in the 80 to 90 octane range.

### Omelettes vs. Photographs

You'd think that except for the toxins involved in making and processing of photographic prints there would be no side effects to the growing popularity of photography in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. However, the most popular method for making photographic paper prints during this period involved egg albumin. So many people were making so many photographs — in part due to Kodak's Brownie (You press the button; we do the rest.) — that there was actually a shortage of eggs for eating!

Ironically, the albumin method was the



least stable of the commonly used photographic print processes of the period. Which means the majority of photos surviving from then show stains and other flaws typical of the deterioration experienced by albumin prints.

### A Few Tidbits

This is already pretty long and there's a lot more which could be included. I'll just hit some high points from here on.

An oversupply of long-distance fiber optic cables installed in the 1980s gave us relatively fast Internet data rates across most of the USA. This contributed to the decline of the long distance phone companies the cables were installed to serve. Connected to this was the ease of connectivity costing us much of our privacy.

There were some unexpected environmental effects when folks switched from soaps to phosphate based detergents. Effects such as algae blooms. There was probably another bloom when they switched from phosphates to nitrates. The main solution to the algae bloom issue wasn't so much changing the ingredients as it was educating the public that they didn't need as much detergent as they had soap. There's some evidence the vendors started selling a weaker mixture of detergent as well, increasing profit and helping the environment with one swell poof.

People could commute into cities by rail before cars, but they had to cluster around train stations, and have their amenities (food and other daily needs) available locally. Cars allowed people to live in housing-only developments (Levittowns) with few or no stores.

I am a fan of the old comic strip *Toonerville Folks* which was centered around an interurban trolley which shuttled the people of the community of Toonerville to and from the train station. (The alternate title for the strip was *The Toonerville Trolley Which Meets All Trains*.) There are collections of these strips and I recommend reading them. Not only are they genuinely warm and humorous, but the way the stories changed through the decades reflects the way automobiles and highways changed American life. (Creator, writer and artist of the strip Fontaine Fox was born near Louisville, Kentucky and started his career as a reporter and part-time cartoonist for the *Louisville Herald*.)

Something not broadly talked about in the past was the radical changes in sexual mores as new technology was introduced. With automobiles teenagers could quickly and easily put enough distance between themselves and their parents to do far more experimenting. (We're currently going thru another such set of changes, where the "mystery" of sex is pretty much eliminated by the internet.) Interestingly, the adoption of automobiles reduced some opportunities for

teen sex, while increasing the consequences of drinking. A young couple could engage in mating much more comfortably in the back of a wagon than the back seat of a car. A drunk didn't need to bother guiding his horse, and in fact could be safely passed out on the seat or even in the back while the horse(s) took him home or simply stopped somewhere and patiently waited.

The improvements in medical care for serious injuries developed to treat military casualties had benefits far beyond use in warfare. Automobile accidents brought the sorts of trauma formerly seen almost entirely in soldiers, miners and some types of factory workers — who were mostly poor but healthy young men — to all genders, social classes and ages.

Then there's the well-known — though probably erroneous — connection between the removal of stray cats to prevent them being used as familiars by witches leading to the outbreaks of rat-carried plague. Later investigations have shown that the fleas most responsible for spreading the plague probably weren't rodent fleas, however.

The ancient Romans loved their sweets, but the discoveries of bee space and sugar cane would not be made until centuries after the Empire's fall. Honey was a rare and expensive commodity (because without bee space and removable frames you have to find and destroy wild hives) and cane sugar nonexistent. What the Romans did have was sapa! This was grape juice boiled down to a thick, sweet syrup. Unfortunately, the sweetest sapa was that boiled down in lead cauldrons. You see, boiling acidic grape juice in lead vessels produced lead acetate. Also known as sugar of lead.

What contribution this made to the fall of the Roman Empire is arguable. However, since the most wealthy Romans typically bought and consumed the most sapa...

There you have only a few examples of how human actions through history had unforeseen consequences. Not all were bad, and not all those which were bad were completely bad. Many of these effects could have been foreseen (lead was already known to be toxic in Roman times) but others required knowledge which was only learned from studying the results of the actions. So, be careful. Just don't be *too* careful, or nothing will ever get done. Which can also have unforeseen consequences.☺

### DO NOT WATCH THESE — EVER!

Three Animated Films that Were a Waste of Good Pixels

Reviewed by Taral Wayne

I don't usually approach reviews intending to be wholly negative, but there are just some films you can say nothing good about, and I've three of them in front of me, begging to be denounced. The most recent of them is probably the best place to start.

*Rio 2* was this year's predictable follow-up to *Rio*, which made three years ago. I wasn't a

huge fan of the original film, which was one-too-many ecologically preachy animated features for this jaded viewer. Moreover, musical birds are not my favourite dish. Despite that, I recognize a well-crafted piece of propaganda when I see it. The narrative was complex, compelling and logical. Characters were more than a little stereotyped, especially Túlio, the dwerpy bird conservationist from Brazil, but perhaps appropriately so. The music was a matter of taste. If you like the Latin beat, updated with syntho-pop dance music, you'll be in heaven. I would have given the first *Rio* three out of five stars.

Unfortunately, the sequel has none of the limited charm of the original. The beat goes on, and if that's enough to get your foot tapping, you may be able to overlook the serious flaws in *Rio 2*. It was certainly not enough for me, though. To begin with, the human characters, Linda and Túlio, play little more than walk-on roles, robbing the film of one of the driving forces that moved the first. The nearly all-bird cast slips its moorings and drifts altogether too far from any relevance it might have had for me. So a lot of birds might lose their habitat? I didn't really care.

Major developments in the film seemed equally unsupported by any sense that they mattered. For instance, there is a soccer game between the blue parrots and some other kind of parrots, representing a turf war of sorts. So what? In the end it didn't matter even in context, since the game was interrupted by Big Bad People Coming to Cut Down Trees.

The two human protagonists from *Rio 1* make their reappearance just so that they can get lost in the Amazon and discover that the blue parrots are not extinct after all. Then they chain themselves to a tree. They have no story of their own in this sequel.

Other characters from the first movie are shoehorned in, but contribute little if anything more than Linda and Túlio. One of them pursues vengeance against the heroes in a half-hearted way that "ironically" saves the day. The trees are spared ... as if there was ever any doubt.

In the end, we have learned that the original blue parrots from the original *Rio* are not the only ones of their kind after all — which rather invalidates the entire purpose of the first movie, to bring them together to propagate their species. No matter, there is a lot of loud music with a muscular 1/2 beat and plenty of dancing! What more could an audience want?

How about a sensible, unclichééd story with strong characters? Sorry ... I guess that is too much to ask from most sequels. It certainly was of this one.

**Hoodwinked Too:** Hood vs. Evil was the sequel to 2005's highly original and clever *Hoodwinked*. Was it worth waiting six years to see what Red Riding Hood, Wolf, Granny and the others had been up to in the interim? Sadly, it was not.

The virtues of the first movie were mixed. *Hoodwinked* was on a budget, and it showed.

But that didn't matter as much as the fresh approach to the storybook characters and their unexpected relationships. The narrative moved a little jerkily, and there are moments where it bogs down, but the humour is quite unlike any other animated film I've seen.

As with many sequels, *Hoodwinked Too* was given the budget to make up for all the production deficiencies of the first ... but then did nothing original with it. The fundamental conflict is the same in both, and the surprise villains are not a surprise at all. They might almost as well have whispered their true motives in an aside to the viewers at the beginning of the story, instead of halfway through. The rather unexpected angles to the storybook background in the first movie are exaggerated to the point they lose all their charm, and gave license to the writers to indulge themselves in far too many martial arts and espionage clichés.

Having gone through the motions of falling out, Red Riding Hood and Wolf learn the importance of teamwork again through their failure to succeed independently ... surprising no one. Entertaining no one, either. Not even a gigantic flaming wreck crashing onto the singing goat could have saved this film from its own awful predictableness.

If *Rio 2* and *Hoodwinked Too* were bad, I've saved the worst for last.

*Barnyard* was to have been Nickelodeon's 2006 "breakthrough" to the big screen. However, the only thing that was broken was *Barnyard* ... and Nickelodeon's hopes for a critical success.

The movie might be viewed as a poor man's plagiarism of *The Lion King*, which itself borrowed far too heavily from Osamu Tezuka's *The Jungle Emperor*. In the Disney epic, a young lion is unwilling to assume the duties and responsibilities of leadership, so buggers off into the jungle to live a carefree, irresponsible life. Eventually he realizes that his obligations as an animal aristocrat cannot be evaded forever, and shoulders his burden. In *Barnyard*, a young bullock whose father is leader of the herd, lives a carefree, irresponsible life, and refuses his father's mantle of leadership when the time comes. Eventually he learns his lesson and becomes the leader of the herd, as he was meant to be.

There are bad guys in both films too – in one they are hyenas, and in the other they are wolves that prey on the chickens. In one, Simba sees the spirit of his father in the heavens, in the other Otis and his girl friend seem to stroll away together into the stars.

It is rather blatant, isn't it?

Of course, *The Lion King* was a beautifully animated and beautifully told story about growing up. *Barnyard* is ugly from beginning to end, and animated no better than a bad educational cartoon for pre-schoolers. The humour is gross and labored. To put that statement into perspective, the big joke through the entire film is that bullocks have

udders just like cows. At least I assume that was intentional. It's hard to imagine that an entire studio of producers, writers, animators and voice actors could be unaware of the gender difference between boys and girls! Also ... I have the assurance of one insider that the director thought tits on boy cattle was hilarious.

