

ALEXIAD

(AΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

On December 7 I again remembered the day of infamy. So many dead. The one who most sticks in my mind is Chief Water Tender Peter Tomich of the *Utah*, who gave his life buying time for his shipmates to get off the sinking ship.

It is Christmastime once again and the malls are filled with Christmas music. I don't get tired of "What Child is This" and "Do You Hear What I Hear", but whoever came up with "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" deserves to be made to listen to it 24/7 for the next ten years. According to that song Santa Claus is an omniscient tyrant. There is no escaping his watchful eye. Another irritating song is "Santa Baby".

One morning I caught a bedbug and shoved it into a plastic bag. It tried to hide it under the cotton swab I'd snared it with but I would have none of that. I turned the bag over and pinned the bug between my fingers. It regarded me with terrified eyes. I had no doubt it knew it was in deep shit. I grinned down at its obvious terror.

"Not so much fun to stalk me now, is it, bug?" I growled at it. And then I heard myself and hearing realized I had become as much a savage as my caveman ancestors. The only real difference between my ancestors and me was that they didn't know any better. Ashamed, I moved my fingers away and let the bug hide in its prison. This one I would have liked to let go in atonement but that was not an option. Instead I got a soap bottle and put a quick end to the bug. I still find it unpleasant to think about the fact that I am capable of torturing any animal, even one of the most hateful ones I'm aware of.

— Lisa

Table of Contents

Editorial.....	1
Reviewer's Notes.....	1
Coffee.....	5
Space Comments.....	2
Worldcon Bids.....	5
Book Reviews	
JTM de Camp, <i>The Arrows of Hercules</i>	3
JTM de Camp, <i>The Bronze God of Rhodes</i>	3
JTM de Camp, <i>The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate</i>	3
JTM de Camp, <i>An Elephant for Aristotle</i>	3
JTM de Camp, <i>The Golden Wind</i>	3
JTM Deresiewicz, <i>Excellent Sheep</i>	4
JTM Haddelsey/Carroll, <i>Operation Tabarin</i>	4
JTM Campbell: <i>The Lost Stars: Imperfect Sword</i>	2
JTM Sedgwick, <i>Blood and Steam</i>	3
JTM Sedgwick, <i>Clockwork God</i>	3
JTM Sedgwick, <i>Tinkerer's Daughter</i>	3
JTM Sedgwick, <i>Tinker's War</i>	3
JTM Selin, <i>Napoleon in America</i>	4
Random Jottings.....	2
Letters.....	6
Dainis Bisenieks, Richard A. Dengrove, Alexis A. Gilliland, John	

Hertz, Robert S. Kennedy, Trinlay Khadro, Rodney Leighton, Murray Moore, George W. Price, AL du Pisani, John Purcell, Joy V. Smith, Milt Stevens, Jim Stumm, John Thiel, Taras Wolansky

Comments are by JTM, LTM, or Grant.

The 89th Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 2, 2013** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Trixton, driven by his trainer Jimmy Takter, won by a half-length.

The 122nd Running of the Kentucky Futurity (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **October 5, 2014** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky. Nuncio, driven by John Campbell and trained by Jimmy Takter, won by one and a half-lengths, after a second-place finish in the Hambletonian.

The 60th Running of the Yonkers Trot (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **October 25, 2014** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. Nuncio and John Campbell won again, by two and three-quarter lengths.

The 60th Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 1, 2014** at Tioga Downs in Nichols, New York. Lyons somewhere beat the favorite, He's Watching, by a half-length.

The 69th Running of the Little Brown Jug (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 18, 2014** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio. Limelight Beach won going away in the second heat, after Lyons somewhere was eliminated in the preliminaries.

The 59th Running of the Messenger Stakes (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **October 25, 2014** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. All Bets Off won handily in a record 1:51.1.

Trivia..... 16

Art:

Sheryl Birkhead.....	6
Paul Gadzikowski.....	5, 16
Alexis A. Gilliland.....	7, 9, 13
Trinlay Khadro.....	2, 12
Marc Schirmeister.....	11

Jerry Pournelle has suffered a small stroke which sent him to the hospital, briefly.

Printed on December 19, 2014
Deadline is **February 1, 2015**

Reviewer's Notes

Sorry to be so late, but there have been Issues. I could write at immense length but don't want to inflict it on you. If it weren't for Lisa I might not be able to go on.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Be careful when you get bored. I entered “Woodrow Wilson Smith” into Ancestry.com and learned that he had died (faked his death?) in Contra Costa County, California on November 19, 1988. However, this guy was born on February 13, 1913, in Jefferson County, Missouri, to William Francis Smith and Martha Katherine Cotton Smith. [That is, not Brian Smith and Maureen Johnson Smith.] I wonder if he ever read SF?

For the past year, GoComics.com has been re-running Winsor McCay’s intricate and imaginative “Little Nemo in Slumberland” Sunday comics from 1905 on. The detail in these is fantastic, the storytelling complex.

About the only problem with the stories is that every day’s strip ends with Nemo waking up. This makes the stories a trifle choppy.

<http://www.gocomics.com/little-nemo/>

Naval surgeon Dr. Murray Levick was to be surgeon of the British Antarctic Expedition’s Eastern Party. When the *Terra Nova* could not get through the ice around King Edward VII Land, the Eastern Party became the Northern Party, left on the coast of Wilkes Land to add to Captain Scott’s observations. Including, it turned out, how the Antarctic can try to kill you. After some extraordinary adventures [also defined as “Bloody Hell, not *another* sodding learning experience!”] the Northern Party was rescued. (For more on this read *The Longest Winter* by Katherine Lambert (2002, 2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #5).)

When he got back to Blighty, he wrote a book about some of his observations, including observations that penguins were known to practice rape, homosexuality, and necrophilia. The book was not thought fit for public consumption (whether Mr Oswald Cobblepot, an American gentleman from Gotham, had any input is not mentioned). [The scandal now is that seals add bestiality to these alternative sexualities.] When World War II broke out, Levick rejoined the Royal Navy and was seconded to the Special

Operations Executive, where he taught commandos fitness, diet, and survival techniques.

However, Levick left something at the expedition’s main base at Cape Evans when he went back to Blighty, and his notebook with listings of the details of his photography of penguins has just been recovered from the expedition hut. It will be conserved, copied, and returned to be exhibited at the hut.

Meanwhile, on December 7, Manon Ossevoort and her Ferguson Tractor reached the South Pole, after a traverse of 2500 kilometers from Novo Runway in Dronning Maud Land.

At the other end of the world, the 2014 Victoria Strait Expedition has recovered the ship’s bell of the wreck found there. This proves definitely that the ship is HMS *Erebus*.

I don’t know why there needs to be any further proof that Hollywood and imagination are profoundly disjoint sets, but here it is:

“Untitled *Ghostbusters* Reboot”
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1289401/>

Supposedly with an all-female team of *Ghostbusters* and so on.

The latest work from Boris Johnson’s word processor is *The Churchill Factor: How One Man Made History* (2014; Riverhead Books (Penguin); ISBN 978-0-698-15556-5; \$27.96; Kindle \$11.99). We have an introduction to Churchill written by a man with American ties, a journalist and politician, and a performer of unusual deeds (and also, not entirely trusted by the powers that be). Johnson provides a brief but incisive biography, evaluates the notorious problems of his career, dispels many disbeliefs, and makes a stab at the man in full (it would take a very very large book, far larger than this one, to even get close).

There are the subtexts, as it were. For example, when Johnson discusses Gallipoli, he is modest enough to not mention what his great-grandfather Ali Kemal Bey was doing.

MONARCHIST NEWS

Question: What do Álvaro de Llanza and Juan José Marcilla de Teruel-Moctezuma y Valcárcel have in common? Well, the former is the current Marques del Valle de Oaxaca, descendant of the conquistador Hernán Cortés de Monroy y Pizarro, and the latter is the current Duque de Moctezuma de Tuitengo, descendant of the tlatoani Motecuhcoma Xocoyotzin, also known as “Montezuma”. Did Randall Garrett know about the latter?

