

ALEXIAD

(ΛΛΞΙΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Soon I will turn sixty. I never really thought much about that until suddenly now it is upon me. Fifty was not that big a deal. This one is for me. My birthday has always marked the anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis. I came into the world at a time of danger for the whole human race. And now today Putin is rattling the nuclear saber.

Loretta Lynn

The queen of country music passed after the queen of England. Lynn was one tough lady. She once performed after oral surgery., rather than disappoint her fans.

— Lisa

Table of Contents

Editorial.....	1
Reviewer's Notes	1
<i>A for Anything</i>	3
Dragon Awards.....	12
Eclipse News.....	2
<i>The Great Steamboat Race</i>	4
<i>Heinlein In Dimension</i>	9
Hugo Awards.....	11
The Joy of High Tech.....	6
Letter to <i>Scientific American</i>	6
N3F Laureate Awards.....	11
Sidewise Awards.....	11
Stop Press.....	17
Worldcon News.....	12

Book Reviews

JTM Binet, <i>Civilizations</i>	5
JTM Fry, <i>MI9</i>	6
JTM Hutton, <i>Official Secret</i>	6
JTM Kane, <i>An Alternate History of the United States</i>	5
JTM Shankland, <i>The Phantom Flotilla</i>	5

Movie Reviews

JTM <i>The Shepherd</i>	5
TW <i>Vivo</i>	8

Con Reports

LK Archon 45.....	9
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Random Jottings.....	18
----------------------	----

Letters.....	13
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Richard Dengrove, Lloyd Penney, George W. Price, David Shea, Taras Wolansky

Comments are by JTM or LTM

The 68th Running of the Yonkers Trot (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **July 1, 2022** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. Filly Jovianity S won.

The 97th Running of the Hambletonian (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 6, 2022** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Cool Papa Bell, who went off at 50-1, won, while Jovianity S was a close second.

The 130th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **October 9, 2022**, at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky. Rebuff, the beaten Hambletonian favorite, won over a field of twelve.

The 68th Running of the Messenger Stakes (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **July 1, 2022** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. Pleaseletmeknow won.

The 67th Running of the Cane Pace (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **August 6, 2022** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Beach Glass won handily.

The 77th Running of the Little Brown Jug (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 22, 2022** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio. Bythemissal, a supplementary entry whose owners had to pay extra to have him entered, won in the second heat against the other heat winner Fourever Boy.

Trivia: 18

Art:

Sheryl Birkhead.....	11, 13
Alexis A. Gilliland.....	5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16
Trinlay Khadro.....	2
Marc Schirmeister.....	3, 4, 17

HMG..... 2

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Deadline is **December 1, 2022**

Reviewer's Notes

I can imagine Corflu having, or even being, a panel on what everyone has and is taking for it. Ill-health seems to be the new norm. Our sympathy to Guy H. Lillian for his diagnosis with Parkinson's Disease. Even the unstoppable Chris Garcia is unwell.

One would think the original Fans would be even worse-off. They grew up in marginal lives, had to work random jobs, and were always close to the poverty line. Yet most of them lived long and productive lives. (Or died of different reasons; Cyril Kornbluth strained his heart carrying a squad support weapon during the Battle of the Bulge, and died after shoveling his driveway.)

It doesn't help that we've been isolated. Conventions are dying as their conrunners are old fans, and tired.

There is a distrust of science. Perhaps it is because of the weather-cock public image. In the seventies, for example, the great concern was the forthcoming ice age. Massive programs, requiring scientific control of politics and the economy, were proposed. In spite of their having the hockey-stick graph. The science was settled.

Before that, eugenics was dominant. Bad genes would be weeded out of the human germ plasm. Three generations of imbeciles were enough. No more Jukes or Kallikaks. The science was settled.

It is not that science can be wrong — conclusions can be changed as more accurate information, new data, become available, but the finality of it. The calls for the transfer of power to a scientific community are as disturbing as for those of transfer to any closed ingroup. Thus *That Hideous Strength* (1945). Oh, and I wrote a book about that sort of thing, too.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



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

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

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

<https://reanimus.com/store>

— Advt.

Those wacky writers, or devoted fanfiction writers at the ~~Hugo-Winning~~ website Archive Of Our Own have done it again! A Harry Potter fan fiction titled *All The Young Dudes* has not only millions of hits but has been anointed as Canon. It deals with the days of Harry's parents at Hogwarts. How so very British, "dudes".

After too long a pause, Yale Stewart has resumed production on his amusing comic series, JL8. For those who don't remember, the basis of the strip is that the Justice League members are all second-graders in Mr. Schwartz's class — wearing their superhero costumes (more or less; Karen Starr (Power Girl) does not have a cutout in the front of her tunic, and J'onn J'onzz (Martian Manhunter) wears a suit and tie).

Continuing the story arc, Clark has taken Bruce home to reassure him after that ghastly reliving of the murder of his parents. At the Kent home, they are playing video games. Of the Avengers. (And no, not Steed and Cathy Gale or Emma Peel or Tara King or Purdey & Gambit . . .)

<http://limbero.org/jl8/>

The R/V *Tom Crean* commissioned on October 6 in Dingle, County Kerry, Ireland. The ship is named after Antarctic explorer Tom Crean, hero of the British Antarctic

Expeditions and the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. The ship will "undertake fisheries research, oceanographic and environmental research, seabed mapping surveys; as well as maintaining and deploying weather buoys, observational infrastructure and Remotely Operated Vehicles." The christening was done by Aileen Crean O'Brien, Tom's granddaughter.

MONARCHICAL NEWS

Whereas it has pleased Almighty GOD to call to His mercy our late Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth the Second of Blessed and Glorious memory, by whose Decease the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is solely and rightfully come to the Prince Charles Philip Arthur George:

We, therefore, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of this Realm, and members of the House of Commons, together with other members of Her late Majesty's Privy Council, and representatives of the Realms and Territories, Aldermen, and citizens of London and others, do now hereby, with one Voice and Consent of Tongue and Heart, publish and proclaim, that the Prince Charles Philip Arthur George, is now, by the Death of our late Sovereign of happy Memory, become our only lawful and rightful Liege Lord Charles the Third, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of his other Realms and Territories, King, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith: To whom we do acknowledge all Faith and Obedience, with humble affection: beseeching God, by whom Kings and Queens do reign, to bless His Majesty with long and happy years to reign over Us.

Given at St James's Palace this tenth day of September in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-two.

GOD SAVE THE KING.



It looks like the fevered predictions of the tabloids, that Wills (then Prince William of Wales, now Prince of Wales) would be given the throne in place of his father, have failed. The hopes of Jacobites and Republicans alike have been stifled; Franz von Bayern has not been summoned from Germany and elections are not on the table. And so King Charles III has succeeded.

And now we're hearing people saying the monarchy will be abolished after he dies. As opposed to those who were so sure the monarchy would be abolished after his mother would die.

The Spanish government has proposed to abolish some thirty-three noble titles granted after the Civil War by Francisco Franco (who is still dead) or Juan Carlos, to notables of the Francoist regime. These include Conde del Alcazar de Toledo (José Moscardo, defender of the Alcazar), Duque de Primo de Rivera (José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the previous dictator), and most notably Duque de Franco (held by Franco's daughter) and Señorío de Meirás (held by her son Francisco Franco, Marqués de Villaverde). The *Ley de memoria democrática* has been prepared but not yet adopted by the Cortes.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

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

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

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

NASA Eclipse website:

<https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

Other useful eclipse websites:

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

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

THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

A FOR ANYTHING (1959)

[*The People Maker*]

by Damon Knight

With the rise of industrial prosperity, there has been speculation on what is sometimes called an “economy of abundance”, one where manufactured goods are available without cost. The prospects are usually not held to be all that good.

It may surprise some people to realize that the two defining British dystopias, *Brave New World* (1932) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) are economies of abundance. The planners of the brave new world devised great entertainment venues to use the overproduction. The chiefs of the three world powers had those productive efforts expended in machines of war.

These were cases of abundance caused by mass production. When that proved less than abundant, the focus shifted to abundance caused by computerized manufacture. Thus we had futurist Robert Theobald’s manifesto “The Triple Revolution”, which heralded an age of production through “cybernetization”. To which Philip José Farmer wrote “Riders of the Purple Wage” (1967) for *Dangerous Visions*, describing a society run under those principles. It was later expanded into a novel, *The Purple Book* (1970).

Theobald seems to have taken issue with Farmer. With the assistance of J. M. Scott, his wife, he had produced his own vision of a world after the Triple Revolution. This was mimeographed and distributed among his associates, who commented on it. The book and the comments were published as *Teg’s 1994: An Anticipation of the Near Future* (1972). Whereas Farmer had a community of decadent, chaotic artists (in one scene he endorses Frederick Wertham’s description of the relationship between Bruce Wayne and Dick Greyson; now if it had been Tim Drake . . .), Theobald had a prim young student traveling the world and recounting her story in a fashion eerily predictive of LiveJournal. (And the characters have cell phones.)

In one section Integra, “Teg”, the narratrix, visits an artist’s colony called Artisia, which in activity is reminiscent of Farmer’s community. She does not like the lifestyle, is offended by the constant offers of sexual contact, and ends up barricading the door of her bedroom in order to sleep alone.

In John Sladek’s *The Reproductive System* [*Mechasm*] (1968) a near-bankrupt doll mak-

ing company (they have one product and its popularity is over) gets a government contract for a von Neumann machine. After much comical ineptitude the company creates one and humanity can embark on a post-scarcity lifestyle. (The owner must have had some home movies of the contract awardees at an orgy, or something of the sort, to beat the bigger firms.) The von Neumann machine can create anything, and is self-operating. But this is a large industrial plant. What if it were a smaller personally-operated device?

The first part of this novel is a separate short story (“A for Anything”, *F&SF*, November 1957). An inventor creates a replicator, which he calls a Gizmo. The Gizmo consists of a “semi-glass” block attached to two wires. The user attaches the original to one wire, flips a switch, and an exact copy is created at the other end. (Conservation of mass? What’s that?) Presumably he built two, and used one to create several hundred copies, which he mailed out to various addresses.

His hope, you see, is to create a spaceship. With the Gizmo, there will be no need for excessive tankage; when one tank is about to run dry, create a new full one and keep going.

Well, that’s his idea. Others have other ideas. In a few days, social order disintegrates. The inventor has withdrawn to a friend’s house in the country, and listening to whatever news gets out, begins to despair. Then a convoy comes through. The man in charge has guns, and he orders the inventor to get in a car and drive, shooting his friend as an example. The story ends with the inventor driving off, a slave.

Society sort of stabilizes, for some values of stability. In the next section, we see North America divided into small states. One last scientific advance has been made; it is possible to have a Gizmo produce, not an exact copy, but a nugget from which an exact copy can be made. We begin with the protagonist Dick Jones complaining that he has to eat, not a fresh-cooked breakfast, but a duplicated one.

More to the point, the nature of human relationships has changed. There is his family at his domain — and many slaves (referred to as “slobs”). A Gizmo can duplicate people, too.

Dick is about to go to what had been Colorado, to enter service under a superior Boss, to whom his family owes feudal obedience. This takes a lot of preparation. (For example, he notes that one of his rifles is showing signs of rust, so he orders up an entirely new arsenal. Maintenance is apparently too much trouble.)

Eagles, the Boss’s grand house in what had been Colorado, is a gargantuan palace. It is continually under reconstruction, as areas are reworked and added to. There are a number of examples of how the availability of infinite resources has changed society. The Boss at one point shows off one of his collections, a set of original comic strips, and discusses learnedly some bits of historical trivia. And you thought *Citizen Kane*’s Xanadu was bad. The Boss’s “Rosebud” is, well, different . . .

Others are more sinister. The Boss appar-

ently gets off on having slobs thrown down a pit. There are other relationships with slobs, but that will come out later.

And Dick is in over his head. Apparently the idea of being trained at Eagles seems to be to learn how to be as oafish and cruel as possible. He seems to have lost some social struggle before he ever showed up, getting sidelined and ignored. Finally he gets taken into tutelage and bed by an older woman. He fights an unusual duel, seeing who can climb over the exterior of the palace and not fall off. (Earlier on, in an example of how social relationships have reverted, he fights a duel with pistols and manages to survive.) He seems to have been sort of a nitwit; Bertie Wooster without either the ability to compose a story or Jeeves. Moreover this experience all seems rather pointless.

