

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

January 28 marked the anniversary of the day the shuttle *Challenger* exploded and took the life of the first teacher in space. Michael J. Smith, Dick Scobee, Ronald McNair, Ellison Onizuka, Christa McAuliffe, Gregory Jarvis, Judith Resnik. May their memory be eternal.

Ben Bova predicted the coming of ebooks in *Cyberbooks*, published the same year Sunday Silence won the Derby. I looked through the list of Bova's books available in digital form. *Cyberbooks* is not among them, at least on Amazon. It is available from Baen in ebook format. In the book, Bova has an inventor invent ebooks which the inventor calls cyberbooks. The inventor has trouble getting companies to invest in his electronic books.

— Lisa

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St. Photini **February 20, 2017**  
Great Lent begins **February 27, 2017**

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## Reviewer's Notes

Now that my income is reaching livable, we may be able to travel. Lisa wants to see the Kentucky Horse Park again; there is the eclipse in August, and family reunions. Also ConGlomeration, though it won't be the same without Larry Smith.

And if my book sales pick up (I am writing several more, but right now it's too cold to concentrate on writing for very long) even more travel may be possible, but now my health is making that problematic.

We are now so connected that it is impossible to reach anyone. Calls are allowed to roll over to voicemail, texts noted and deleted, emails likewise. Twitter is said to be the new communications method, but Twitter tweets are written on the wind, lost in a storm of other tweets. We have 5000 Facebook friends and don't know anyone in town.

I am grateful to longreads.com for publishing and Alec Nevala-Lee for writing an essay titled "Xenu's Paradox: The Fiction of L. Ron Hubbard and the Making of Scientology". Nevala-Lee is writing a book titled *Astounding: John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard, and the Golden Age of Science Fiction* (2018; Dey Street Books (HarperCollins)).

The article contains a number of interesting revelations. Apparently, Hubbard did not care much for writing sciencefiction, preferring to do mundane adventures. But when Campbell became editor of *Astounding*, he was ordered to boost the circulation by buying anything that certain established writers submitted — that is, Hubbard.

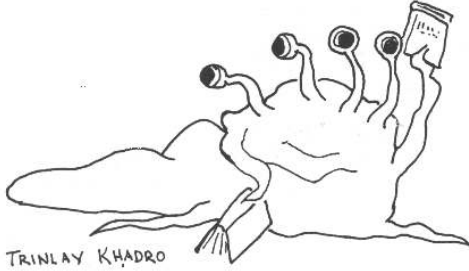
Nevala-Lee does not disdain Hubbard's earlier works. *Buckskin Brigades* (1937), a novel with his standard tough-guy hero, he praises for its taking the side of the Native Americans against the settlers. There are other surprising revelations her.

I think the book will be worth reading when it comes out. Even if it does lose the Hugo to *Chicks Dig Scavengers: A Celebration of Rey by the Women Who Love Her*, or *SJW Always Whine: Hate Mail to Castalia*.

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Buy my books. (All available on Amazon.com for quite reasonable prices, except the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, which can be bought from NESFA for a reasonable price.)

— Advt.

The Senior Person in Space is now **Valery Fyodorovich Bykovsky** [ *Valeriy* ], call sign “Hawk” [ *Hawk* ], born August 2, 1934. His first mission was Vostok 5, June 14-19, 1963, which set a record for longest duration in space. He also flew on Soyuz 22 and Soyuz 34, and is twice a Hero of the Soviet Union.

The succession is:

April 12, 1961 — March 27, 1968  
**Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin**  
Vostok 1 “Cedar” [ *Kedr* ]

March 27, 1968 — July 21, 1998  
**Alan Bartlett Shepard, Jr.**  
Mercury-Redstone 3 “Freedom 7”

July 21, 1998 — September 20, 2000  
**Gherman Stepanovich Titov**  
Vostok 2 “Eagle” [ *Oryol* ]

September 20, 2000 — December 8, 2016  
**John Herschel Glenn, Jr.**  
Mercury-Atlas 6 “Friendship 7”

December 8, 2016 — present  
**Valery Fedorovich Bykovsky**  
Vostok 5 “Hawk” [ *Yastreb* ]

**Cinematic Mystery Solved!** Under new consumer regulations, snow globes are now required to have a notice warning the purchaser that the globes may cause cancer.

Now we know how Charles Foster Kane died. Rosebud.

We regret to report the death of **Eugene Andrew “Gene” Cernan** on January 16, 2017. Born March 14, 1934 in Chicago, Cernan entered the U.S. Navy through the ROTC program, becoming a naval aviator and being selected in the third group of astronauts.

He flew on the Gemini 9, Apollo 10, and Apollo 17 space missions. On that last mission, he was the last person to enter the Lunar Module, thus earning the sad distinction of being the last person on the Moon.

He was a pro-space activist, joining Neil Armstrong in 2010 to testify before Congress in opposition to the government’s decision to cancel the Constellation program.

The first man on the Moon, and the last, are both gone. Now there are only six moon walkers left. There will come a time when there are none.

The British Antarctic Survey has decided to evacuate their Halley station, due to the threat of cracks in the Bruton Ice Shelf. The current station, the sixth built at that site, was designed to be modular and movable, as the previous five stations had all been on sections of the shelf which had broken off and drifted away. (It was formerly Halley Bay Station, but Halley Bay broke off and drifted away, so they renamed it.) The station will be evacuated in March and left untenanted during the winter.

Now you know why Shackleton didn’t stay at Balloon Bight in 1908 — it was gone, and he didn’t trust the Bay of Whales which had replaced it. Amundsen was not planning for a long-term stay, so he took the risk and won. So Byrd put Little America there, which is why it is gone.

*Analog* and *Asimov’s* have gone to bimonthly publication. Given their declining sales, this may be a harbinger of the end of an era. The first issue of *Astounding*, thirty years before it became *Analog*, had on the cover a guy punching out a giant beetle while a girl stood behind him looking slightly startled (“The Beetle Horde”, by “Victor Rousseau” [Victor Rousseau Emanuel, né Avigdor Rousseau Emanuel; he had been a Harrovian and had been sent down from Oxford]). How times change.

Shortly before Christmas news came that Carrie Fisher had suffered a heart attack on a plane. She lingered for four days before dying on December 27. Her mother Debbie Reynolds followed her on December 28. I sat back and remembered a young Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia. I thought of Debbie Reynolds as she had been in the Way the West was Won. I never had the honor of meeting either Fisher or Reynolds but their passing leaves a hole in my life. Also recently gone is Richard Hatch, who played Apollo on the original Battlestar Galactica.

— Lisa

## MONARCHIST NEWS

**Prince William, Duke of Cambridge** has extended the condolences of the House of Windsor to the House of Organa on the death of their princess.

We regret to report the death of the Right Honourable **Antony Charles Robert**

**Armstrong-Jones, Earl of Snowdon** on January 13, 2017. Lord Snowdon was born on March 7, 1930 to Anne Messell Armstrong-Jones and Ronald Armstrong-Jones. He was known as a photographer when he met the Princess Margaret; they married on May 6, 1960 and he was created Earl of Snowdon on October 6, 1960.

The couple had two children, **David** and **Sarah**. Lord Snowdon and the Princess divorced in 1978 and he married Lucy Mary Davies Lindsay-Hogg; they had one child, Frances.

Lord Snowdon was given a life peerage (as Baron Armstrong-Jones) to allow him to remain in the House of Lords after the exclusion of hereditary peers. Among his photographic subjects was J. R. R. Tolkien.

He was succeeded by his only legitimate son, David Albert Charles Armstrong-Jones, who previously had been styled Viscount Linley, his father’s subsidiary title. David Snowdon is eighteenth in the British line of succession.

UNDER THE MOON MEN  
Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
*Under the Red Flag* (1919) and  
*The Moon Men* (1925)  
by Edgar Rice Burroughs

In 1919 Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote a work predicting the horrors of communist rule in a conquered America. Though the Red Decade was eleven years in the future, and surely in the horrors of the Palmer era such a red-baiting work should easily have found a market, *Under the Red Flag* did not sell, though he submitted it to about every market he could think of. Perhaps the thought of a Soviet America was just too depressing to be considered.

Three years later, Burroughs produced yet another of his tales of interplanetary derring-do, *The Moon Maid* (1923), a story of reverse ancestral memory. The nameless narrator meets a senior officer of the air service, Air Admiral Julian, who feels moved by the triumph of the final victory to reveal that it was not so final, and to recount an exploit of one of his descendants. The story of the first trip to the Moon, which wasn’t the intended destination, is he tied in (distantly) to Burroughs’s already established Barsroom series. Somewhat morbidly, the hero Julian 5th and his girl Nah-ee-lah, the heiress of the lunar Empire of Laythe (some people have all the luck) have to flee a revolution of the Kalkars, the oppressed lunar masses (well, they *said* they were) before they return and go (respectively) to Earth.

A couple of side notes worth mentioning: At one point, Julian tries to explain the theory of Universal Gravitation to Nah-ee-lah, who laughs off the whole thing as utterly absurd. This sounds like just another piece of alien ignorance until you consider that Nah-ee-lah is acting rationally in evaluating this on the basis

of her own experience. As far as she knows, the universe is one vast series of caverns in rock and Julian's comments about "orbits" and "rotation" are just so much foolishness. It's a difficult thing to go beyond the limits of knowledge. Then there's Burroughs's comment on the Topic A of 1923:

History narrates that under the regime of prohibition drunkenness was common and that it grew to such proportions to become a national menace, but with the repeal of the Prohibition Act, nearly a hundred years ago, the habit of drinking to excess abated, so that it became a matter of disgrace for any man to show his liquor, and in the service it was considered as reprehensible as cowardice in action.

— *The Moon Maid*

This seems to be a rather perceptive comment on Prohibition.

In 1925 Burroughs published *The Moon Men*, the sequel to *The Moon Maid*, describing the horrors of lunar rule in a conquered America. As Burroughs had to retype his own manuscripts, not having available word processors with automatic global change features, it must have taken a while to turn *Under the Red Flag* into *The Moon Men*. Sometimes the changes are easy to spot: "The word teivos is applied impartially to a district and to the administrative body that misadministers its affairs." [*The Moon Men*] Try spelling the word "Soviet" backwards and see what you get. By such measures the story of Julian James, oppressed opponent of a Soviet America, became that of Julian 9th, slave of the invaders from the Moon.

In *The Moon Maid* it was established that the Kalkars were nasty baggage (in fact, just about every intelligent being on the Moon seems to be hostile one way or another). In the introduction to *The Moon Men*, Burroughs describes how with the aid of a vindictive Earthman, the mad genius inventor Orthis (the rather petulant human antagonist of *The Moon Maid*, who defected to the Kalkars), and in the lassitude of an apparently permanent end to wars on Earth (just like we were thinking that such was the way things would be on August 1, 1990, and again on September 10, 2001), not to mention "the rise of a religious cult which preached against all forms of scientific progress and which by political pressure was able to mold and influence several successive weak administrations" (sounds like a premonition of Asimov's "Trends" (*Astounding*, July 1939)) the Kalkars proceeded to conquer Earth and impose Kalkar rule on it.

The description of the people's democratic republican rule of Chicago under the Kalkars also seems to have come out of a look at the future of progressive nations. The economy is dead; barter has replaced normal economics

while the government parasitically absorbs goods and services through extreme taxation and forced purchases.

Politically, Burroughs seems to have anticipated the Great Terror as it affected the ordinary people: the sudden arrests, the special tribunals, the GULag, and the supreme measure of social self-defense (execution, that is). About the only thing it seems he didn't fully anticipate is the sentencing. Julian 8th, the narrator's father, is sentenced to a mere ten years in a strict-regime camp for speculation and economic crimes. Under Great Stalin that would have earned you more than just a tenner. (Actually, "he had been arrested for trading by night," and was sentenced to the mines.)

In *Tyrants and Typewriters* (1989) Robert Conquest quotes a comment by a Soviet dissident about Orwell's 1984 to the effect that the most persuasive image from that book is its depiction of the petty poverty of socialist life: you can never get razor blades and the lifts don't work.

Well, Ingsoc had some thirty-odd years to devastate the economy; the Kalkars have been on the job for seventy and they have carried out some really inspired wrecking and sabotage on the world economy: "I recall one poor devil from Milwaukee who . . . told us that fully ten thousand people had died of starvation the preceding month in his teivos." Or was he a poor devil from Ukraine in 1932-3? (See *The Harvest of Sorrow* (1986) by Robert Conquest.)

The degradation of life under the Kalkars is demonstrated in a number of ways. They can't even make their own spaceships work any longer, much less keep up atmospheric flight. Even surface motor transport has been reduced to a continually defective railroad, and Chicago, the setting of the story, is the western terminus of such railways as exist. Communication is at the speed of a courier. One wonders how the Kalkars keep control of the continent.

Burroughs never quite showed life for the Kalkar rulers themselves. One thing that Orwell did show was how the Inner Party members had a better standard of living than the Outer Party members, never mind the Proles, and this turned out to be correct, as shown in Michael Voslensky's *Nomenklatura* (1984). Do the Kalkars live better than their American slaves? Somewhat, one can guess, but not overly so.