Nothing in the film goes uphill from there. Don't look for much that's funny. Skunks smell bad, pigs are dirty and rats are sneaky. Animals do barn dancing, and ride "mechanical humans." Of course, the dumb cluck of a farmer doesn't know that his animals talk and mess around when he isn't looking. Reverting to "dumb animal" mode is a gag that runs throughout the 89 minutes of this film and didn't raise much of a chuckle the first time it was played, let alone the next dozen.

I had to check the DVD case to remind myself that there was music and songs ... they were that memorable. In fact, hardly anything about *Barnyard* was memorable ... but watching this ugly, distasteful mess did leave me with a lingering, uneasy feeling that what I had seen was just not right.

## NEBULA AWARDS

### Novel

*Annihilation*, Jeff VanderMeer (FSG Originals; Fourth Estate; Harper Collins Canada)

### Novella

*Yesterday's Kin*, Nancy Kress (Tachyon)

### Novelette

"A Guide to the Fruits of Hawai'i," Alaya Dawn Johnson (*F&SF* 7-8/14)

### Short Story

"Jackalope Wives" by Ursula Vernon (*Apex* 1/7/14)

### Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation

*Guardians of the Galaxy*, Written by James Gunn and Nicole Perlman (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures)

### Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy

*Love Is the Drug*, Alaya Dawn Johnson (Levine)

Other SFWA Awards presented:

### 2015 Damon Knight Grand Master Award

Larry Niven

### Solstice Award

Joanna Russ (posthumous), Stanley Schmidt

### Kevin O'Donnell Jr. Service Award

Jeffrey Dwight

## WORLDCON BIDS

2017

Helsinki  
<http://helsinkiin2017.org/>

Japan  
<http://nippon2017.org/>

Proposed Dates: sometime in August

Montréal

Washington DC  
<http://dc17.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 16-20

2018

New Orleans  
<http://neworleansin2018.org>

San José  
<http://www.sjin2018.org/>  
Proposed Dates: August 16-20

2019

Dublin  
<http://dublin2019.com/>

2020

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

2021

Fort Worth

2022

Chicago  
Doha, Qatar

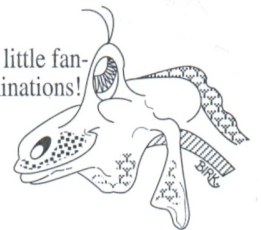
2023

Paris  
<https://sites.google.com/site/parisin2019/>

2025

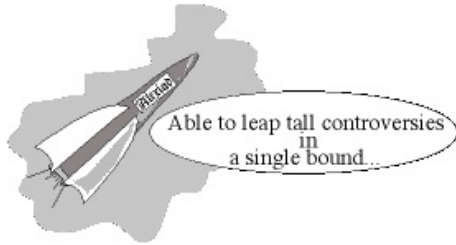
Perth, Australia

Yeah...I'm a ghoud little fan-  
I sent in my Hugo nominations!





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**Letters, we get letters**


From: **Dainis Bisenieks** March 27, 2015  
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,  
PA 19143-3310 USA

The Inhabitant of the Sink is back! In recent months, after an absence of several years, it has manifested half a dozen times. It looks to be of the fruit fly kind, and flies out of the drain hole when I have business in the (2nd floor) bathroom. The present avatar is less alert than the previous one; when it alights, I can usually swat it on the first try. I never see but the one, and it's as if, like Joe Hill, it never died. After some days, or weeks, it is back. We might be back in the Middle Ages, when people thought that worms and things were bred out of flies. If modern biology is anything to go on, there's got to be a breeding pair somewhere!

Also seen singly, once in a blue moon, is a large beetle, most often in the basement, always crawling, never flying. Before long, it is demolished by the cat. Anyway, this cannot be deemed an infestation. I vaguely know that insects have to start out small, but we never see the junior edition. Maybe Junior is not allowed to cross the street.

In my reading of current periodicals and such, I sometimes trip over one phrase or sentence in what is otherwise perfectly okay prose. Why write "bears an unfortunate visual resemblance" when you can write "looks too much like"?

Of half a dozen volumes of Morison's naval history, I decided to keep only two, *Marianas* and *Leyte*. I have long had *The Two-Ocean War*; the full history gives more detail, including debates on strategy and logistics.

Morison does not fail to give credit where credit is due to the enemy. I even found a named Japanese here. Having just taken off from a carrier, he crashed his fighter into an approaching torpedo. There was, however, a second torpedo which inflicted fatal damage. . . the sinking long remained unknown to the Americans, as was not told in the short history.

The Navy was not impressed by Morison and had its own history of the war written by Walter Karig, who later wrote

Zotz! (1947). For the volume on Pacific operations in the early part of 1943, Morison carefully avoids naming any carriers at all, thereby writing "USS Robin" [HMS Victorious] out of the historical record.

Can books coming in be balanced by books going out? I have found one to discard, *The Alphabetic Labyrinth* by Johanna Drucker. It tells about thinkers with bees in their bonnets and their notions about alphabetic origins, universal alphabets, and universal languages.

June 13, 2015

Several more avatars of the Inhabitant of the Sink have met their ends, and there has never yet been any sighting of two that might constitute a breeding pair.

It may never be known if the spelling of "Pharoah" was a deliberate choice or arose from ignorance, sheer ignorance. Of many names there are spelling variants, like Fredric and Frederik, but should we regard Scriptural names as fixed — that is, in the tradition of our translations? Mervyn Peake may be deemed to have erred in not naming the cook Abiathar Swelter ("the father of excellence and plenty"). The same goes for many historical personages. I once read in the paper of the untimely death of a "Ceaser". He was spared going through a long life explaining how to spell his name, with the awareness that his parents were yokels.

Betsy's brother, James Henry Balderston, had been one Jim among many, and took to calling himself Hilary. After his death (murderous robbers in the back country of Ecuador), it seemed the right choice for our son, though we knew the shift from M to F was almost complete. Mrs. Clinton, with a variant spelling, was a cloud the size of a man's hand, no more. We allowed as how the boy could in later life call himself anything *he* pleased.

Our choice might otherwise have been both difficult and very iffy, as there was no other cherished namesake. Some surnames in the Balderston family have recurred as given names, either first or middle: Lloyd and Canby. It was a Lloyd Balderston who married Catharine Canby, granddaughter of Betsy Ross.

The popular name in my family is "James Major". My great-grandfather, grandfather, uncle, first cousin, and first cousin once removed, five generations in order, were/are all "James Major" with different middle names and bynames. I once saw three other James Majors in two days. There are also a few "the thirds" and "the fourths" (including a great-great-grandson of my notorious relative) and even one "the sixth". But no other "Joseph Major" in my family.

— JTM

I just got a few freebie books that had been in the library of Friends Select School (Hilary's school). Toland's *The Rising Sun* had had four borrowers, none recently; several of the others had none. Christopher Fry's play *Curtmantle* pleased not the millions; John Crowley's novel *Lord Byron's Novel The Evening Land* was caviare to the general.

From elsewhere, Daniel C. Dennett's *Brainstorms* had in the trade paperback edition a superb cover by Gorey. I have learned that there is a recent book of Gorey's cover art . . . which I do not plan to buy. I have a small sampling; most Gorey-esque is *What Maisie Knew*.

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** May 11, 2015  
Post Office Box 5323, Oracle, AZ  
85623-5323 USA  
[laurraine@mac.com](mailto:laurraine@mac.com)  
<http://www.weasner.com/>

You might have noticed that I've fallen pretty far behind with my reading. I'm letting my *New Yorker* subscription lapse in the hopes that it will help; I don't always find articles worth reading in the magazine anyways.

Rodney Leighton should know that I received the zines he mailed me. I have also received the e-mailed ones. I've fallen behind a bit in my publishing.

It seems to me that if there were a space elevator, it would have similar security to airlines. No one would be able to sneak in among other people.

July 3, 2015

Here I am still working at catching up with my reading.

I was sorry to read Murray Moore's letter expressing his excitement looking forward to seeing his first opera. He never made it to Milwaukee because of weather problems that kept cancelling his flights. The opera was short as operas go and had a modern story. There was at least one attendee who had never seen an opera before, and I think he enjoyed it.

From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** May 23, 2015  
Ste. Julie, Quebec, CANADA  
[cathypl@sympatico.ca](mailto:cathypl@sympatico.ca)  
<http://www.monsffa.com/>

The poem about Gemellus brought tears to my eyes. I understand not wanting another pet just now. I say that every time, but I just keep doing it to myself. I've had to see a cat and 6 dogs cross the rainbow bridge. So many little ones at the shelter needing love and attention, hard to say no more, really — no more. We lost two dogs last year, within just 5 months of each other, one of them on Mother's Day. It hurts so much, but yeah, we got another one later in the summer. We found the house too quiet, too empty, and Maggie was moping around looking

for someone to pick a fight with, or romp with on the beach. It pained us to see her sitting in the sand, looking for a friend to play with, to the point that we hardly used the cottage at all last year.

Do you know the poem by Rudyard Kipling, *The Power of the Dog*?

<http://www.mans-best-friend.org.uk/dog-poe-ns-poetry-power-dog.htm>

I'm sure we can feel the same about the feline — they do indeed know where there is a vacancy and a soft heart. And shoelaces. They ask so little of us, and give so much.

From: **Milt Stevens** May 25, 2015  
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley,  
CA 93063-3834 USA  
[miltstevens@earthlink.net](mailto:miltstevens@earthlink.net)

Before beginning this LoC on *Alexiad* #80, I looked at the daily dogfight on *File 770*. I resent the time I spend looking at the daily dogfight. The discussion has been going round and round the mulberry bush for weeks now. So why do I keep looking at it? It's an easy form of time wasting. I can do that instead of doing anything useful for awhile.