But things are stirring. In the midst of this nothing life, there are considerations about the slobs. They finally seem to be getting the idea that they are disposable.

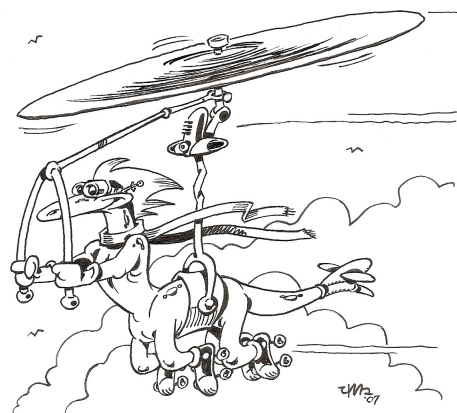
And then Dick meets the other slob relationship. The first Boss had a son by a slave woman, who died shortly thereafter. But he had her copied, and his son has a son by the copy. It has become a tradition that the next Boss has to be the child of a Bosswife.

(This is screaming “Recessives!” in large unfriendly letters. Presumably if a Bosswife has a daughter, the child is discreetly disposed of and a new Bosswife is provided.)

It doesn’t help that Dick meets the latest Bosswife, who is so far blissfully unaware of her fate. And he falls for her.

Not that it matters, for a slob rebellion breaks out. There are striking images of the palace being destroyed. The Bosswife has been rescued by the aged slob who is inspiring the rebellion. In a drastic confrontation, Dick, having been smashing things up with the best of them, kills the slob leader and watches the Bosswife flee.

He calls home, and discovers that the idea has spread, as his family has been wiped out by their slobs. The book ends with his resolution to recover his own.



Southern plantation culture had its cruelties. A modern explication of it was done by Buck Brown, a cartoonist for *Playboy*, who drew a massa riding down from the plantation house in a carriage, past the slaves toiling in the fields, singing, "Take good care of yourself — You belong to me!" (And yes, Buck Brown was black.) If looks could kill . . .

This hideous indifference to slobs is in such a tradition. The masters' humanity has been corrupted. The idle pointlessness of the characters' lives is a result of such corruption. Knight is describing how prosperity can lead to a degradation of humanity, whether the crude slobs or the brutal masters, and how such abundance can kill the desire to innovate and explore.

(One wonders what these varied authors would make of Elan Mastai's *All Our Wrong Todays* (2017), which attains post-scarcity through infinite energy. Or Fred Pohl's "The Man Who Ate the World" (1960) about a less-attractive result of infinite production.)



There was a strange riposte to this story. Ralph Williams, a minor author, wrote a story titled "Business as Usual, During Alterations" (*Astounding*, July 1958). It has the distribution of a Gizmo with the serial numbers filed off. The head of a department store takes measures. He only sells on charge accounts. Stability is somewhat preserved. (Williams pulled off an elaborate firearms joke. Anyone who comes in wanting to get a weapon for self-defence or self-aggrandizement gets sold a Sten gun, a simple British submachine gun design from WWII, that has been turned into a non-functional war trophy, and a box of .380 ammunition, which is the same caliber as the 9 mm ammunition for the Sten, but has a shorter casing — it won't chamber properly!)

BOATY MCBOATFACE

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
THE GREAT STEAMBOAT RACE
by John Brunner (1983)

John Kilian Houston Brunner was a man

who rose above, or some might say fell from, his origins. He was descended from Sir John Tomlinson Brunner, Bt., co-founder of Imperial Chemical Industries. He served in the Royal Air Force. While the Brunners' politics had been generally Liberal, Brunner himself was more radical.

He began in the fifties as a writer of adventure science fiction, but progressed. His Hugo-winning novel *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968) was one of a quartet of novels describing various unpleasant fates for human society, as predicted by the Club of Rome. The other three were *The Jagged Orbit* (1969), *The Sheep Look Up* (1972), and *The Shockwave Rider* (1975).

These behind him, he put his career on a different course. Dropping out of science fiction, he began a vast and deep program of research, aimed at producing an historical novel of depth and fidelity. *The Great Steamboat Race* is a tale of the Mississippi River steamboat culture of the post-Civil War era. This is a colorful period, an era of specialized technological development.

Brunner depicts a vast and varied cast of characters sweeping across the classes of American society, from the wealthy investors and planters to the humble newly-freed ex-slaves who toil and moil. (And yes, he has his characters use *that* word; it has to be realistic.) Some are just striking, such as the chief pilot in New Orleans who was blinded during the War when a Union cannon hit his ship and blew the boilers. Others are melancholy, such as the poor Black man who fired the cannon, and gets hired as an engineer on the *Nonpareil* literally at the last moment. Or the merchant selling new explosives, who wants to plant one of his charges in the boiler wood of the other boat, only to discover the prevalence of fraud. Or the unfortunate band leader and composer who wants to make a name for himself.

Similarly, he describes in *Analog-ish* detail the mechanics of building and operating a paddlewheel steamboat. Every part has its use, its benefits, its weaknesses. The effort needed to create the new fastest boat on the Mississippi, rightly named the *Nonpareil*, is carefully and thoroughly described.

The *Nonpareil* makes her first trip from the building yard in Cincinnati to New Orleans. On hand there is the current champion boat of the rivers, the *Atchafalaya*. Immediately, speculation begins of a race between the boats, a Great Steamboat Race indeed.

But the captain of the *Nonpareil* isn't interested. Or isn't interested until a physician arrives from France, summoned at great expense and effort, to treat a child in St. Louis who is desperately ill, using his wonderful new electric treatment machines. (One of his colleagues, there in New Orleans, disdains him; he also disdains the germ theory.)

And so the *Nonpareil* is booked for a trip, not to Louisville as had been planned, but St. Louis — and, the *Atchafalaya* is also ready to go. Great excitement energizes the city; bets are laid, plans are made, journalists deployed.

The Great Steamboat Race is on. The two boats make their way up the treacherous Mississippi, encountering snags, sandbars, other boats, and such perils of the river. Going at the thrilling speed of fifteen miles an hour, the contenders progress, surrounded by waves of enthusiasm and terror. The progress of the two boats is described in full and powerful technical detail. This is how such a race would go. The cities of the river watch and wait with bated breath.

The last stretch to St. Louis is finally at hand. The *Atchafalaya* has surged into the lead, and the captain of the *Nonpareil* is pulling out the last stops to catch up. Wherein the problem, Building such a boat is a compromise, and some of the compromises are coming apart. The boilers suffer fatal leaks, and a fire starts. The *Nonpareil* turns for shore and barely makes it, and the captain of the *Atchafalaya* turns back to help rescue the survivors.

This book is what might be called a "Grand Hotel" work, where a large number of characters with their own stories connect and influence each other and the plot. The term "Grand Hotel" comes from German writer Vicki Baum, whose novel *Menschen im Hotel* (1929) was used as the basis for the movie *Grand Hotel* (1932). Brunner had the writing skill to do this; consider for example the intricate plot, subplots, and interlace of *Stand on Zanzibar*.

But by 1983 it seemed that Grand Hotel novels were passé. Arthur Hailey had written several, including one titled *Hotel* (1965). Paul Gallico had made a name with *The Poseidon Adventure* (1969), made into a successful movie (1972). The disaster movies that followed from this seem to have burned out the subgenre.

The detailed description of the building and equipping of the boat may have been more than readers could take; too complicated, too detailed. John Masters, the chronicler of the Raj, once observed that he dared not do too much research, or he would feel obliged to insert every petty bit of trivia he found, no matter how much it slowed the plot. (On the other hand, when asked by a editor to cut down the amount of military detail in a novel, he responded by writing an episode of a sailing ship in a storm, having to take emergency measures — without using *any* specific maritime terms; it goes both ways.)

Brunner provided the reader with an immense bibliography and described in detail how he had researched the book. The race is based on an actual race (which happily did not end with such a disaster), the detailed description of the Mississippi was taken from a riverboatman's guide to the river.

Brunner renders the settings, whether the murky and humid mud streets of New Orleans, or the decks of the boats, in vivid detail. The reader will feel himself there.

Yet . . . the book did not sell well. Brunner felt his effort had been wasted. It was the

harbinger of his physical decline. Widowed, deprived of his emotional and organizational support, he wasted away until he died, at the Glasgow Worldcon on August 25, 1995.

MIRROR, MIRROR

Review by Joseph T Major of
CIVILIZATIONS

(2021; Farrar, Straus and Giroux;
ISBN 978-0374600815; \$27.00;

2021; Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Kindle);
\$11.99)

by Laurent Binet, translated by Sam Taylor
2021 Sidewise Award Long Form winner

Native-Americans Won stories (*The Indians Won*, Martin Cruz Smith, 1970; *Apacheria*, Jake Page, 1998) have a problem of numbers. The white-skins have more people and more resources. The writer has to make accommodations and go farther back.

Binet makes an interesting start; he has one of the Norsemen settling Vinland have smallpox, which communicates itself to the Skraelings. Which clears the decks.

After the ghastly failure of the effort by Cristobal Colon to achieve a short-cut to the Indies, things settle down. Until the Inca Civil War (which, unfortunately, was triggered by an epidemic among the Incas) ends up with Athahualpa deciding to flee east. He rebuilds Columbus's ships (have fun trying to rig those things) and sails to Spain.

Where, with his entourage of about 200, he arranges a meeting with Carlos Quinto, takes the King and Emperor hostage, and achieves the overlordship of Spain. Just as Pizarro did to the Incas in Our Time Line. At which point I said, "It didn't work that way," and gave up.

You see, while the Inca Empire was centered around the Inca, Spain was run by a complicated assemblage of cabinets, and broken into often independent-minded kingdoms. If Carlos was taken prisoner, while Castile might submit, would Aragon and Navarre?

And similarly would the Holy Office just lie down and die? Nobody's expecting them to. Not to mention other sides in the ongoing religious difficulties. (Having Henry VIII adopt the syncretistic Inca-modified religion in order to justify having many wives would go over ever so well with Parliament and the Anglican Church.)

HAMILTON

Review by Joseph T Major of
AN ALTERNATE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES:

From the Birth of the First Republic to the Second Civil War

(2022; Fulton Books;
ISBN 978-163860720; \$20.95;
2022; Fulton Books (Kindle); \$9.49)
by Nicholas Kane

It's reasonably certain that in this time-

line, there won't be a big-production, anachronistic Broadway play about Alexander Hamilton. Such is the fate of art.

And yet the point of departure is so simple. President Washington decides to run for a third term. His presidency goes well, including a successful and bloodless dispersal of the Whiskey Rebellion (since the Declaration thoughtfully decided not to follow the Polish example and Albert Gallatin did not throw in with the moonshiners).

There is a subtle earlier departure, as John Adams tires of subordination and Washington is able to name Hamilton to succeed him. (That is, the new constitution had some version of the 25th Amendment; whether this is intentional or an error on the author's part is hard to say.) Which becomes more than once, as thanks to carelessness about maintenance and not exactly helpful medical care, Washington dies and Hamilton becomes President.

Hamilton seems a little more forceful in national and international affairs. He dispatches an expeditionary force to Europe to join in the War of the Second Coalition, which helps bring about an embarrassing defeat for the 1st Consul. But at home, he becomes a little too empowered by the Sedition Act. (And is nearly assassinated by Aaron Burr.)

His authoritarian rule does not go over well on the frontier, which leads to the First Civil War. All the smart generals were on the rebels' side, and factories didn't matter, so the war ends with Hamilton exiling himself to the Canadas, and the founding of what is referred to as the Second Republic.

Which still has the problem of what to do about slavery, which after an era of growth and expansion leads to a Second Civil War.

Kane has an unusual method, which some might call a built-in spoiler. Each chapter begins with a time line of the events therein, followed by a narrative. Beyond that, he seems to have too few butterflies in the births of people who become prominent.

It is interesting to see how the United States might have developed without a two-term custom. Kane's historical revision is interesting and in some ways all too plausible.