One comment that I shamelessly borrow from Richard Lupoff in his excellent general commentary *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure* (1965; 1968; 2005): "The 'Americans,' as the Earth people are called, are forced to bow to any whim of their Kalkar masters. The form of address required in speaking to Kalkars [actually to anyone] is 'Brother,' Burroughs's bitter commentary on the communist 'comrade.'" [p. 126] This calls to mind the comment a German from the DDR made on the hypocrisy and revulsion he felt at having to address everyone as *Genosse* ["Comrade"] when more than forty years of Communist rule had leached away any connotation of solidarity or companionship from

the word. As Julian 9th puts it, "I told them I would call no man Brother unless he was."

Eventually Julian manages to become a Spartacus and you know how that came out. As his wife flees the last stand, she lets him know she is not alone, and so Burroughs set the stage for *The Red Hawk* (1925).

In his disgust and revulsion against the evil and hypocrisy of the Bolshevik tyranny, Burroughs had set forth in *Under the Red Flag* a devastating portrayal of its horrors. But the forces of publishing conspired to prevent it appearing as it was, and so Burroughs had to cloak it in a guise of fantastic adventure as *The Moon Men*. Years later, Martyn Burke, the author of *The Commissar's Report* (1984(!)), had to cloak in a guise of humor his bitter revelations about the Chekists from his TV special that PBS found to be anti-progressive, not politically correct, and unworthy of being shown. History repeats itself.

Burroughs has often been stigmatized for presenting only pretty typical religions of Campbell-*Astounding* vintage; i.e. all-evil, all-phony pushovers as were portrayed in "If This Goes On—" and "Gather, Darkness!". There is clear evidence in *The Moon Men* to indicate otherwise; in Chapter Six of the book Burroughs portrays a moving religious service, when Juana St. John, the woman who Julian rescues, wants to get married she persuades him to do it in the improvised chapel, and in general the attitude displayed towards belief in the entire book is a positive one. Burroughs, it would seem, thought that religions were corruptible; the body of believers being after all a part of the corruptible world. The things beyond the world, being of a different order, were beyond such change for the ill.

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#### ON THE TOWN LIKE ALICE

Commentary by Joseph T Major  
on *Requiem for a Wren*

[*The Breaking Wave*] (1955)  
by "Nevil Shute" [Nevil Shute Norway]

Nevil Shute is best known for his least characteristic book. *On the Beach* (1957) is not particularly plausible in its nuclear destruction, but more to the point, it is so out of keeping with Norway's portrayal of people coming to terms with their problems and accomplishing something.

Or perhaps not. As the prospects of Global Thermonuclear Destruction have ebbed, other interests have come to the fore, and he is now as likely to be known as the author of *A Town Like Alice* (1950) [American title: *The Legacy*] which was adapted into a television miniseries in 1981; the story of two prisoners of the Japanese in Malaya who survive outright atrocities and simple neglect, then end up reviving the fortunes of a declining town. (In some ways the later section parallels his earlier book, *Ruined City* (1938) [American title: *Kindling*].)

Leaving aside the question of *On the Beach* which is a future-war book in the style of *The*

*Battle of Dorking*, Norway also was a fantasy author. At least that's how I could classify *An Old Captivity* (1940), which is mostly an "ancestral memory". Another book that combines both is *In the Wet* (1953) which might not be publishable nowadays due to the nickname the protagonist has.

After the Second World War, Norway moved to Australia, and perhaps not coincidentally most of his novels from that period were set there. (For example, *Ruined City* is set in Britain while the parallel scenes in *A Town Like Alice* are set in Australia.) Which brings us to this book, which is set on a sheep station in Australia.

Alan Duncan, the narrator, is an Australian who had served in the Royal Air Force, losing his feet after being shot down. He turned to the law, becoming a barrister, but now he is going home. He receives an unusual greeting; their housemaid Jessie Proctor has committed suicide. Finding out why will end up setting him on a new course in life.

Alan is the heir to the family sheep station, a fairly profitable operation. (From reading his concerns about death duties and income tax, one gets an idea of the problems of tax reform; those high taxes that were praised as having ensured prosperity hit very hard people who couldn't get tax shelters.) The family house is rather eccentric, but large enough for a decent family. But there were only two sons, and a daughter who went to Blighty and married; and Alan's brother Bill died doing a beach reconnaissance.

Bill had, it seemed, a girlfriend; a Royal Navy sailor (Women's Royal Navy Service, WRNS, called "Wrens") who was an ordnance mechanic, and a deadly shot with guns. Janet Prentice was the daughter of an Oxford don, with hopes to go up to Lady Margaret Hall (an Oxford's women's college at the time), but the war intervened.

The housemaid had apparently no reason for killing herself; and she had obliterated her identity. Alan gets curious about this, and begins a search of the house, not believing that Jessie would destroy all her papers. And he finds them; hidden in a remote part of the house. (A great effort for someone with two prosthetic feet.)

Perhaps not surprisingly, "Jessie Proctor" turns out to be Janet Prentice. She kept a diary. Which becomes the principal narrative. Janet had determined to turn to and make do for a living, but the diary describes a series of terrible experiences that lead her to question her reason for living. She shot down a German reconnaissance airplane; it turned out to be carrying a group of *Volksdeutsche* would-be defectors, Czechs and Poles drafted into the *Wehrmacht* and trying to flee to Britain.

This could be an event of war. But the Normandy invasion takes two people close to her. Bill Duncan is killed during a mission to disarm German mines near a small port. Her father is killed when the ship he is on doing

observer duties is hit by mortar fire.

And then, a small thing tips the balance of her mind; Bill Duncan's dog, which she had adopted after his death, is injured during a landing rehearsal and has to be put down. She is put on psychiatric leave, and eventually demobilized.

After the war, she drifted, with no clear aim. She went to the States, lived with an elderly aunt, and after the aunt died decided to go to the Duncan home in Australia. Under a pseudonym. (Using the same initials for an assumed name is fairly common, more so then when monogrammed personal possessions were also more common.)

The diary describes how she became more understanding and enamored of the Duncans, the elderly and increasingly frail parents of Bill and Alan. Their life was very appealing. Then the news came that Alan was returning. She couldn't bear to meet him.

Alan considers these events, thinks about the story of her sad life and its tragic ending, and makes a decision of his own. During the war he had met a Wren who had known Janet; their romantic relationship postwar had been erratic, she not quite wanting to commit. He's going back to Blighty, to tell her the story of Janet's life and sad end, and propose.

Janet is an interesting psychological case. The death of the dog seems to have been the last blow to her mental stability, and her recovery was less secure than it seemed, apparently. Or perhaps not, since one recurring complaint she admits to in her diary is being constantly rejected for reenlistment in the WRNS. Did they have her flagged as a psych case?

The question then arises of why did she kill herself rather than be "outed" by her late boyfriend's brother? Did she think Bill Duncan had not written home about this wonderful girl he was going to marry? And Alan had met her exactly once.

Perhaps it was shame. Her life had gone so wrong that she could not recover it, and she feared a reminder of happier days. Ending her life may have been some sort of solution.

#### THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### WORLD WAR TAKE II

by John D. Thomas

(2016; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

THE UNIVERSE IS ALL THERE IS, BOYS  
THE UNIVERSE IS ALL THERE IS, BOYS  
THE UNIVERSE IS ALL THERE IS, BOYS  
BUT COSMOLOGY MARCHES ON!  
GLORY, GLORY, HALLELUJAH!



Back in the early seventies I read a story about a time-travel scenario. In 1943, an American pack-mule borne unit, exercising in the Tennessee mountains, was blasted back to 1864 by an early secret atom bomb test. They marched to Nashville, linked up with the Army of the Cumberland, and blew away Hood's attack at Franklin with their M-1 fire.

The surviving commanding officer ordered that the men destroy every bit of evidence they were from the future, because he didn't want to change history. And they did.

If this reminds you of *The Final Countdown* (1980), join the club. [Though someone on the alternatehistory.com board did start, but not finish, a story in which the *Nimitz* destroyed the *Kido Butai* and stayed in 1941.] The point is that history has been changed because you're there; why not make your losses worthwhile?

In a grim, Soviet-dominated world, a special project of DARPA works on a desperate measure. They develop time-travel! And, trying to identify the tipping point, they settle on the Battle of Kursk. Therefore, a task force built around a battalion of M-1 tanks, with artillery, infantry, and helicopter gunships, will be sent back to *Reichscommissariat Ostland* with orders to help *Unternehmen Zitadelle* do better.

Problems begin to accrete. Some soldiers come down with a mysterious affliction. Sabotage, both by local Partisans and by covert Soviet sympathizers in the ranks (it's mentioned that a lot of people in the U.S. have been attacking the army, the police, and other authorities to show themselves on the Soviet side), strikes at their fighting potential. And then, when they destroy their equipment after victory, a ghastly disaster occurs . . .

One point that has often been noted in discussions of the difference between science fiction and mundane works is that of *normalizing*. At the end of the mundane work, the changes are either undone or completely concealed; in the science fiction work, the changes make a difference to the world. For example, take the discovery of prehumans. In Petru Popescu's *Almost Adam* (1996) and John Darnton's *Neanderthal* (1996) the discovery is suppressed. These are mainstream, mundane novels; the discovery makes no effect on the world. By comparison, look at Michael Bishop's *Ancient of Days* (1985) and Roger Macbride Allen's *Orphan of Creation* (1988), where the discovery of the prehumans makes a difference. These works are science fiction. (The climbers who found George Mallory's body on Everest resolved to keep it secret. By the time they got back to their base camp, they were greeted with the congratulations for their discovery. It looks like the science fiction novels are more realistic.)

So it was with the time-travel stories described here; the change is suppressed. In this book, the change makes a difference; our current time-line comes into existence. In the

other stories, the suppression was difficult if not impossible.

But the author of a time-travel story which seemed to make no difference had a description of the problem involved:

That a tale shall accomplish something and arrive somewhere.

— Mark Twain, “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses”

(By the way, if anyone remembers the title of the WWII-Civil War story, I’d like to know.)

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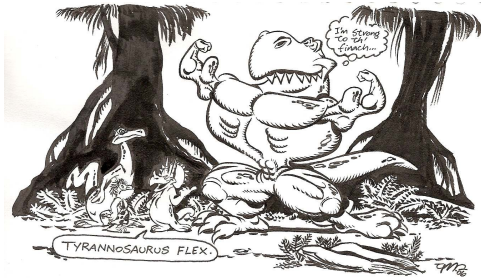
### AND THE STARS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE FALL OF NIGHT**  
by Christopher Nuttall  
(2014; CreateSpace; \$13.24;  
Amazon Digital Services; \$3.00)

One of the elements that led to the invasion in *Red Dawn* (1984) was the collapse of NATO. Milius was presenting a worst-case scenario. George Chesney was describing a like case in *The Battle of Dorking* (1871). So is Nuttall, but his ending is not so happy.

A brilliantly planned and perfectly executed Russian attack on the European countries, where nothing malfunctions and they were able to make plans and preparations without it ever being found out, decapitates the countries and devastates their militaries. For example, No. 10 Downing Street is utterly destroyed, and indeed the senior surviving officer and administrator in Britain is a major-general in a minor command.

He tries to organize some sort of resistance, while the Russians overwhelm the continent, with the aid of Spetsnaz teams, suborned Islamic terrorists, and Russian sympathizers, using next-generation technology tanks, missiles, and planes. The navies of Europe are sent to the bottom of the ocean by superior Russian ships.



Finally, with Britain standing alone, getting only minimal help from the US (the precipitating event that destroyed the alliance was the rape of a British woman by an American soldier), the Russians mobilize a vast invasion fleet, land near Dover, and drive on the capital. In the final desperate battle at Dorking (yes, there), the remnants of the British Army are annihilated, the commander

dies fighting, and the island is overwhelmed.

Somehow this seems like being on the other side in a Tom Clancy novel. All the structural problems of the late Soviet and post-Soviet armies seem to have vanished; low morale, low standards of training, poor organization, ethnic hatred, crude equipment . . . all gone.

Though to be fair, the terrorists who come forward, expecting to be richly rewarded for their efforts on the behalf of the Russians, are quickly executed. Remember what happened to the covert Communists in Kornbluth’s *Not This August* (1955)? Yes, that. [Oh all right, they were considered untrustworthy because they had been contaminated by bourgeois experience, and the occupiers awarded them the supreme measure of punishment.]

On the other hand, a group of German antiwar activists attempt to love-bomb the Russians. That doesn’t work.

Nuttall seems to be calling for a revival of local military effort. It’s swimming against the tide.

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### EARTH ABIDES

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**STORM FRONT**  
by Robert Conroy  
(2015; Baen Books; \$25;  
Amazon Digital Services; \$6.99)

George Stewart, author of *Earth Abides* (1949), had earlier done a story about less of a disaster. In *Storm* (1941), he told the story of a rainstorm that hit California. The first meteorologist to note the gathering storm had a whimsical note and called the storm “Maria”. Yes, this was the origin of “They Call the Wind Maria”, and in turn the origin of the naming of hurricanes and typhoons, and now of winter storms. Of which one has deluged California with rain, getting us back to where we started.

In this story, though, the storm is a blizzard. A super-blizzard, where two blizzard fronts meet in the middle of Michigan and stick around together for a while. The description of the devastation caused by the blizzard is quite nerve-racking. The public services are hard-pressed by the extra effort and must rise to the occasion. Like in *Storm*, various people face crises and resolve them, or have them resolved for them.