Maria del Rosario Cayetana Paloma Alfonso Victoria Eugenia Francisca de Paula Lourdes Antonia Josefa Fausta Rita Castor Dorotea Santa Esperanza Fitz-James Stuart y de Silva Falcó de Gurtubay, Duquesa de Alba (and a *whole lot* of other titles), descendant of James II and Arabella Churchill,

died **November 20, 2014** in Seville. Born **March 28, 1926**, the duchess became notorious for a long string of personal eccentricities, including her final marriage to a man 26 years her junior (un mayo-diciembre marriage, ¿verdad?). She held six dukedoms (and the Jacobite Dukedom of Berwick) along with a number of other lesser titles and was a grãndee of Spain fourteen times.

ORION SHALL RISE

The Orion/Delta launch was technically quite impressive, a powerful rocket lofting an advanced crew capsule for an unmanned test. I hope the enthusiastic guy who wanted to get a good view of the flight the first time they tried the launch has some matters explained to him.

But it seems every silver lining has a cloud. The report is that the next Orion flight will be in **2017**. That is, under the next administration.

What does experience tell us? A new administration will have its own supporters to reward. So Orion will be canceled and a new spacecraft will be announced, built by supporters of the new administration. And the space people will fall over each other explaining how Orion was all old technology and here was this hot new development to use.

Will the hot new technology finish development by 2024? Not that it matters, since that year will definitely see another turnover. Remember DC-X and VentureStar?

ONLY ONE LATRINE . . .

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE LOST STARS: IMPERFECT SWORD
by “Jack Campbell” [John G. Hemry]
(Ace; 2014; ISBN 978-0425272251; \$26.95)

F. M. Busby’s *Rissa Kerguelen* (1976) and its multiple sequels are a grand-scope space opera with a number of striking human touches. For example, there is his portrayal of the “other life” within the oppressive corporate empire. While it isn’t explicitly named, what happened was that the United States contracted out government, and without any controls, the corporate government became truly and thoroughly oppressive. Within the authority, though, there were small spots of independent thought; and then, as it expanded into space, there grew up a independent culture, a counter-culture as it were, with its own ways and mannerisms. Such as, for example, the sardonic ditty of the space cadets that went, “There is only one latrine in all of U! E! T!”

What vitiated it, though, was that the title character was a Mary Sue. Mary Sues don’t face any real problems. They don’t have to deal with lingering habits of suspicion and distrust from the old ways. Or with problematic subordinates — partners, even.

President Gwen Icení and her commanding General Artur Drakon of the newly independent planet of Midway don’t have the leisure of being able to nip off a few light years to deal with aliens who savagely kill everyone they

come into contact with, but turn out to be only poor misunderstood beings who lash out (fatally) when feeling Bad Thoughts on the part of their interlocutors. They have to deal with the problems of trying to build a civil society while dealing with the disintegration of an uncivil one.

The corporate government of the Syndic didn't encourage independent thought. This makes it easier to deal with — but harder to supersede. Building a civil society on the ruins of a society without a civil sector, gaining the trust of those who found trust to be a fatal affliction, encouraging initiative among those dared not exercise initiative if they wished to live, requires efforts that are challenging even of the best, harder still for those who had only the values of that society to work with. The parallel is that of the rebuilding from a Communist world described in Henry Hazlitt's *Time Will Run Back/The Great Idea* (1951, 1966).

This problem shows itself in the decision to dispatch an expeditionary force to clean up a Syndic garrison in a neighboring system. Who to take, how to ensure that it doesn't seem like a coup, and is somebody trustworthy make for seemingly dry, yet vitally important scenes. No matter what they do someone will take it wrong . . . and might take action.

Meanwhile, the general's special agent (and it turns out, one with a very problematic connection to him) Colonel Morgan is in action on the target, doing her best to soften it up in a style worthy of *Wasp* (by Eric Frank Russell (1958)).

Hemry is terrifyingly unsparing in the portrayal of the absence of social capital and trust in the newly liberated planet Midway. Similarly, his portrayals of space combat are part and parcel of his technology, of an advanced technology, but one with its internal constraints. Kimball Kinnison would have been disappointed, but Artur Drakon doesn't have inertialess drive available.

This may be "space opera", but it is a work that touches on very real problems and has flawed, struggling characters striving for solutions to these problems, without miracles on hand to answer the issue.

FLYING TO FAERIE

Review by Joseph T Major of
TINKERER'S DAUGHTER

(2011; CreateSpace;

ISBN 978-1460982290: \$9.79;

Amazon Digital Services: \$0.00),

TINKER'S WAR

(2012; CreateSpace;

ISBN 978-1478364831: \$11.24;

Amazon Digital Services: \$0.99),

BLOOD AND STEAM

(2012; CreateSpace;

ISBN 978-1481072099: \$9.89;

Amazon Digital Services: \$2.99), and

CLOCKWORK GOD

(2013; CreateSpace;

ISBN 978-1492800477: \$9.44;

Amazon Digital Services: \$2.99)
by Jamie Sedgwick

The idea of "Steampunk Elves" could be horrific, particularly after encountering urban fantasies where elves seem to be junkie punk rockers with pointed (as well as pierced) ears. Fortunately, Sedgwick has some sense of propriety, even if he has other problems.

No one wants Breeze. Not surprisingly, since she's a cast off child and worse yet, half-elfen. However, someone is looking out for an assistant.

Tinker is an interesting character; a more practical Maurice (as in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)), a devoted inventor in his own technical scholium. His materials are a little different, but then this is a fantasy. In fact his hopes are dedicated to the Wright Stuff, and the idea of spring-wound aircraft, difficult though it may be to credit, is not without a certain charm.

Breeze gets caught up in this, growing into becoming her own Amelia Earhart. There is a danger of characters having concepts they shouldn't have in the society they come from; which is mildly present and annoying. Discovering the concept of flight, though, lends this book great charm.

In the subsequent books, the charm declines. Beginning with an invasion, Breeze and Tinker have to change from peacemakers to partisans, and then Breeze takes off on a voyage of exploration, not without leaving progeny.

Her daughter River grows up in a marginal society. Nevertheless, she sets out to find out who and what can overcome the invaders, resolving the curious question of the previous book well enough.

But the city she and her friends find is too-perfect, too closed off . . . and they have to find out what to do and where to do it. At least the train they take is better than China Mieville's one in *Iron Council* (2004). (One wonders how River would have handled the utopian city of Havatoo and its neighbor the zombie city of Kormor in *Lost on Venus* (1933, 1935).)

The parts are each well done and striking, but Sedgwick seems determined to throw in Cool Stuff without reference to how well it fits. Why writers seem determined to ruin their promise is something that should be explicated.

TIME AND CHANCE

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE DRAGON OF THE ISHTAR GATE

(1961; Phoenix Pick/Amazon Digital Services:

ISBN 978-1-61242-158-2: \$6.99);

AN ELEPHANT FOR ARISTOTLE

(1958; Phoenix Pick/Amazon Digital Services:

ISBN 978-1-61242-128-5: \$6.99);

THE BRONZE GOD OF RHODES

(1961; Phoenix Pick/Amazon Digital Services:

ISBN 978-1-61242-145-2: \$6.99);

THE ARROWS OF HERCULES

(1965; Phoenix Pick/Amazon Digital Services:

ISBN 978-1-61242-191-9: \$5.99); and

THE GOLDEN WIND

(1969; Phoenix Pick/Amazon Digital Services:

ISBN 978-1-61242-158-2: \$6.99)

by L. Sprague de Camp

with introductions by Harry Turtledove
<http://www.phoenixpick.com>

. . . In February 1957, Fles got me a contract with Doubleday for *An Elephant for Aristotle*. I finished the novel with much help from Catherine, and it appeared in 1958. It received many good reviews and sold fairly well.

Once again I thought, now I was at last established! Alas, I had entered the field of the swashbuckling historical romance at just the wrong time. During the 1950s, such fiction had reached its peak of popularity, when novels by Tom Costain, Alfred Duggan, and Mary Renault regularly made the best-seller lists.

During the following decade I wrote four more historical novels: *The Bronze God of Rhodes*, *The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate*, *The Arrows of Hercules*, and *The Golden Wind*. All were laid in the Mediterranean region in Classical or Graeco-Roman times, with excursions to Iran, India, and Africa. All were based on real historical events, but events of which only a little is actually known. The critics were kind to all of them, but still, each sold less well than its predecessor.

The 1960s saw a rapid decline in the popularity of the genre. After *The Golden Wind* (which I privately thought the best of the lot), I said to hell with this; I will write more novels of this kind, which entail much arduous research, when and only when the market improves. So far as I can judge, it has not improved up to the time of this writing. . .