THE SHEPHERD

By Back Garden Films

Screenplay and direction by

Stephen Parker

3D Models, Characters, & Animation by

Stephen Parker

Based on the story by

Frederick Forsyth

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

The Shepherd is the story of a RAF pilot, flying home from Germany for Christmas 1957, having an extreme emergency. Lost in fog, deprived of his instruments because of a power failure, he considers his choices and finds all of them fatal.

To his relief, another airplane looms out of the mist. An old Mosquito bomber, appearing out of nowhere, to save him. The pilot follows the Mosquito, sees the lights of an airfield, and gliding because he is *completely* out of fuel, makes a landing — almost into a housing development.

An elderly RAF sergeant drives up to pick him up and explain what's going on. The air base he has landed in has been closed and is about to be demolished. He had heard the planes and turned on the lights.

It gets even more complicated. No one at the RAF bases knows about any air guidance missions and they don't even operate Mosquitos any longer.

The sergeant has a picture of one of the pilots who flew from the base during the War — and it's the same one who guided the narrator to safety. Except he died on Christmas Eve, 1943, bringing home another plane.

Strikingly, the film is completely computer animated. (Human features still need work, alas.) The result is amazing for its skills, and moving for its presentation of the story.

THE WORLD OF COMMANDER MCBRAGG

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE PHANTOM FLOTILLA:
An Exciting True Story from the Royal Navy's History
(1969; 2019; Lume Books (Kindle); \$3.99)
by Peter Shankland

This is the world of Commander McBragg!
Your hair will curl in the world of McBragg!
He can do anything! In his world, he's the king!
Or so says the brag of McBragg!

These were cartoon fill-ins on *Tennessee Tuxedo* (a penguin always trying to get out of the zoo; he should have got a message through to Mr. Cobblepot). They were set at a gentleman's club. The title character would entrap a fellow clubman, spin a globe, point to a location on it, and tell a wild story about an adventure he had there.

This descends from Lord Dunsany's Joseph Jorkens, and has ties to Clarke's Harry Purvis

and Lanier's Brigadier Ffellowes, and the people at Pratt's and de Camp's Gavagan's Bar and Niven's Draco Tavern. Captain Geoffrey Basil Spicer-Simson had one small difference from these people; he actually existed.

In spite of an effort to make Africa neutral, the World War quickly extended to the European colonies, drawing in the hapless locals. The unfortunate Belgian Congo, formerly the Congo Free State, was haunted by Leopold's ghost. Its mineral riches were valuable to the Allies, and so the German troops under the redoubtable Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck over the border in Deutscheostafrika were a threat.

And the Germans controlled Lake Tanganyika, the boundary. This was not good news.

In a small office in the Admiralty, a not-quite disgraced officer sat and did paperwork. His last command had been terminated abruptly when a ship under his command was torpedoed offshore, while he was on shore to see it. Commander Spicer-Simson had been in the surveying department and had extensive experience in Africa, as well as speaking several languages.

He was assigned to do this. The project required transporting two gunboats overland, since the river system was less than navigable. Spicer-Simson set about designing transport cradles for the boats. He had wanted to call them "Dog" and "Cat", and upon being told that those were *quite* unsuitable names for H.M. ships, compromised on HMS *Mimi* and HMS *Toutou*.

That done, he proceeded in execution of his orders. This effort brought to attention two of his habits. First off, he delegated; the doctor was told to get what he needed and did so without interference from his C.O. Second was his bragging; he would describe improbable heroic exploits from his Navy career at the drop of a sweat. Yes, this was the brag of McBragg.

Nevertheless, he persisted. And by December 1915 he had launched the boats on the lake. The ensuing campaign was startlingly brief; by the end of January Spicer-Simson had captured one German gunboat and sunk another, gaining partial control of the lake.

He did not remain in command much longer, having become torpid and not committing his ships to further operations. Also, the main German ship, the *Graf von Götzen*, remained in service. Yet when he returned to Britain he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order to add to several Belgian awards and named to a high position in the Naval Intelligence Department.

He retired after the war and moved to British Columbia, where he died in 1947. Other works, such as Giles Foden's *Mimi and Toutou Go Forth: The Bizarre Battle of Lake Tanganyika* (2004) present a less approving view of Spicer-Simson.

This is a picture of a strange and perhaps troublesome officer. But he was set to a job and got it done. In our zero-defects, perfect-resumé Navy is there room for such an officer?

HOGAN'S HEROES

Review by Joseph T Major of
MI9:

A History of the Secret Service for Escape and Evasion in World War Two

by Helen Fry
(2020; Yale University Press;
ISBN 978-000233209; \$12.00;
2020; Yale University Press (Kindle); \$6.24)
and

OFFICIAL SECRET:

The Remarkable Story of Escape Aids, Their Invention, Production, and the Sequel

by Clayton Hutton
(1961; 2015; Tannenberg Publishing
(Kindle); \$4.99

The Kregies in Stalag 13 had it pretty well. They had an elaborate tunnel network under the camp, and contacts locally and abroad. Better off than the Kriegies in *Stalag 17*.

Reality, of course, had its own twist. When the Second World War broke out, one of the things the British did was to begin developing means for prisoners of war to escape and return to Blighty.

An entire department of Military Intelligence was created, under the purview of Colonel Z, the arch-spy Claude Dansey. But it was run by others, and the efforts of Brigadier Norman Crockatt made things very interesting for the Jerries, the Ites, and even the Nips.

He had the assistance of many deceivers. The one first to attention was his technician, Christopher Clayton "Clutty" Hutton. His memoirs make him out to have been someone with remarkable influence and access, and surprisingly Fry's book confirms them.

But once you have compasses hidden in uniform buttons (chess pieces, shaving brushes, whatever), maps hidden in playing cards (books, Monopoly sets, whatever), uniforms that convert into civilian gear, and food supplies, what do you do with them? Escapees across Europe used such covert equipment to pass through occupied Europe. Even if they didn't make it, the effort expended in a search detracted from the German war effort. (Well, there was the aftermath of the Great Escape, but one MI9 staffer was a survivor of the Wormhoudt Massacre, so there's that.)

Other chapters cover the other Axis partners. Italy was an interesting place, being rife with people disinterested in Fascism. (Don Camillo and Peppone evidently never had to deal with escaped prisoners of war in Mondo Piccolo.) One advantageous fact was that Vatican City gave refuge to escaped POWs and even had people working for it.

The Far East had problems. All the same, MI9 provided advice and aids, and a few prisoners managed to make it back to friendly terri-

tory.

Hutton proudly described the ingenuity he and his associates employed to provide prisoners with these aids. Now that they're gone, Fry has demonstrated how these devices were employed and the aid they gave to the Allies. She recounts the bravery of French, Italians, and even Germans in support of the effort.

CORRECTION

Letter by Taras Wolansky to
Scientific American

August 27, 2022

Dear Editors:

Sheree Renée Thomas writes ("A Time Traveler's Legacy," September) that Octavia Butler's influential 1979 novel, *Kindred*, was published "at a time when it was commonly believed that Black people didn't read or write science fiction."

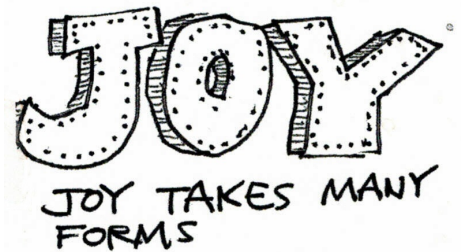
It should be noted that, by the time Butler published her first story in 1971, Samuel R. Delany, arguably the dean of Afrofuturists, had already been nominated for science fiction's highest awards, the Hugo and the Nebula, an astonishing 13 times, winning Best of the Year five times.

Indeed, Delany was the first author to win the Science Fiction Writers of America's Nebula Award for Best Novel twice, in 1967 and 1968.

Sincerely,
Taras Wolansky
Kerhonkson, NY

The Joy of High Tech

by Rodford Edmiston



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

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

Attention to Detail

The closer we look the more we see. Interestingly, the applies to everything. Ironically,

this often requires larger and larger tools to examine things in increasingly finer details. From the revelations of the latest particle accelerator to what is shown by the newest telescope, we humans have learned to look more and more closely at things, almost always to our benefit. Just as important, we have also learned to value what we see in these details. Well, most of us have...

Crime solving is one of the activities where paying attention to detail pays off. Using special powder (or cyanoacrylate fumes) and a magnifying glass can reveal identifying details of fingerprints. Using a microscope with a special holder can allow the direct comparison of the markings on two bullets. PCR can amplify DNA in samples. All of these and much more can be used to exonerate the innocent and determine who is guilty. Thus removing much of the guesswork in crimefighting. Unfortunately, the old mindset of just picking someone who is thought guilty and building a case against them is still used by many. Interestingly, in some cases new methods of examining crimes were portrayed in fiction before even major metropolitan police organizations adopted them.

Astronomy is an old science. However, before the invention of practical photography, recording what was seen depended on written descriptions and often hasty sketches, both of which can be highly subjective. (I'm looking at you, Percival Lowell, and your maps of Mars.) Even when what was seen was accurately represented, it was limited to what could be directly observed with human vision.

The first known photo taken through a telescope was a Daguerrtype of the Moon in 1840. However, sensitivity, resolution, practicality and durability all had to improve greatly before astrophotography became useful. Once it did, though, the process removed subjective analysis (well, some of it) and allowed more than one person to review the same view of the sky. As well, astrophotography soon had the ability to detect objects much too faint for the Mark I Eyeball to detect. By 1883 the dry plate process allowed astronomers to record and examine stars too faint to see with unaided vision on the same telescope. Even beyond that, in the late Nineteenth Century it became obvious there was more to the universe than what was visible, even with astrophotography.

By the time this is written there is well over a century of astrophotographic material gathered in various archives. This includes spectrograms, which are monochrome images of stellar and planetary spectra projected directly onto a photographic medium. Better, these old astrophoto negatives (mostly large-format glass plates with extremely fine grain) are being scanned and made widely available digitally through the Internet. Astronomers can now use magnification on these scans of telescopic negative images to check things which the people who originally made them

never imagined. As one example, they can determine if the variability of a particular star is a new phenomenon or something simply missed before. Astronomers can use things like old sky surveys, adjust the exposure by using the average brightness of known constant stars, and plot the brightness of the body being checked through time. The resulting plots are often very revealing.

Astronomers can also determine whether a recent change has been recorded but not noted before. Checking things like ancient records (those made by Chinese astrologers, especially) and even the alignments of large, old structures can be illuminating. Though the information revealed can often raise additional questions. For example, due to the precession of the Earth's axis, at the time the Great Pyramid was built there was no distinctive north star (today the north axis of our planet points very closely towards Polaris). So why does one of the "ventilation shafts" in the King's Chamber of that monolithic structure point towards what then would have been an empty part of the sky?

Staying on the topic of astronomy for the moment, the new James Webb Space Telescope is specialized for several bands of infrared light. Each band is broader than the range of frequencies in "visible" light, and each band tells us different things. For example, some bands of IR are much better than visible light at getting through intervening clouds of dust. The JWST, being outside our distorting atmosphere, can also (as can several other telescopes on space probes, though the JWST is newer and more advanced) show more detail than we can get through our dirty air. Which, by the way, blocks much of the IR reaching us from space. Among other revelations, the JWST has provided some of the best views of the outer planets and their moons since the last actual probe was there.



Coming back to Earth, remnants in left in old pots — especially those made of clay — have revealed what our ancestors stored and what they cooked. Anthropologists and other interested parties have even managed to figure out how they made alcoholic beverages, and what they fermented doing so. Likewise, in those days before regular tooth cleaning, dental calculus (the hard residue left on the teeth and today recovered from ancient skeletons and mummies) can teach us what people actually ate. Not surprisingly, there is little correlation between the menus thus revealed and such

things as "the Paleolithic diet" or "the caveman diet."

Most readers of this column probably remember when it was announced that the Large Hadron Collider had confirmed the existence of the Higgs Boson and gave its mass. Some of you may have even wondered why experimenters were still running the device after that. Well, there is far more to be discovered after finding the Higgs Boson and getting a good estimate of its mass. For one thing, refining our value for the mass of that vital particle will help with such things as using fusion for power generation. It is also a fact that the existence of many other particles remains theoretical.