There are a variety of endings, some happy, some less so. It’s more cheerful than, say, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

I suppose it’s an alternative history; Sheridan, Michigan, where the novel is set, is a real place, but the Sheridan in the book seems to be a bit larger. Anyway, this was a change for Conroy, and he did get out of his ruts in more explicit AH.

(Coming from Conroy in June: *The Day after Gettysburg*, completed by J. R. Dunn.)

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THE CRYING OF LOT 97, AGAIN  
Review by Joseph T Major of  
**ROBERT HEINLEIN’S CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY**

by Robert Lazaro and Eric Gignac  
Art by Eric Gignac and Steve Erwin  
(2015; Idea & Design Works; \$5.97)

This is a graphic novel adaptation of the Heinlein novel. Maybe now kids will read it.

The adaptors have slightly streamlined the story, paring down the two central sections, but they have retained the basic thrust of the plot and realized it in great visions. The story of Thorby the slave, who was far far more than he had ever imagined, and caught up in intrigues and schemes greater than himself, should appeal to the younger sort who have been going through the endless stream of “alienated teens fighting dystopia” which seems to be the going thing in YA SF.

The more experienced reader (says the author of *Heinlein’s Children* (2006), the authoritative work on the topic and if you don’t already have a copy, why?) will appreciate the visualization of the many and varied settings of the book (and Leda has some really hot outfits). If you like in-jokes, the first captain Thorby is told to deliver a message to (in spy talk, a “brush pass”) looks exactly like Heinlein.

By all means, get it. If you don’t have a Kindle already, download the Kindle app from Amazon.

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### ONE GIANT STUMBLE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**ONE FALSE STEP**  
by Richard Tongue  
(2011, 2014;  
Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

The unofficial motto of the space program (whether here or there) might well have been “No bucks, no Buck Rogers!” For every actual mission there were it seemed a half-dozen proposed ones, more exciting, pushing back the envelope even further — and far more expensive, so expensive as to make justifying them a mission in futility. This book is a story of some of them.

While Robert Heinlein was imagining a burst of exploration and colonization across the planets of the Solar System, those given custody of the real technology had wide, but not as wide proposals themselves. This was complicated by the question of which service would develop the vehicles in question or even whether it would be a military one. This led to more heat than light, until someone else got into the lead.

Once the spacemen were actually flying, the question of *how* we choose to go to the Moon arose. And (as Larry Torgerson showed in his *Gemini 17* (2012; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 14 #3)) it was proposed to send two men around the moon in a proven, if not quite as capable, vehicle. Or even *to* the Moon; the Gemini program manager proposed a Direct Ascent vehicle that would have meant Gemini 16 landing on the Moon in 1966.

Not that the Chief Designer, Builder of the

Integral was asleep at the switch (or beside the lovely, if rebellious, I-330). S. P. Korolev had his own missions, even if they involved using a rocket that had not been tested on the ground and had 30 ( ) engines in the first stage, the mighty N-1. Though the more workable one turned out to be the UR-700, better known as the Proton, designed by his rival Vladimir Chelomei ( ). One of these was intended to begin by sending a man around the moon in the Soyuz LK, or Zond, capsule.

There was more than enough hardware left lying around once a disappointed Harrison Schmidt and Gene Cernan said farewell to the Moon. There might have been as many as nine more Apollo moon missions. But again there were other demands, other shortages, and saddest of all, a lack of interest. Tongue even speculates about who these other Apollo crews could have been (and some real-life version of Mark Whittington's Dr. Wendy Pendleton could have gone).

Or, perhaps, they could have done something really mind blowing. There were proposals for a manned Apollo flyby of Venus. Yes. Now that would have been spectacular.

Could these have been done? Apparently. Should these have been done? We can dream. And if we stop dreaming, we die.

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#### STOLEN VALOUR

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**COLD WAR COUNTERFEIT SPIES:  
Tales of Espionage: Genuine or Bogus?**  
by "Nigel West" [Rupert Allason]  
(2016; Frontline Books; \$39.95;  
Amazon Digital Services; \$23.97)

Ian Fleming had been there and done that. As a result, his spy novels always had some basis in reality, even if tenuous and subject to errors or literary contrivances, like, for example, having SMERSH ( , or in full [SMERT' Shpionam] "Death to Spies") continue to exist well beyond its dissolution in 1946, when it was absorbed into the Ministry of State Security.

Most of his successors were less so, and then they wandered off on various digressions such as "sexy superspy" or Church Committee betrayers of freedom. But then, there were stories which were portrayed as having actually taken place.

There were plenty of such stories from Fleming's war, too. Allason had set out to debunk them in *Counterfeit Spies* (1998); now he is continuing the task with a discussion of their more contemporary successors.

The stories told have certain patterns of similarity. The narrator is an ordinary person who finds himself swept up into a desperate mission, sent into enemy territory without proper training or preparation, among a group of men who have never worked together or even met before. The mission tends to fail, with all the other participants being killed or

nearly so, and the narrator, sworn to secrecy, is returned to an ordinary assignment, all details of the mission officially obliterated.

If Alfred Hitchcock did war movies, this is the sort of thing he would do. Real missions are conducted with professional teams who have trained together, rehearsed, reconnoitered, and coordinated. Or at least they try; from single-man missions such as Lionel Crabb's disastrous attempt to inspect a Soviet ship up to Operation EAGLE CLAW, there have been disasters, in part because such preparations have not been made. (Crabb had been in poor health and had been drinking, while the preparation for EAGLE CLAW seems to have been done on the basis that each service should be represented, so Army helicopter pilots with hundreds if not thousands of hours in combat flying time were rejected for Marine helicopter pilots with anti submarine warfare experience.)

Some of the writers are just fantasists. The example of the British thriller writer who claimed some real-life experience, along with an Army rank he did not earn, for example.

Even those who have actually done something can tell stories. Sir Ran Fiennes, one would think, has had a real life of considerable note. Yet he wrote a thriller, *The Feather Men* (1991), about himself being saved from an Arab assassination plot by a secret group of British special forces veterans. However, twenty years later Fiennes admitted it was all made up. It couldn't have been because he found his life boring.

Or Greville Wynne; not having done enough in keeping Oleg Penkovsky entertained, after he returned from his time in the Soviet prison he felt abandoned. Thus he wrote about a defection he had been involved in, providing a distraction by falling off a ship's deck, in his *The Man from Odessa* (1981). He seems to have been having trouble getting along with people, too burdened with his past.

The problem with such stories is that people accept them as true and fundamental to their world-view. As a result, conspiracy theorizing flourishes, impeding real perception of the problems of rule and governing.

(One of the people covered here, "Gayle Rivers" of *The Five Fingers* (1978) seems to have pulled off a fast one. He claimed to have served in a special reserve unit of the Special Air Service. Specifically, F Troop of the SAS. The SAS did not have an "F Troop". The older recipients here will remember *F Troop*, the story of a unit of lovable misfits in the Indian Wars: "The end of the Civil War was near when quite accidentally, a hero, you please, abruptly sneezed, retreat and reverse into victory . . .")

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#### CAT VERSUS HUMAN

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE LION IN THE LIVING ROOM:  
How House Cats Tamed Us and Took Over  
the World**

by Abigail Tucker  
(2016; Simon & Schuster;  
ISBN 978-1476738239; \$26.00;

Simon & Schuster Digital Sales; \$13.99)

Humanity faced an implacable enemy, one that rended their bodies with crushing jaws and tearing claws. Under such destructive pressure, the weak apes developed tools and weapons, and by sheer numbers, and ferocity of attack, they devastated the foe, exterminating many and driving most of the rest into besieged retreats,

Yet one branch of this dire insidious foe chose a different strategy. They infiltrated themselves into the humans' communities. They deceived humans as to the labor they could provide. By sneaky stunts they made themselves physically attractive to their enemies. They even found a means of biological warfare that made them irresistible.

Having read this, I told Slim his fiendish plot had been found out. He went "MROW!"

This senior writer for *Smithsonian* magazine has produced a book that gives the other side to cat ownership (or being slave to them). She describes the evasions and perversions of feline behavior, recounts their role in driving extinctions, and otherwise paints a grim and dismal picture of *Felis catus*, in terms reminiscent of Yasmine Suravec's "Cat vs. Human" cartoons.

She discusses how "The Internet Is Made of Cats"; how cat memes such as I Can Haz Cheezburger? and Grumpy Cat become worldwide. ("Grumpy Cat", known for her perpetually disapproving look, is a very sweet and mild-mannered cat named Tardar Sauce.)

The creation of the exotic forms of cats has been cruel, apparently. Persian cats aren't very Persian and need constant grooming. Even more exotic breeds such as the Sphynx, the Rex, and the Scottish Fold are physically fragile, overbred, and even genetically weak.

The cat got its way because of its infantile look; people think of kitty as their baby, and spend no end of time and money on ensuring its ease. Yet they are expensive; Tucker quotes a source which claims that cats in New Zealand eat more fish than the humans do.

Even control measures don't seem to work. The trap, immunize, and neuter policy of alley cat rescue groups comes in for criticism, for example, as not solving the basic problem.

Some of her points don't quite seem to align, as when she scorns cats for not even being mousers, much less tackling rats, and then describes how feral cats have been responsible for the extinction of — species of rats!

Not that this will stop anyone, and indeed some of her arguments are overblown. Perhaps Tucker should be sent to H. P. Lovecraft's Ulthar, where there was a law that no one should kill a cat. Or have an appointment with Ms. S. Kyle of Gotham.

(When I saw this in the library there was a book next to it which was an absolute utter fantasy: *The Trainable Cat: A Practical Guide to Making Life Happier for You and Your Cat*

by John Bradshaw and Sarah Ellis (2016).)

Cat vs. Human  
<http://www.catversushuman.com/>

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### INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE QUEST FOR THE TOMB OF  
 ALEXANDER THE GREAT**

by Andrew Chugg  
 (2012; AMC Publications;  
 ISBN 978-0955679063; \$22.95;  
 Amazon Digital Services; \$7.99)

**“I wished to see a king, not corpses.”**

Did the Venetians do an oopsie, thirteen hundred years ago? British historian Andrew Chugg certainly likes sticking his head into the fan.

This book begins with a short life of Alexander, describing his personality, conquests, and other details. (Chugg is also author of *Alexander's Lovers* (2007) which discusses his affairs with women and men.)

The potential controversy begins with his description of Alexander's death. He ascribes it to malaria, and wonders why other writers seem too willing to dismiss that as the cause. Among other things, he says, it seems to explain the seemingly miraculous preservation of the body — he lived longer than it looked.

From there he discusses the procession to Vergina. Or Egypt. The body was placed in a tomb in Memphis. That's Manf, in al-Misr (Egypt), not the city in Tennessee.

A generation later, the great tomb in Alexandria-by-Egypt was built and the body transferred there. Chugg gives his opinions on the form of the tomb. (He may be depending too much on not particularly representational artistic doodles in various works.)

He recounts the history of the tomb and some of the less favored emperors who tried to profit by a comparison to Alexander. The last one to visit the tomb seems to have been Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus Pius Augustus — better known as Caracalla (AUC CMXLI — CMLXX, r. CMLI — CMLXX [AD 188 CE — AD 217 CE, r. AD 198 CE — AD 217 CE]). He also conducted a massacre in Alexandria, but Caracalla had a habit of spreading devastation across the Empire.

Then the speculation begins. In 828 two Venetians pulled off a daring mission. They went to Alexandria and rescued the relics of St. Mark. And since then, they have been the primary relics of St. Mark's Basilica, which was first the Doge's chapel and now is the great cathedral of the Queen of the Seas.

Are they sure it was the body they were looking for? This is where Chugg gets speculative. He describes the history of the relic (the one time it was moved, the body had deteriorated badly; as you might have noticed, Venice is dampish) and the associated items,

including a carving that looks suspiciously like a Macedonian set of arms (shield with the star insignia, kopis (sword), and what may be a xyston (lance)).

How to find out? An examination of the remains might uncover whether they bear Alexander's documented wounds. DNA testing could determine the ancestry of the body. And the face could be reconstructed, since the skull was reported to be whole, and compared to the known images of Alexander.

(Facial reconstructions have advanced since the science of Clyde Snow and the art of Frank Bender. Two computerized facial reconstructions were performed of the skull of Tutankhamun; one of the teams of reconstructors were not told who they were doing. The two reconstructions were remarkably similar.)

The Catholic church has stated that the matter is settled and the relics are St. Mark. Chugg discussed the matter with fellow Alexander historian Robin Lane Fox, author of *Alexander the Great* (1973) (and perhaps less fortunately historical consultant to Oliver Stone for his movie *Alexander* (2004)) on the BBC in 2004.

There is considerable speculation and guesswork to this theory. The perceived points in support of the theory could be doing so, and could be just distorted interpretations. Yet, there are ways to determine further proof.

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### THE EMPIRE STEPS UP Commentary by Joseph T Major on *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*

There's little enough to say about the story; it was realistic enough and took a rather severe set of steps to ensure continuity. However I did have a few points.

Why did Galen Erso design the Death Star in the first place? He would have to have started doing so under the Republic. I didn't think they were going around blowing up planets.

Or maybe not. There seems to be an undue number of smugglers, bandits, thieves, and such out there and such groups don't spring up out of nothing.