Some people are still emphatic about whatever they were emphatic about to begin with. This has led to intellectual trench warfare. This is fine for some people. They are feeding on notoriety. Vox Day, in particular, seems to subscribe to the G. M. Carr theory of egoboo. G. M. Carr believed that any mention of your name was egoboo no matter what they said about you. I think Day would be happy being Charles Manson. That may be a problem in the future.

This situation isn't going to be resolved soon. I'm annoyed that none of my nominees for best novel made it to the ballot. (Just for the record, my nominees were: *Echopraxia* Peter Watts, *Cibola Burn* James S. A. Corey, *Shipstar* Gregory Benford and Larry Niven, *The Rhusus Chart* Charles Stross, and *A Darkling Sea* James L. Cambias.) I've read nominees and some of the other potential nominees since I submitted my ballot. Choosing between *A Darkling Sea*, *Station 11*, and *Three Body Problem* would have been a tough decision. Those are three excellent novels.

This year's business meeting will be searching for the final solution to the puppie problem. If it were up to me, I'd raise the price of supporting memberships high enough to discourage ballot stuffing. If you want to play with the big boys, you gotta pay like the big boys. Some of the proportional voting plans might produce some strange results. They might not stop cheating, but would make it impossible to figure out whether anybody cheated or not.

Did you remember James Gifford complaining that Robert

**A. Heinlein: A Reader's Companion got the highest number of first-place votes, but lost anyway?**

- JTM

In the letter column, it is mentioned that science fiction may have died. The novel supposedly died 40 or 50 years ago. Then some other critics came along and maintained that the novel had never really existed in the first place. Now that I think about it, maybe the death of the novel led to all these vampire and zombie novels that have been flooding the market in recent years.

From: **Eric Mayer** May 26, 2015  
[groggy.tales@gmail.com](mailto:groggy.tales@gmail.com)

Thanks for *Alexiad* 80. Sorry things have been so tough recently. It's hard to lose a pet. We have not replaced our last cat. How could we anyhow? Sabrina was with me for over twenty-one years. She dated all the way back to my first marriage, when my kids were small, when I worked at a regular job in another state. She was the last link to the totally different world of the first part of my life. Three years after her passing the fuzzy commode cover on the bottom shelf where she slept hasn't been removed. When her companion died, quite a few years before she did, we thought it unwise to bring a stranger into the house. Sabrina was already old and had always been nervous. She attached herself even more closely to us and seemed happy enough. I think your vet is right about not getting another cat.

Although I haven't read science fiction for years I still enjoy fanzines and so, unfortunately, have heard about the puppies business. Typical right-wingers. They figure they are entitled to always have their way and if they can't get it fairly they're happy to lie, cheat, steal and fix elections. (Or fall down in the middle of the floor and scream and kick their feet)

Still, I was curious enough to go over to *Speculative Fiction.org* and read four Hugo nominated short stories from last year. At least I thought I was going to be reading short stories. What I found were...I'm not sure. An extended joke? The author's notes for a short story just slapped into a word processing file? Some sort of weird intelligence test? Okay, I'm no literary genius but who actually understands this stuff? Anyone. Really? Is it a matter of the Hugo nominated authors have no clothes? Or maybe the readers who pretend to understand, or think they do, have no clothes either? Beats me. Luckily I also read a longer piece by Ted Chang which I thought outstanding.

So in a way I can see the puppies point — based on a tiny sample — that there's something dreadful about Hugo nominated short stories. I agree the selection last year was awful. That sort of show-offish stuff is not real literature. It's sophomoric college lit-mag junk. I just finished short story collections by John Updike and Alice Munro and they were all

actual stories, not a mess of pretentious literary effects and obscurity.

Unfortunately, I'm not so sure that that is what the puppies object to. They seem fixated on the supposed political implications. I'm not sure why they think liberals particularly favor literary nonsense. I don't and I'm so liberal I'm nearly a communist. I guess I am in the awkward position of despising the same sort of so-called stories they do but for totally different reasons.

I'm not fond of pretentious neo-New Wave nonsense put out by people with the right selection of victim statuses, but I'm not particularly fond of bash-the-alien-mooks-tales written by the real guys, either.

— JTM

Well, enough. I probably haven't written that much about sf in thirty years!

From: **Rod E. Smith** June 2, 2015  
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA  
[stickmaker@usa.net](mailto:stickmaker@usa.net)

I missed MillienniCon, Conglomeration and MarCon this year, due to a combination of a persistent sinus infection (which finally required two different rounds of antibiotics to get rid of) and working with a contractor to replace my front porch and step.

I really hope I can make WorldCon. My plane tickets are non-refundable. I have an allergy evaluation on June 5, and some information from my dental hygienist for my allergist which may help with all these upper respiratory infections.

Brad W. Foster is worried about the lower part of a cut beanstalk cable falling to Earth and causing damage. The plans call for use of an epoxy which loses strength when heated by atmospheric reentry. This would cause the upper part of the falling portion to break into far smaller sections. This would reduce the damage, but not eliminate it entirely.

Murray Moore's comment about my full name is something I have often thought. My writing is done under the name Rodford Edmiston.

Taras Wolansky: None of the resources I found on SLAM gave numbers in re. the radiation exposure, but all which mentioned it claimed it would be a serious health threat.

One of my novels has been at Angry Robot since October of 2013. They were flooded with entries during an open submissions period. \*SIGH\*

I'm also in the final stage (revision after test readers) of another novel. Hope to submit it somewhere in a month or two.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** June 3, 2015  
6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA  
19149-2128

[darrells@comcast.net](mailto:darrells@comcast.net)

Well, just look at that Hugo ballot you published. It makes it very clear why, if the Hugos are to be saved as an institution, we need a No Award landslide this year. The Puppies themselves are in a lose-lose position. If they “win” they will have lost. They might get to take home some trophies, but there is no honor in it, because everyone knows HOW they won. Most winners this year will be under a cloud of suspicion. I think careers are going to be damaged this way, and the only way some people can save themselves is by loudly denouncing the Puppies now.

Otherwise the award becomes worthless, even something to be defensive about. It could become a liability, not just for the writer who won, but for the whole field. Robert Bloch called this syndrome “worst foot forward.” We put our worst foot forward. This is how the mundane world first hears of the Hugos, as something gamed by Neo-Nazi space cadets. That is admittedly a simplification, but the outside world perceives us in the form of simplifications. The Puppies have allied themselves with the worst in our society, and there is no way to remove the stench now. I mean, would you take seriously a book published by something called Patriarchy Press? How about one from I Hate Niggers Press?

I have some cause for optimism. What happened last year is happening this year on a much larger scale. The Puppies have forced themselves into the limelight, which only makes people aware of how bad writers they really are. The people I’ve talked to who are reading their way through the nominations report that most of the material is unbelievably awful. The more people actually read this stuff, the better No Award’s chances become. Just remember not to vote for anything below No Award.

I can understand why people withdrew from the ballot. I didn’t expect to be nominated, but for once I was glad I was not. The best comment comes from the World Fantasy Award winning writer Lavie Tidhar (quoted by David Langford in the current *Interzone*): “It’s an honor just not to be nominated.”

As for Requires Hate, this was a puppy of a different stripe, but very much the same phenomenon. I don’t think she had nearly as much impact. I have only heard about this, and I can’t remember the writer’s name. Her career might be saved if enough people forget who she is.

Don’t you wish Harlan Ellison were still in his prime? Think of the roadkill he could have made out of those Puppies!

Ah, the thought of Harlan jumping up and down on Beale, screaming — isn’t it gratifying.

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** June 6, 2015  
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON  
M9C 2B2 CANADA  
[penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)  
<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Many thanks for the 80th *Alexiad*. I hope there’s been positive changes going on in the Major household, but it looks like there’s more than enough grief.

We truly invest so much emotion in our pets, and they are family, and when they die...we learn a lot about our relationship to them, and about grief. Yvonne and I have never had pets, but friends and family have, and I can think of a few cats and dogs I do miss... ChatChat, Momcat, Tiffany and Max, all gone and all remembered with love. Let your hearts heal, and perhaps then take on a stray cat or kitten to enliven your lives again.

Tomorrow is the Belmont Stakes...let’s see if American Phoenix can get the job done, and start his own dynasty.

I don’t have anything like a smartphone or tablet, or e-reader. They can be quite expensive, depending on what you buy, and often, more money must be spent for software and content. I still have a small mountain of paperbacks to read, so I’ll be fine there. I don’t have the money for the unit or software or content, and don’t care to spend it, even if I had it. They are a major distraction for many people, and these people sometimes walk into me, not looking where they’re going. Some of them shout at me to get out of their ways. I have created for myself a two-page Word document that I print out every so often to keep track of my schedule.

Somehow, we thought Art Widner would live forever; he was still quite independent in his mid-90s. Leonard Nimoy was such an iconic face; for many of us, the face of our neofannish days. You know they can’t live forever, but you never think about the time when they will be gone, and that time is unfortunately now.

Schirm’s taggers are right, mammals stink. It’s their nature. And, the ones who stand upright are the stinkiest.

John Purcell’s Aggiecon report...I deal with a few people who run literary conventions, and who have spent over a decade making sure a particular person doesn’t get onto the committee, for they are sure that person will turn the litcon into a mediacon; some of them have admitted that’s exactly what they will try to do. They don’t have the money to start their own convention, so they hover vulture-like over any litcon that might be having a little trouble, and swoop down at the first hint of difficulty. Might be happening in the Buffalo area, not sure, but will keep my eyes open.