Doc Smith and many other SF writers in first half of the Twentieth Century speculated that layer after layer of ever finer particles and forces were yet to be discovered. While the actual situation is unlikely to be "turtles all the way down" it is known that — theoretically, supported by the evidence so far — there is at least one more layer of particles to be explored. So, we need to keep looking.

Oh, and for those worried that the LHC will create some sort of effect which will doom the planet (or even the universe) I'd like to point out something. Far more energetic collisions than anything the Large Hadron Collider can produce take place in our upper atmosphere several times a day, and have been for billions of years. (God has a much bigger accelerator budget than we do.) The problem is that A) we don't know what exactly went into each of these events and B) they are randomly distributed in time and space. Getting large, sensitive detectors up that high is also a major problem. However, much has been learned by putting smaller detectors in high-altitude balloons.

The idea that ancient footprints could be preserved in a prehistoric environment took a while to be accepted by scholars. In fact, a consensus of acceptance did not occur until decades or centuries after the first widespread reports of such things. In part this was due to simple cultural inertia. However, the unlikelihood of something as ephemeral as footprints being preserved was also a factor. Recognition of the true age of the Earth helped scientists to accept that this rare occurrence would have plenty of chances to happen through time.

Not helping with the acceptance was the fact that some deformations in rock with other causes were claimed by the ignorant or overeager to be footprints. Many of these were debunked, which resulted in all such tracks being considered mistakes or outright hoaxes (of which there were a few). Also not helping was that the preservation of footprints usually required unique events, and to this day scientists studying geology and its processes tend to think of these things as proceeding gradually and smoothly, on a predictable course. (On the long-term average, of course, they do.)

However, footprints do get preserved by natural processes. From those of the distant ancestors of dinosaurs and many creatures of

contemporary antiquity, to tracks left by anatomically modern humans into current times. (Getting back to the an early part of this column, examining footprints is important in modern crime scene analysis.) The Laetoli footprints of Tanzania — some of them over three and a half million years old — were left in a fresh layer of volcanic ash, cemented by a gentle rainfall (raindrop prints have also been preserved in this layer) and then covered by a different ash fall. Note that the prints of over twenty species are thus preserved. The preliminary find of hominin tracks was left by three individuals — perhaps a family unit of members of the *Australopithecus afarensis* species — with one of these individuals actually walking in the footprints of one the others. One of them may have been a female carrying an infant on her hip. Their feet were remarkably similar to those of modern humans. This trail runs about 27 meters.

Many of the fossilized tracks discovered were left in fresh mud which then dried before another layer of mud (or something else) was deposited. There have even been tracks of things like sea worms, left underwater in mud which is now rock well inland. Burrows of sea creatures have also been discovered.

Such tracks are far more than interesting curiosities. From them we can determine the size of the creature which left them, how fast it was walking and sometimes what was stalking — and likely eating — what. A set of tracks recently discovered (in 2017) and analyzed (ongoing, as this is written) in White Sands, New Mexico were made roughly ten thousand to thirteen thousand years ago. These fossilized footprints were found just below a layer of loose white gypsum sand by a National Parks employee familiar with the area, who was paying close attention to the details of the ground. Paleontologists have since determined that some of the tracks were left by a young woman likely in her late teens. On one trip across the mud — heading northwest — she carried a toddler most of the way, but occasionally put the child down. On the way back — hours later, though while the mud was still wet — she was unburdened. She knew where she was going, with her tracks proceeding in a straight line both times. The path she took covers about a kilometer and a half each way, before disappearing into less preservative ground beyond the muddy area.

Other tracks made in that area during this same, relatively short window in time include those of a woolly mammoth and a giant sloth. The latter showed a wariness on encountering the human tracks, circling and even rearing up on its hind legs before deciding to go another way. The former just kept going as it was, perhaps not even noticing the human tracks. All of this information and more has come from a detailed examination of a series of tracks. If that little peek into the recent past doesn't tickle your sensawunder, there's something wrong with you.

These tracks are very fragile, beginning to

deteriorate as soon as they are uncovered. Paleontologists are therefore working on small sections at a time, photographing, measuring and making casts. Who knows what more they will learn?

Designing aircraft and — especially — spacecraft has taught us to be very attentive to detail. Because in those facets of engineering a mistake is usually quickly obvious and expensive, and sometimes fatal. Boosters have exploded on or just above the launch pad because someone overlooked a small detail. As well, the higher up a launch vehicle stack a part is the more critical weight saving becomes. So, a fraction of a percent removed from the topmost mass can result in significant savings.

Sometimes, though, paying great attention to the details just doesn't pay off. Any competent engineer knows there are times to leave well enough alone.

When structural design software became widely used in the early Eighties a revolution in lightweight buildings began to be constructed. Unfortunately, while these structures were plenty strong, many of them turned out to be far too flexible. People on upper floors of these new buildings were actually getting motion sickness! A round of structural stiffening reinforcement and the installation of tuned mass dampers became common. The need was very obvious to anyone who worked in such a building. One person said he could *feel* the mail cart coming. It turned out the heavy cart was perpetually in the trough of a shallow wave as it was pushed slowly across the floor. The deflection wasn't enough to be unsafe but it was definitely noticeable!

So it turns out that while painstaking attention to detail is useful in the aerospace industry, for uses where the grams saved are not important that rounding up is still good engineering practice! Most of the time, though, paying attention to the details of a situation is a good thing.



VIVO LA DOUCHE

Review by Taral Wayne of
VIVO (2020)

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6338498/>

Occasionally, I come across an animated

film that is so appallingly bad, and yet so professionally made, that I can only spew invective on it. Sony's recent *Vivo* was the latest such movie to enrage me.

When I came across a new copy from WalMart, I was dubious from the start. Unfortunately, I hadn't seen a new film in too long ... so, against my better judgment, I bought it. It did not disappoint my need to be offended.

In short, *Vivo* was a piece of trash that not even an answering machine would find memorable enough to record.

When I bought it, the colourful but strangely unappealing character designs should have been a warning. As well, everyone in the cast seemed to be unknowns to me, and that too ought to have started warning bells over the exit signs. Usually there are *one* or *two* headliners in the cast ... but there was only one who I *thought* I recognized among the minor credits ... although I wasn't at all sure. Worse, a name I had never heard before, Lin-Manuel Miranda, voices the main character, scored all the music, wrote the story and, I suspect, directed how the characters would look. I should have dropped the box on the floor, kicked it behind the display rack with my foot, and pretended I had never seen it.

But I was desperate for something new to watch, and it was not expensive enough to make me cautious. Later that afternoon, I watched it. After buying it, that was the second mistake I made.

I'm reluctant to admit that the animation gave me nothing to complain about. Some of the reveries in *Vivo*'s mind experimented quite freely and playfully. I appreciate good animation. Nor did the voice actors fail to deliver the goods, *per se*. *Moy* disappointment. I didn't want to enjoy anything about this movie.

Vivo, you see, is first and foremost a contemporary musical. It shares a lot with other forgettable musicals that all closely follow Disney's musical formula, that are all stazy excuses for spectacle. In the hands of a Gene Kelly, a musical is a delight, surprising us with plot twists and playful numbers. In the hands of a Lin-Manuel Miranda — who wrote not only the story for *Vivo*, composed *all* the music and also plays the part of *Vivo* himself — it was a recipe for disaster that rivaled the self-indulgence of a Seth MacFarlane who's been up all night with cheap beer and a bad hangover. In other words, in the hands of someone like Lin-Manuel Miranda, in other words, who lacks real genius, like Lin-Manuel Miranda, it results in a thin story, with just enough padding to stretch out for 90 minutes ... and a film just long that the average 12-year-old will not notice he is being cheated.

The old dancer and his love had once danced together in the streets, and he stepped aside to give his beloved a chance at stardom in Miami! He resumed dancing in the streets alone for spare change. But there is one last chance! His beloved has sent a free plane ticket so that they can reunite.

Of course, the old dancer, looking forward

to tomorrow, dies in his sleep. So now Vivo resolves to deliver the old dancer's last song to his beloved. Vivo, by the way, is a talking kinkajou ... though his internal monologs might as easily have written for a pink flamingo.

Cut to a little American girl, on vacation in Havana. (Is that a thing?) She has purple hair and wants to be a rapper, but has no shred of talent. None. She doesn't want other little girls to be her friends, because they all take life too seriously, and want to save endangered wildlife. They want her to sell Girl Scout cookies, and wear a uniform. Baby Rapper, however, decides to steal Mom's credit card, charge the ticket to an important dance, and run off to the Everglades. Although the plot is a bit attenuated up to this point, it is at least a real plot ... but the middle part of the movie turns into a chase in the swamp, more talking animals, fighting crocodiles and a giant python!

In one of the least convincing of all plot mergers, Baby Rapper now runs into Vivo, who is also lost in the Everglades! Some sort of Mafiosi have begun chasing Vivo, to steal the last music of the old dancer, and the girl guides are tailing Baby Rapper to force her to return Vivo to this "protective cage" at Animal Protection. And then, in a complete change of heart, the girls now intend to help Baby Rapper, who wrap everything up nicely a huge musical farewell show. So the memory of the old dancer dances with his beloved once again, everyone in the audience sighs and the last song is of course a big, number one hit!

In the end, Baby Rapper has made friends after all. They still sell cheap cookies to save wildlife, but she still has purple hair and wants to be LL Cool J. It'll probably be another 10 years before she busts her first cap, so it's a happy ending. Right? No!

There was just SO much wrong with this film that was the result of nothing more than carelessness, and just frankly not giving a damn. My complaints are mainly little things, but it's because they would have been so easy to fix that they annoy me! For instance, American tourists who wander around Havana at will, without a legion of creepy spies reporting on their every movement. Equally incredible was the direct route taken by Baby Rapper from her mom's home in Key West to Miami, as though neither orange groves nor Disneyland lay between! Apparently it is fairly safe to cross the open ocean before plunging into the swamp, and once clear of the gators it is clear sailing across the bay right into the fabulous neon heart of Miami!

Okay... I know what the problem was. I'm overreacting. This was a movie for 12-year-olds, not sophisticated, pop-culture geeks like me. I'm just not going to accept this excuse yet again. Adult audiences have been conditioned to accept whatever Disneyfied gruel is spoon-fed to them, just as long as there is a fairytale romance, and plenty

of soulless, over-produced, forgettable spectacle. Is there any question that this is the audience wants? None at all!

The *Rotten Tomatoes* site gives *Vivo* something like an 86% approval rating! Who am I to say 86% of the public is wrong, just because they like their pabulum bland? But they are wrong! The public could be enjoying much better movies than *Vivo* that are not written, composed and performed by some conceited, studio deity. The public could have been watching Ron's *Gone Wrong*, *Soul*, *Inward*, *Encanto*, *Luca*, *Onward*, *Coco* or *Missing Link* – all superior animated films that have appeared in the last few years.

There is no rule that says a young audience can only enjoy familiar tropes, carelessly tossed together for no other purpose than to include the right number of food groups. So why do writers give young viewers such Silly Putty trash when it would be so easy do better? The answers are all rather ugly, and betray a deep-seated contempt for young minds, and the lack of imagination of the people who exploit them.

HEINLEIN'S FINE LINES

Review by Thomas E. Simmons of

HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION:

A Critical Analysis

(1968; Advent: Publishers, Inc.; ISBN 979-8712452569; \$14.99)

by Alexei Panshin

In last month's *Alexiad*, Joseph T. Major regretfully reported the passing of Alexei Panshin (1940-2022). During his productive life, Panshin penned, inter alia, one of the earliest serious critical analyses of science fiction, one which focused on the lifetime literary output of Robert A. Heinlein (1907-88) through the year 1967.

The influence of Heinlein is difficult to overstate. Panshin's monograph breaks down the Grand Master's works into three periods: (1) prewar ("The Period of Influence"); (2) postwar ("The Period of Success"); and (3) 1959-67 ("The Period of Alienation").