I do like the trend of having things be obviously used. Having everything be fresh and clean and new detracts from the plausibility of a story. Compare the grungy setting of *Rome* (2005-2007) with the neat clean one of, say, *Cleopatra* (1963).

Ben Bova can't quite get ready to polish up his laurels for the computerized recreations he showed in *The Starcrossed* (1975). The portrayed return of Peter Cushing to play Moff Tarkin and the rejuvenation of Carrie Fisher to play Princess Leia was done by digital superimposition of their faces from then on the faces of doubles of the same build. There has been criticism of the voice-doubling for Tarkin and the appearance of Leia.

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### SUPER BOWL LI

by Lisa

For the Super Bowl it has become my practice to choose a team to back. I decide this based on either the team's location or its name since I know very little about football. Last year it was the Denver Broncos because it was love at first sight of Colorado for me. This year the teams were the New England Patriots against the Atlanta Falcons. Falcons are magnificent birds but I could not bring myself to side against a team named the Patriots so I decided the Patriots would be my team this year.

I had to get some errands done that night so I tuned in partway into the third quarter. The Falcons were ahead by at least twenty points. I sighed to myself and almost found something less humiliating to watch than my team being creamed so royally but decided to stick it out. And then the Patriots began to whittle down the lead. It was like watching Personal Ensign's charge in the 1988 Distaff when she caught Winning Colors right at the finish line.

I make no pretense at any knowledge of football but I understood I was watching something extraordinary. The Patriots tied the score in the last few minutes and the announcer told me that this would be the first Super Bowl to go into overtime. I blinked at this. This championship game has been around for fifty years and this is its first overtime? The Patriots scored a touchdown to win the game.

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### THE INDIGESTIBLE CRUMB! Review by Taral Wayne of **YOUR VIGOR FOR LIFE APPALLS ME: Robert Crumb Letters 1958-1977** Edited by Ilse Thompaon (1998; Fantagraphics Books; \$19.99)

When it comes to comics, you have to admit there is only one Crumb: Robert Crumb, and I've just read a volume of the letters he wrote to friends when he was sixteen or seventeen. Its effect on me has been somewhat like looking the wrong way through a telescope, oddly diminishing the man. Granted, he was an adolescent at the time, and appears to have led a life rather more isolated than that of most teenage boys. Yet I found the same patterns of sophomoric questions and answers that were first raised in his final year of high school were still being repeated in most of his later work.

All but a few letters toward the end of the volume were written before, 1963, so the book represents the young artist far more than the adult. Yet there is little difference in the character of the letters from beginning to end. They consist largely of "chummy" gossip, in a vernacular that may have been current at the time, but which continues to appear in most of Crumb's later writing. But another large part of these letters relates to comics or old records that he wants to find, already owns or is willing to trade with his correspondent, along with commentary on them. Most of his comments

are simple, along the lines of “That Benny Goodman is sure hot,” or “*MAD* hasn’t been as good since Kurtzman left.” They are perceptive, but not particularly deep or thoughtful. His obsession with collecting almost anything from before his own time reveals someone who feels very much out of place in the present, and is attempting retreat into an imagined “better” past. He is acutely self-conscious – to the point that much of his writing amounts to little more than inspecting his own motives and actions under greater and greater magnification – but without ever reaching a resolution.

As an intellectual, Crumb comes across as someone who may have repudiated his Catholic background, but has not for one moment put it behind him. Every waking moment in which Crumb is not thinking about comics, he is thinking about guilt and sin – explaining away his culpability, since he has decided that Man has no Free Will, but still unable to feel free of impurity. His thoughts are strictly Platonic. Older things, closer to their sources, are less artificial are therefore nearer the ideal.

It is not surprising that the young R. Crumb discovered J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* and instantly saw himself mirrored in it. The book was very much written for his generation, although in that day it also appealed to all readers of all ages. I don’t think it retains all that impact for today’s readers. When I read *Catcher in the Rye*, I was merely surprised at Holden Caulfield’s naiveté. Had he *really* grown into his teens without ever realizing his parents lied and that adults were hypocrites? Had he not yet nuanced his view of the world? What a maroon...

From talking with people of my generation, I gather that’s not an uncommon reaction to Holden Caulfield’s world.

It was, however, very much R. Crumb’s world – one full of self-doubts, crumbling authority, meaningless goals and misrepresentation. No matter that Crumb’s guilt and insecurity came from his Catholic upbringing and Salinger’s from his Jewish; they might as well have grown up in the same household.

The disappointing thing about Crumb’s mental universe at this time is how little else there is in it.

He meditates over character and human behavior endlessly, but never seems to concern himself with any of the thousands of other things he must have encountered in his reading or on the street. He is not interested in architecture (except perhaps for how to draw it). He couldn’t care less how an automobile runs. At least, judging from what he wrote, the youthful Crumb has no interest in how to fight a Medieval battle, how to paddle a canoe, who was playing in the World Series, when dinosaurs ruled, how to load a flintlock, who first flew across the Atlantic, how medieval armour was made, when beer

was invented, how Cricket is played, where diamonds come from, how many kidneys had, which planets might bear life or anything else that a moderately curious young intellectual might find worthy of his attention. Crumb does not mention The Beatles once ... although he did mention Fabian several times, disparagingly, several times. I suppose Fabian was pop music in Crumb’s mind.

The most interesting passages I found in the letters consisted of his visits to Stan Lynde, artist and creator of the Western strip, *Rick O’Shay*, which occupies a comfortable niche between realistic and comic. Lynde was born in Montana, and nothing on the artist’s own website mentions his ever living east of teepee country. Yet, Crumb was able to visit him in his studio in New Jersey in 1960, because Lynde created *Rick O’Shay* in New York in 1958, and only returned to Montana in 1962. Crumb had little enough to say about the artist, but what details he provided more than made up for his interminable lists of old shellac records.

Another facet of Crumb’s collected letters that I found intriguing was that he clearly thought of himself as belonging to fandom at the time, and his earliest comics were “fanzines” to him. Yet, they were not fanzines as we know them – they were printed in larger numbers than we are accustomed to, and every effort was made to sell them for a dime apiece, sometimes earning up to ten whole bucks! He traded comics only with a small number of friends who also published. There is no mention at all of science fiction fandom, or any fanzines that we would be familiar with. Crumb was in an entirely different world from ours, despite the similarities and overlaps.

Yet, I wonder whether the two fandoms were *very* dissimilar? We, who belong to “our” fandom, remember that era by such zines as *Warhoon*, *Void*, *Psychotic*, *Odd*, *Innuendo*, *Oopsla*, *Habukkuk* and others. So far as I can tell, they are more sophisticated by far than the amateur magazines created by the comics fandom at the same time. Yet there was common ground – it was a period of great sobriety and serious purpose for most prominent SF fanzines of the time, mirroring the ambitions of the “Crumbzines” and others like them. It must be admitted, too, that it may not have been all that long before – ten years, perhaps – that most SF fanzines had also contained endless lists of books the editor wanted or had for sale, indexes of magazines and skin-deep reviews of slapdash space opera. Until the advent of cheap paperbacks reintroducing out-of-print classis to popular circulation, SF fandom was also was also once preoccupied with collecting, almost to the exclusion of everything else.

The early letters of Robert Crumb sometimes venture into discussions of art, and what he has to say is in character both with Crumb and with cartooning at the time. Cartoonists were to striving to simplify, to leave behind the constraints of unnecessary draftsmanship. The great exemplar of this was perhaps Jules Feiffer, about whom Crumb has

quite a lot to say, blowing both hot and cold. Among Crumb’s favourites, not surprisingly, were Carl Barks and Walt Kelly, two artists who could do more with simplicity than almost any others you could name. The elimination of unnecessary rendering and artificiality was an idea that Crumb seemed to come back to again and again, the absence of unnecessary rendering and artificiality. His aim, in his own, was to find the expressiveness of the cartoonists he admired, along with the authenticity that came directly from the source, not from technique.

But, of course, there is never any getting away from technique entirely, and Crumb spends more enough time discussing the strengths and weaknesses of different sorts of pens to prove it!

But at the end of 245 pages of drawn, handwritten and typed pages of Robert Crumb’s private thoughts, it seems as though rather little has been said that anyone might not have said. There are no great insights, no unique points of view, no surprising revelations. I think perhaps Crumb had a better grasp of his grammar than I might have had at sixteen – or else the editors of *Fantagraphics* have fixed his lapses – but these might almost have been written by you or I, or almost any other young fan we know. *Our* letters have no likelihood of ever being published, however, because *we* are not R. Crumb. People are no doubt intrigued by that artist’s early epistles because they are hoping to they will shed some light on his mind and later work. I suppose they do, at that. They reveal the roots of a self-conscious, wise-cracking, cynical, pessimistic, adversarial, escapist and sometimes tendentious creative personality, that for several years did more to shape underground comics than any other single artist I can think of.

Yet for all that, Crumb appears such a small man. He has had no really new ideas in ages, and hides away in France, in a house provided for him by a fan, and where Crumb has created a little bubble of time where it is always 1932. It is full of cardboard sleeves containing thousands of shellac records, old furniture, books in old bindings, old magazines, old photos framed on the walls, everything just plain full of oldness, without a hint that things might ever change. As well, Crumb’s thoughts are as dominated by guilt and sin as they were the day he renounced the Church in 1959. While Crumb has held up far better than Vaughn Bodé, does he really have anything to say to us anymore?

I’m not sure he does. But, if he has little to say about 2017, perhaps he still has much to say about 1959 in which we might take an interest. There is a lot of Crumb’s work that is now lost on me, but a great deal can still be read for the unique pleasure of viewing from the present, the Jazz era as viewed from the 1960s!

R. Crumb may not be as palatable as he once was, and I would hesitate to serve him as



an all-you-can-eat buffet. It can't be denied, however, that he still has a place of interest on any comic fan's menu. But it is the main courses – the issues of *Zap*, *Mr. Natural*, *Big Ass Comics*, *Uneeda Comics*, *Snoid Comics* and others – that are most digestible. It is those that are important about Crumb. I don't know if I would recommend the collected letters ... except to the sort of overwrought connoisseur who sniffs the cork and believes he can tell you who trampled the grapes.

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LOSCON 43  
by Robert Kennedy

On Thanksgiving afternoon (2016), as usual, I drove down to the LAX Marriott. It's about 50 miles and took a bit over an hour. I do this to avoid possible Friday traffic and so that I can sleep in on Friday. After checking in I went to my room and unpacked. I read a little bit, then went down to the lobby and just sat around watching people.

At 5:00 I went to their Latitude 33 restaurant and had Thanksgiving Dinner. At my age and divorced having dinner or any activity alone is no big deal and if I did not do many things alone I would not do much of anything. The meal is huge and to finish it all is virtually impossible. Dessert was boxed and kept until later to eat in my room. After finishing dinner it was down stairs to obtain my badge, the magazine, and the daily schedule. Then it was back to my room to read, eventually eat the dessert, then to bed.

Friday: After sleeping late it was back to the Latitude33 for breakfast. The first session was at 1:00 pm and was "The Politics and Socioeconomics of Space Exploration" with Alfred Nash, Gregory Benford, Robert Mitchell Evans, and Isabel Schechter. At 2:30 pm it was "Classics of Science Fiction – The Lanthanide Series: Starship Troopers" with John Hertz. At 4:00 pm it was "What's New in Science?" with James C. Glass, Alfred Nash, and Seth Potter. After that it was back to the same restaurant for dinner and then to my room to rest a bit. At 7:00 pm it was to my favorite activity, the **Ice Cream Social**. After pigging out on ice cream it was back to my room to read and then to sleep.

Saturday: 10:00 am saw "Should I Stay or Should I Go Now? Space Travel and Human Manifest Destiny" with Alfred Nash, Gregory Benford, Tim Cassidy-Curtis, Richard Foss, Erick Atkinson, and Gregg Castro. 11:30 am was "Mars in Focus" with Bridget Landry. Then it was lunch. 4:00 pm it was to "Dawn: A Tale of Two Bodies" which involved Vesta and Ceres with Bridget Landry (again). 5:30 pm it was to "What if Star Trek Had Never Existed?" with Brad Lyau, Daryl Frazetti, David Raiklen, Steve Frankel, Brian K. Lowe, and Michael Siladi. After that it was back to the restaurant for dinner. Then to my room to read and sleep. Again this year I skipped the Masquerade.

Sunday: At 10:00 am it was to be 'Military

Science Fiction – A Retrospective" with Christopher Beilby, Dr. Jerry Pournelle, and Corporal Joseph Slackie, RMMC. However, they were all a no-show and so this presentation was obviously cancelled after we in the audience had sat there for ten or fifteen minutes. I know that Pournelle was at the convention because I saw him and he had been in the audience at one (at least) of the sessions. This was a great disappointment! So, it was off to the last of the sessions attended at 10:30 pm (arriving late obviously) "50 Years of Star Trek Props: Star Trek: TNG/DS9 and More" with Max Cervantes. This session did not appear in the program book. The presenter had a massive amount of props and information and was excellent.

During breaks in sessions I checked out the Dealers Room and the Art Show. However, nothing was purchased. Oh, and for the first time the T-shirt man was not there.

One thing that bothered me was a People of Color Dinner. I thought of going and claiming Pink Skin. Is fandom going to split into skin color? Actually the person who seemed to be sponsoring it only looked like she had a very light tan and I would not have considered her a person of color. Maybe I'm overreacting here and it was a big nothing.