— L. Sprague de Camp, *Time and Chancel An Autobiography* (1996), Pages 246-247

Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* came out in 1991. This is in the class of historical romance that excluded de Camp, being your standard romance plot (unformed woman finds powerful man with hidden weakness and fills it) with a couple of glosses. Small wonder de Camp felt about it the way George Arthur Rose felt about the twopenny dreadful he borrowed to read in the first chapter of *Hadrian the Seventh* (1904).

However, thanks to electronic publishing, it is now possible to get these novels again. (When I think of the long arduous quest I made to find *The Golden Wind*, and I never did own a copy of *The Arrows of Hercules*. I find ebooks have their own virtue.)

The novels all seem to involve traveling and cultural comparisons. As de Camp had said, *An Elephant for Aristotle* involved transporting an elephant from India to Athens, through many different cultures, political hazards, and the exigencies of wartime.

The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate involves, by

way of contrast, getting something; a dragon from the headwaters of the Nile. What with hostile locals, treacherous politics, and the problems of transport, oh yes and there really was no dragon there, one can imagine that anyone who did what de Camp's protagonists did would have had as difficult a time.

The Bronze God of Rhodes is mostly about the problems of art, if one includes being involved in the greatest siege up to that time, chased down the Nile by Egyptian tomb-robbers, and propositioned by Demetrios the Besieger as "art". And yes, he treats with Hellenic love.

The Arrows of Hercules is very personal, being about the weapons research center at Ortygia. Since de Camp had been at the weapons research center at Philadelphia, he wrote what he knew. Ortygia was one of the projects of the tyrannoi of Syrakuse, and while it was promising it had . . . well, read the book.

The Golden Wind is certainly the most far-spanning, as its protagonist travels from India to Hispania, and then attempts to go back by sailing around Africa. This is certainly an ambitious project, and like the others this book is based on real events.

But de Camp was caught in a paradigm shift. Nowadays, it seems that historical novels have to be either romance novels or detective novels. The introductions by his succeeding trend-bucker, "H. N. Turteltaub", are the words of one who has been there, done that, and had the declining sales. (Oh yes, the Menedemos & Sostratos novels are *also* coming out as e-pubs.)

IT NEVER REIGNS . . . II

Review by Joseph T Major of
NAPOLÉON IN AMERICA
by Shannon Selin
(2014; Amazon Digital Services:
ISBN 978-0-9921275-2-7: \$7.99)
<http://shannonselin.com>

One could say "it never rains but it pours." Last year had Scott Freiheit's *The Emperor of California* (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 13 #2) and now this.

Selin is very contextual. In the *For Want of a Nail* style she bolsters her narrative with fictional correspondence and quotes from the people involved. Beyond that, she sets her tale in context; the flight of the Eagle would affect all Europe, and the Americans would also respond.

There is a bit of H. A. L. Fisher's "If Napoleon Had Escaped to America" (*Scribner's*, January 1931, also *If It Had Happened Otherwise/If, or History Rewritten*) here, as he becomes lionized and involved in plans to take over Spanish America.

The principal events are the maneuverings of the various people involved. The British government takes a low-key attitude, which is echoed by most of Europe. *The Golden Millstones* (by R. F. Delderfield, 1964) or to take the subtitle of that work, Napoleon's

brothers and sisters have to consider what to do, except for the hapless Joseph, who has his sibling show up at his home in New Jersey.

As Fisher had it, Napoleon begins to see opportunities in Spanish America. But the organization of a campaign takes time and money as well as men, and trying to get all this can require effort. The book ends with Napoleon just getting started on his latest campaign.

Is it worth getting? It's more plausible than Freiheit, more developed than Fisher, and more low-key than either.

ARMING THE PENGUINS

Review by Joseph T Major of
OPERATION TABARIN:
Britain's Secret Wartime Expedition to
Antarctica 1944-46
by Stephen Haddesley with Alan Carroll
(Spellmount; 2014;
ISBN 978-0-7524-9356-5; £18.99, \$32.95)

The crew of the U-1701 was drawn up on the deck, in the cold. At a signal, they all gave the salute, and then the Führer emerged from below, looking pale and wan. He looked around. "So this is the western outpost. Not very much, but we had less when the struggle for power began."

The crew launched a small boat and the Führer was conveyed ashore, to the principal structure there. But they were stopped by a man in a thick parka and, strangely, a tall helmet.

"See 'ere now! You can't just go breezin' your way into His Majesty's dominions! Mr 'Itler, I arrest you in the King's name for illegal immigration! Anything you say will be taken down and can be used in evidence against you!"

Paul Allman Siple got his start in Antarctic work at a very young age, being the Boy Scout on the [First] Byrd Antarctic Expedition of 1928-30. And he went again with Byrd in 1934 and 1939, after which he participated in Operation Deep Freeze, being the scientific director of the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station during its first year (1956-1957). Yet he was not the pioneer.

In 1921, Boy Scout James William Slessor Marr went south with Shackleton on the *Quest* expedition. This marked him, and when there were rumors of Nazi submarines lurking off the Graham Peninsula (now called the Antarctic Peninsula), Marr was chosen to lead an expedition to affirm British sovereignty in their claimed area. The Argentine and Chilean claims overlapped it, understand.

Marr had a very small team, and getting equipment was a struggle. There was a war going on, understand. But he managed to get two bases set up on islands off the peninsula, where they explored the region, provided

meteorological information, and showed the flag. It was a bit like *The Ascent of Rum Doodle* (by W. E. Bowman (1956)) but with competent people to balance its doggedness.

Or perhaps it was. Marr was recalled after his first year for health issues (some of which may have been in bottles). His successor was less popular, but got by.

The Peninsula was an old stamping ground. The Graham Land Expedition of 1934-7 had done work there, but their captain was engaged on other matters just then with Combined Operations. The TABARIN expedition members explored the areas around their bases, making some minor additions to the knowledge of the area.

In this age of instant communications (e.g., Jerri Nielsen's real-time updates of her self-treatment for breast cancer) it is a piquant reminder of how different the past is to read of the expedition members listening to the BBC shortwave broadcasts. Having so little news from the outside world made it more precious.

And the war having ended, so did this operation. The stations became civilian again, on the way to the International Geophysical Year. The managing agency, the Falkland Islands Dependencies Service, offered aid to Byrd's Operation WINDMILL. (It's not mentioned here, but they were less openly supportive of the Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition of 1946-7, which also had its base in the British-claimed area. It seems ironic that Ronne himself sneered at Jeannie Darlington, expedition member and wife of the focal point of the expedition's divide, for using a professional writer, secure in his knowledge that L. Sprague de Camp would not reveal that he had ghostwritten Ronne's own memoirs of that expedition.)

The fears of Nazi strongholds in Antarctica, while not overly amusing fiction, or the additional assertions of Holocaust Deniers, were more as pretext than as possibility. The white warfare of the south was only a metaphor.

THE GRIND THAT ISN'T

Review by Joseph T Major of
EXCELLENT SHEEP:
The Miseducation of the American Elite and
the Way to a Meaningful Life
by William Deresiewicz
(Free Press; 2014;
ISBN 978-1476702711; \$26.00
Simon and Schuster Digital Sales; \$11.99)

In high school you were National Merit Scholars, student council presidents and captains of your fencing teams. You took dozens of practice SATs, practiced viola for thousands of hours (violinists are a dime a dozen) and French-braided the hair of homeless veterans.

You masterfully tied together a set of emotional symptoms that looked enough like attention deficit disorder to buy you extra time on all your finals and

standardized tests. Plus, you got to take the exams in special quiet rooms, where a test facilitator would sharpen the pencils outside, because the grinding sound triggered your acute sensory overload. (Which somehow didn't preclude your part-time summer job at Blenders Juicery.)

You hired private college advisers to read your essays and hone your interview skills. Just think back to those valuable sessions where you learned to practically leap out of the chair talking about your passion for writing one-act plays in Cherokee, or how your heart raced that summer on the Mongolian steppes when you first spotted an ovoo monitor lizard, once thought to be extinct.

And you learned to deftly walk the college interviewer through your many achievements while still showing carefully modulated self-effacement: "Yes, I helped design the CO2 scrubber that will save humanity from global warming, but it was totally a team effort."

— "A Message for the Class of 2013"

Rob Lazebnik, who writes for *The Simpsons*, laid aside Bart's snappy comebacks to serious questions, Homer's "D'oh!", and so on to craft "A Message for the Class of 2013" (*Wall Street Journal*, May 31, 2013). With more rigor, but less force, Lazebnik set forth the principal arguments of this book.