Thus, Panshin's book necessarily omits what is typically seen as Heinlein's fourth period which followed a health crisis beginning in 1970 and includes novels such as *Time Enough for Love* (1973), *Job: A Comedy of Justice* (1984), and *The Cat who Walks Through Walls* (1985). The book also omits posthumous Heinlein publications like *For Us, the Living: A Comedy of Customs* (2003) and *Variable Star* (2006) (co-authored by Spider Robinson).

According to Panshin's assessment, Heinlein's postwar period was not only the author's most successful, but also his most productive. *Have Space Suit – Will Travel* (1958), Panshin says, "is put together amazingly well. It is pure magic" (84). Indeed, Panshin predicted, in time, Heinlein will be remembered mostly for his juvenile novels. Like Joseph Rudyard Kipling (today remembered mostly for youngster fiction such as *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *Just So Stories* (1902)), Panshin predicted that the

Scribner's juveniles like *Farmer in the Sky* (1950) and *Tunnel in the Sky* (1955) would be the works which survived.

Time will tell, but Panshin is mostly dismissive of the "Alienation Period" Hugo-winners. He is unenthusiastic about *Starship Troopers* (1959) and its "curiously anonymous" (96) narrator and downright scornful of *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) which he characterizes as "a heavily sexual, metaphysical, thoroughly annoying piece of work" (98) comprised of three competing stories jostling for the reader's attention – a satire, an adventure story, and the founding of a new religion. The rightness of the Martian religion in *Stranger*, Panshin explains, is – like the militaristic creed of the government of veterans in *Starship Troopers* – presented as a brute fact which exists on a plane beyond argument:

"If you grant the story's premises, the religion cannot be argued with, just as, if I were to write a story in which Heaven was only open to string savers and mud eaters and actually made things come out that way, my religion would be beyond argument" (101).

Panshin's view of *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1965) is slightly more generous, though he highlights important shortcomings. First, the ineffective language used by its narrator, a "sort of baby-Russian in which the first-person pronouns and definite articles are all but missing" (115). The effect is bothersome and irrelevant to the story.

Second, Panshin points out logical inconsistencies in *Moon's* lunar society population demographics and the book's artificial suspense devices (e.g., a computer which announces the odds of the lunar revolution's success at seven-to-one ... then longer odds, then still longer odds, etc.).

"One would think," Panshin observes, "that the initial odds would have taken into account all the necessary chances the revolution has to take, and that only the unexpected would materially affect the odds. The unexpected does not seem to happen, but the odds – Heinlein's computer tells us – keep getting longer and longer. The result is an altogether unreal sort of suspense that lacks the power to compel belief" (id.). Panshin concludes of *Moon* that it "has its interest, but it is not as a novel. It is a dramatized lecture" (116).

Despite all of this, Panshin is mostly complimentary toward Heinlein's oeuvre, especially the postwar period juveniles. His critical analysis is readable, convincing, and insightful. His contributions to science fiction and science fiction scholarship will outlive him and bring satisfaction and insights for generations to come. Rest in peace, Alexei Panshin.

ARCHON 45

Con Report by Leigh Kimmel

Archon is the St. Louis area's biggest and

oldest science fiction convention. This year's convention was held over the weekend of September 30-October 2, 2022 at the Gateway Center and DoubleTree Hotel in Collinsville, Illinois, one of the Metro East suburbs.

Because we wanted to visit my dad on the way, we left on Wednesday. My husband had a chiropractic appointment on the way out of town, so our plan was to go to it, then continue to my dad's place. However, as we were driving to the west side of Indianapolis, we got a call from my brother-in-law, who was housesitting: we'd forgotten the cash box.

We talked briefly about the possibility of just buying a new cash box and the necessary change to fill it up. But on reflection, we decided our time and gas probably wasn't worth all that much. So when we were through the chiropractic appointment, we drove back home to retrieve the cash box and a couple of other items we'd forgotten, then resumed our journey.

It meant we arrived in Champaign later than we'd planned, so our shopping there ended up being a little rushed. But we were able to get to my dad's place in time for supper, and to get all our laundry done. There was time to visit and time to work on my Tuesday writing challenges.

On Thursday we knew there was no use hurrying down to Collinsville, since the hotel wouldn't have our room ready until the afternoon. So we were able to enjoy breakfast before carrying our belongings back out to the van and hitting the road.

The drive went smoothly, although we were still having the intermittent odd sounds that had led us to take the van to the shop the previous week, without results (they couldn't replicate the fault on a test drive, and thus couldn't diagnose it). The weather was beautiful, just warm enough to be comfortable but not too hot. We made a couple of stops along the way but still arrived in good time. In fact, when we pulled in at the hotel, our booking wasn't quite ready and we spent some time waiting.

When we had made the reservation, we were under the impression we were getting a suite, which to our minds indicated at least some separation between the sleeping area and the living area. However, when we got in, we discovered something more on the order of a giant room with a sofa and chair arranged around a coffee table beside the beds. However, given that the hotel was fully booked, there really wasn't much of an option for doing anything about it except giving a negative review. So we just brought our personal belongings up and settled in for the weekend.

After supper, we headed over to the convention center to pick up our badges. At first we thought we were going to have to wait an hour before Registration would be ready, but as it turned out, they were able to get our badges in our hands right away. So instead of sitting around and doing my writing challenges on my Dragon Touch tablet, I went

back to the hotel, where I got the hotspot out so I could upload my new e-book *Lunar Surface Blues* on KDP in time. I also spent some time working on a story I'm writing for an anthology before turning in for the night.

On Friday we got up early and headed down to the central atrium for the hotel's complimentary breakfast. However, it was not ready when stated, and even as we were picking up what was available, the hotel staffer arrived with the scrambled eggs and hash browns. It really looked like management considered food prep a zero-time action and wouldn't let the cook clock in before the time the breakfast was supposed to open to the public. So we decided to adjust our plans accordingly for Saturday and Sunday.

After breakfast we headed over to the convention center to load in. It was chilly and things were running late because several dealers had suddenly canceled, requiring some last-minute rearrangement of tables. However, once the doors actually opened, we were able to get things hauled in pretty quickly. In fact, our biggest problem was getting things up, since our mini-grid hutchers didn't want to stay together, and I dropped a couple of panels of the big grid wall on my foot while trying to unload one of the big flatbed carts so we wouldn't be monopolizing it.

However, we did get our tables reasonably set up in time for the doors to open. I would've liked to get some finishing touches up, which would've helped make them look more professional, but at least we weren't scrambling to get boxes out of the aisles as the doors opened, as we have at some places.

Friday was very slow, although we did get a couple of very large book sales, mostly because one of the largest booksellers in sf fandom was at another con that weekend. However, I spent a lot of time struggling to stay awake, and by the end of the day I was worried about how we were going to make expenses.

On an even worse note, one of our neighbors had to break down and leave early, due to a family emergency. It was sad to see, and I made a point of letting the dealers' room co-ordinator know I would be thinking of them.

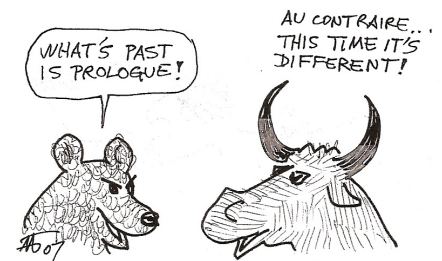
Unfortunately the art show still wasn't able to hold its traditional reception this year. I was rather disappointed, but I understood why it would be necessary. So we just headed back to the hotel, where I did some work on the story for the anthology before we turned in for the night.

Saturday we managed better timing, and arrived at the breakfast area after everything had been set out. However, it appears that the hash browns are served only on weekdays, because they were nowhere to be found. Even so, we were able to get a decent breakfast before heading back over to the convention center for our big sales day.

However, while we were in the room making last minute preparations, we had two uncomfortable discoveries. First, I stomped a cockroach. I'd no more than gone down to the

front desk to let the clerk know about that than I returned to discover that one of our roommates had discovered a bedbug. Just one, but given how nasty they can be and how fast they reproduce, it was not a welcome discovery. We're hoping we don't end up carrying unwelcome hitchhikers home in our merchandise and personal possessions.

When we got over to the convention center, we immediately set to work on putting those final touches on our setup that we hadn't been able to do on Friday. We got signs up, and I got the strings of blinking lights onto the tops of our displays. Then we settled in to sell.



We still had a fair amount of down time, but we had some fair-sized book and t-shirt sales, and even sold a few of our figurines. It's nice to see those go, because they sell so slowly and they're such a hassle to get unpacked and re-packed, with a constant risk of breakage.

After the dealers' room closed for the evening, we went back to the hotel to have supper. Then I took some stuff down to the van, and had a frightening moment when I saw liquid under the side door. However, it appeared to be water, so I tried to calm my worries by focusing on the work I needed to get done. I got my cosmic horror newsletter finished and out, and scheduled my retail newsletter. Then I tried to do a little more work on the story I was preparing for an anthology submission before we turned in for the night.

On Sunday we got up and got our breakfast. Then we had to get everyone packed and out of the hotel room in time to get checked out and still get over to the convention center in time. It was tighter than I would've liked, but not so bad that I didn't have time to finally walk around the dealers' room and take a look at the other vendors' displays. It was a quick one, just a glance, but better than 2019 when I didn't even get that.

Then the doors opened and we started focusing on a strong finish for the convention. Sales continued to come in spurts, with lulls punctuated by big purchases. However, we made sure that both of us got to eat lunch. I hadn't forgotten the year when my lunch got crowded out by busy until I got so weak and famished I was about to fall over.

After lunch I started packing the remaining

figurines. We're actually down to the point where I was able to get that done before the doors actually closed — and I still made a few last-minute sales.

Finally the doors closed, and the big roll-up door to the loading dock was opened. I grabbed a cart and retrieved the t-shirt boxes, as well as some other boxes that had been taken out to the van during setup. From then on it was a non-stop process of packing up t-shirts, breaking down structures, and getting everything hauled back out to the van. Having so many helpers, as well as a dry day, meant we could just pile things beside the van and I could sort through them to get them in their proper places. We actually got finished almost an hour before we were required to be out.

Then it was just a matter of getting back to Dad's place. At first I was doing fine, but somewhere between Springfield and Lincoln, I started getting incredibly weary. Even caffeine wasn't doing much to push it back. By the time I pulled into Dad's driveway and powered down the van, I was honestly relieved to not be driving any further.

Carrying our belongings in and getting supper actually perked me up. I was able to get laundry done and complete my Sunday writing challenges, although I still was tired enough that I fell asleep pretty much as soon as I crawled into bed for the night.

On Monday morning we got up and had breakfast, then got ready to head home. I carried as much out as I possibly could before lunch, since we needed to get back to the Indianapolis area in time to make our cash deposit. Then we had lunch and carried the last few things out. I ended up forgetting a food item I'd wanted to take home with us, but by then the cooler was pretty much buried and we didn't want to take the extra time to get everything off it. So we decided to leave that behind and just said good-bye to Dad before hitting the road.

Traffic wasn't terrible, but we did have a fair amount of road construction slowing us down. When we stopped to get gas at Sam's Club in Champaign, I noticed that one guy had several jerry cans as well as his vehicle. I wondered if he knew something we didn't, not that it made any difference for us.

We got to Brownsburg in time to make the deposit at that branch. Then we drove the rest of the way around town to home. It felt good to get the van back in our driveway and be back home again.

And the intermittent noise the van was making — later that week, with the knowledge that it happened only at very low speeds, the techs at the shop were finally able to track it down. It was an ABS sensor going bad, which wasn't all that expensive to replace. So at least that worry is off my plate.

N3F LAUREATE AWARDS

(Courtesy of George Phillies)

Best Fan Writer: Andy Hooper

Best Fan Artist: Brad Foster
 Best Fan Editor: Fred Lerner
 Best Non-N3F Fan Publication: *The Zine Dump*
 Best N3F Fanzine: *Tightbeam*
 Best Literary-Critical or Historical Work: *2021 First Fandom Annual*
 Best Novel: *Child of Destiny* by Chris Nuttall
 Best Shorter Work or Collection Thereof: *Fantastic Schools* edited by Jagi Lamp-lighter and Chris Nuttall
 Best Book Editor: Toni Weisskopf
 Best Pro Artist: Brad Fraunfelder
 Best Manga/Comic Book/Graphic Novel: Tie between *Telepaths* and *Jinnie Hex*
 Best Live-Action Television Show: *Stargirl*
 Best Animation: *Komi Can't Communicate*

SIDELINE AWARDS

Courtesy of File770.com

SHORT FORM

Alan Smale, "Gunpowder Treason," *Tales from Alternate Earths*, Vol. III, Inklings Press, 2021

LONG FORM

Laurent Binet, translated by Sam Taylor, *Civilizations*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021

HUGO AWARDS

Courtesy of File770.com

Hot off the presses...
 and the Hugo winners are....