I paid to attend Loscon 44 but am not sure if I will be going. 2016 seemed to be of less interest to me than previous years. We'll see. If I do go I might take the Roadrunner Shuttle to save the hassle of driving.

Anyway, about 1:00 pm I drove home. The traffic was unusually light and the trip took only about an hour.

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Depraved Beyond Comprehension  
(9<sup>th</sup> Century)

When the basileus Michael, rightly called the Drunkard, took to his bosom the Macedonian Basil, raising a mere groom on high, and Michael's uncle Caesar Bardas objected, and Michael and Basil killed Bardas, Constantinople might have accepted it calmly, like a change in the weather. When Basil killed Michael and took his place,

a child could have predicted as much. But when the two of them swore their everlasting love for the imperial uncle in a document signed in the very blood of Jesus

Christ  
(of which the state, among many other marvelous relics, maintains a small supply) then perjured themselves almost before the ink was dry, that was depraved beyond comprehension.

Worse yet, Basil got away with it. No lightning strike. No hideous, wasting disease. He reigned gloriously. He founded a dynasty.

The implications are terrifying. Is the throne of God now vacant?

— Darrell Schweitzer

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WORLDCONS

2017 NASFiC  
San Juan, Puerto Rico  
<http://www.northamericon17.com/>  
July 6-9, 2017

2018  
San José  
<http://worldcon76.org/>  
August 16-20, 2018

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WORLDCON BIDS

2019  
Dublin  
<http://dublin2019.com/>

2020  
New Zealand  
<http://nzin2020.org/>

Boston 2020 Christmas Worldcon

2021  
Boston  
Dallas/Fort Worth  
<http://fencon.org/texasf/>

2022  
Chicago  
Doha, Qatar

2023  
Paris  
<https://sites.google.com/site/parisin2019/>  
New Orleans

2024  
District of Columbia  
<http://dcin2024.org/>  
United Kingdom  
<http://www.ukin2024.org/>

2025  
Pacific Northwest  
Perth, Australia

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THAT TIME OF YEAR

What do people think will be nominated for the Hugos? What are your nominations?

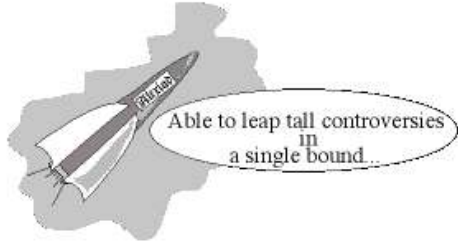
Or will it even matter? There are already Sad Puppies and Rabid Puppies proposals for the nominations. Is Vox Day like Charles Platt, who promoted a Hugo nomination for *Battlefield Earth* as a way of destroying the awards?

And, of course, will Dragon\*Con try to have the Dragon Awards this year? Stay tuned.

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 Letters, we get letters
 

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From: **Guy H. Lillian III** Dec. 12, 2016  
ghliiii@yahoo.com

Ho ho ho! WHAT A MONTH. Rosy's stepmother has been diagnosed with glioblastoma — we won't know the stage till later today — and the house is full of dogs as her daughters crowd in to be of service. MY pooches are silent and circumspect, except for the young one, whose bark splits the skull. In good news, our lawsuit has been settled and we should have some financial padding soon. THANKS for *Alexiad* — as I've said, multiple zines in the works. Chall will have my gothic story.

I'm sorry to hear about Rosy's stepmother. Glioblastoma is a particularly nasty cancer.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** December 13, 2016  
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL  
 33810-0341 USA  
Pagadan@aol.com

Thanks, Joe!

Btw, just how many more elements are waiting to be discovered?!

Thanks for the book reviews; they save me a lot of time. Two books I read and reviewed recently (on Amazon and GoodReads) are *Rise of the Rocket Girls* by Nathalia Holt and *Mary Fields AKA Stagecoach Mary* by Erich Martin Hicks. Both are worth reading, and I enjoyed the history in both.

I enjoyed the con reviews too. It's great, Sue, that you have a con so close now! Uh, who or what is The Starship Cat? (I never got around to writing a review for Oasis, but I had a lot of fun there too, everyone.)

That's Leigh's review blog:

<http://starshipcat.livejournal.com/>

— JTM

And thanks to everyone for their LOCs, which are also full of interesting and fun tidbits — and more.

Merry Christmas, Joe and Lisa!

From: **Rod E. Smith** December 19, 2016  
 730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA  
stickmaker@usa.net

In re. *Zero Phase: Apollo 13 on the Moon*, as you mention there were plans to use Gemini technology for a Lunar landing if Apollo fell behind. Gemini was actually much closer to Apollo in sophistication that it was to Mercury. There were many proposals to use existing or second-generation Gemini equipment, even after Apollo was well under way. However, despite some setbacks — the biggest being the *Apollo 1* fire — it went ahead to the Moon and there just wasn't funding for other manned mission programs at that time.

A Lunar Gemini mission is portrayed in Brad Torgerson's *Gemini 17* (2012; reviewed in *Alexiad V. 14 #3*).

The Lettercol has a discussion about the Fermi Paradox (which isn't really a paradox, just an unanswered question). I speculate on that in an SF novel still in progress. The characters are all human, the time about three centuries hence. They're discussing why aliens didn't contact humans; humans had to find them and insist on making contact:

"It's like an established business suddenly facing competition from a young, upstart company which is smaller and more flexible and more open to new ideas," said Keelo.

"No, that's not really an accurate analogy," said Julian, shaking his head. "More like a retirement community, where everyone is settled and content with the routine, which suddenly has a daycare center open next door. Playing Barney music over loudspeakers. Of course they're not going to contact the new culture. That might be taken as encouragement. Just keep quiet and maybe they'll go away."

"Retirement community?" said Keelo, confused.

"Barney music?" said Cayle.

"Never mind," sighed Julian.

Captured Iraqi soldiers had to listen to the Barney theme 24 hours a day. No one was ever prosecuted for this hideous war crime.

— JTM

Speaking of writing:

The anthology which bought one of my short stories is still not published.

I have a short novel coming out (hopefully) in February, through a small press group via Amazon. Will provide further details when

available.

I recently finished revising two 100k+ word novels. I just need to decide who to submit them to. Both are contemporary fantasies. I have over 85k words on a more traditional fantasy. I also recently submitted three short stories to various markets. Here's hoping.

I was recently reminded of the 1981 SF movie *Looker*:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Looker>

It actually predicts some of the technology used in today's F/SF movies.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Dec. 25, 2016  
 4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA  
 22204-1552 USA  
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 15.6. A comment, "Only 4 atoms of Oganesson have been observed," so how can observations indicate that it might be a solid and possibly reactive? Og is in the noble gas column, but if it existed *theory* suggests it might be a) solid and b) reactive.

From: **John Purcell** January 2, 2017  
 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station,  
 TX 77845 USA  
[askance73@gmail.com](mailto:askance73@gmail.com)

Well, this was just posted on efanazines.com recently, which means it is about friggging time to write another letter of comment to *Alexiad*.

Whow! Ninety issues down, only ten more to go before *Alexiad* hits the century mark. That impresses the heck out of me. Despite everything life has thrown at you two, Joe and Lisa, still the zine gets produced. I take it that just like me, doing the fanzine gives you an outlet for expression, an island of sanity in an increasingly insane world where the stupid grows by the day. As a firm believer in the Aristotelian concept of creative catharsis, I think that's one of the reasons why this fanzine continues a regular publication schedule and at a consistent level of high quality, too. I commend you folks for persisting. You two are not putting this fanzine out because you have to, it is because you want to. That is all the difference. Thank you for the fanzine. I want you to know how much I appreciate your efforts.

Joe is right when he says that if he wrote a novel featuring "lesbian steampunk vampires fighting time-traveling Nazi zombies" that he'd be a best-selling author, but I fear someone has already written this story, and hundreds of copies would be available at the freebie tables in Helsinki.

Or ebooks, available on the authors' websites.

Speaking of which — did you see what I did

there? — I am officially one of the three candidates vying for this year's TAFF race to attend the 75th WorldCon in Helsinki, Finland later this year. Voting ends on March 4th, and official ballots are available at [www.taff.org.uk](http://www.taff.org.uk), plus I am mailing them out with copies of my fanzine *Askew*. The 17th issue has been mailed out, and there will be issues published in January, February, and March. Also the 39th issue of *Askance* will be out in late January detailing my TAFF plans thus far. Let the games begin!

Speaking of cons, thanks go to Leigh Kimmel for her dealer's eye view of Archon 40 and MidAmeriCon, Part Deux, and also to Sue Burke's WindyCon report. Glad to hear that things went well (for the most part) at these conventions, and I trust everyone has recovered by now.

Finally, thank you, Joe, for that in depth look at that James Blish story "Testament of Andros." I have never heard of it before, and it certainly operates at very interesting levels. I need to check this out.

I'ts a very dark and desparing story. Something in it speaks to me now.

— JTM

That's gonna do it for now, kids. Here's to a better and more prosperous new year for all of us. I'm afraid it's going to be a long year coming up, and we are going to have to do our best to keep the wolves outside the gates.

From: **Michael L. Brown** January 3, 2017  
[Michael.L.Brown@carrier.utc.com](mailto:Michael.L.Brown@carrier.utc.com)

Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*. I looked up "The Bull Against the Enemy of the Anglican Race." Wow, what a diatribe!

The interesting thing is that both Hadrian and Nicholas Crabbe are based on Rolfe himself.

— JTM

The shift in values of present-day culture (or at least the Western culture in which we are awash) is both curious and oftentimes dismaying. It is hard to say what "excellence" is, or even if excellence itself is something valued. The world has moved on...

From: **Taras Wolansky** January 9, 2017  
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 12446-2806 USA  
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First, some belated comments on the October *Alexiad*:

Lisa: I think I liked the latest *Star Trek* movie better than *Star Wars* #7. The latter was virtually a remake of *A New Hope*, as many people have pointed out. It's as if nothing was won or achieved by the good

guys, and we're in exactly the same place where we were. Nor does it show our heroes in a very favorable light, having apparently frittered away all their gains. ("Taras, you're too analytical!" I can hear my brother the film prof say.)

Joe ("Is This Really Necessary Department"): I didn't realize John Norman was still alive. I remember seeing him at a con years ago, complaining about Donald Wollheim's daughter breaking her promise and dumping him from DAW Books; probably a sound business decision, given the drift toward a kind of puritanism among feminists since the Seventies. A B&D specialist paperback house reprinted (some?) the Gor novels at some point. Which puzzled me, when I saw them at a small con in Albany; as, when I read the early Ballantine editions, back in the day, they struck me as nothing more than mild E.R. Burroughs imitations, and whatever erotic element may have been there simply didn't register. Maybe the books had been bowdlerized by the Ballantines. (Maybe I was too young!)

The earlier ones, from Ballantine, were more straight Burroughsian-style adventure. The more BDSM elements came in the later ones (along with such things as multiple commas and long long sentences and paragraphs), which were from DAW.

James Blish's *Cities in Flight*: A President "who dripped charisma but had no brains worth mentioning" makes me wonder if Blish were thinking of the Kennedy brothers. It would not have seemed implausible at the time to imagine they would parlay their relationship with Joe McCarthy into political success: McCarthyism with a prettier face (literally). In our history, of course, JFK really did attack Nixon and Eisenhower as being soft on communism.

I'd thought so as well but the dates aren't right.

Dragon Awards: Actually, most of the winners look pretty respectable: Wright, Pratchett, Weber, Novik, Gaiman.

Darrell Schweitzer: If the Retro-Hugos ever penetrate the early 1930's, do you think they will honor the best SF, even if it was published outside the pulps?

"Vox Day will eventually become the Harold Stassen of SF". The Net is a big place and he may find himself a pocket universe to dominate.

Richard Dengrove: To paraphrase Heinlein, there ain't no such thing as a "free bus system".

George W. Price: "the British Empire was one of the better things to have happened to this old world." The great classical liberal economist, Ludwig von Mises, condemned all empires — except the British.

The trouble is, the only kind of empire that endures is the kind that is willing to wade

through oceans of blood.

Sue Burke: As for the Hugo nominees, I think Neal Stephenson's *Seveneves* was the best SF I've read in years — though it's a little sad, too, as the human population, escaped into space, goes from four digits, to three digits, to two digits, to ...

Stephenson's theme is taken from William Faulkner's Nobel Prize speech. Which is as far as I want to go in the direction of spoilers!

N.K. Jemisin's *The Fifth Season*, the Hugo winner, was a disappointment. (Her *The Broken Kingdoms* was so much better.) Some stories have idiot plots; *TFS* has an idiot society: train people up with more-than-thermonuclear powers, and then treat them very, very badly, and then let them wander around unsupervised to learn how badly they're being treated.

Fiction is supposed to make more sense than real life. In real life, inner city murder rates soar as the Black Lives Matter pushes out the police, based on rare or falsely reported cases of police misconduct. I doubt this is what Jemisin had in mind, though. When I heard her speak at a Barnes & Noble, a couple of years ago, she sounded like a stereotypical middlebrow liberal.



On to the December issue ...