My letter...I have just marked a full year of regular employment, and it’s been some time since I could say that. Finances are still a little fragile, but we’re getting there. We’ve decided to go to England next year, for if we do not go next year we probably wouldn’t go at all. Do or

do not, there is no try.

Jim Stumm: *Murdoch Mysteries* has broadcast 8 seasons, Season 8 should be out on DVD shortly, and filming has just begun on Season 9. The CBC knows a good thing when it sees it. I can see the show at least six or seven times a day on various channels here, but still, having the episodes on DVD is the best.

Some of the steampunks I know got into it through the costumes, some through the steampunk music (groups like Steam-Powered Giraffe, Abney Park, Frenchie and the Punk), and only one or two through the myriad steampunk novels there are. I admit that we got into it through the costumes.

Murray Moore asks why dealers do it? We do it to have some fun, meet lots of people from behind the comfort of our table, and most people come past without us having to look for them. We’ve done extremely well at a few conventions, and the money we make allows us to continue to be creative through buying new supplies. I’m a relative late-comer to all of this, but they could be why I’m getting so much out of it. Yvonne’s quite used to it; she’s been supplying local fandom with Hawaiian-style tacky shirts for decades. She can command \$60-75 for one of her masterpieces.

It’s time to go, and given the day, we wish you a happy and relaxing weekend, and enjoyment of the Belmont. Take care, and see you next weekend.

From: **John Purcell** June 7, 2015  
3744 Marilene Circle, College Station,  
TX 77845-3926 USA  
[askance73@gmail.com](mailto:askance73@gmail.com)

Yes, indeed. It is the 80th issue of your fine, fine fanzine, and it is so appropriate to write this letter the morning after American Pharoah won the 146th running of the Belmont Stakes yesterday afternoon, becoming the first Triple Crown winner since 1978. Many have come close — winning the first two — but the length of the Belmont has been their downfall. Congratulations to such a fine, beautiful horse and its owners, but it will never compare to Secretariat. I still remember sitting in the living room watching Secretariat pulling away and demolishing the field by 31 lengths, running the 1-1/2 mile race in a record 2:24, still a record. I am reading this information on another tab, and think it’s worth noting here that Secretariat’s average speed was a whopping 37.5 mph. Unbelievable. I will likewise never forget my father leaping to his feet and yelling over and over, “Jesus H. Christ! Look at him go!”, which made my mother start giggling while I felt a bit embarrassed by dad’s outburst, but couldn’t help giggling, either. I doubt we will ever see another Secretariat, but congratulations again to American Pharoah. Incidentally, Secretariat’s Triple Crown win in 1973 was the first in 25 years. Just thought I’d mention that.

I do so hope, Joe, that things start to turn around for you guys in all forms. As you know, I wish you luck on your battles with The

System, and also that your health holds up. By the end of June Valerie and I will be converting our supporting memberships for MAC II to full attending, so may the stars align to ensure you and Lisa get there, too.

Man, the science fiction fannish universe has been rocked by the passing of some major friends this year: Art Widner, Peggy Rae Sapienza, and Leonard Nimoy. There is a really nice tribute to Art Widner in Dick Lynch's *My Back Pages* #14 (see *efanzines.com*), which reminded me of when I met Art — and Jack Speer — at Corflu Quire in 2007 (Austin, TX). Art is missed, and I wish I had the chance to chat with him even more than I did over that weekend. He was one of the great ones. I think Dave Kyle may be the last fan from that era (1930s fandom) still active. Is there anybody else I am forgetting? It is possible there is/are a few others still with us.

### Erle Korshak, Bob Madle, and Jack Robins.

Lisa's tribute to Gemellus is lovely. We have been adopted by a few cats over the years, too, so Valerie and I certainly can identify. My condolences on his loss.

Thank you for running that Aggiecon 46 report. I am interested to see what some of your readers think of my comments about how Modern Media SF has infiltrated and shaped traditional SF conventions. It had definitely affected the Hugos: all one has to do is look at the long and short dramatic presentation categories, plus graphic story, fancast, and fan writer fields, to see how these awards have changed in the last decade. I am with Guy Lillian and others who are promoting the vote of quality SF for this year's awards to counter the Sad Puppies agenda. In the near future I expect WSFS meetings to be dominated by changes to the Hugo voting system: that is where the system is "broken" and where the fix needs to be made. Eventually there will be amendments, but these will take time. Then again, all awards — Oscars, Tonys, Emmys, etcetera — are by nature popularity contests, so we really shouldn't be surprised that somebody figured out a way to muck with the Hugos. It was inevitable, I guess, therefore the Powers That Be — with a lot of involved fans, hopefully — will eventually work on it. We shall see how things develop in the next few years.

The proposals for things like "Mulligan Awards", "No Award" across the board, elaborate vetting procedures, and the like, all come across as sour-grapes at best and more likely unworkable.

It is extremely helpful that you list mailing addresses of the letter writers, Joe: from those I have been adding people to the *Asked* mailing list, and the 12th issue will be mailed

out starting tomorrow (Monday, June 8th). You should get your copy by the end of the week.

Alexis Gilliland: The line of Purcells that I come from has a family castle — in ruins, naturally — in Ireland by name of Loughmoe Castle (see

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loughmoe>

for more information and some pictures). It sounds like Lee has quite the fascinating family history. At least she has some kind of existing Barony, unlike my family. Knowing how the Purcells have operated over the years, I am positive we owe money, so I have no intention of saying much more about this. However, it would be cool to visit County Tipperary and see the old stomping grounds and tour the castle while avoiding getting hit by falling bricks and stones.

Murray Moore: No opera? Oh, well. At least it was no fault of yours, since I assume those flights were cancelled due to inclement weather.

Sue Burke: Very interesting information about the upcoming celebration of Cervantes's death next year. Thank you so much for sharing.

Joe, your comment to me about folks getting into Steampunk via the music is not surprising. There are many, many musical acts that travel and play at Steampunk conventions and events around North America right now: some of the more successful are Abney Park, Steam-Powered Giraffe, Darwin Prophet, Marquis of Vaudeville, Montague Jacques Fromage, and the list goes on. Yes, the costuming and role-playing aspect of the Steampunk genre is a major part of the fun, and should people attracted to it give some of the literature a try, I hope they find the stories just as entertaining. In fact, Goodreads has a lengthy listing of Young Adult Steampunk novels and series that reveal just how extensive the genre has become. One of the things I enjoy doing at these events is talk up some of the writers and their books to people who sound interested in checking them out. It is rather like going to a science fiction convention and talking to kids who are into comics, maybe graphic novels, or the superhero movies and television series — the media fans, as illustrated by *The Big Bang Theory* on television — that dominate Hollywood these days. Those all have their roots in science fiction from the pulp era. At an Aggiecon three or four years ago I was chatting with a couple of local fans — high school kids at their first con — about pulp magazines and comic books of the 1930s, and when one kid said he liked the Flash Gordon movie of 1980, I immediately said, "go to YouTube and watch some of the old Flash Gordon serials from the 1930s, and then find the books on Amazon.com." Sometimes I wonder if he ever did. But that's how I like to proselytize about SF and try to get youngsters reading this Crazy Buck Rogers Stuff.

A lot of people thought *Flesh Gordon* was better, even though it was a minimally-augmented porno flick.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068595/>  
— JTM

I seem to have prattled on for a while here. Fine. This is a good way to get the day started. So now it is time to sign off and go poop-scoop the backyard before it gets too hot. As it is, at least the objects of my endeavor are now baked into bricks instead of being smushed down by weeks of torrential rains. But I suspect this is Too Much Information.

From: **Joy V. Smith** June 8, 2015  
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA  
[Pagadan@aol.com](mailto:Pagadan@aol.com)

I hope you're feeling better soon, Joe... And you also, Lisa; that was a lovely tribute to Gemellus. (Every time I put one of my dogs or cats to sleep, I'm amazed at how quick it is ... I usually cry. Once I just said — Damn!) It sounds like your iPad is very useful, Joe. (I'm never on the cutting edge.)

I watched the Belmont Stakes race online; there was a video that followed the horses all around the track, with little numbered icons at the bottom so you could keep track. Very cool!

It Can't Happen Here (review) sounds like a scary warning story. I enjoyed your other reviews, and I think it would be interesting to see a movie with the hang gliders catapulted into the sky (Clash of Eagles)! And thanks for the Aggiecon review by John Purcell and the award and WorldCon bid news. The Sad Puppies comparison with the New Wave in one of the LOCs was interesting. (Cute cartoon about The Puppies on the back page. And I enjoyed The Adventure of the Dead Colleague there.) Yes, blogging and social media do take a lot of time (Timothy Lane LOC); I have three blogs, and I'm behind on FaceBook and LinkedIn... More interesting news and background in other LOCs, which is always appreciated.

From: **George W. Price** June 10, 2015  
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690-3228 USA  
[price4418@comcast.net](mailto:price4418@comcast.net)

April Alexiad:

I stopped going to WorldCons several years ago, when my late wife's health had worsened to where I didn't want to leave her even overnight. And, truth to tell, I was no longer enjoying cons very much, so it wasn't much of a sacrifice. Since I haven't been getting con literature, I never heard of the Sad Puppies campaign until I saw an article about it a few weeks ago in, of all places, the *Wall Street Journal*. I find I can't get worked up about it.