BEST NOVEL

A Desolation Called Peace, by Arkady Martine (Tor)

BEST NOVELLA

A Psalm for the Wild-Built, by Becky Chambers (Tordotcom)

BEST NOVELETTE

"Bots of the Lost Ark", by Suzanne Palmer (*Clarkesworld*, Jun 2021)

BEST SHORT STORY

"Where Oaken Hearts Do Gather", by Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny Magazine*, Mar/Apr 2021)

BEST SERIES

Wayward Children, by Seanan McGuire (Tordotcom)

BEST GRAPHIC STORY OR COMIC

Far Sector, written by N.K. Jemisin, art by Jamal Campbell (DC)

BEST RELATED WORK

Never Say You Can't Survive, by Charlie Jane Anders (Tordotcom)

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, LONG FORM

Dune, screenplay by Jon Spaihts, Denis Villeneuve, and Eric Roth; directed by Denis Villeneuve; based on the novel *Dune* by Frank Herbert (Warner Bros / Legendary Entertainment)

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, SHORT FORM

The Expanse: Nemesis Games, written by Daniel Abraham, Ty Franck, and Naren Shankar; directed by Breck Eisner (Amazon Studios)

BEST EDITOR, SHORT FORM

Neil Clarke

BEST EDITOR, LONG FORM

Ruoxi Chen

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST

Rovina Cai

BEST SEMIPROZINE

Uncanny Magazine, publishers and editors-in-chief Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas

BEST FANZINE

Small Gods, Lee Moyer (Icon) and Seanan McGuire (Story)

BEST FANCAST

Our Opinions Are Correct, presented by Annalee Newitz and Charlie Jane Anders, produced by Veronica Simonetti

BEST FAN WRITER

Cora Buhlert

BEST FAN ARTIST

Lee Moyer

LODESTAR AWARD FOR BEST YOUNG

ADULT BOOK

The Last Graduate, by Naomi Novik (Del Rey Books)

ASTOUNDING AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER

Shelley Parker-Chan

DRAGON AWARDS

Courtesy of File770.com

1. Best Science Fiction Novel

Leviathan Falls by James S.A. Corey

2. Best Fantasy Novel (Including Paranormal)

Book of Night by Holly Black

3. Best Young Adult / Middle Grade Novel

A Dark and Starless Forest by Sarah Hollowell

4. Best Military Science Fiction or Fantasy Novel

A Call to Insurrection by David Weber, Timothy Zahn, Thomas Pope

5. Best Alternate History Novel

The Silver Bullets of Annie Oakley by Mercedes Lackey

6. Best Media Tie-In Novel

Star Wars: Thrawn Ascendancy: Lesser Evil by Timothy Zahn

7. Best Horror Novel

The Book of Accidents by Chuck Wendig

8. Best Comic Book

Immortal X-Men by Kieron Gillen, Mark Brooks

9. Best Graphic Novel

Dune: House Atreides Volume 2 by Brian Herbert, Kevin J. Anderson, Dev Pramanik

10. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy TV Series

Stranger Things, Netflix

11. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Movie

Dune by Denis Villeneuve

12. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy PC /

Console Game

Elden Ring, Bandai Namco Entertainment

13. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Mobile Game

Diablo Immortal, Blizzard

14. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Board Game

Star Wars Outer Rim: Unfinished Business, Fantasy Flight Games

15. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Miniatures / Collectible Card / Role-Playing Game

Magic: The Gathering, Dungeons & Dragons: Adventures in the Forgotten Realms, Wizards of the Coast

Also presented at the ceremony:

2022 JULIE AWARD

Jim Starlin

In 1998, Dragon Con established the Julie Award presented annually in tribute to the legendary Julie Schwartz. The Julie Award is bestowed for universal achievement spanning multiple genres, selected each year by our esteemed panel of industry professionals. The first recipient in 1998 was science fiction and fantasy Grandmaster Ray Bradbury.

2022 HANK REINHARDT FANDOM AWARD

The recipient of the Hank Reinhardt Fandom Award, formerly the Georgia Fandom Award, is John Carroll.

WORLDCON BIDS

2025
Seattle
Worldcon Seattle 2025
August 13-17, 2025

2026
Los Angeles
Cairo, Egypt
PharaohCon
September 1-5, 2026

2027
Tel Aviv
August 2027

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

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

2029
Dublin
<http://dublin2029.ie>

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

NASFiC BIDS

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

WORLDCON

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

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

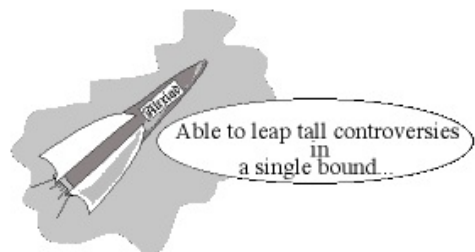
Oops. Chengdu is using the new terminology and levels of Worldcon membership.

NASFiC

2023
Winnipeg
Pemmi-con 2023
July 20-23, 2023
<https://main.winnipeg2023.ca/>



Letters, we get letters



From: **George W. Price** September 18, 2022
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price4418@comcast.net

August *Alexiad* (#124):

Lisa's first-page note about the attack on Salman Rushdie says, "I am very sorry that my country failed to keep Mr. Rushdie safe. The United States is supposed to be a haven for free speech."

We needn't blame ourselves for this atrocity. How could we reasonably be expected to have averted it? Bear in mind that Rushdie has rarely bothered to take serious precautions.

It's been 33 years since Ayatollah Khomeini issued his infamous fatwa, and as far as I know, up to now no one had even tried to execute it. We can't expect our government to assign permanent bodyguards to everyone whom religious or political fanatics want to see dead.

Well, I suppose most of us could routinely go armed, so we can intervene when we see an attack. That seems a little extreme, though I do see signs that our society is moving in that direction.

In the recent Greenwood, Indiana mall incident, Elisjsha Dicken potted that murderous rifleman at a range of 120 feet. That's mighty good shooting for a handgun. Should we all strive to follow his example?

What might have happened if Mr. Dicken had been in the front row of Rushdie's audience?

I was saddened to read in "Random Jottings" of the death of Eric Flint. I have long enjoyed his "1632" series. Yes, some of it is just yardgoods, but Flint and the other authors have generally shown a serious knowledge of—and respect for—history that really attracts me.

That the series is ending is regrettable, but better than having lesser hands try to keep it going.

Because of my worsening eyesight, I haven't yet gotten to the most recent "1632" books. They should keep me in pleasurable reading for the next year or so.

The obituary for Alexei Panshin was an unpleasant surprise. He was very important to Advent Publishers when I took over the company in 1965.

While founder Earl Kemp was still running Advent, he considered publishing Panshin's proposed critical study of Robert Heinlein.

When Heinlein heard about that, he went right up the wall. He sent Earl a fire-breathing letter (which I have read) denouncing Panshin and demanding that Advent not publish anything of his about Heinlein. The letter implied possible legal action if we did, but Heinlein did not straight out threaten to sue.

Panshin had written a fanzine article titled "Heinlein: By His Jockstrap." Panshin later said this title, playing off Heinlein's 1941 classic "By His Bootstraps," was stuck on the article by the fanzine editor without Panshin's knowledge or consent. I have never seen the article, but I gather that it dealt harshly with the sexual opinions and implications in certain Heinlein stories.

That was before some of the really outré scenes, such as the dinner party in *Time Enough for Love* where the men occupy the same couches throughout while the women go from couch to couch.

As if that weren't enough, there was Panshin's attempt to contact "Sarge" Smith, one of Heinlein's old buddies. Panshin wrote to Smith requesting background information on Heinlein. He got a reply from Mrs. Smith saying that Sarge had recently died, and would Panshin like to see some of Sarge's correspondence with Heinlein? He said yes, which was a serious mistake. And she sent it. (I don't know if this was only Heinlein's letters to Sarge, or also Sarge's to Heinlein.)

Note well that, according to Panshin, sending him the Heinlein correspondence was entirely Mrs. Smith's idea, not Panshin's. He read the letters and returned them.

When Heinlein learned that Panshin had seen those letters he was roused to even greater fury. I've heard that he accused Panshin of tricking Mrs. Smith into sending the letters, which does not seem to have been true—Panshin didn't even know Sarge was dead until he got the widow's offer to show him the correspondence. No matter, Heinlein was on the warpath.

When all this landed on Earl Kemp, who had some personal acquaintance with Heinlein, he decided to abandon the Panshin project rather than offend Heinlein any further.

A couple of years later I began running Advent, and talked this over with Panshin. We decided to revive *Heinlein in Dimension*, with some restrictions. The most important was that I required Panshin to include no information from the Sarge Smith letters, and write nothing that could not be backed up from published sources. He could use the Smith information for

his personal enlightenment about Heinlein's thinking, but that's all.

And so it was done. Panshin sent me his revised manuscript—I have never seen the version that Earl saw—and I began typesetting it.

I took the additional precaution of converting Advent from a partnership to a SubChapter S corporation. That meant that if Heinlein sued and won, he couldn't seize any more than the corporation's assets, mostly the inventory. He could not get at each owner's personal assets, as he could if Advent stayed a partnership. So *Heinlein in Dimension* became the first book Advent published as a corporation, and now you know why.

Heinlein did not sue. Years later I heard on the grapevine that he had cooled off about Panshin, at least enough to eventually read the book. I had sent him the customary complimentary copy upon publication, and he had not returned it. Maybe he kept it—or maybe he just threw it away, or even used it as toilet paper.

Advent remained a corporation until a few years ago, when I converted it to a sole proprietorship—I had already bought out all the other owners.

And now my Advent is gone. It is replaced by the new Advent run by Andrew Burt in Golden, Colorado, from whom you can buy Joe Major's *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles*. That was my last book for Advent, and it seems fitting that it too is about the work of Robert Heinlein.

I look forward to seeing your next "Monarchical News." The passing of Elizabeth II and the accession of Charles III is obviously the most important monarchical news since you started running such notes.

I am old enough to clearly remember Elizabeth's ascension to the throne. I even faintly recall hearing about the abdication of Edward VIII and his transformation into the Duke of Windsor, though at the age of seven I had no idea what the scandal was about.

I am quite sure that Elizabeth will be mourned and remembered far more than her two predecessors.

Rodford Edmiston's "Joy of High Tech" article is interesting, as usual. "Measuring Temperature" notes that "The ancient Greeks knew that materials changed volume with temperature." That reminds me of my one and only scientific discovery: I came across a tiny anomaly in cryogenic chemistry.

Back about 1964, as a junior chemist at the Institute of Gas Technology—the research arm of the natural gas industry—I was checking the shrinkage of various kinds of insulation proposed for lining tanks of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

My task was to measure the length of a test piece at room temperature, immerse it in supercold liquid nitrogen, and measure the

length again. The less it shrank the better it would be as cryogenic insulation.

Everything went routinely until I tested one material, a kind of foam plastic (I forget its name). I was startled to find that it had not only not shrunk, it had actually lengthened at the superlow temperature. Sonofagun! That was not supposed to happen!

I reported this to the lab boss, and he snapped that I must have done it wrong. Then he repeated the measurements himself. And got the same anomalous result! Well, he did give me a handsome apology.

We soon figured it out. The temperature drop by cryogenic immersion caused a significant change in crystalline structure that made the material a little longer along one dimension, but much shorter along the other two dimensions. The overall volume of the test piece actually did shrink, as physical theory predicted.

Your back-page story "First Penguin" says, "Conway Costigan, Mason Northrup, and Jack Kinnison . . . leveled their DeLameters at Cobblepot."

Uh, no, they did not.