Joe: "In May of 1686 the *Golden Fleece* was careened for repairs at Hispaniola when the frigates HMS *Falcon* and HMS *Drake* came in. In a hard battle, the *Golden Fleece* was set afire and sank ..." The *Golden Fleece* was relaunched before it was sunk, I take it.

Dale Speirs: Off the top of my head, I can think of at least two movies "better than the book": *The Wrong Box* (1966), based on a bad book co-written by Robert Louis Stevenson; and *The Wheeler Dealers* (1963), based on a

forgettable novel by George J.W. Goodman (“Adam Smith”). A third one just hit me: *The Princess Bride* (1987); like the movie, hate the book. And a fourth and fifth: *The Prisoner of Zenda*, a badly-written book made into a magnificent 1937 movie and a good 1952 one. Anthony Hope’s tragic (and rarely adapted) sequel, *Rupert of Hentzau*, is actually the better book.

Milt Stevens: A story or novel is eligible for Hugo nomination in the year of its original publication. But what determines eligibility for a series? The year the author dies? What if the series is continued by others?

Which is often the case. This might, for example, lock out Darkover (Adrienne Martine-Barnes) and Pern (Todd McCaffrey né Johnson).

— JTM

I wonder if the real rationale for this is to keep series books from clogging the nominations for best novel.

John Hertz: “The Left (speaking for myself) too often say Eisenhower had no brains worth mentioning.” There’s a movie (I think it’s 1976’s *The Front*) in which Woody Allen’s character makes a speech at an Adlai Stevenson rally, making fun of Ike’s lack of intelligence. However, I read the scene as displaying the character’s (and Stevenson supporters’) naiveté, as Stevenson obviously lost. It’s true, though, that Democrats will reflexively attack the intelligence of a Republican Presidential candidate, if they possibly can, and even if their candidate actually has a lower IQ (e.g., John Kerry’s 120 vs. George W. Bush’s 125 in 2004).

George W. Price: Listening to arguments about allowing persons with penises and Y-chromosomes to use the girls’ locker room (while telling the girls to Get Used to It), it suddenly hit me that the reasoning was similar to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation: the Communion wafer becomes the Body and Blood of Christ merely because the priest says so. Which leads to my Sudden Insight: Progressivism is the dominant religion in the U.S. today.

It’s a religion without a God and (oh my yes) without a commandment against lying, but it’s a religion nonetheless. For example, the progressive faith mystically decreed that the Castros are the rightful rulers/owners of the Cuban people, even if they never let the people even discuss this situation, much less vote on it.

Sue Burke: “Yes, Taras Wolansky, I did notice that women won a lot of awards this year. That could be coincidence, or it could be that most readers of any kind of fiction these days are female. Women are also more inclined to read female authors than men are, and the Hugos are voted on by readers.” This would serve to explain, for example, why 95% of Romance Novel awards go to female

authors — but in that case 95% of the nominees are female as well. By contrast, half of the Hugo (and Nebula) fiction nominees were male, but none of the winners. (Perhaps male authors should use initials.)

“I also read *A Planet for Rent* by Yoss, a Cuban writer. ... Each chapter shows how a different character has been corrupted by colonization, but the corruption tells us as much about Earth’s present as its future.” The guy sounds like a regime toady, allowed to come and go from Cuba because he toes the party line.

Darrell Schweitzer: “If Taras Wolansky is right that there are voters who will only vote for women ... then the [Hugo] awards are rendered meaningless.” Perhaps it’s like the Nobel Peace Prize, sometimes ridiculous (Rigoberta Menchu for her fake autobiography, Yasser Arafat, Barack Obama before he had a chance to do anything), sometimes worthy (Nelson Mandela, Chinese human rights lawyer Liu Xiaobo, Lech Walesa, Elie Wiesel). Still, it does look like it’s nearly impossible for a male writer to win a Hugo Award at this time. Nominated, yes; win, no.

“It is encouraging in a way that ... [the PSFS] Hugo Predictions panel gave out a lot of No Awards.” Not if they were doing it on a political basis. For example, one of the recent Hugo Awards went to a really awful story, merely because all the other (mostly better) nominees were recommended by the Puppies. In this particular case, the writer’s monopoly on political correctness permitted a male author to win.



From: **Milt Stevens** January 11, 2017  
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While reading Leigh Kimmel’s worldcon report in *Alexiad* #90, I had this feeling that MidAmericon had been a long time ago. That was strange, since the con had only been a few months ago. From having read previous con reports by Leigh Kimmel, I know she spends most of her time in the dealers room. I spend almost no time in the dealers room, so we attend entirely different conventions in approximately the same place.

Since I used to run conventions, I usually look at the big picture. MidAmericon had an

awful lot of space. It possibly had too much space. I heard that the attendance was something like 5000. However, it was so spread out that it felt more like 1500. These days, I use a cane to get around large conventions. My hotel was a block from the front door of the convention center. It was two rest stops from the front door of the convention center to registration. I’m very glad they had a lot of chairs along that corridor. From registration it was up the escalator to the fanzine lounge which was quite capably run by Gerry Sullivan. I hung out there a lot.

I was on the program four times, so I had to do some exploring to make sure I knew where I was going when I had to go there. This helped convince me the con had too much space. The actual program items were entirely friendly and went quite well.

Then there was the matter of room parties. There weren’t none. There wasn’t a con suite either. I’m sure future installments of the fannish inquisition will ask about such things. If voters had known this was going to be the situation, there wouldn’t have been anything to do about it. There was only one bidder. If the situation has been known a couple of months before the vote, another bid might have appeared. Of course, the KC Committee might have looked around the Mid-West for a possible alternate site.

Those aren’t good signs. I can’t get along with room parties nowadays — too many of those at ConGlomeration seemed to me to be excuses to turn out the lights so teenagers could get drunk — but anyone who experienced a Khen Moore party had fun, and the fading of those kinds of parties is not a good sign. There’s no longer any community.

— JTM

In the next few years, it looks like the worldcon is going to leave North America for two years in a row. That has never happened before. It’s hard to say how the whole thing will play out. Will the situation shake off some of the usual North American worldcon attendees? We’re already under competitive pressure from the big commercial conventions. However, we have one big advantage. We don’t need to make a profit. We can be big or small. As long as we have the will, there will always be a way.

From: **Lloyd Penney** January 13, 2017  
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Many thanks for *Alexiad* 90, and happy belated birthday. The best explanation for the Cubs’ victory in the World Series may have been a deal with the devil.

I am still job hunting, although I have had some good interviews. I almost got on with Nasdaq Canada, but almost doesn't pay the bills. There are some jobs in the works that I hope I will qualify for, once the potential employer figures out what they want. In the meantime, the resumes continue to flow out. While I do that, Yvonne prepares for her own retirement. She does so at the end of this year, December 29, to be exact. I honestly can only think of the *Wall Street Journal* as the only American news source I would trust. All others have a political bent based on their ownership. When I see local papers with a sports story on the front page, I think it must have been a slow news day, or the papers continue to hide the true news of the day from the electorate, thereby slowly taking away their franchise. Could be either.

I had heard of Buzz Aldrin's collapse in Antarctica, but have heard nothing more, which says to me that Buzz continues to recover. I'd also heard that the new king of Thailand at first had not wanted to succeed his late father to the throne, but later accepted his fate. I wonder what his thinking was when he finally said yes to the life sentence of being a monarch.

He seems to have bounced back. But there will come a time when, again, there are no living people who have walked on the Moon — with the anguish of knowing that once there were.

— JTM

Your description of Chico and Harpo Marx as aged and tired...I can certainly sympathize, and I feel that way right now. Then again, it could be the cold I am coming down with, and the fact that Yvonne is recovering from the flu. Your essay on the books that make up the two books of *Altered Space* reminds me that we did see a movie recently. Not *Rogue One*, and not the newest STAR TREK movie, but *Hidden Figures*, the story of how three mathematicians, all black and female, helped to put John Glenn in space. An excellent movie, especially given Glenn's recent passing. Indeed, an era has ended, and the movie reminded us all of that fact, combined with America's problem with blacks and women at that (and this) time.

Conventions for me these days consists of cons, not usually on my regular circuit (much of which doesn't exist any more), but on a relatively new (for us) circuit of conventions and shows where we can sell our wares. Our next convention is Genrecon 2017 in Guelph, northwest of Toronto, and we have a table there. It is a gaming/comics/cosplay convention, and we have felt like Mom and Dad looking after the kids there, but sales have been good in the past, so off we go. Our interest in Steampunk also means we can bring a costume or two along, and not feel too out of it.

Fandom is getting old? We are already there, at the blistering rate of one second per second. And minor illness isn't helping. I am losing a fight with a cold, and Yvonne is fighting the flu right now. I am having trouble keeping my eyes open, and it is mid-morning. There is more to read, but I can't do it with closed eyes. I will say many thanks for this issue, and I hope to have some good personal news for you soon.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Jan. 19, 2017  
2651 Arlington Drive, #302,  
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This is for the December 2016 issue of *Alexiad*. Like for all my recent letters to *Alexiad*, I read the issue in Starbucks and marked my comments. Then I wrote the letter at home. You might criticize my rendezvous for reading *Alexiad*. However, whatever criticisms people have of Starbucks are currently irrelevant: I am too used to the place.

No, I will not criticize your rendezvous place. I too spend time at the Starbucks between home and work.

— LTM

How does one get used to making a living writing? First, you've got to make that living; and I know, Joe, you're pretty far from it. I'm sure you also know the market for science fiction. I can't argue with you on that. However, I can argue you haven't advertised your works before this issue that I remember. You might get a few more sales if you did. In fact, in response to the issue, I did buy one. After I read it, I may buy more.

Now, from you, I go on to one novel you have reviewed, *Ocean of Storms* by Mari and Brown. There is a twist there that must have been done hundreds of times before, but I still like it.

An entirely cloned race finds that it is susceptible to a disease if it doesn't go back and create more variation in its genes. I guess politically correct pluralism has taken over my brain; and I would rather have a variety of people than even a homogenous species like myself.

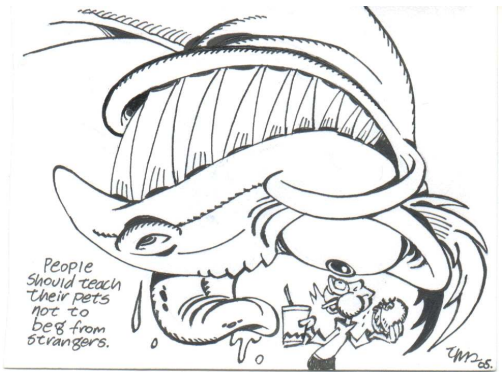
From your review of *Ocean of Storms*, Joe, we go to Dale Speirs' opinion about *Cities in Flight*. Unlike *Ocean*, it concerns more in what media it would work rather than what great ideas Blish has.

Dale believes *Cities in Flight* would make a great TV series because it was a series of stories to begin with. I dare say, though, if I remember the series correctly, the TV writers would have to expand on it too. Also, they would have to somehow connect one tale with another.

There's certainly room for expansion. I observed that the

background had great potential for other stories, and certainly they would want to put off dealing with the events of "Sargasso of Lost Cities" and *The Triumph of Time* for as long as possible.

Certainly, it would make a better series than the novel *The Man in the High Castle*. There, we just have several slices of life threads. Before it could be made into an Amazon TV series, the writers had to perform massive surgery. On the other hand, to me, the series basically keeps the spirit of the novel through even a change from realism to action/adventure. Others may disagree.



Now we will have a different take on genre, from slices of life, action adventure and anthologies to the nature of science fiction and fantasy. From the package to the very innards, which makes science fiction and fantasy.

Milt Stevens asks what constitutes science fiction and fantasy, and what doesn't. Does T.H. White? I say Yes. I do it for the same reason I equate *The Man in the High Castle* series with the novel: namely, I feel an association between T.H. White and fantasy.

Yes, I believe, whether a novel or story belongs as science fiction or fantasy depends on how the reader feels; not any specific nuts and bolts whereby everyone would place it the same. For instance, the actual science in science fiction may be totally absent. However, if a work has the 'feel' of science for readers, it is science fiction. Possibly, technical expertise might define "hard science fiction"; but not science fiction as a whole.

While T.H. White was not considered a genre writer in his life time but a literary writer, it's obvious his work is now generally categorized as the fantasy genre. On the other hand, no way would readers generally categorize Sponge Bob in that genre — at least not yet.

Now we go from genres to a famous person, and from feelings to abilities. Specifically, we are talking about a famous person's abilities. Not those of a living person but one who has passed..

I agree with John Hertz; and think Eisenhower's war abilities showed what his

strengths would be as President. These were abilities that had not been revealed in the political arena, and so people never associated him with them.

However, they are what, I believe, held him in good stead. I go beyond John, who believes it was his ability to gain the cooperation of many people in war. I think it was more than that. As John Kenneth Galbraith said, Eisenhower kept the peace between some of the most egotistical people: for example, Patton, De Gaulle and Montgomery.

We go from Ike who knew how to deal with egotists to the WorldCon, which encourages them. However, we are not going to deal with that problem here. Instead, we will deal with how convenient WorldCon is to get to.

Joe, you complain to Darrel Schweitzer that that convention so rarely sets up shop in the US these days. However, there is one convention you are supposed to attend when WorldCon becomes, as you say, a world traveler – NASFIC. I gather few would rate it as a World Con. However, when I went one year, it was pretty big. In addition, it gave out its own awards.