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Jim Stumm, replying to Richard Dengrove,

notes that the Founding Fathers held a wide variety of conflicting opinions, and what wound up in the Constitution is a set of compromises. Quite so. For example, Jefferson is often cited in support of the notion that we have full “separation of church and state” that requires states to be rigorously neutral on religious matters. This overlooks that Jefferson lost that fight at the Constitutional Convention, and hence the Constitution requires only that there be no national established religion. The states were allowed to keep their religious establishments, despite Jefferson’s objections. (In our time the Supreme Court has held that the states are now subject to the same restrictions as the federal government, but I think that’s a gross misinterpretation.)

And now we are getting a state-encouraged religion, but it’s not Christianity, so it’s okay with the secularists.

— JTM

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Alexis Gilliland surprises me by denying that government debasement of the currency is theft, as I had asserted. He defines “theft” in a narrowly legal way, saying that since it is the government that decides what is “theft”, the government’s monetary manipulations are no more theft than taxes are. (Some anarchists and libertarians do claim that taxation is theft, but never mind.)

I am not convinced. Currency debasement is theft morally, if not strictly legally, because it is deceptive. It amounts to a tax imposed and collected secretly, which makes it extralegal, if not outright illegal.

It would be different if the government publicly announced that it would pay its debts by inflating the currency, and favored us with a detailed explanation of exactly how expanding the money supply operates to transfer wealth from the citizenry to the government. But of course that would defeat the purpose of the exercise, which is to transfer the wealth in a way that can be blamed on soulless corporations or greedy unions or Wall Street or damned near anybody other than the politicians who are actually doing it. The whole point of inflation is to impose a “tax” which we don’t realize is a tax. If that’s not theft by strict legal definition, it is morally indistinguishable from theft.

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On to Richard Dengrove and the gold standard. He observes that the price of gold has fluctuated greatly in recent years, and that it also has uses in computers and electronics so that it “has become another commodity with prices that go sky high and valley low.” All perfectly true. We certainly would not want to use as a monetary standard a commodity that suffers wide and frequent swings in value. However, most of the swings

in the price of gold now represent people trying to protect themselves against the inflation of fiat money. Those swings would not occur if there were no fiat money.

So how widely would the price of gold swing if we went back on the gold standard? That depends on how much gold would be needed for industrial purposes, compared to monetary usage. My guess — and it is strictly an unprovable guess — is that industrial usage would be very small compared to monetary, especially if the whole world went on the gold standard. If the variations in non-monetary usage amounted to no more than, say, five or ten percent of total usage, that should provide far better currency stability than we can hope to have with fiat paper money.

I say it’s worth trying, even if only on a small scale to start. Suppose we require only that the U.S. Mint accept all raw gold presented to it and give out the corresponding amount of gold coins or gold certificates. Of course we must also repeal all the laws that now forbid or hamper the use of gold as money, such as capital gains taxation on increases in the value of gold between when we buy it and when we sell it. We would also have to abolish the “legal tender” status of fiat money that requires us to accept it in payment of all debts. Then let the gold money circulate freely and compete with the fiat money. That is, allow us all to choose which money we prefer to use. Now that would be an interesting experiment!

I note that it was to prevent just such an experiment that when we went off the gold standard in 1933, the government required that all gold money be turned in. They took no chances that people would prefer to keep on using gold if it were available.

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Mr. Dengrove misunderstands my remarks about his use of quotation marks and apostrophes. He says, “What precisely George criticized me for was syntax. He faults me for presenting dates as ‘40s and ‘60s with half quotes rather than as “40s and “60s with full quotes.”

No, no, no! I intended nothing about syntax or full quotes. My quarrel (or quibble) is with the use of a single open-quote (what he calls a half quote) instead of an apostrophe. Let me try it again, this time using square brackets instead of quote marks to set off the characters I am discussing.

When we abbreviate [1940s] we use an apostrophe to indicate the contraction, thus: [’40s]. Note that the apostrophe [’] and the single close-quote is the same character, differing from the open-quote [‘] by having the curl face the other way. He had [’40s] — with the open quote — when it should have been [’40s] — with the apostrophe (same as close-quote). That’s all I was pointing out.

We get an open-quote when we intend an apostrophe because the standard keyboard has only one key for both open-quote and close-quote/apostrophe (with the shift position

giving both open and closing double quotes). The word-processing program decides which is intended by assuming that if the quote mark is preceded by a space and followed by a character, it must be an open-quote [‘]; if it is preceded by a character and followed by a space, it must be a close-quote [’]; and if it is preceded by a character and followed by a character, it must be an apostrophe [’], identical to a close-quote. This necessarily ignores the possibility of having an apostrophe preceded by a space; the program has to assume that’s an open-quote. It takes some special tricks to produce the apostrophe preceded by a space. What I do is type the quote twice, giving [‘’], and then back up and delete the first one, giving [’].

As an added complication, this all has to run through Joe’s word-processing program, which is not the same as mine, and just might make some changes of its own. So I am also sending an explanation to Mr. Dengrove by letter.

From: **Murray Moore** June 10, 2015  
1065 Henley Road, Mississauga Ontario  
L4Y 1C8 CANADA  
[murraymoore@gmail.com](mailto:murraymoore@gmail.com)

Lisa. Dogs and cats as pets are like home-use printers: cheap to acquire but expensive to maintain. Pets: food, litter (cats), annual vet visit, drugs, and operations for illness. Home-use printers: insanely expensive ink cartridges.

Joe. I bought my iPad in 2012. My rationale /e/x/c/u/s/e/ was that after surgery on my right hand to correct my Dupuytren’s Contracture, for three to four weeks I would be one-handed. The upcoming surgery also was my rationale excuse for buying my Kobo Touch. I bought my Kobo a month before the surgery. The iPad I bought a week before the surgery.

This year my greatest use of my iPad is watching the Toronto Blue Jays. While we were cable TV subscribers (stopped five years ago when I retired) we never paid for a sports channel. So the last televised Blue Jays game I had seen, before this year, was the team’s 1993 (second-in-a-row) World Series win.

For \$119 in your currency this year on my iPad I can watch every regular season Major League Baseball game. I can chose either the home team broadcast or the visiting team broadcast.

I am wondering how you will describe your experience reading fiction using your iPad. The iPad is inferior to an e-reader for long-time reading because of its glass screen. The value of e-readers and their e-ink is that e-readers better mimic the experience of reading printed-on-paper text.

A wireless keyboard in a metal cover for my iPad was a Christmas present. However most writing I do, I use, as I am now, my only other computer, an ASUS eeePC notebook.

Every eReader I have had has broken. The iPad is tougher, and

has a larger screen.

I started watching Netflix on my iPad, too, but not since the start of the 2015 baseball season.

We are beyond, Joe, “the level of people who collect 8mm prints of feature films in an era of DVD and Blue-Ray.” DVD and Blue-Ray will be gone, soon. Did not Blockbusters chain expire? Another industry barely hanging on. Everything physical is gone or going. The Black’s chain of 59 camera stores here has announced it is going out of business.

Sometimes I read too quickly. I read “live action movie based on Play-Doh” as “live action movie based on Dolly Parton.”

In Letters, Rodney announces that he has “no desire to ever meet Guy Lillian”, Guy being just an example of “lots of people in fandom” he could have named, all such people whose writing Rodney enjoys. Rodney, I want to meet you. Then I could decide if I wanted to meet you again. Guy Lillian in particular might want to know, too.

Also, Rodney, you are correct that I might not read your next ish, title to be determined, if I am not given a paper copy. Strike the “might” and leave the “not”. I slowly write LoCs to editors who hand me and mail me a fanzine. I owe them first. I am aware of the existence of other fanzines I would read, fine examples of fanzinery, but I will expand my title reading list only when I am caught up with, shall I say, real fanzines distinct from virtual fanzines.

And, checking, I see that I wrote a LoC on *Rodney’s Fanac 1* and *Rodney’s Fanac 2*.

Milt Stevens “still likes” Donald Duck, Me aussi, if written and drawn by the Good Duck Artist, Carl Barks.

**When I was still reading Donald Duck comics, I got annoyed by their reprinting old stories with the note “Reprinted by Popular Demand”. Reprinting old Carl “The Good Duck Artist” Barks stories would have been quite desirable, but the faux “by Popular Demand” was an insult.**

Jason Burnett declares the Patterson biography of Heinlein “valuable”. If only it also was readable. I bogged down halfway through the first book. I thought I had narcolepsy until I noticed that every blackout occurred while I was reading Patterson. So I have a copy, signed by the author, which I am describing as half-new, the half-new half being the half that I have not read.

**Volume II might have given you nightmares with its description of Heinlein’s various illnesses.**

Timothy Lane is at a loss as to why new

years are spanking new: maybe because the new year symbol is a baby?

Jim Stumm in Buffalo: Do you have a digital TV antenna and TV? We have both and your PBS station signal is clear here. Free OTA (over-the-air) TV, only better signal than analog. The digital signal is uncompressed, while the same signal through cable and satellites is compressed, I have read. Not that you can tell the difference, probably. Did I mention, free, as in no monthly bills?

Would you like to meet Rodney Leighton? We could do a road trip. But I would have to meet you first (see above). If you have a lot of free time, potentially, we could drive from Nova Scotia, having met Rodney, onward to Florida and tell Guy Lillian if Guy is missing, or not, the experience of meeting Rodney. Either way, Guy would thank us for the information.