Deresiewicz is a professor at Yale, and he is disoriented with the students. They are so focused on having the right CV that they don't bother to learn; they have no lives, just study. And yet grade inflation has made the "Gentleman's C" the "SJW's A-". And they will leave the Ivies for guaranteed jobs at Morgan Stanley.

The contest for position has led to a stagnation. No one takes chances, because they might fail, and failure is not an option. One thinks of P. J. O'Rourke's opinion on death: "If it weren't for death, we would all still be amoebas and would have to eat by surrounding things with their butts." (In the nicer version he left out the comment about posteriors and added, "have sex by lying on railroad tracks waiting for a train to split us into significant others," evidently never having read *Escape on Venus* (1946).)

Having been sure not to fail, the students then graduate and head for Wall Street. Where they will show another problem, that of entitlement. It's a problem also found among politicians these days, that having struggled for office, they can do as they please — peddle influence, take bribes, the like.

This all sounds dreadfully reminiscent of the complaint against many of the technicians of the Holocaust — they had immense technical knowledge but had never gained any morals to restrain themselves. Those gassed Jews were all messed up because they got

hysterical and if they had just been calm about it everything would have been all right, they said.

Deresiewicz argues that there is real education to be found at non-Ivies institutions. Part of the course at the Ivies, though, is contacts. He cites a comment about having a college degree being considered as proof of employability; now, it's having a degree from an Ivy League elite university that certifies the holder as employable.

That they have avoided commitment, that they have a fear of failing and therefore do nothing that might fail, that they have no internal lives, and worst of all, they hate their education and their jobs, is irrelevant. For all that it explains much of the contemporary corporate mentality.

Those super students somehow did not turn out to be so super once they got out of applications.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There was a partial solar eclipse on **October 24-23** (it crossed the International Date Line), visible in eastern Russia, Canada, and the United States. The greatest totality was at 71° 12' N. 97° 12' W., in the Franklin Strait in Nunavut, Canada. The eclipse was part of Saros 153, which began July 28, 1870 and will end August 22, 3114. Oddly enough, all the eclipses in this saros are either partial or annular. It began near sunset here in Louisville (though that was near the end of the eclipse), and earlier before that, many American astronomers (for example, Mike Weasner) got pictures of it.

The next solar eclipse will be **March 20, 2015**, visible in Svalbard, the Faroe Islands, and the North Atlantic and Arctic oceans, ending at the North Pole at local sunrise. The maximum totality will be two minutes 47 seconds, at 64° 24' N., 6° 36' W., in the Norwegian Sea. It is part of Saros 120, which began May 27, 933 and will end July 7, 2195.

The other solar eclipse of 2015 will be a partial eclipse on **September 13**, visible in Angola, Namibia, South Africa, and Antarctica, with maximum at 72.1S 2.3W in Marie Byrd Land. It is part of Saros 125, which began February 4, 1060 and will end April 9, 2358.

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

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

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

COFFEE

by Lisa

Grant bought me a Hamilton Beach coffeemaker. It is a marvelous machine. No pot. Just put the cup under the spout and push the bar in order to get the magic brew. Even cinnamon coffee tastes decent, although I will be glad when I use up the last of the cinnamon coffee

and can move on to African Plains.

WORLDCON BIDS

2017

Helsinki

<http://helsinkiin2017.org/>

Japan

<http://nippon2017.org/>

Proposed Dates: sometime in August

Montréal

Washington DC

<http://dc17.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 16-20

2018

New Orleans

<http://neworleansin2018.org>

San José

<http://www.sjin2018.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 16-20

2019

Dublin

<http://dublin2019.com/>

2020

New Zealand

<http://nzin2020.org/>

2023

Paris

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

Bids under consideration include:

2021

North Texas

2022

Chicago

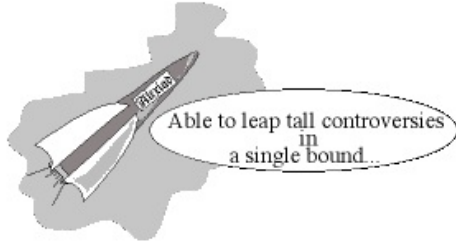


<http://no-things-off-the-end-of-the-creative-process>

© PAUL GAUDZIŃSKI 12/12/14

No news on the appeal.
No, I'm not happy.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Milt Stevens** October 23, 2014
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley,
CA 93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* V13 #5, Joseph mentions that he is running out of reading material. I considered the matter for a moment. Of all the people I know, Joseph would be the most likely to run out of reading material. You just can't read at the rate he has been doing it without eventually reaching the end of the print universe. At least, he didn't do anything drastic like collapsing into a literary singularity.

Somewhere in the neighborhood of 1000 SF and fantasy books have been published every year for far too many years. I begin dealing with the mass by eliminating certain types of fiction. I don't need no stinkin' vampires or zombies. I don't need no stinkin' dragons or unicorns. I don't need no stinkin' super secret agents or genetically upgraded soldiers. (I just started thinking of the lyrics of "All I Need Is Love." That has nothing to do with anything.) After I've eliminated all of that stuff, I look at the NESFA list for things I'm actually going to read. The folks at NESFA read a lot of SF and are almost as jaded as I am.

I've been reading SF for over 60 years. For each of those years, there were books I meant to read but didn't get around to it. So I now have a large supply of books with good word of mouth reviews which I haven't read yet. I have found there is no disadvantage to reading mostly older books. There is no commonality as far as current reading is concerned, so nobody is likely to notice you aren't paying attention.

Sounds like your tastes are about like mine. And it's true that there is such a diversity of books out that it is easily possible to have two avid readers meet and find they have not read one book in common. Back even in the seventies everyone had read the same things. It was a proud and lonely thing to be a fan, emphasis on the lonely.

Taral's comments on the smell of a new book got me thinking about the smells of other new things. Liking the smell of a new car, fresh laundry, or even a garden after a rain is reasonable. Now that I think about it, brewing coffee is a really great smell too. I can think of only one new smell that is a negative. When I was a kid I liked the smell of fresh paint. It probably isn't so bad if you only take a couple of sniffs and move on. However, prolonged paint sniffing does sort of rot your brain. Most people would consider that a negative.

In Leigh Kimmel's con report on Archon, I expected some information of their fan guest of honor situation. What were people saying about the matter? Did attendance seem to be down? Was there a new fan guest of honor? Where's the dirt?

**Leigh works the dealers' room
— that's how they can afford to
go in the first place — and I don't
think those matters got there.**

— JTM

From: **John Thiel** October 27, 2014
30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana
47904
pablolenis@frontier.com

Since the subject of utopias has come up, I'd like to say I'm interested in the concept. I think you share George Price's attitude about this, which seems to be that since men aren't going to be able to come up with one, the subject is low in interest. I don't know about that; I've been writing an opera called "Heaven On Earth", which takes place in a monastery that is under investigation, and the idea of utopian living at least comes up in it, which could be a bit fresher than things written in the last century or earlier. One thing I might say on the subject is that, considering that utopian thinking might originate with Plato, with his ideas about how things ought to be set up, we might consider his thought that artists and musicians wouldn't have much place in a well-run society. He didn't seem to get much contradiction, but it seems to me that in order to have spiritual increases which would assist in the formation of a utopia, there ought to be art and music, and the essential mistake is to exclude them from a place in society. That may be why utopian thinking falls flat, after a time.

I agree with you that there is a turgid sameness in the science fiction that has been coming out; everyone has much the same theme, and real imagination would seem to be lacking. But I don't think it spells the death of sf; just as leaves fall from the trees in autumn, as they are doing now, and then in the spring grow afresh, we may be experiencing the down part of a cycle.

I'm sorry to see how Harlan Ellison's condition is. I never met him, only talked with him on the telephone, but it makes me feel for the man. A stroke is caused by high blood

pressure, is it not? I suppose his present surroundings put a lot of pressure on a man. I wouldn't think his nervous structure had been destroyed by this; there would seem to be a chance of his recovering from his paralysis. I had been wondering about how he was doing, because he's on the film staff at *F&SF* and doesn't seem to be doing anything there.