And this year it is in Puerto Rico. I doubt it will do well.

— JTM

We go from a convention's awards to the rewards of the US Political system. Robert S. Kennedy wants to make the electoral college more up-to-date. I disagree: we should get rid of it. It was fashioned for a United States where the States had lots of power. Now we see ourselves as members of one country.

Also, the Founding Fathers thought, for democracy to work, there had to be intermediaries between the common folk and the President. The problem is it hasn't mattered in a while that there are intermediaries because few electors vote against the voters' preference.

In short, the Electoral College is outmoded historically. Reason isn't going to make it disappear, though. Whether a politician wants to get rid of it depends on whose ox gets gored by a numerical majority.

So much for democracy in the United States; how about democracy in Africa? A place not used to democracy. A place with a great deal of illiteracy.

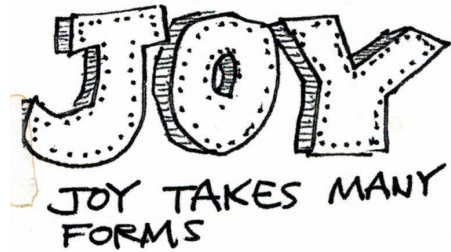
Al du Pisani has a theory about democracy in Africa; and it explains why democracy arose in South Africa and Senegal. According to him, limited democracy proved its worth in South Africa and Senegal, and all the disenfranchised opted to become enfranchised rather than destroy the whole system.

My theory differs. I think democracy works if politics are less polarized. If one part of the country doesn't hate the other, and wants to kill or enslave it. Zimbabwe had the limited democratic institutions he talks about

as Southern Rhodesia. Then, the franchise widened from the White minority to include the Black inhabitants. However, with the years, democracy has frayed more and more. The reason seems to be that factions have been tearing it apart.

Now I go from the inhabitants of the world to one person, you Joe. Also, from governments in general to one governmental program – Social Security. While it has a sizable budget, even Tea Party Conservatives tackle it on tippy toes.

Good, that you were able to get the real Social Security, as opposed to disability. They didn't give you any hassle at all. It sounds more like they were a friend. Or, at any rate, you can count on them to pay you your legislative entitlement.



With that, I come to the end of my letter. Social security, however, is just one of a number of topics I have tackled. These include science fiction and fantasy in novels and the media, Dwight David Eisenhower, the Electoral College and democracy. Having written this, I think I'll drink a glass of Merlot.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** January 20, 2017  
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Thank you for *Alexiad* Vol. 15, No. 6 (December 2016), Whole Number 90.

Last year we were to have received lots of rain and actually received virtually nothing adding to our 5 or more years of drought. This year we were to have received very little rain and have had a lot which has helped a great deal with our years long drought. So much for weather forecasting.

Here's a book I obtained from the library that may be of interest to people who like cats or just may be interested. *THE LION in the LIVING ROOM: HOW HOUSE CATS TAMED US AND TOOK OVER THE WORLD* BY Abigail Tucker (Simon & Schuster, 2016).

More on genealogy. The pursuit of this interest can turn up surprises like horse thief, bank robber, train robber, etc. ancestors. Most of the time your ancestors will be fine people. But, you should be ready for possible shocks. Here's an example. Bill Griffeth (the youngest person in his immediate family) is a long time genealogist who has traced his family back a

good number of generations and traveled extensively in his research. Recently at the request of a first cousin he took a DNA test. Surprise! His father (who was no longer alive) turned out not to be his biological father. Imagine his confronting his mother with that information? If the story interests you read *The Strange in My Genes – a memoir* by Bill Griffeth (New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2016). (No, he wasn't adopted. Yes, his mother gave him permission to write and publish the book.)

I want to have other relatives take the mtDNA test so I can find this out. However, I can't make them.

— JTM

On December 5, 2016, the History Channel presented *Pearl Harbor: The Truth* which was apparently based on a book by Anthony Summers and Robbyn Swan who appeared in the production. As a result I purchased *A MATTER OF HONOR-PEARL HARBOR: BETRAYAL, BLAME, AND A FAMILY'S QUEST FOR JUSTICE* BY Anthony Summers & Robbyn Swan (HarperCollinsPublishers, 2016). Sadly, because of other books received for Christmas and books from the library I have not had a chance to read it as yet. Some of you probably know that this is an area of interest to me and that I have a fairly extensive collection of books on the subject. My impression of this book is that it rehabilitates Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and Lt. General Walter C. Short which has also been done by other authors. (See especially *SCAPEGOATS-A Defense of Kimmel and Short at Pearl Harbor* by Captain Edward L. Beach, USN [Ret.], Naval Institute Press, 1995.) It is, however, my impression that Summers and Swan pin the Pearl Harbor tragedy on incompetence and other factors rather than purposeful action by persons in high places. This, if that is the case, goes against some conclusions I have reached from my extensive reading. We'll see when I get the chance to read the book.

*STAR TREK BEYOND* was obtained from the library. On my rating scale of 1-5 I gave it a 3.5. If anyone has something to say about it I am open to commentary.

**James Stumm:** Once again I thank you for the shipment of books. They are very much appreciated.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** January 23, 2017  
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Sending fanzines around as PDFs is fine with me. Surely this is the salvation of the fanzine in an age of exorbitant postage rates. Everybody has e-mail and a printer, so it is not unreasonable to ask your readers who want a physical copy to print their own. A lot of them can do it in a more sophisticated manner than I

do. I empty out the paper tray, then feed the sheets in one at a time by hand, flipping them over to get two-sided printing. I do wish that all of the cartoons came out. For some mysterious reason some of them do not reproduce. It isn't solid blacks or anything like that. The Schirmeister cartoon on page 14 is fine, but whatever it was in the upper left of page 12 is an illegible, faint smudge. The cartoon on the last page is gone entirely. What I can suggest is that you should avoid attempts at half-tones or color, and keep it solid black & whites.

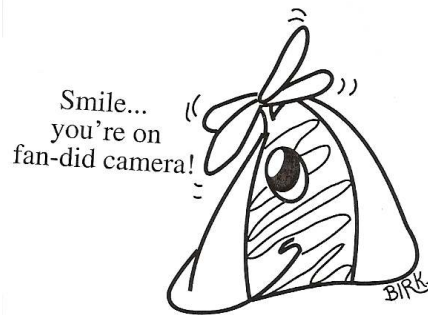
I am not entirely sure what your conclusion is about Blish's "The Testament of Andros" is, but I am glad to see Blish getting this attention. He is rapidly becoming a forgotten figure, I fear. I went and reread the story. I was surprised to find I didn't have it in any collection and went back to the original magazine appearance in *Future* for January 1953. It's illustrated on the cover, and for once the scantily-clad young lady is actually in the story, so the cover (by Milton Luross) is quite appropriate. It shows a huge flaming sun, the woman in her nightie, a near-naked man in the background who is reacting to the sun (the lady seems to be in no discomfort), and a skeleton on the ground. The ground is not earth but a series of lines, perhaps a wooden stage. But the only story mentioned on the cover is "Time Stops Today" by John Wyndham, who was obviously a bigger name in 1953. Wyndham alone is mentioned on the spine of the magazine too.

It's pretty clear from the blurb that editor Lowndes didn't quite know what to make of this story, but he was impressed by it, particularly by its ambition. The great virtue of Lowndes as an editor was that he was willing to take an intuitive leap on stories like this. (He also published Blish's "Common Time" and Tenn's "The Liberation of Earth.") His magazines were definitely second-tier, and they paid poorly, but they were willing to publish stories too sophisticated or challenging for the Big Three. *F&SF* for all it was devoted to the idea that SF should be as well written as anything else, was actually rather conservative. *Galaxy* had its own peculiar slant. *Astounding* was beginning to ossify. This meant that often the most ambitious stories – the ones that would be "New Wave" fifteen years later – often ended up with Lowndes, and he had the sense to publish them.

And that was why we got *Who Killed Science Fiction?*

This is actually a win-win situation for the editor. If he had published only safe, routine stuff, given that he paid so poorly and was no one's first choice of a market, he would have ended up with a crappy magazine filled with rejects, no better than, say, *Spaceway*, which was one of the worst magazines of the period. What he got was actually considerably better

than *Spaceway*. There is also a deep, dark secret that I only learned from years of magazine work, which is that unless it gets the magazine banned from the mails for obscenity, you can get away with anything in one story. Just make sure that some of the other stories in the same issue will have broad appeal and then if there is one story which makes readers scratch their heads and say "What the hell was that?" you won't lose them because they will like something else in the same issue. (The mistake of Damon Knight in *Orbit* some years later was to have a much too high percentage of "What the hell was that?" and he did lose readers.) In this issue of *Future*, anybody who was puzzled by the Blish probably responded more positively to the Wyndham.



As for what the story is about, well, I have a theory. In a word: sex. Recall that this is just about the same time that Blish wrote "Common Time" and he and Damon Knight had exchanges over the Freudian symbolism in that. Nothing so abstruse here. Note that in the first part, after a great deal of technobabble about stellar evolution, the scene ends on a note of sexual jealousy. The aged Dr. Andresson launches himself at his assistant. His wife Marguerita screams. "The rest you know," the narrative tells us. The next section is the pseudo-Biblical one, in which the Sun is going to destroy the Earth because the man has given himself over to the woman. Then we have the episode of the survivor in Fort Knox. He encounters Margaret in her night gown rather implausibly wandering around in the scorched ruins. He proclaims that he will be the new father of the human race and he is coming for her. His knife is in his hand. Again, sex, jealousy, and the threat of violence. Only the pre-adolescent Andy a.k.a. Admiral Universe has a positive view of women, but his St. Margaret is an abstraction. He's rather down on the Earth, though, and on a certain doctor Fergusson, who is "wrong" about him. As you have noted, these episodes all show increasing disintegration. Then we come to T.V. Andros, the son of a drunkard, who is a rapist. Here the doctor who asked him to write it all down is Dr. Ferdinand. After that, the narrator is Man, and there is nothing left.

So let me suggest that this is not a story about a solar flare destroying mankind. Dr.

Andresson (rather surprisingly for his age) committed one or two murders out of sexual jealousy. The astronomical imagery, and the science-fiction clichés in the Admiral Universe section, are purely symbolic of the catastrophe this has brought to his life. He is in a madhouse, writing this out as a series of fantasies. His wife is depicted as a goddess in the second section, but one that gets him into trouble. He reverts to a child-like condition in which she is a saint. His rapist id is then revealed. After this, he can say no more.

Given what we can glean about Blish and Knight's ideas about symbolism from their critical writings, it is certainly plausible that Blish was thinking along these lines. The story is not actually science fiction, but uses science fictional imagery merely as trappings. This is actually a lot closer to a psychotic version of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty."

That sounds like Blish giving his justification for the murderer in *Frozen Year* (1957). The point he makes there about albinos and skin cancer is a bit off: skin cancer is not as great a problem for those with albinism as impaired vision is, though a photographer who was almost blind would make a good example of the *Ascent of Rum Doodle* air of genial incompetence about the expedition. Reverend Spooner of spoonerisms was an albino. (And Blish was paying off a grudge; one of the characters who is killed is named "Wollheim").

As for whether things are "genre" or not, the only thing I can say to Milt Stevens (p. 13) is that yes, if someone cared to nominate a Spongebob Squarepants cartoon for a Hugo (short subject) it would be eligible as I understand the rules. There is no gate-keeper to say what is or is not "genre." "Our" field has no defined boundaries. This becomes especially relevant when we push further and further back in time with the Retro-Hugos. We have to think beyond the pulps. In the 1920s or 1930s, MOST of the best fantastic literature was not to be found in the pulps, but in "general literature." Does "our field" include, indeed, the works of T.H. White, or Huxley's *Brave New World* and *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, or Sloane's *The Edge of Running Water* and *To Walk the Night*, or Capek's *The War with the Newts* or Collier's *Tom's A'Cold* (a.k.a. *Full Circle*), or Dunsany's *The King of Elfland's Daughter* or Mirrlees *Lud-in-the-Mist* or the works of Olaf Stapledon? (Stapledon was apparently surprised and a bit horrified when fans contacted him and he discovered that such things as science fiction magazines existed and he was somehow associated with their content.) It was entirely possible in those days to be a fan of fantastic and imaginative literature and not read the pulps at all. You can see that in the letters of Lovecraft and his circle. They

begudgingly admit the existence of *Weird Tales* because they all contribute to it, but they don't think well of it, and Lovecraft in particular does not regard himself as a "real writer." To Lovecraft the real writers of the supernatural were folks like M.R. James, Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, etc., none of whom wrote for the pulps, none of whom would be part of "our field" by Milt Stevens' definition.

We can even ask if Tolkien can be considered a "genre" writer, or did he only become one when Wollheim did those Ace paperbacks?

On another matter, I am sure that as a not-so-closeted monarchist you are faithfully watching the new PBS series *Victoria*. It's very good. Maybe you can explain to me a point I have been puzzling over, i.e. why Victoria became queen at all, when one of her uncles was the last surviving son of George III. I mean the fat guy with the facial scar, who is Ernest Augustus (1771-1851). He became king of Hanover on the death of William IV. Victoria's father, the Duke of Kent (also a son of George III) had one child, Victoria, born May 24, 1819, but George Augustus also had a son, George V (king of Hanover, not to be confused with George V of England, who was Victoria's grandson), born May 27, 1819. William IV did not die until June 20, 1837.