We could visit some *Alexiad* contributors along our route: just from this issue’s loccol, Taras in New Jersey, Darrell in Pennsylvania, Alexis or Rich in Virginia, Joy in Florida. On our return, Tom in Tennessee and Lisa & Joe in Kentucky. At each stop our hosts could organize a Meet The Fans Who Met Rodney Leighton gathering. Maybe a RV? Do you snore?

Schirmeister and Gilliland are superb. Marc’s cartoon *The Gospel According To Farmer Al Falfa* is particularly wonderfully gnomic.

**I went over the picture with Corel Photo House, which is an old program but seems to work better for me than newer ones, and carefully cleaned up the paste-up lines Schirm noted.**

—JTM

From: **Sue Burke** June 12, 2015  
calle Agustin Querol, 6 bis 6D  
28014 Madrid, SPAIN  
[sueburke@telefonica.net](mailto:sueburke@telefonica.net)  
[mount-oregano.livejournal.com](http://mount-oregano.livejournal.com)  
[amadisofgaul.blogspot.com](http://amadisofgaul.blogspot.com)

It’s now safe for Spaniards to visit Westfjords, Iceland. There, in 1615, shipwrecked Spanish whaling crews from the Basque region were searching for food, which led to confrontations and finally a decree permitting Spaniards to be killed on sight: 32 of the 80 crewmen were slain. This year in April, the Westfjord district commissioner repealed the decree and unveiled a memorial to the slain whalers. A small Basques delegation ventured into now non-hostile territory to attend the ceremony and exchange good wishes and gifts.

**I’ve heard that a guy tried to use the Missouri Executive Order 44 of 1838 as his defense in a murder trial, because the alleged victim was a Mormon; the order says that “The Mormons must be**

**treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace”. It didn’t work and the order was revoked in 1976.**

Just west of Basque Country, we now know it was hostile territory 430,000 years ago. In a cave in the Atapuerca Mountains, anthropologists have found a variety of human remains over the years. A close look at Neanderthal skull number 17 shows evidence of two stab wounds that pierced the bone and caused death. This is the oldest case of homicide among hominids found so far.

Not far from Atapuerca, just a few years ago, a new species of early Cretaceous dinosaur was discovered: the *Demandasaurus*. The name doesn’t mean what you might think. This sauropod, only 11 meters long, was named for its place of discovery, the Demanda Mountains (where, coincidentally, Sergio Leone filmed *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* in 1966). The mountains, in turn, were named for a legal dispute over land use that lasted from the 16th to the 19th century. *Demanda* means “lawsuit.”

No lawsuits yet, but on May 24, municipal and regional elections were held in most of Spain, and the conservative Popular Party, which had controlled most of the country, lost. Voters were angry because its officials have stolen millions from the public treasury and sent the money to secret personal Swiss bank accounts – enough theft to do significant harm to the economy. A party called *Podemos* (We Can) and its local variants, based largely on activists from the Occupy movement, did well. They won in Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia, and elsewhere took parliament and council seats. While some fear *Podemos* as radicals, I think that the worst they can do will still be an improvement over kleptocracy.

Speaking of kleptocracy, during the Dark Ages, the Visigoths came to Spain in 415 AD to drive out the Vandals and stayed to rule – or misrule. For a lot of reasons, they didn’t get along with the local populace, such as theft. The Spanish word for clothing is *ropa*, which comes from the Germanic Visigoth word for “booty,” related to the English “rob” because at that point, the locals had already been ravaged by the Sueves, Alans, and Vandals, and all they had left worth robbing were the clothes on their backs.

The Vandals were also Arians, as Darrell Schweitzer noted. The locals were Roman Catholics. To try to win them over, Visigoth King Recaredo converted to Catholicism in 587, but the Visigoth Catholic hierarchy turned out to be just as kleptomaniacal as its politicians, so when the Moslems arrived in 711 and stayed to conquer, a lot of locals decided they were an improvement in overlords.

Arians’ heresy was a denial of the Trinity. Modern-day Unitarians are not direct spiritual descendants, but they, too, argue for a single rather than three-part God. I’m a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and I have



some German ancestry, but I have yet to plunder Spain, despite some nice clothing stores here.

Puppies! I've been reading so I can vote responsibly for the Hugos. When I joined Sasquan early this year, I was looking forward to reading some of the year's best, and I can recommend three of the novels: *Ancillary Sword* by Ann Leckie, *The Goblin Emperor* by Katherine Addison, and *The Three-Body Problem* by Cixin Liu. Some of the other categories also contain worthy works, but most were a waste of time. I feel cheated and aggrieved.

I think here we see the difference between fandom and the internet, that is, between a self-policing community with standards of more or less civil conduct, versus a virtual Dark Ages of idiots, zealots, and perverts (as Cathy Palmer-Lister said) carving out little warring reigns.

And the Internet has taken over. All the Puppy Wars are fought in blogs, getting more vitriolic and extreme every day. While all the "best fanzines" and "best fan writers" are blogs and bloggers (and the "best fan writers" are minor pros).

As for the Nebulas, none of my choices won, but the ballot was solid quality, so I can't complain. Congratulations to the winners.

I'm looking forward to reading *El marciano* (The Martian) by Andy Weir before October, which is the deadline for voting in the Ignout Awards, Spain's equivalent to the Hugos. It's in the Best Foreign Novel category, along with *Aniquilación* (Annihilation) by Jeff Vandermeer, *El rito* (The Croning) by Laird Barron, *La música del silencio* (The Slow Regard of Silent Things) by Patrick Rothfuss, and *Perillán* (Dodger; translated as "Little Peter") by Terry Pratchett. There's a lot of other works in the Ignout ballot's eleven categories, and they're all worthy. It will be a pleasure.

But among the Best Related Work category, there's nothing like "Chicks Dig Time Lords." The translation of such a hypothetical title would pose challenges. The slang for "chicks" is not literally "baby chicken" or *polluelos*, it is *chicas*; note the calque. "Dig" is slang, which is always tricky, but the Spanish equivalent would not be *cavar*, which is almost a calque of "excavate." The closest Spanish slang is *molar*, which means, more or less, "to be great," as in: *Este libro mola*, "This book is great." That would require some grammatical rearrangements to get: *A las chicas les molan los Señores del Tiempo*. It loses some brio in translation, I think.

In any case, the writers and producers of Spain's hit television show *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (The Ministry of Time) are self-

proclaimed fanboys of *Doctor Who*, so they were careful to create a completely different time travel show.

Let me close with best wishes for Lisa and Joe, whom fate has not treated kindly lately. It has, at least, given them the chance to show their mettle and their kindness toward those in their care, both human and animal, which deserves admiration and praise.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** June 13, 2015  
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA  
93010-2451 USA  
[robertk@cipcug.org](mailto:robertk@cipcug.org)

Thank you for Vol. 14, No. 2 (April 2015), Whole Number 80.

I very much hope that things are going better for you.

It rained on Tuesday (June 9) which was a small (very small) help. Then it drizzled during Wednesday night (June 10). Well, every bit helps.

Just because there is not any comment on most of the contents of an issue of *ALEXIAD* doesn't mean that it is not appreciated. To the contrary, every issue is very much appreciated.

Your review of *Joe Steele* by Harry Turtledove was much appreciated. As you know I have read the book. The name Joe Steele is obvious. I caught some of the other names, but not as much as you. I recommend the book.

Your review of *Clash of Eagles* by Alan Smale would have been of help for me except that I already read the book. Yes, I read the whole book. Probably because I almost always read a whole book once it is started. If I had read your review before starting to read it a lot of time would have been saved.

There is a very good obituary of Terry Pratchett in the June 2015 issue of *Reason* magazine. It includes a photo of Pratchett dusting a sculpture of Discworld on the back of the four elephants who are standing on the back of the turtle. I found the picture on the internet and printed it on glossy photo paper.

June 4 through June 7 was spent at the Burbank Airport Marriott for Genetic Genealogy: DNA Plus and the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Southern California Genealogical Society Jamboree. DNA testing has become big in genealogy. However, my first test was done after reading *The Seven Daughters of Eve* by Bryan Sykes (2001) and it was with Sykes organization. Over the years I have done some six DNA tests for various reasons. This probably qualifies me as a DNA Junkie. The latest one was with *23 and Me*. The reason for testing with them was because they did massive tests regarding health risks as well as ones generic ancestry. Subsequently, the government stuck its nose in and made them stop the health tests. I am 99.6% European with 0.4% Unassigned (whatever that means). Also, apparently I share a Haplogroup with Harry Louis Gates, Jr. One of the more interesting tests, however, was for Neanderthal

DNA. Virtually all decedents of Homo sapiens who left Africa have some Neanderthal DNA. That's right, Homo sapiens and Neanderthals had sex with each other and they did not produce any mules.

So Ayla's son Durc could share Pleasures with the women of the Clan of the Cave Bear and have progeny.

— JTM

**Lloyd Penney:** It was Loscon 41 which is what was in what I wrote. Somehow when it appeared in *ALEXIAD* the title became Loscon 42. I am not a time traveler except in the sense that we are all time travelers. But, we can only go in one direction and that an instant at a time.

**Alexis A. Gilliland:** I had cataract surgery several years ago. It went fine and my driver's license no longer says that I have to wear glasses. I also work on my computer without having to wear glasses. I'm very happy to have had the surgery.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** June 9, 2015  
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA  
22204-1552 USA  
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for *Alexiad* #14,2 which arrived in the usual way. The local news is that on March 24th, shortly after I wrote my last letter Lee totaled her car, the particulars being that a ball bounced from between two cars, and she swerved to avoid the child following after, although in the event the little boy's mother had him by the hand. Lee spent a couple of days in the hospital, but felt recovered enough to go down to Ravencon, where we had a middling good time despite her running out of pain pills, a circumstance which led us to skip the dead dog party and go home early.