**Harlan got out of the hospital
and went home on October 27.**

—JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** October 31, 2014
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-
0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

I enjoy your book reviews — and appreciate your pointing out those historical mistakes that most of the rest of us aren't aware of. (I enjoy learning more history.) *The Skeleton Crew* is a fascinating book; it's amazing how many cold cases are being solved today by people with the tenacity and tools to look into them.

Interesting article on jetpacks, etc. It looks like we need a better fuel source or flame resistant suits. Thanks to Sue Burke and Leigh Kimmel for their con reports. (I hope to get to Oasis this year; it was cancelled last year.) Thanks to all the LOCers and their interesting ideas and news.

Btw, I have a short story, "Cold New Planet," in a recent anthology, *Science Fiction Consortium*. You may be interested to know that I introduce the story with a scifaiku by oino sakai, whom I think you know.

Oops, I forgot to say that I enjoyed your Doctor Who story, but I have to admit that I'm not sure who Miss P is....

All the clues are there . . .

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** November 3, 2014
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los
Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Changes purporting to make something more easy and convenient fail when instead of inspecting what seems uneasy or inconvenient they introduce arbitrary additions, cuts, or rearrangements.

Ease and convenience can be good. Our country created wealth by seeking them. But, like health, they can't be higher than Priority 2. What do we desire ease, convenience, health, for?

Also if I try to increase ease and convenience for me at the expense of ease and convenience for you I destroy service and without that there's no wealth, folks.

Businesses and professions must be to some extent followers and to some extent leaders. If I do what I can't sell I may starve. But if I look only to what may sell I leap into a whirlwind of everyone chasing everyone and we all fall

down.

I think the arts these days have a bad case of Emperor's New Clothes. Why go along?

I'll try again about the Hugos. I respectfully suggest it isn't a rules problem, or an administrator problem; it's a nominators and voters problem. Numbers are available for 2014 and previous years. Look at them. So long as we sit on our hands others who do nominate and vote will win.

Thanks to Sue Burke for reporting "Multiply yourself by zero." I was just reading elsewhere about math jokes on *The Simpsons*. Sue, what do you think of Michener's *Iberia*? The Putnam translation of *Don Quixote*; Nabokov's lectures?

From: **John Purcell** November 9, 2014
3744 Marilene Circle, College Station,
TX 77845-3926 USA
j_purcell54@yahoo.com

Hey, there. I think it's time to write an e-moc on the Spirit of 76: the 76th issue of *Alexiad*, that is.

Unlike the one I sent to you last time, in which I rambled on for quite awhile, this batch of commentary won't take very long. Besides, I've already done my morning stretches and all, with the dog walk coming up after this is completed. So onward to the zine in question.

Our Halloween here was busier than usual, mostly due to artistic deadlines: Valerie and I were painting arches for the Sugar Skull Spooktacular Soiree hosted by the Friday Night Meet-Up group we hang out with from time to time. It was a lot fun painting those arches — pictures of them are posted on my Facebook page — for the party held on the evening of November 1st (a Saturday). Being involved with the preparation of that event reminded me a lot of doing the prelim phases of working on a Minicon, something I did while an active fan in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minneapolis back in the day. Valerie was also under deadline for getting a work into an art show by the end of October: her work is now on display at the Sead Gallery in downtown Bryan, Texas until the first week of January, 2015. She is the recording secretary of the Brazos Valley Art League (B-VAL), which also means she produces the monthly newsletter for that organization. For her it's comparable to pubbing a monthly fanzine, something that I will never again attempt. I have learned my lesson. Once she's no longer the Rec-Sec ("wrecked sec" sounds apropos) then this responsibility goes away, which will help reduce her stress level. Ah, me. Life goes on, tra-la!

Unlike you, Joseph, I have no trouble finding things to read. Just recently I grabbed a book off the shelf that sounded like fun written by one of my favorite science fiction authors, Poul Anderson, *The Stars are Also Fire* (Tor Books, 1994). It is, as I expected, a richly detailed, engrossing read. If I feel like it, once done I might just write a review of this

novel and send it your way. If anything, I might do a mini-review for one of my fanzines. We shall see what comes of this.

I could have got that when it came out — maybe I did — but by then I felt that Anderson had used up his creative impulse.

The news of Harlan Ellison's stroke swept through the SF community like one of his screeds, and I am astonished at his progress. He is already back home (as of October 28th, if I recall correctly) and doing very well. My mother had the same kind of stroke back in the fall of 1985, but hers was much more debilitating than Harlan's. She lived for another 14 years, regaining some mobility and speech, bless her heart. It sounds like Harlan's wasn't as extensive, but it is still nothing to sneeze at. I wish him the best and a full recovery.

Hard to believe that this year (2014) is the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I, the Great War: the War to end all Wars. Somehow I don't think the word "anniversary" is a good one to use, since it is commonly used in a celebratory manner regarding weddings, graduations, and such. In the sense of remembering what WWI meant — the whole-sale slaughter of people, both military and civilian: the hallmarks of modern warfare — then we should commemorate this world-changing event. Wars are terrible, man-made destructive atrocities and should be avoided if at all possible. I could go on for a long time decrying warfare, but I won't; there are much better things to talk about in the 76th *Alexiad*.

It's also the centennial of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

The other two items I want to briefly address are Taral Wayne's article "The Undigitized Man" and Rodford Edmiston's "Joy of High Tech." The second one is first, since I can sum up my feelings very quickly. Yes, I do agree that jet-propelled backpacks are cumbersome and impractical, they are cool, but what I want to know is this: where the hell is my flying car? As for Taral's piece, I also find that word processing speeds up the writing process, and it is much easier to edit one's work. The old days of typewriter ribbons, white-out, and so forth, were messy, but definitely evoke a certain nostalgia when I think about rattling off issues of *This House* or *Bangweulu* on that manual Royal typewriter in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Can't say I miss those marathon typing sessions, but it sure felt good to get an issue done and in the mail. I still get that feeling of accomplishment today, too. As for writing stories, poems, or non-fiction, it's not uncommon for me to grab a notebook and a pencil and start scribbling when the muse strikes. Taral also reminds me that I need to vacuum the bookshelves today. *sigh* Such is the life of a fan.

I unwittingly adored Michael Nesmith's mother. You see, she was the inventor of Wite-Out. My letters were often typed at one letter to the bottle.

There is nothing that I can add to your assessment of the Hugo Awards handed out at LonCon 3, which Sue Burke ably recorded in this issue. Nice touch to bring back Mr. Ellison's famous line "the mad dogs have kneed us in the groin" about the fan awards, but the way I look at it, those categories are forever changed. Not that they're worth fighting for, far from it. I am not that fervently interested in running WorldCons or attending their business meetings since I so rarely get to them anymore. Odds are the only foreseeable upcoming World SF Conventions I will probably attend are Kansas City in 2016 and New Orleans in 2018, should that city win the bid. Who knows? The future is so tenuous and unpredictable that I really don't want to worry about it.

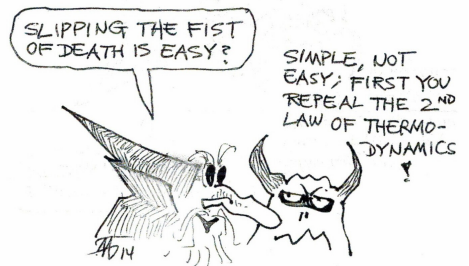
At any rate, I really enjoyed this latest issue, and look forward to the next one. Allow me to reiterate what I and many others said in the loccol of issue 76, good luck on the job front, and I hope everything goes well for you and Lisa.

See you guys in Kansas City.

I hope the matter is resolved by then.

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Nov. 5, 2014
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
22204-1552 USA
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>



Thank you for *Alexiad* 13.5, which arrived between the last lawn mowing and the first leaf raking, coincidentally with a partial solar eclipse. October 31st was our 21st wedding anniversary, celebrated by having a leisurely dinner with our old friend Trina King, who was in town on vacation, after which Lee and I went on to the Halloween party at Freddie's Beach Bar, with lots of people, lots of costumes and lots of noise. Lee was having a great time, but I ran out of steam so we left for home a little before midnight.

Rodford Edmiston's article on jetpacks was interesting though it has long been obvious

that the jetpack's flight duration was limited by its fuel supply. In the November issue of Scientific American there is an account of an even more useless device, a man-powered helicopter that lifted a very fit operator ten feet in the air for more than a minute to win the AHS (American Helicopter Society) Sikorsky Prize of \$250,000. SpaceShip Two, the first spaceship intended to take tourists into orbit—another invention on the useless side, exploded due to pilot error after releasing from its carrier plane at 70,000 feet. Thus does the reality of technology mock the high-flown promises that stole our youthful hearts.