So, in the last month of William IV's life, there was another brother of George III still alive (Ernest Augustus). If William had inherited the throne from his brother George IV, why did not Ernest Augustus inherit from William? If the rule was that it must pass on to someone in the next generation, why did it go to Victoria and not George, son of Ernest Augustus? Both were grandchildren of George III. Victoria was all of three days older. Did that make a difference? Or did Parliament just make a deal? As it worked out, Victoria became queen of England, but Hanover had the Salic Law (no female inheritance of crowns), so the crown of Hanover went to Ernest Augustus and then to his son, and England and Hanover never shared a monarch again. (Ernest Augustus also active in the English House of Lords, where he was a staunch conservative and very unpopular. Apparently being King of Hanover was a part-time job.)

The British succession was not like the Saudi or the Prussian; Edward was older than Ernst-August, so he would have succeeded if he had survived, and Victoria was his heir.

— JTM

I am sure you can elucidate. I am a mere Patrician of Thxois in the Empire of Trebizond and may not have a full grasp of these things.

From: **George W. Price** January 25, 2017  
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December *Alexiad*:

This issue opens with Lisa's commentary, in a font that is only just barely legible. Big capitals are mated with minuscule lower-case letters that make me reach for my magnifying glass. Can you please, please, find a font that is both distinctive and easy to read?

\*\*\*\*\*

Sue Burke confirms my deduction that she lives right across from the elevated-train tracks. She says, "It's a bit noisy, especially the Purple Line trains as they barrel through." Boy, they are not nearly as noisy as when I started riding them as a kid in the 1940s.

The Great Depression had thrown the elevated-train company into receivership and it had bought no new equipment since the 1920s. The cars used for the Evanston Express (now called the Purple Line) were even older. Some dated from when the North Side line was built in 1895 from downtown to Wilson Avenue. It was extended farther north up into Evanston a few years later.

Compared to modern trains they were noisy indeed. One type had motors that made such a deep bass drone that my brother and I called them "boomers." However, they didn't keep anyone awake late at night, because (like the Purple Line express now) the Evanston Express ran only from the morning rush through the evening. In mid-day it was sometimes called the Shoppers Special because it took the North Shore ladies to the downtown department stores. The local trains that ran all night (now called the Red Line) were the more modern and somewhat less noisy 1920s types.

Back then my family lived on the South Side, and I rarely came up to the North Side, which may be why I particularly noticed that the Evanston Express trains were different from the ones I was familiar with. The Kenwood line that I mostly rode had cars just as old as the Evanston Express did — some dated back almost to 1892 when Chicago's very first elevated line began service — but they were of a different style. This was because the various train lines were built and operated by several different companies; they weren't unified to form the Chicago Rapid Transit Co. until 1924. In 1947 the city took over all the private transit companies — trains, streetcars, and boulevard buses — to form the Chicago Transit Authority with which we are now blessed.

I now live in the Portage Park neighborhood, about six miles west and a mile and a half south of where Ms. Burke is. The nearest train station is Montrose Avenue on the Blue Line, a mile and a half east of me. Now that I am retired I ride the trains only about once every two weeks, mostly to go downtown to pick up my post office box mail and browse

a bookstore.

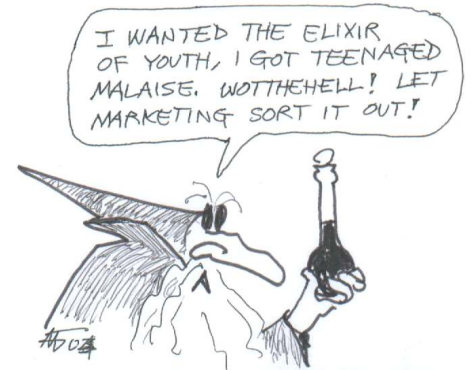
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An editorial note in Richard Dengrove's letter mentions "comparisons between Federal monitors and Royal Navy ironclads." I live on Monitor Avenue, named after the Union warship. Only a few blocks away is Merrimac (not Merrimack) Avenue, named after the other ship in the famous battle. But the two streets run parallel, so there is never a meeting of Monitor and Merrimac.

But Virginia Avenue is nowhere near there.

— JTM

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I forbear to say how I feel about the outcome of the election. However, I will defend the role of the Electoral College.

First, I think it is not too cynical to assume that in this and other close elections, 99% of those who profess outrage when the College overrides the popular vote would have no objection at all if the override had favored their preferred candidate.

Far from being a strange anachronism, the Electoral College is a highly significant and sensible part of our checks and balances. The U.S.A. is not, and was never intended to be, a plebiscitary democracy in which policy is settled by counting noses. It is a federal republic comprising states which are sovereign political entities, not just administrative subdivisions of the national government — that's why we call them "states" rather than "provinces." The College gives weight to regional considerations — it discourages the larger states from simply ignoring the interests of the smaller ones. More broadly, it makes it harder for majorities — whether racial, social, or economic — to ignore the interests of minorities.

Leaving aside the theory, there is also an eminently practical reason for the College. What should we do when the popular vote total is almost evenly divided and we need a recount? With no Electoral College, every vote would count toward the one grand total — and



therefore any recount would have to cover all the votes in the whole country — every precinct in every state. Ye gods! Just imagine the mess in Florida in 2000, and multiply it by fifty! Thank you all to hell, I'll stick with the College and recount only the few states where the popular vote is close.

Likewise, it would encourage vote fraud if every vote stolen anywhere counted against the one grand total. The College sets up firewalls limiting the influence of fraud to the few states where the popular vote is close.

Those strike me as very good reasons for keeping the Electoral College pretty much as it is.

From: **AL du Pisani** November 30, 2016  
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For the first time in a number of years, I could take my December holiday at the same time as the rest of my family. This had a number of advantages, but also had the disadvantage that I had to drive down to the coast.

My initial planning indicated that it would take me 12 hours to drive down – so if I take the suggested number of rest stops, I should be at my destination in 13 hours. It took 14 and a half hours. For one, there were so many other people on the road that it took much longer than anticipated to go through two of the three toll gates on the road. For another, there were enough areas of road construction, with detours and slowing down.

But during this long drive down, I had the chance to see certain things for myself. For one, how badly dry the country was after five years of less than normal rain. While there had been some rains before the holiday, in general it was pretty bad. The maize planted were in general very short, and did not look like much. The sheep I saw were emaciated.

Another thing was the bad state of roads. Partly due to roads not properly maintained for a number of years. Partly due to repairs that were done of the cheap. Partly due to roads that have not been upgraded since the 1950's and 1970's – the 1950 era roads is narrower, with no shoulder, the 1970 era roads are wider and has an about 1 meter wide shoulder.

The N1 is the main highway between Cape Town and Pretoria (via Bloemfontein and Johannesburg.) (I drove from on it Johannesburg to Colesburg, before getting off on to less traveled roads.) For most of the way it consists of a carriageway with a single lane on each side. Some parts has been upgraded to areas where one or the other side has two lanes, enabling faster vehicles to pass slow moving trucks. And close to the major cities the highway has been upgraded to dual carriageways, each with two or more lanes.

After my drive down and back, I have

consistently been surprised at how low the road death total was, even as the press was having a meltdown. You see, I was surprised how few people got killed, given how badly they were driving. I had multiple experiences where people with a desperate need to get to their destination fast would pass at places with road markings forbidding passing, where there is very little line of sight to see what is coming from the front. Time and again my vehicle was nearly sideswiped, as these important people just had to push in front of me, as the road narrowed and the stream of traffic from the other side just kept on coming.

I had a quiet holiday, just resting and chilling with my family. And then they started leaving one by one, and I had to drive back home. This time I split my driving over two days, sleeping over after I had driven for ten hours.

The drive back was different, for it had started to rain. After the first three hours I started to pick up indications that it had rained, and for the last five hours I was driving in the rain. The rain continued the next day, and only stopped about two hours away from home. I could see areas where there was water laying on the ground. I do not know how much of a difference seeing the veldt in soft light and rain made, rather than the harsh blazing sunlight when I drove down, but things were looking better.

Even so we in Johannesburg are still under water restrictions. Partly because the rain have not been falling in the catchment areas of our dams, but also because of aging infrastructure. One piece of evidence for the last is how much the pressure I got at home have fallen during the past year. There are some major refurbishments and expansions going on with regards to the water infrastructure, but we can expect things to remain bad for the foreseeable future.

My mother also had some rain – in fact, had more rain in January than they had all of last year. But, as always, unevenly distributed. So that the area around the farmhouse had the good rain, and the other end of the farm had very little. The rain is so welcome – They had a year with only the wool cheque as income. And they had to use the wool cheque to buy food for the sheep. Hopefully this year will be different.

That sounds like California. My cousins Wade and Ed, who get this, live in California; they might recognize your description.

You asked me for suggestion regarding good authors/books – Immediately my mind went blank, but I have since thought of a couple of authors.

Dave Freer: An ex-South African who emigrated to Australia, where he lives on an island near Tasmania. His juveniles *Cuttlefish*, *The Steam Mole* and *Changeling's Island*, and the more adult books *Dragon's Ring* and *Dog*

and *Dragon* are all books I liked, and think may appeal to you. The first two and last two books are each a series. The first series had a bad review, with the reviewer complaining that not only were the thirteen year old protagonists not having sex with each other, but were not having kinky sex with each other. So that he would not recommend the books as suitable for teenagers.

Nathan Lowell: I know almost nothing about the author. I read the first six novels in his "The Golden Age of the Solar Clipper" series. *Quarter Share*, *Half Share* and *Full Share* are the more juvenile half, and *Double Share*, *Captain's Share* and *Owner's Share* are the more adult half. Something in these books spoke to me, and I ended up reading into the early morning hours.

I'll have to look at the Freer again. As I recall, the first of the books by Lowell didn't impress me, but he may have improved. Thanks for the recommendations.

— JTM

In a couple of important ways this year is already better than last year. I just hope that in the areas where it is still bad to see some improvement soon.

Good luck to you all. Never give up your love of reading.

#### WAHF:

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

**Martin Morse Wooster**, the same.

**Earl Kemp, Leigh Kimmel, Rod Smith, Robin Usher**, who got it.

**Carolyn Clowes, Gary Flispart, Alexis A. Gilliland, Robert Kennedy, Guy H. Lillian III, Marc Schirmeister**, with holiday greetings.

**Susan Baugh, Jason Burnett, Jeffrey Allan Boman, Johnny Carruthers, Carol Clarke, Carolyn Clowes, Steve Fahnenstock, Paul Gadzikowski, Bruce Gillespie, Mike Glycer, Debra Hussey, Robert Kennedy, Dara Korra'ti, Rose-Marie Lillian, Chuck Lipsig, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Eric Lindsay, Victor Milán, Howie Modell, James Nicoll, John Purcell, Mike Resnick, Tom Sadler, Ben Schilling, Steve Silver, Joy V. Smith, Rod E. Smith, Steve Spero, R-Lauraine Tutihasi, B. J. Willinger, Joel Zakem** with birthday greetings.

Sorry this took so long to get out but we're not as used to the cold as we used to be.

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**MASTER OF THE SWIFT**

Tom Swift, son of Barton Swift the owner of the Swift Construction Company of Shopton in the great state of New York, was faced with a puzzle. A pile of the great newspapers of the American Northeast lay before him as he reviewed the mysterious events they recounted.

"This is a great mystery," Tom said, speculatively. "An unknown vehicle is driving through the mountains of the state of North Carolina. When it is not passing, in its rapid and arcane fashion, a large air-craft, of the form of a zeppelin, but apparently a heavier-than-air vehicle, has been observed flying over the said mountains."

"So what are we to do?" asked his long-time confidant and associate Ned Newton, whose mechanical skills complemented Tom's innovative ones.

"We must construct a similar vehicle. I must have words with my father, and with his partner old Wakefield Damon," Tom said foresightedly. "The construction of such a craft will require much effort and great expense, yet its uses will be many and valuable."

The Swift vehicle, the *Swift Auto-Flyer*, was in its final state of testing when the news was bannered across the pages of the journals. MYSTERIOUS INVENTOR SPEAKS they said, and THREATS ISSUED.

There had been a communication received from the presumed builder of the mysterious vehicle. He declined to reveal the secrets of the vehicle, declared himself able to resist any effort directed against him, and proclaimed himself "The Master of the World".

When Tom read the letter, he was profoundly concerned. "This is a most dangerous man," he said judgmentally. "Such a powerful vehicle must be used for the good of humanity, not to ensure the dominance of a man of dangerous isolation."

"Bless my buttons, Tom!" Wakefield Damon said. "Your devotion to humanity is to be commended. What will you do about this 'Master of the World'?"

"The *Swift Auto-Flyer* will be ready for service in the next few days. We will fly her to North Carolina and seek out this 'Master of the World' to propose a comparison test of our vehicles," said Tom, racing ahead.

— Not by Jules Verne or the Stratemeyer Syndicate

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

This is issue **Whole Number Ninety-one (91)**.

**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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I'VE STOPPED WATCHING ALMOST ALL TV SHOWS

THAT'S A GOOD THING. YOU'LL HAVE MORE TIME TO DRAW CARTOONS

BUT WHAT'LL I DRAW ABOUT?



<http://arthurkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

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