Your loss of Gemellus is noted with regret, though I doubt that a cat can be aptly described as anybody's "lesser servant." Cats tend to be peers if not gods, a status they earned in ancient Egypt by eating the rodents attracted to the stored grain, thereby increasing grain yields 800-percent for the humans. We hope that Lisa & Co. will be up to taking in a replacement or two, since in most cases the joy of companionship will outweigh the pain of having to put a loved pet down. The departure of Grant is differently serious, though the fact that he spent most of March in bed complaining of the cold suggests that he was seriously ill, and may not have been aware of how badly his health had been deteriorating. We wish him well but he reminds me of my own mortality in a way that the death of cats do not. The death of Art Widner at 97 is also noted, he'd sent me copies of *YHOS* and we had met at several conventions. It probably speaks to my age that I know three of the four surviving attendees of NyCon.

For whatever reason I don't read online fanzines, and we have stopped going to

Worldcons so I was unaware of the online campaign (rabid puppies?) to influence the Hugo Awards. My theory is the dinosaurs didn't become extinct when they started giving out the Dino Awards, they became extinct when they started arguing over who was eligible for what. More to the point, society changes, and our hobbies reflect those changes. Capclave, the WSFA literary convention, has been drawing a few hundred attendees for years now. Awesome Con, a comic convention, which started in 2013, pulled 30,000 attendees into the Washington Convention Center over May 29-31, 2015. Comics are big, literary SF is little, and paper fanzines are an anachronism.

On a happier note American Pharoah won the Triple Crown at the Belmont, the first time in 37 years.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** June 14, 2015  
2651 Arlington Drive, #302,  
Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA  
[RichD22426@aol.com](mailto:RichD22426@aol.com)

Joe, I received your April 2015 *Alexiad* in June. In short, business as usual. Maybe better than business as usual. Certainly, you have kept your zine more on track than I have mine. I do not even bother claiming I publish it on any schedule.

Such is the scheduling for zines. How about the schedule for revolution and repression. Stalin as the US President/Dictator Joe Steele creates both a revolution and repression in the US in Harry Turtledove's novel *Joe Steele*. My problem is this: dictator and times must meet part way. In fact, times create the dictator, as far as I can tell, more than dictators create the times.

The same with places. I imagine a Joe Steele/Joseph Stalin who tried as President to make the US into a dictatorship would end up serving time in a secured institution at government expense. Even during the Depression, the time was not rife for a dictatorship. Roosevelt could not even get his way in packing the Supreme Court.

Even in fandom, Americans are not that polarized. Although it may seem like fullscale warfare is upon us, we agree more than we disagree. John Purcell, in his report on AggieCon, is right that literary fans tend to be older.

However, I attended MediaWest Con in Lansing, Michigan. As the name suggests, it caters to media fans; and is devoted to movies, television and the pulps. However, fans, both older and younger, appeared to read. Also, many, in fact, write their own fiction, which literary fans may not. I confess it is mostly fan fiction, but they are at least writing.

Going on to the letters, Rodney Leighton talks about another breed besides media and literary fans. A truly different breed: namely, the Sasquatch. He heard of a novel entitled *The Sasquatch Hunter's Almanac*. I once read

a novel entitled *Naked Came the Sasquatch* by a John Boston. It wasn't bad overall, although the ending needed revamping – probably with a sledgehammer.

### The explosion of Mount Saint Helens destroyed a significant Sasquatch habitat.

— JTM

Marc Schirmeister talks about a single cartoonist, Winsor McCay. I know very little about him except for his magnificent, detailed cartoons. However, I know about Johnny Gruelle. Who? The fellow who created Raggedy Ann, Raggedy Andy, and numerous other children's characters.

Unlike Winsor McCay, however, he had no problem meeting deadlines, in his case, of the *Indianapolis Star*. In fact, he finished all his work in the morning. At first, he went home. However, he was told he had to stay. That was when he wrote and illustrated children's books to while away the time. Thus, unlike with Winsor McCay, he had plenty of time to draw talk balloons if he was of a mind.

Next, I go from living individuals to a statue. In fact, it is a statue of the Virgin Mary, which, according to legend, was hidden in Madrid's city wall in 711. While Madrid did not exist at the time, Alexis Gilliland is suggesting that it may have been hidden in a city whose name has been lost to history.

I got the impression from Sue Burke that the statue was supposed to honor the city of Madrid. That it honored another city would have invalidated the tale.

The only thing I could add to this controversy is this tidbit I remember, which would indicate that Madrid existed by the 11th Century. The Arab who wrote a book of magic dated then, *The Picatrix*, was known as the Man from Madrid, or Maslama ibn Ahmad al-Majriti.

With al-Majriti, the Man from Madrid, I end this letter. It has included such topics as whether Joe Stalin could be elected President, whether fan fiction is literature, whether the Sasquatch is naked, and whether Raggedy Ann has any connection to Little Nemo.

From: **Taras Wolansky** June 15, 2015  
100 Montgomery Street., #24-H, Jersey  
City, NJ 07302-3787 USA  
[twolansky@yahoo.com](mailto:twolansky@yahoo.com)

The April 2015 *Alexiad*:

*Joe*: Are Roman alternate histories that rare? I think of De Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall* and Sucharitkul's "Aquila" series, among others.

*Hugo nominees*: After all the fuss, lots of respectable names among the short fiction nominees; e.g., John C. Wright, Michael F. Flynn, Thomas Olde Heuvelt, Edward M. Lerner, etc.

God knows why *Dresden Files* vol. DCCCXIX was nominated. I tried reading it.

It's a supernatural heist story — in which it takes almost 400 pages to get to the heist. At one point the characters were just about to enter the warehouse where they will plan the crime, and I decided to skip ahead 200 pages: they were just going into the same warehouse.

*Jason Burnett*: On the bright side, as Vance and Heinlein fans start to die off, the "elegant mausoleums" of these authors' collected works will come on the market at lower prices. Assuming they don't end up on the town dump, that is.

*Milt Stevens*: "Someone should try making a movie consisting of beginning credits, ending credits, and one incredibly long fight scene in the middle." Change "fight scene" to "chase scene" and you've pretty much described the new *Mad Max* movie.

Read a couple of the Hugo nominated graphic novels. (A so-called graphic novel is typically four to six issues of a comic book bound together as a trade paperback or hardcover.)

*Rat Queens* is an undistinguished fantasy, heavily anime-influenced; but it got nominated simply because for once the cliched kick-ass warrior women are not drawn looking like Playboy Playmates.

On the other hand, *Sex Criminals* is original and interesting and very well drawn. (And very raunchy.) A young woman discovers that she can stop time — literally — when she has an orgasm. Which leads to a very confused conversation with the "bad girls" at school because she naturally assumes that this happens to everybody. Eventually she runs into a man who has the same power; and everything goes swimmingly — until they decide to play Robin Hood by robbing a bank (thus the title).

*Darrell Schweitzer*: Even though *Tarzan of the Apes* (the novel) is in the public domain, people still can't write stories about Tarzan?

The character is trademarked by ERB, Inc. Thus for a while there were ERB fan fiction stories about "Elmo of the Apes".

"The Last Heretic" sounds interesting. Got to be difficult to clue in the readers, though, given that most of them know nothing about the Roman Empire.

*Jim Stumm*: "Your comments on protecting a space elevator from a terrorist bombing are not very useful and suggest that you don't know much about the design of such a structure. A space elevator would be a single, super-strong cable stretching from Earth's surface to many 1000s of miles into space. It wouldn't have 'many lines holding it up' like a suspension bridge, just one line."

However, the Wikipedia article on "Space elevator safety" states: "most space elevator designs call for the use of multiple parallel cables, separated from each other by struts, with sufficient margin of safety that severing just one or two strands still allows the surviving strands to hold the elevator's entire

weight while repairs are performed.” So I’m not the only one thinking along these lines.

*John Purcell:* Unfortunately I have thousands of emails trapped in Yahoo and don’t know how to get them out!

On the promised “Dr. Strange” movie, the writers of the comic have said it was very difficult to figure out plots, given that Strange’s powers are virtually unlimited.

*Alexis Gilliland:* I thought Lee was Egyptian royalty! [:)]

*Sue Burke:* Speaking of Captain Alaric, you probably saw Viggo Mortensen playing him in the recent movie. He speaks very softly, to conceal his American accent I presume.

*Richard A. Dengrove:* You seem to be confusing Brad Torgersen’s moderate “sad puppies” with Theodore Beale’s more right-wing “rabid puppies”.

Also, you confuse my ideas about how religious believers might rationalize their beliefs with what I believe myself. I sometimes describe myself as “about as religious as a garden gnome”.

As I pointed out, the hypothesis that — 6000 years or 6000 seconds ago — God created the world but faked the evidence for a much older Earth is not falsifiable. However, religious people appear disinclined to accept a God that behaves that way.

Philip Gosse, *Omphalos* (1857), which argued that God had created the universe as if it had existed for a long time, complete with light from far-off stars, fossils, etc. Then he wondered why religious people were mad at him while scientists didn’t think him worth discussing. Fr. Ruiz-Sanchez discusses him in *A Case of Conscience*.

*AL du Pisani:* Your accounts of South Africa remind me of Bishop Sidonius writing optimistically about the Visigoths, as darkness falls too slowly to notice.

Or Victor Davis Hansen writing about California, today.