It's been my observation that the most vigorous and vehement opponents of space programs have been proponents of competing space programs. So the would-be funders, private or public, listen to the experts and do nothing.

Defending the gold standard George Price says that: "Most creditors are not rich, since "creditor" includes everybody with a bank account." I don't agree, since bank account holders are depositors, rather than creditors. A creditor loans money at interest, while a depositor puts money in the bank for the bank to loan at interest, while remaining able to withdraw that money at any time. In 2014 depositors got an annual interest rate of about half the annual inflation rate of 1.7 percent, while creditors typically got much more, credit cards charging an average of 15.1 percent per annum. Depositors may also be net debtors in that they owe more money on their mortgages, car payments and credit cards than they have in their bank accounts. Most individuals, even if they are not net debtors, choose not to make loans, while "creditors" in the business of making loans are typically corporations, ranging from pawnshops to banks, the largest of which may be too big for the government to let them fail. Price then dismisses my argument that stable money would impose social costs, by saying that this is the view "of Keynesians and suchlike charlatans," who do not accept his opinion to the contrary. Historically it has only been during good times that maintaining the gold standard was possible. During bad times (caused by the all too frequent wars, recessions, and economic fiascos) the governments in charge have eventually concluded that debasing the currency was their least evil choice. From which one may infer that the gold standard is the effect of good times rather than the cause. Finally Price presents the moral argument that debasing the currency is theft, a violation of the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." In theory yes, but in practice the Ten Commandments apply to people rather than governments. Furthermore, debasing the currency does not do only one thing. True, our

depositors are seeing the slow erosion of their savings, but the net debtors enjoy the slow erosion of their debt, so that there is a transfer of wealth from creditors to debtors. The government's debt is also eroded, so that servicing it becomes easier. And who holds the bulk of the government's debt? The creditors, mostly, who do their best to minimize the taxes they pay, and include government bailouts among the services they receive. The "theft" inflicted upon our unhappy creditors by debasing the currency could therefore be regarded as a form of taxation, although some libertarians also regard taxes as theft. Thus, Price's moral argument appears at best ambiguous, if not specious.

Refuting my assertion that demand for widgets is finite and limited, Taras Wolansky compares apples with alligators, using the factoid that when the price of aluminum went way down (from its weight in gold when it was discovered to \$0.90 per pound today) it became a widely used commodity. He is correct that demand may be influenced by price; if the price of anything goes up people will find a cheaper substitute or use less. However, if the total demand for some product is x , then if one manufacturer cuts prices it may increase sales at the expense of the other manufacturers (if they don't also cut prices) but the total demand for x will remain unchanged. If, in a fit of optimism, the makers of cars or houses turn out more product than the market can absorb, they will be left holding their unsold product at the end of the fiscal year. Why? because most people will not make an unnecessary major purchase, even at bargain prices. Last year's unsold cars or houses will then be offered at a discount cutting into next year's sales (and profits) and forcing a reduction of production to bring supply back in line with demand. Since Taras has read a lot of economics, he should have no trouble finding examples.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 18, 2014
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA
93010-2451 USA
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for Vol. 13, No. 5 (October 2014), Whole Number 77.

September 21 to September 27 was spent at Villa Roma Resort and Conference Center in Callicoon, New York for my Navy ship (USS Worcester CL-144) reunion. The attendance was not that great. Apparently (despite explanations to the contrary) a number of our members felt the cost was too high. That was not the case as the price was all inclusive including room, three meals a day, and entertainment. It was our 25th and final reunion as we voted to disband the association effective December 31, 2014. There were some tears.

Robley Rex said that one of his last decisions as President of the Kentucky Veterans of WWI was to give all the members life

memberships.

At the reunion my reading was *Spheres of Influence* by Ryk E. Spoor (Baen, 2013). It is the sequel to Spoor's *Grand Central Arena* (Baen, 2010). I enjoyed both novels. Hopefully, Spoor will produce another and not wait another three years.

On my return from my Navy ship reunion it was noticed that there was a small swamp in my front lawn. The main water line to my house had a break which could have been existing for most of the time I was away. The plumbers had to dig a very deep hole. But, they found it quickly and inserted a patch which fixed the problem. My next water bill was huge. Our water bills have several tiers with the charge increasing with increasing tiers. I am usually in the first tier with sometimes going slightly into the second tier. This water bill was well into the third tier. I've appealed and hopefully will receive a credit eventually. If my appeal is approved I will still be charged for the total water usage, but only at the Tier One Rate.

I am thoroughly enjoying Jack Campbell's (John G. Hemry) "The Lost Fleet" and "The Lost Stars" series. I just hope that he brings them to a conclusion while I am still alive.

Another novel just completed and enjoyed is *1636: The Viennese Waltz* by Eric Flint, etc. This is a series that could go on forever. In going back in time, and considering what they have done, the USA and Canada will never exist in their future.

The local PBS TV channel had a two hour presentation on the history of the Navy SEALs. At no time during the program did they ever mention Roy Boehm who is considered the father of the SEALs. Shame on them. While he was alive Roy was a member of my ship association having served on the Worcester as a First Class Boatswain Mate. He later became an officer. His autobiography *First SEAL* is an excellent read.

It looks like our chance for having a good rain season may not happen and we will be in for another year of drought.

Sue Burke: You make mention of Spain having a problem with raccoons that were brought there as pets. A few nights ago I saw a raccoon in my backyard with something in its mouth. Possibly a rat or someone's pet cat or kitten. There is also a squirrel that appears in my backyard from time to time. I suspect that it moves around the neighborhood.

From: **Murray Moore** November 19, 2014
1065 Henley Road, Mississauga
Ontario L4Y 1C8 CANADA
murraymoore@gmail.com

Consecutive life sentences have come to Canada, in the sentencing of a man in Nova Scotia who hunted and shot fatally police officers.

I saw what you did!: quotation marks around Best Fanzine, Best Fan Writer, Best

Fan Artist: tsk. Fandom Is Just A Goddamn Hobby. A Hugo for Finlay in the centennial year of his birth. His daughter Lail represents him during World Fantasy Convention later this month (November).

Milt Stevens suggests that a biography should be a summary of a person's life, "as little as a sentence if you could find the right sentence." Not much of a market for one-sentence biographies, I say. Writing one-sentence biographies could be an entertaining convention program item.

From: **Rodney Leighton** 2014
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
CANADA

Halloween was the normal for me; quiet, no noise, no kids, no treats except what I bought in the off chance someone did show up and no tricks. Three spiders committed suicide in my bathtub.

"Sooner or later, everybody in fanzine fandom writes something that gives offence, whether intended or not." Something written by Robert Runté in something called *SF Fanzines* in April 2000, quoted by Garth Spencer in a longish essay in eAPA 7, distributed in Oct. 2004, printed last month and shipped to me from England.

There is some possibility that they have stopped making ribbons for this old typer. I will be screwed if that is true.

This old apa is quite interesting. There were only 5 folks in it to begin with. David Burton, don't know him but he wrote a fair bit about religious matters in the first 8 mailings. Dave Locke. Garth. Laurraine Tutihasi. and Janine Stinson. Steven Silver joined in later. Not as interesting. But I was intrigued to read that he has experienced paper copies of *Argentus* vanishing; his statement was that copies mailed to Australia rarely made it there. He once told someone he mailed me copies of that zine. I received one, the very first one. Pretty sure I loosed it. Haven't seen another one.

Also of great interest to me was that a decade ago some folks were complaining about the lack of response to ezines. Mr. Locke wrote about doing paper zines and then ezines but no feedback. Jan and I were friends back then; I always loosed her zine but I recall she was unhappy with the response she got. Chuck, awhile ago, well, I wrote about this last time. But one wonders.

I see that John Purcell has in formed your readers for the sixth or so time that he intends to mail me paper copies of his zine, and has done so in the past. I got one issue of *Askance*, #30 I think, I wrote about it in some zine or other. Don't recall whether I loosed or not. Got 2 issues of *Askew*; wrote after one of them.

I sent about 35 or so copies of *Rodney's Fanac* #1 around the world. I have received some sort of response from about 25 of those

folks. Some people who were mailed copies that I don't know if they received them are : Laurraine Tutihasi; John Purcell and Joe Major. Such is life. If I don't know if you didn't get a copy, nothing I can do about it.