DeLameters were not yet invented.

In the time of Virgil Samms, the Patrol's standard sidearm was the Lewiston. (See pages 288 and 299 of *First Lensman*, Fantasy Press edition.)

However, the error is forgivable, since this was "Not by E. E. 'Doc' Smith."

Oops.

I first read the Lensman stories very much out of order. I got hooked on science fiction in 1947, as a senior in high school. My first Doc Smith story was *Children of the Lens* (*Astounding*, Nov. 1947 to Feb. 1948), the last in the series.

Over the next few years I haunted second-hand-magazine shops until I had all issues of *Astounding* back to July 1937. That gave me a complete set of Lensman stories, starting with *Galactic Patrol*.

Later, when Fantasy Press published the series as books, I read them carefully to see what changes Doc had made in the original four.

Even more interesting was how he had rewritten *Triplanetary* to make it the first in the series. I think he did that because that story covered the invention of the inertialess drive.

I once saw (but could not keep) the 1934 magazine version of *Triplanetary*. One notable difference was that "Rod the Rock" was not surnamed Kinnison.

Likewise, in the original 1937 magazine version of *Galactic Patrol*, when Commandant of Cadets von Hohendorff lectured the graduating Lensmen, he did not name Virgil Samms as the founder of the Patrol, as he does in the book.

Finding other changes is left as an exercise

for the reader.



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

Odd experience. I was sitting at a table in Wilde Lake Park, peacefully drinking my coffee, bothering no one. A man passing by stopped and said he remembered me from an "open mike night" at an area bookstore. It seemed a little strange that he recalled me, as this was — I don't remember exactly — at least 10 years ago. However, he particularly (incorrectly) identified me as one who had read a particular poem which had made quite an impression on him. I agreed that I had read prose there, but no, I did not write or recite such a poem. He was disappointed; whether from my deficiency as a reader, or his lapse of detailed memory.

By some coincidence, I made a few efforts lately to get up "open mike" work. One bookstore was shocked at the idea which they rejected; another said they didn't have enough room; the library apparently found the idea boring. Go figure.

In memory of the late Queen, perhaps this is an apt moment to recall a story I read. On the morning in 1948 when the then Princess Elizabeth was to marry Prince Philip, the bride realized she had forgotten her favorite pearl necklace. It had been a gift from her father King George and she especially wanted to wear it. A minor functionary was sent on the errand. He rushed down to the courtyard of the Palace. Rushed up to the first car he saw, yanked open the door — and found himself facing a dignified

older gentleman wearing an elaborate uniform. It was King Haakon, the king of Norway. Fortunately the royal composure was equal to the moment. "You seem to be in a hurry, young man," said the King. "Take my car — but do let me get out first!"

As time went on, the ladies of the wedding party were whispering among themselves. Who would tell the bride it was time to go, with or without the necklace? At the last moment the man rushed in, breathing hard, but with the necklace triumphantly in hand. Happily it was even the right necklace. The wedding proceeded as scheduled.

Do I guess correctly that the Grand Duke Georgi Mikhailovich is the claimant to the Russian Imperial Throne?

It's complicated. His great-grandfather Grand Duke Kyril was the next in line left after the Bolsheviks got through. (There were other Romanovs, but they are the products of morgantic marriages. One was a colonel in the U.S. Marines.) His grandfather Grand Duke Vladimir married a Bagrationi princess and there was some doubt whether she was qualified as being "royal" enough (and it was a second marriage for her). His mother Grand Duchess Maria styles herself "Curator of the Russian Throne". Women have been excluded from the succession since after Catherine the Great. Other Romanov princes dispute her right but assume no headship.

If it's any help, my doctor says that on average men's hemoglobin transfers oxygen slightly better than women's hemoglobin. And the official journal of the American Hematology Association is called: *Blood*. Succinct and to the point, at least.

I'm sorry to hear of the death of Alexei Panshin. I still have my copy of *Rite of Passage*.

Surely it is not my place to tell Leigh Kimmel what to do at a con. But it seems as if every con report is: unloaded into the dealers' room, sat in the dealers' room, loaded up out of the dealers' room.

Darrell Schweitzer: It's not my place to apologize for Balticon; it's been long years since I was on committee there. The last time I went there (pre-pandemic) was either 2016 or 2017. There appeared to be a lot of turnover among people running the con. I did not get much regard, but not as bad as what you describe.

Robert S. Kennedy: I can drive to tidewater in half an hour should I wish (Baltimore Inner Harbor) though I have not done so lately. But I can get to the water any time. We have four lakes in Columbia/Ellicott City; though I once said that anyone who lives in Chicago would

call Wilde Lake "A pond with delusions of grandeur". My father collected coins, including several 50¢ pieces. There is also a special bicentennial first day of issue \$2 bill (April 13, 1976) in a vinyl folder with a certificate of authenticity.

Mr. Mfume is a Black gentleman who has made it clear his focus is the concerns of Black people. A small part of Howard County was gerrymandered onto a heavily Black district.

Well! William Breiding received a FAAN Award for *Portable Storage*. I had better not say I correspond regularly with William, lest CorfluCult rescind the award. Unfortunately I lost touch with Nic Farey long ago.

Nic Farey
2657 Rungsted Street
Las Vegas, NV 89142-2747

If anyone in fandom wishes anything from me, now would be a good time to ask. You know where to find me.

I was rather saddened by Schirm's 'toon on page 11 where a muscular monster has stabbed to death a Studebaker. I always liked Studebakers. To this day I still believe the 1963/64 Studebaker Avanti was one of the most striking cars of its time. Unfortunately only a few thousand were made. In the late 1960's someone bought the rights to the design and built a few cars under the title "Avanti II" with Chrysler engines. That effort also failed.

Avanti production continued until 2006, when the owner Michael Kelly was arrested for a Ponzi scheme fraud.

—JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** September 27, 2022
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penneys@bell.net

I was hoping to earlier than this, but I am on time, nonetheless. Thank you for *Alexiad* 124, and I have indeed made some notes on what's here, and time to type it all out.

I haven't heard anything more about the attack on Salman Rushdie. I haven't heard if he had been released from hospital, or if he has indeed lost an eye. A small but increasing percentage of our populations are extremists, which I think more and more is a form of mental illness.

I hear you when it comes to conventions. Our litcon Ad Astra is gone because of a lack of money and volunteers. Seems the age of the volunteer is over. Other conventions here are on the brink...the only survivors are anime conventions, plus a handful of one-day gaming and comic cons, and of course, the massive pro cons. I miss our 3-day literary conventions, but I've redirected myself with editorial work, fanzines, and making and selling jewelry at our table. I am very lucky. Yvonne is busy with sewing projects and customer service and sales

for that big anime con mentioned above.

Our old local con RiverCon had to shut down because the staff was getting old and tired. Its successor ConGlomeration had to shut down because, you guessed it, the staff was getting old and tired. They held a meeting to ask for successors but while everyone really appreciated what they did, no one would put in the effort to do it.

The centigrade scale of temperature is probably known as that in the US and a couple of small countries, but it seems only the US still uses the Fahrenheit scale. The rest of the world uses the Celsius scale, which is a part of metric measurements.

NASFiC bids...I support both, and unopposed, both are on the go. In Winnipeg, I can spend Canadian dollars. For Buffalo, we can drive there. I have agreed to do some copywriting for the Buffalo bid, but... in the long run, we are not sure we could afford to go to either. We will have to examine our expenses, and see what we can afford, if anything.

I have indeed read David Shea's article in *Fadeaway* 67, and yes, it is difficult to break into print. I think a lot of us have tried, and e-publishing has helped some of us actually succeed. As for me, I tried SF short stories, but I tried to impress fantasy novelists, and failed. Becoming an editor seems to be an alternate way in.

Like Darrell Schweitzer, we are never sure if we can offer anything of substance to conventions. The passing of conventions seems to confirm it. It's been a long time since we've done any panels. If the cons were still around, I don't think they'd want anyone like us to reminisce in front of an audience... We'd be better off doing that in the con suite, anyway. If cons suites still exist... In this genre, I recognize few names... the genre has left me behind, with just memories. I looked him up, and Chan Davis still lives in Toronto, and is in his mid to late 90s.

Breaking news: We regret to report that Chandler "Chan" Davis died September 24, 2022 in Toronto. We can all get overrun by events.

My letter of comment...the steampunk festival in Coldwater, Ontario was spectacular, as were our sales. We now have four more shows to go to in the fall. The laser treatment for my right eye was supposed to be today, but has been postponed a week. Our fifth COVID shots are now in the horizon, and we will get them ASAP. As for books, *Cents of Wonder* will be available soon, and I am now working on a sequel to a past John Stith book.

Good luck with the eyes. I like seeing color, and not having to wipe

off condensation on a wintry day.
—JTM

Made it to the second page, so I must be done. Off it goes, with my thanks. Stay warm and safe, and the best of health top you both.

ALT. TREK
ALT. TREK, THE
RATING GENERATION

WHEN KLINGON BLOOD
POURS DOWN THE SEWER DRAINS
AH, THEN MY FRIENDS
THE FUTURE WILL BE BRIGHT!



From: **Taras Wolansky** October 1, 2022
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Thanks for the August *Alexiad*.

Lisa: The people running the event, at which Salman Rushdie was attacked, were probably unable to keep a close eye on the young Middle Eastern male with close-cropped hair and burning eyes — because they would consider that bigotry.

Joe: Maybe it's something in the water here in the Northeast, but fan-run conventions seem to be going strong, knock on wood. Two weeks ago I was at Albacon, north of Albany. Today I'm at Capclave in D.C. At the beginning of November there's Astronomicon in Rochester; a few weeks later, Philcon. Next year, Arisia in January, Boskone in February, Heliosphere in April (replacing Lunacon), and Balticon in May.

On belief in "conspiracy nonsense" (review of *Unintended Consequences* by John Ross), a lot of this has to do with what narrative somebody just happens to read first. I got into a

heated argument with an "Oxfordian" advocate, a believer in the crank hypothesis that the Earl of Oxford actually wrote Shakespeare's works. I think it boiled down to the fact that this person had read — and imprinted on — an Oxfordian book before learning what real scholars had to say.

I see people who read one book and suddenly Understand It All — generally a crank book and often a conspiracy book.

"Ross is quite dismissive of the 'patriotic militias', which he characterized as all talk". Tim McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber, joined militias but found they were happy to prepare for a coming race war, but not actually start one.

Review of Jack Campbell's *Resolute*, the latest entry in the "Lost Fleet" follow-on series: New readers should really begin with the original series, which is a novel in 6 or 7 volumes.

Rodford Edmiston: Another great article, thank you.

As I understand it, the so-called normal body temperature of 98.6°F is an overly-precise conversion from the Celsius temperature.

The normal body temperature is 37±.5° C. 98.6°F is overprecise.

Darrell Schweitzer: Your Byzantine annals raise the question once again. Was Christianity in the East really more vicious and corrupt than Christianity in the West, or is this just reporting bias? If there really was a difference, why? Did the Western Papacy act as a restraint on brutality in a way that the Eastern church hierarchy did not? (I note that the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church endorses Putin's invasion of Ukraine, as far as I know the only religious leader of any kind to do so.)

Still trying to puzzle out what the Balticon person meant about your "presentation style". I wouldn't have said you have one, other than being well-informed and, when you moderate, making sure everybody gets a chance to be heard. What it may really mean is insufficient kowtowing to the sacred cows of the woke movement. "One shall not question Wokeism or, through inaction, allow Wokeism to be questioned."

Re Chan Davis, being tolerant of leftists like him is admirable. As long as you remember that they would never extend to you the same courtesy, if circumstances were reversed. As, I think, you've learned the hard way at Balticon.

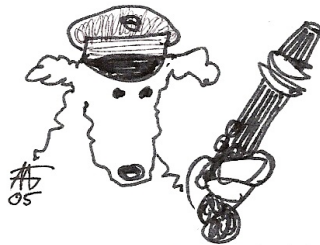
Countless old-style liberals on college faculties around the country discovered this, too. They welcomed Marxists and leftists but, the moment those gained a voting majority, suddenly the liberals found themselves frozen out.