—JTM

*Brad W. Foster:* A list of the best superhero movies would include *Captain America: The First Avenger* (the one set in the 1940s); the Tobey Maguire/Kirsten Dunst *Spiderman II*; Tim Burton’s *Batman Returns* (with its stellar cast of psychologically complex villains); the latest *Wolverine* movie set in Japan (in which our hero walks obliviously into the middle of the dysfunctional family from Hell).

From: **Jim Stumm** June 10, 2015  
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo, NY  
14223-0029 USA

JTM: The purpose of copyright, as stated in the Constitution, is to “promote the progress of useful arts” (Art I, Sect 8) but now it seems to hinder more than help progress. That’s because patents and copyrights were supposed to be for “limited times”, which the First Congress set at I believe 17 years, indicating what the Founders meant by limited times.

But now, every time Mickey Mouse is about to go into public domain, Congress tacks on another 50 years or so to the term of copyrights, making them virtually unlimited, which is unconstitutional. I think copyrights should run for the life of a human author, but only perhaps 20 years for a corporation or literary estate.

George W Price I’m sure you’re right that these Progressive Joes and Janes support raising the minimum wage because they feel that low wages are an affront to human dignity. This is undoubtedly their own subjective view.

But we can take note of who is being affronted. Not the minimum wage worker. He applied for the job, was glad to get it, and certainly didn’t feel affronted when the boss agreed to hire him.

Joe and Jane probably know nothing about low cost living, so they compare their own high expenses to the small income of the minimum wage worker, and their indignation is fed by their inability to imagine how anyone could live on such a low income. But I have lived reasonably well on a low income (less than taxable income for 10 years, and later \$6 per, hour part time job for 7 years, no welfare). I’ve read about it, written about it, published articles about it in *Living Free*, and I sell 2 reports on low cost living. It can be done if you’re willing to make appropriate changes to your way of life.

It’s not really a clear choice between working for low wages OR going on welfare. “Welfare” is not one single program. Anyone who supports himself or herself and maybe dependents on a minimum wage already qualifies for food stamps and medicaid, and maybe also for assistance with winter heating bills, help paying rent, etc.

From: **Tom Feller** June 20, 2015  
[TomFeller@aol.com](mailto:TomFeller@aol.com)

Thanks for sending the zine.

Re costume contests as conventions: Anita and I went to the Wizard World Comicon at the new convention center in Nashville last year and stayed for the costume contest. There were over fifty entrants. Drawn entirely from comics, television, and movies, they were mostly excellent, although their presentations were poor. They just walk on the stage, pose for a few seconds, and walk off. One exception was a Clark Kent who disappeared into a phone booth and emerged as Superman.

I have downloaded the Hugo Award packet to my Nook and plan to read as many of the nominees as possible before the deadline and vote according to their merits.

From: **John Hertz** June 12, 2015  
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

American Pharoah did win the Belmont Stakes, 12th winner of the Triple Crown (Kentucky Derby, Preakness Stakes, Belmont), the first since Affirmed in 1978, and not merely by a length either. Heartfelt cheers for him, and for his rider. Victor Espinoza and trainer Bob Baffert (Zayat Stables) in their 6th try, time 2:26.65, second fastest since Secretariat’s 1973 record of 2:24.

Nor are the likes of us the only ones confused by the inadvertent misspelling, made permanent when it was so sent to Jockey Club registration in January 2014 Next day after the race the *Louisville Courier-Journal* had a photo of AP’s Belmont-winner blanket with his name as “American Pharaoh”

Art Widner, or as (speaking of spelling) he sometimes wrote, “R Twidner,” — he did this a-purpose, Rick Sneydy didn’t — was at his death the Oldest of All. I had the honor and pleasure of rooming with him at a few cons, even with him and Jack Speer. What are a few decades difference between friends?

Widner was exemplary, having been First Fandom, those happy few — and how few remain — active by at least the first Worldcon in 1939, he gafiated a few decades, then came back full strength, then being the Eo-Neo.

Leonard Nimoy was such a success as Spock we neglect that this was a success at acting — an art those who can’t achieve it we forget. Those who can we think are jes’ doin’ what comes natcherly. Electronicmen (you do know the suffix -man isn’t masculine?) may see my appreciation at <File770 com> under date 13 Mar 15 His achievement with a character of science fiction was stellar.

In my ignorance I think nothing could be more Spanish than a Ministry of Time Thanks to doña Susana for reporting this s-f television show. Good luck also to Castles in Spain. Stephen Maturin said he had a castle in Spain and he did.

Speaking of how a teacher had better not blame the students, I meet too many English teachers who moan students take no interest in reading. Whether or not I deeply sympathize, Plutarch said “A mind is not a vessel to fill, but a fire to ignite”, who else should light that fire, the Man in the Moon? As an s-f fan I may say “Yes indeed” but actually that rocket won’t fly. Actually I have to face that I am an English teacher, being a lawyer (you see what happens if professionals fail our duties’), a fanwriter, and an English-speaker. And I do keep going round with a torch. And how are you, Mr. Wilson?

**WAHF:**  
**Lloyd Daub**, with various items of interest.

## 22. NOVEMBER

Prisons were not as bad back then. They hadn't invented SuperMax, for example, and a con in stir could occasionally see sunlight and hear a bird. But it was bad enough, and I thought the man I was going to see might be expecting the worst of Corrective Labor when and if he got home again.

"John Anthony Walker, Christian Missionary Witnesses," I said to the guard. Let them pin that on the bastard, too. They searched me, but didn't look at the papers, and let me into the waiting room.

After a few minutes they brought him in. He looked as decrepit and untidy as he had in the pictures. Looks can be deceiving.

The guards let us talk alone. Security wasn't what it would be. I said, "John Walker, Christian Missionary Witnesses. Mr. Abel, I have a document I think you would be interested in seeing, something very important to your life."

"Really?" he said.

I slid the document over to him. I'll give him this, he was a professional, he didn't crack. Getting it from the Public Records Office was easy enough. There, amid all the florid Victorian decoration was the simple declaration: William August Fisher, son of Henry Matthew Fisher and Lyubov Vasilevna Fisher, maiden name Karnyevna, born 11th July 1903 in Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, United Kingdom. His real birth certificate.

"I wonder if your footprints have ever been taken?" I said, idly. That got a rise out of him.

"What has this to do with me?" he said.

"That depends. It could go to the CIA or . . ." Always leave them hanging.

He still didn't crack, but he did shake. "Or what?"

I passed him the second item. "You could get it, along with a painter's kit and some other interesting items, when you get home. It wouldn't go beyond this room."

His eyes were hooded. "Go on."

He picked up the picture. The information kit didn't have the "Hunter of Fascists ha ha" picture and that really didn't exist yet. It was easy enough to get a picture of him, though. "This man is in an interesting position."

"Is?" He turned it over after a moment, looking at the name written on the back.

"Let's just say that his defection is not entirely sincere. The Competent Organs might want to ask him a few questions and take their own good time doing it."

He looked closely at the back, memorizing the name. "This man is one of yours?"

"Of the Christian Missionary Witnesses? Oh good heavens no. Tell you what, the guards are going to start getting antsy. Drop a line to my boss, Robert Hanssen, at Post Office Box 1517 in Bangor, Maine, and any thanks you have for me will be appreciated." Might as well get the other s.o.b. in trouble, too.

I left with the birth certificate and the picture. I hoped Lee would have a whole lot of fun with the Competent Organs, or vice versa.

They handed him over in February, and in April, when Robert Hanssen got a thank you note from Moscow, I sent him a painter's kit with the birth certificate, the picture, and \$5000 behind the lining. I guess he got it. Foreign currency went a long way there then.

November, the President gave a moving speech at the Dallas Trade Mart, flew back to Washington, and I guess rendezvoused with his latest blonde bimbo. I hung around for a couple of months, wanting to make sure there weren't any tornadoes, coups in Moscow, earthquakes, or that sort of thing.

I hope they beat a confession out of that whiny little shit Lee.

— Not by Stephen King

Co-Editors: Lisa & Joseph Major  
Co-Publishers: Joseph & Lisa Major  
Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa

This is issue **Whole Number Eighty-one (81)**.

**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.

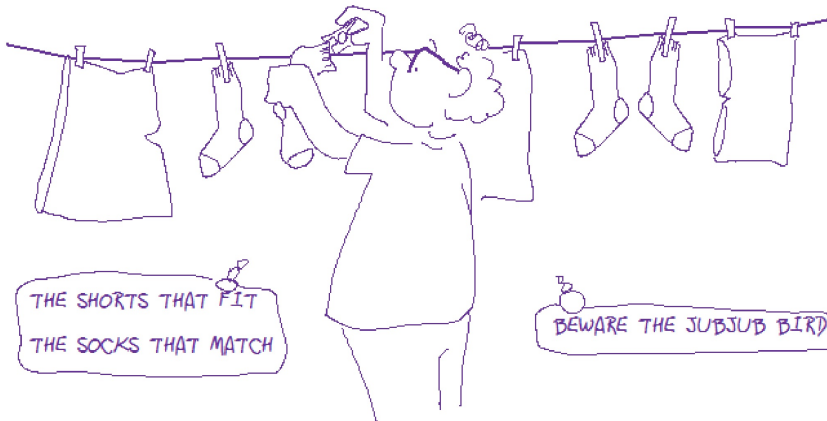
**Contributions:** This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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## ALEXIAD

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major  
1409 Christy Avenue  
Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA  
[jtmajor@iglou.com](mailto:jtmajor@iglou.com)  
<http://efanzines.com/Alexiad/index.htm>



<http://www.thurkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

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