We did.

Well, I can fix that with you for this issue; if all or some of this letter appears in the next issue of *Alexiad* then I will know you received *RF* #2. Gonna mail a copy to Laurraine shortly. John, if you want to read it, make like Andy Hooper and pull it off the internet.

I got copies of 3 issues of *Flag* by some convoluted manner not long ago. Parts were boring. I am intrigued to see how many Faan Awards Mike Meara got this year. I was intrigued to see that Mr. Hooper reads *Alexiad*. and *Rodney's Fanac*.

Andy Hooper reads this? I am amazed and astounded, even analoged!

— JTM

UFO TECH
SUPPORT

OKAY, THEN...
WHICH OPENING
DID YOU PUT THE
ANAL PROBE IN?



Got a copy of *Challenger* whatever number it is and *Spartacus*. I gather they arrived at my email address over in England and were printed out and shipped to me.

Haven't looked at *Chall* yet. One time Guy said he mailed me a copy of 6 issues in a row; nary a one arrived, I figured he was lying or

someone was stealing the damned things.

I don't know what to do about these. I have this idea that I want to keep *RF* for paper zines or at least things that arrive in my mailbox. I suppose, technically, they do. But Chuck pays for printing and postage...

Redheaded female at the post office in Pugwash was entering all the charges into her computer. \$3 and something for an envelope to England. "Hell of a price, she said. Later, "Now I will take it all off." Smiled when I cheered. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, she meant the taxes.

Hey, guess what? I was reading this zine I got called *Show Me the Money*. I was thinking I might send one of them to Tim. He would either find it interesting or toss it unread or maybe get riled up at reading it. Thought that I didn't have an address; well, I could ship it to Joe and reading the locs and here he is and I just this second realized that I was over the edge but also that if I looked in some older issues I could find it. Don't know if I will. Finances suck.

As far as I can find out it appears that *Rodney's Fanac* is the only fanzine that might be considered a SF fanzine that has paper copies mailed to people that exists in Canada. What a hell of a thing!

Well this is certainly an egocentric letter, now isn't it! Good luck with the lawsuit or whatever you do.

Toss out any of this you wish, no problem.

From: **Jim Stumm** November 11, 2014
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo, NY
14223-0029 USA

Robert S. Kennedy, *SPACE ELEVATOR*: I used to think this was a good idea, to lower the cost of access to near-Earth space. But then I read *Mercury* by Ben Bova in which he depicts the sabotage of a space elevator. Now I don't see how terrorists could be prevented from destroying it. They could easily conceal themselves among all the people who would be riding up and down the cable, and hide a bomb amidst all the freight being carried up. Exploding a bomb at around 22,000 miles up the cable would cut it. The section above would fly off into space and the section below would fall to Earth, possibly sideways all along the equator, killing many people and destroying property. I don't think equatorial nations will accept such a risk. It's likely that they will be able to prevent the building of any such space elevator.

SOLAR POWER SATELLITE (SPS): This is quite different. Terrorists probably couldn't get to an SPS undetected since they would have to go by rocket.

I presume that, once an SPS is built and operational, it would normally be unmanned. There wouldn't be any traffic to it for terrorists to hide in. Once their unauthorized rocket is spotted, perhaps by NORAD which tracks every nut and bolt in orbit, they could be shot down. If they get to the SPS and blow it up,

what would that accomplish? It would reduce the amount of electricity going into the grid, but disabling a terrestrial power plant would be an easier way of accomplishing the same thing. And it would spread debris in orbit. But they could do the same thing by blowing up existing orbiting satellites. But there is one thing terrorists might hope to do that they could only do with an SPS.

In normal operation an SPS would beam power to Earth as microwaves to be converted into electricity in a rectenna, a circular target miles across. This beam would be so diffuse that a short exposure wouldn't harm a person. We could imagine an unlikely scenario in which terrorists seize control of an SPS and reconfigure it to send a death ray down to Earth from space.

They would have to concentrate the beam and move it to a populated area like a city. But the system could be designed to make any such alteration difficult and time-consuming. And defending against it looks easy. The SPS would be a sitting duck. Defenders could launch a missile to blow up the SPS to halt any such death ray. Or defensive systems could be built in such as a self-destruct mechanism that could be triggered by controllers on the ground that would turn the SPS into useless junk while leaving it intact. In short, I don't think terrorism would be much of a threat to a properly designed SPS. The real obstacle is raising the enormous amount of money it would take to build it.

Taral Wayne: I once owned a Timex-Sinclair that used a TV for a monitor, had an annoying membrane keyboard, and only 1 K of memory. It was hard to do anything useful with such a small amount of memory. I was not terribly disappointed when it stopped working.

My next computer was entirely different. It was a dedicated word processor from Smith Corona. It consisted of 2 pieces that looked like a typewriter and a CRT TV. The typewriter was a daisy wheel with a built-in computer with 64 K of memory and a disk drive that took a 3 inch disk with 720 K of memory. A cable connected the monitor to the computer, but there were no other ports so no other peripherals could be added. Besides the word processing program, there were 3 other programs built in, and no way to add any other software. The other included program that I used a lot was a spreadsheet with a 26x99 matrix, that I used mainly for keeping track of my mutual fund investments. Spread sheet programming was an interesting challenge.

I loved that machine. I missed it when it finally stopped working after several good years of use. For the kind of short-item writing that I do, the 64 K of memory was ample. I'd buy a new machine just like it without any hesitation if I could find one, but I don't suppose anything like that is made anymore. That was what I mostly want from a computer, a super typewriter.

Richard A. Dengrove: You misquoted me.

I didn't say the conservative justices are closer to the Founding Fathers. I said their views are often more in accordance with what the Constitution says. How could they agree with the Founders when the Founders differed among themselves?

Delegates to the Constitutional Convention held a variety of views, but they compromised and settled on one sequence of words that made up the Constitution that they signed and that State conventions ratified. It's those words of the Constitution, and not the various opinions of the Founders, that make up the fundamental law of our nation, which elected politicians swear to uphold.

I agree with you that Congress should cut the post office loose and stop trying to micro manage it.

But the p.o. pension issue is complex. On the internet I found 3 items: 1) Re other agencies' pensions: "As a nation, we've promised benefits to retirees that either we can't afford, or aren't willing to fully fund." So the fault may lie with those other agencies that are not putting enough money into their pension funds.

2) Until 2006 the p.o. was paying pensions on a pay-as-you-go basis which puts retirees' pensions especially at risk as the p.o.'s business declines. There may come a time when the p.o. simply has too little current revenue to pay in full what it has promised to retirees. To prepare for this possible shortfall, in 2006 Congress ordered the p.o. to begin accumulating a pension fund.

A pre-funded pension fund removes the risk to retirees of their pensions not being fully paid if it is kept up to the present-value of all the pensions that are to be paid out over the average life expectancy of the qualified pensioners. Pre-funding means paying for pension liabilities year by year as they accrue.

That present-value would be less if a pension fund can be invested so as to earn a generous return. But (3) Congress has ordered the p.o. to invest its pension fund in US Govt bonds only. That's a terrible investment because T-bonds pay low current interest and will fall in value if interest rates rise.

One thing I don't get is what that "75 years" even means. All discussions of other pensions that I have seen are in terms of dollar amounts not years, the dollar amount in the pension fund now, and how that compares with the amount that will be needed in the future. Does that 75 years refer to the average life expectancy of retirees? If so, that would seem to be about right.

From: **Sue Burke** November 28, 2014
calle Agustín Querol, 6 bis 6D
28014 Madrid, SPAIN
sueburke@telefonica.net
mount-oregano.livejournal.com
amadisofgaul.blogspot.com

The Duchess of Alba, Cayetana Fitz-James Stuart y Silva, fourteen times Grandee of Spain,

died on November 20 at age 88. She had broken a leg during a visit to Rome last year, and since then her health had declined.

More than 80,000 people filed past her casket as it lay in state in the Seville City Hall. Three thousand people filled the Cathedral for her funeral, conducted by the Archbishop Emeritus, who called her "noble by inheritance and noble, very noble, of heart." Her eldest child, Carlos, age 66, the new Duke of Alba, spent several minutes kneeling during the funeral. A crowd outside greeted her casket as it left with sustained solemn applause, the custom in Spain.