Robert S. Kennedy: I've held onto a few two-dollar bills because they have a great print of the signing of the Declaration of Independ-

ence on the back.

No doubt, people who are not permitted to leave China after next year's Worldcon will tell us they're staying "voluntarily". Just like that woman tennis star who accused a high party official of rape "voluntarily" retracted her accusation. (Realistically, the biggest danger is to Chinese citizens living overseas. The government considers them property.)

SHEEP
WARS #3
"BLEAT TO
QUARTERS"



STARRING SYBIL SHEPARD
AS CAPTAIN LANOLIN

Incidentally, I just picked up my first flyer for next year's Worldcon. Or rather, for "The 6th International SF Convention, Chengdu, China". It doesn't mention Worldcon.

They say Worldcon on their website. A Google search indicates that there is an annual convention in Chengdu called "The International SF Convention".

—JTM

AL du Pisani: In your judgment, is South Africa A: progressing slowly; B: stagnating; or C: in a gradual decline? Or, like Bishop Sidonius writing about 5th Century Gaul, is the decline too gradual for people in the middle of it to notice?

Finally, Joe: In his most famous painting, 19th Century Russian painter Ilya Repin imagined what the composition of the Ukrainian Kozaks' (probably apocryphal) letter to the Turkish Sultan might have looked like. Repin was, of course, seeking to depict the independ-

ent Kozaks of the 17th and early 18th centuries, later wiped out by Russia, and not the servile "Cossacks" who became famous for doing the Russian Empire's dirty work.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Oct. 7, 2022
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Here are my comments on *Alexiad* August 2022. I hope I'm not too late for your Letter Column. I am up-to-you-know-where with fanzines I want to write to.

Attack on Salman Rushdie. Since the crowd prevented Rushdie from getting killed by a fanatic, I'm not certain how much we should bow our heads in shame. Also, I gather what protected Rushdie for many years was not body guards, paid for or gratis, but not going out in public. Anyway, that's what I suspect happened.

Your father. He was a sailor on a ship in World War II that the Japanese sunk. He must have been a brave individual. My father wasn't so brave. He did provide a service for the air men in China, though. He, along with other doctors, treated battle shocked air men with Sodium Pentothal. They re-lived the battle, and were like new. However, he suspected, over the years, this cure was forgotten.

Reviewers Notes. Conventions. Will conventions be all celebrities who don't care? How many decades has DragonCon done that? On the other hand, I just saw a list of cons in Texas, and they seem to be flourishing. They're of every kind you can imagine, including cons that take a lot of participation. The big question, though, is how long will there be people identifying as fans? I think that's the rub.

Heinlein's House. So Heinlein might have had a Dymaxion House at 8777 Lookout Mountain Avenue. I hope it had a bathroom and a taller shower. Of course, Buckminster Fuller would want the same house for everyone.

Only two Dymaxion Houses were made, and one of the executives took them to his farm in Kansas. His children offered them to the Henry Ford Museum. There were enough sound parts that with some extra building, one Dymaxion House could be assembled, and it is an exhibit there. We saw it.

Cabbage Patch Kids. A good parody of the Cabbage Patch Dolls and other faddish collectibles of the late 20th Century. My brother filled his daughter's crib with Cabbage Patch Dolls. He was waiting for prosperity that never came. There were also Star Wars collectibles. I found they became worthless too. There were too many of each of them. Of course, who knows? Maybe they will be worth something some day. Certainly, 5,000 years from now when archae-

ologists dig up the surviving ones.

I have heard stories of children crying as they saw collectors buying up every Star Wars action figure that was for sale. The store managers took to punching holes in the boxes to make them uncollectable.



DOBBIN'S MOM WAS SCARED BY A THOAT.

Nobody Expects the BATF. A review of the book *Unexpected Consequences*. Of course, things have gone in the opposite direction. Assault rifles are legal and sold practically everywhere. However, the author seems to believe people with guns are being persecuted.

Broadway Revival. Time travel. Is there a problem with making alternate time lines. I suspect that they're common. Including time lines with intelligent universes and universes without any intelligence. I don't really have any scientific reason for this that I can think of. I just like the idea of alternative universes happening.

The Joy of High Tech. Rodford Edmiston tells very interesting stories about measuring and using heat and cold. I hear that, at the lower temperatures, supercomputers can be made. Of course, we're still better than that because we don't need the very hot and very cold to have the brains we do.

Leigh Kimmel. She didn't sell too much. However, there was a consolation: she had time to go to the dead dog party. Probably not much of a consolation. Too bad. It sounded like whoever ran that convention were decent individuals.

Choniates. I wonder when Constantinople was attacked by Crusaders, were they put up to it by the Venetians? I seem to remember hearing that.

April 13, 1204, a date which will live in infamy. The Fourth Crusade, at the behest of Enrico Dandolo, Doge of Venice, captured and sacked the City, destroying a bulwark against the Turks.

Letters. Darrell Schweitzer. From what I gather about that Balticon, it is further proof

that ideological people don't believe in free speech.

George Price. He gave up his car. I had originally intended to give up my car after five years. However, Toyota convinced me to make that eight years. Of course, cars don't last as long as they used to. I hear a few Model As are still running. I don't know how much of an incline you could go up with one, though.

Robert S. Kennedy. We have decent bus service here. However, I haven't trusted buses since my luggage was stolen at a bus station in Ohio. Maybe I'll grow out of this association. I'll see.

David M. Shea. Lots here to comment on. If Russia is banned from Wimbledon. Maybe someone from Kazakhstan can still compete in tennis there. It depends on how close to Russia it is and not how democratic it is.

John Hertz. They have a con for everything right now. No need to go to an all fan con. I saw a list of cons in Texas and they had everything: a con for miniatures, a con for all that is retro and cons re-enacting the Victorian era.

Lloyd Penney. He seemed to have had good luck in getting employment after the Covid epidemic gave up the ghost. Not only has he got editing gigs but he is getting money from selling at cons. All I can say to him is, literally, keep up getting good work.

Al du Pisani. I wasn't completely disgusted with office work when I retired. However, I felt life would be more pleasant without work. Right now, I am sort of ambiguous about it since, in many ways, I enjoyed my job.

With the deterioration in my health I would have had to retire by now in any case. I have taken to genealogy (and fanzine writing) in order to have something to do.

A Warning to Putin. So who won, the Sultan or the Cossacks? And who is going to win? Putin or Zelensky?

The back page. First Penguin. So, Joe, Cobblepot is God in your parody of the Lensmen series. Or is it a parody of that series? I never read any novels from it.

**Never read any Lensman novels?
Bite your tongue.**

—JTM

Well, that's it.

WAHF:

Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.

Lloyd G. Daub, the same.

Trinlay Khadro, Lacy Thomas with thanks.

STOP PRESS

Andy Weir and John Scalzi appeared at the Louisville Free Public Library Main Library on October 11 to discuss Andy's new book *Hail Mary* (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 20 #3). Andy discussed how he had developed the alien Rocky, the phages that were devouring solar energy, and other things. Louisville's own Stanley G. Weinbaum would have been proud at this example of alien building.

Bob Roehm was there for Carmichael's Bookstore, the other sponsor of the talk. **Joel Zakem** also attended. There seemed to be a lot of people around who were interested in written SF.

But they seem to be on the "member, not participant" mode of thought. There were enough people there to have a good con. But somebody would have to organize it, somebody would have to prepare it . . . Perhaps I should say "somebody else".

It was there that the first item of bad news popped up. **Robert A. "Bob" Madle**, First Fan, last surviving attendee of the NyCon, had died on **Saturday, October 9, 2022**. A link with our history has been broken.

And finally, it was brought to notice that Chengdu Worldcon Pro Guest of Honor **Sergei Lukianenko** has said in response to the missile attacks on Ukrainian civilian targets on October 10: "Finally, I wish it would be so in February, deliberately and ruthlessly, fascist scum should go to hell."

The Chengdu concomm has so far not acted on this. With the reports of their general malaise aired at Chicon, it seems that they have attempted a task beyond their means to accomplish, under the control of a less than beneficial government.

While fans will want to give other venues a chance, to encourage fandom worldwide in what is literally a **Worldcon**, this situation is not entirely favorable for the Cairo and Kampala bids. The fiasco of the San Juan NASFiC should have given warning. What would the Bermuda Triangle In 1988 Bid (the Boat Bid) have been like, with everyone having to buy a ticket, no one able to leave until the con was over, and no prospect of "The Capture", Phil Foglio's alien abduction comic.

There was Garth Spencer's history of the Vancouver fans who went to Worldcon and concluded, "Hey, we can do this." The effort left All Vancouver Fandom At War. It was as bad as Coventry.

Meanwhile, Hugo nominee **Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki**, having overcome an arduous struggle to get a visa to enter the U.S. (it seems to be a general problem), is hoping to use his hard-won six-month stay to attend the World Fantasy Con in New Orleans. A fan fund was established to enable this, and it worked.

SOME LOST SHAKESPEARE

From *Tragedie of ye End-Tymes yt Come*

Enter Captain KILGER, fearfully armed
Enter to him Master KONTOS

Kil Dost thou smell that?

Kon What?

Kil Tis the Greek Fyre. Naught else in the mortal world doth smell such. I love the smell of Greek Fyre in the dawn. There was a hill, held by the Saracen, doused by it for half the span of the day. When the taske was accomplished, I came to ye rise. Not one bodie was to be found, not one vile Saracen corpus. It smelled like . . . victory.

From *Ye Coache Styled Desire*

Enter COUNT KOWALSKI OF POLAND

Kol Alas! Opres't am I, bereft and alone.
The chief Mitchell doth amass his kerns.

Enter LADY BLANCHE

Bla What ho! Thy face hath the pallor of one oprest by care.

Kol Disaster I face, a dire end to come.
It must be my friends to summon,
To ammas my force for this task.
Kindness must be our strength.

Bla Ever and always, I hath depended upon the kindnesse of strangers.

From *A Savage Journie to ye Hearte of ye Englyshe Dreeme*

Enter Doctor GONZO and Doctor RAOUL

Enter within CLARK of ye TAVERNE

Rao Hail. Raoul Duke I am named. Aye, on the list I am, for certes. Dinner for free, final wisdom, coverage of all. With me is my solicitor, hence, and his name is not on the list, but it is most needful, for he doth conduct me hence to this bourne. Check the list and thou shalt perceive. Fear not. What doth come next?

Cla The lodgings are not prepared yet. Natheless, there is someone awaiting you.

Rao Nay! Wherefore!? Naught have we done even!

Gon I shall take charge. My companion's heart doth ail, but I have medicaments in plenty. Doctor Gonzo I am call'd. Prepare our lodgings upon the instant. In the taproom shall we be found.

From *Cheape Tales*

Enter BRETT and two knaves, with a bundle

Kn1 I shall sleepe.

Sleeps

Enter in pursuit JULES and VINCENT

Jul What ho! How dost thou?
The men of your companion Marcellus Wallace we be. Art thou Brett?

Bre I am.

Jul Thou dost recall Marcellus Wallace?

Bre Regreful we are that affairs did not go well. The best intentions we have and

JULES shoots KNAVE 1

Jul Pray forgive me. Did I halt your words? Alack, you were done! Pray permit me to respond. Recount unto me what the semblance of Marcellus Wallace be.

Bre What?

Jul What land dost thou originate from?

Bre What? What? What?

Jul Never have I known any land styled What. Is Englyshe spoken in What?

Bre What?

Jul Englyshe! Dost thou speak it?

Bre Yes.

Jul Describe unto me what the semblance of Marcellus Wallace be.

Bre What?

Jul I defy you twice to utter what one more damnable time!

Bre He is an Ethiop.

Jul Pray continue.

Bre His pate is hairless.

Jul Hath he the semblance of a she-dog?

Bre Nay.

Jul Wherefore didst thou endeavour to treat him as one?

Bre I did not.

Jul Thou didst. Dost thou read Holy Writ?

Bre I do.

Jul I have taken unto my heart this verse from the book of Ezekiel, 25:17: The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the iniquities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is He who in the name of charity and good will shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness, for He is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children. And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy My brothers. And you will know My name is the LORD when I lay My vengeance upon thee.

JULES and VINCENT slay them

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