Cayetana's 40 titles of nobility were distributed among her six children. Her third husband, a handsome man 24 years her junior whom she met in line at a movie theater (and whom her children initially hated when they married in 2008), had renounced the inheritance of all titles and all but a tiny portion of her estate, which is estimated to reach US\$4 billion – although much of that is in properties that are official historic landmarks: the castles and state artwork aren't very liquid assets.

Two years ago I visited an exhibit, The Legacy of the House of Alba, in Madrid, a display of some of her family treasures. I toured room after room of precious and historic artwork, rare books and documents, a letter by Christopher Columbus (nice handwriting), clothing worn by Spain's kings at their coronation, and other extraordinary objects – basically stuff from someone's attic if their family had been a major political player for centuries.

This provides a clue to her popularity: she patronized arts and culture, high and low. Most of all she had an indomitable will. She did what she wished, dressed as she wished, went where she wished, always busy and happy, and urged others to do the same.

Half of her ashes now rest in both the family pantheon near Madrid, and the other half in the Church of the Confraternity of the Gypsies in Seville, where she was an active and generous member.

In other news, you may have heard of some sort of referendum about independence for the Catalonia region of Spain held on November 9. It was a sort-of referendum: by law, a region can't hold a referendum on an issue it can't legally act on, so the balloting was conducted by volunteers in state institutions like school buildings, but with no official voter lists. The result was about 36% turnout, of whom 80% voted for independence.

What now? Should the central government authorize a real referendum, perhaps with the stipulation that an absolute majority must vote for independence, much like the Scotland vote? I think 80% of 36% would be the outcome in that case: about 28% voting for independence. Case closed. But the central government holds such hostility to independence it won't do that – or anything else constructive.

That's a pity. I'm against Catalonia independence, but its citizens have real

grievances that ought to be addressed, but instead, every time the Prime Minister opens his mouth to say something stupid and insulting about *independentistas*, even more Catalonians favor independence, and I have more sympathy for them – and fewer people nationwide support the ever-less competent current government.

A couple of recent surveys confirmed that the party in power, the conservative Popular Party, is anything but popular. Although it holds an absolute majority in Congress now (the Senate here has no power), if elections were held today, it would get 10% of the vote, blank protest ballots 11%, small parties 7%, the Socialists 13%, 37% of the electorate would stay home, and the new Podemos (We Can) Party would get 22%.

Podemos is a big surprise. The party only came into existence in August. It grew out of Spain's Occupy movement, and it's still formulating its platform. Why do so many Spaniards support it when they even don't know what stands for?

The answer lies in the "Punic Wars," as the press has gleefully monikered it. On October 27, the police arrested 51 people for institutionalized government corruption in "Operation Púnica." The name came about because the alleged corruption ringleader was Francisco Granados, a high-ranking Popular Party leader, and *granada* is Spanish for "pomegranate," whose scientific name is *punica granatum*.

Púnica is not the only corruption investigation. There's also Bárcenas, Blesa, Convector, Edu, Enredera, ERE, Fabra, Gürtel, Hacienda, Madeja, Malaya, Método 3, Mercasevilla, Minutas, Nóos, Palau, Palma Arena, Palau de la Música, plan Rabasa, Pokémon, Pretoria, and Pujol, among many others. In all, 2000 politicians from every major party, especially the Popular Party, are being investigated for corruption, along with the King's sister, the former International Monetary Fund Director Rodrigo Rato, the head of the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, business leaders, labor leaders, construction company executives, bankers, and plenty of other people with a finger in the pie.

We may not know a lot about Podemos, but we know what its leaders aren't: they aren't under indictment. They may be a bit too leftist even for me, but unlike other populist movements popping up around Europe, at least they're not neo-Nazi thugs beating up and killing people.

The next election will be held in November 2015. That's a long time away in politics.

In happier news, we have bedbugs in Madrid, too, but so far they've been confined to the Lavapiés neighborhood, a safe distance from mine. I was at Lavapiés Street in a bookstore-café on November 25 for an open mic, where I read a piece about my baby brother's first Christmas. I stayed close to the bar and far away from beds.

Incidentally, we have Spain's holiday schedule for 2015. By law we get 14 days of public holidays in Spain, but since holidays that fall on Sundays don't count, in some years we celebrate for minor reasons, for example in the coming year: March 19, Father's Day, actually St. Joseph's Day, Jesus's step-father; May 2, Madrid's uprising against Napoleon Bonaparte's troops; June 4, Corpus Christi; September 9, *Santa Maria de la Cabeza*, "Saint Maria of the Head," a Madrid medieval saint whose skull, as a relic, has performed many miracles and is especially good at ending droughts; and November 9, the Virgin of Almudena Day, the patron Virgin of the city, whose name comes from the word for "city wall" in Arabic because, according to legend, when the Moors were approaching for conquest in 711, Christian Madrid hid its revered statue of the Virgin in the city wall, but in fact Madrid didn't exist at the time and there was no city wall, so the whole legend is false including the part where the statue was rediscovered by El Cid – and yet, we get the day off in her honor.

That sounds like the story of the priest celebrating mass in Hagia Sophia during the Turkish capture of The City; supposedly he just stepped into a pillar, and is waiting until the Turks are driven out.

— JTM

On that day, and almost every day, I will no doubt be composing on my computer. Like Taral Wayne, I think it's helped me become a better writer, and beyond all doubt a more prolific one.

But I'll be celebrating the upcoming national holidays of December 5, Constitution Day, and December 7, the Immaculate Conception, away from my keyboard. I'll be at Spain's national SF convention in a suburb of Barcelona. Expect a report next issue.

P.S. Today I'm seeing lots of ads for bargains for Black Friday – here in Spain, and not for *viernes negro* but "Black Friday." I'm not sure if businesses know exactly what it means, except that it's an excuse to try to lure shoppers into stores. Traditionally here, Christmas pre-season doesn't start until after Immaculate Conception. Or at least, it didn't used to.

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** 11/24/2014
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring,
MD 20907-8093 USA
mmwooster@yahoo.com

Many thanks for *Alexiad*. I really wanted to go to Loncon, but the money wasn't there. I understand it was pretty well run and that most people enjoyed themselves. One thing I'd like to know, based on what Gregory Benford said in *Challenger*: is it really true that the end result of the Mighty Internet War Over the Politically Incorrect Toastmaster was that the

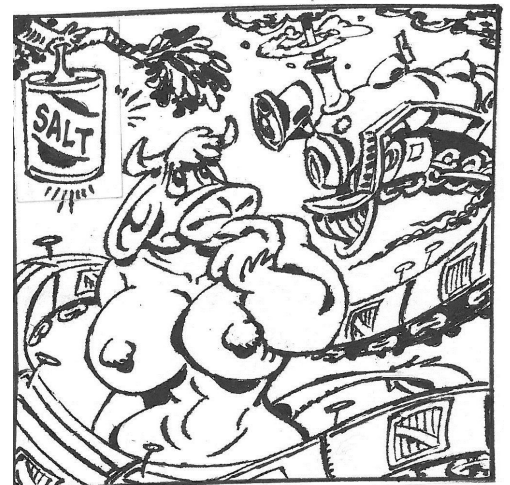
toastmasters at the Hugos uttered no jokes at all? Did this work?

Sometimes toastmasters can tell awful jokes, like the two doofuses in Reno. But a funny toastmaster, like John Scalzi, makes the ceremony better. At the World Fantasy awards this year, Mary Robinette Kowal didn't really have that much to do but when she was on stage she was enjoyable and deserves another Toastmaster gig at some point.

As for Bill Patterson's Heinlein biography, I reviewed volume 2 in *National Review*. I think I should get a prize for convincing *NR* to write about science fiction. As I understand it, David Hartwell deserves a lot of credit for turning Patterson's book into a credible biography. One can imagine what unedited Patterson was like. However, even with editing, Patterson's book has problems. He unquestionably takes everything Virginia Heinlein ever said at face value, even when she says things that are questionable, such as the notion that Heinlein personally bailed out SFWA around 1975. He did not interview Earl Kemp or Alexei Panshin. He also takes the point in all battles between Heinlein and everyone else that Heinlein was always right.

Theodore Sturgeon reviewed SF for *National Review* in the sixties.

AW, G'WAN... WHO'S GONNA KNOW?



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO FARMER AL FALFA

Nonetheless, Patterson's books are serious ones that deserve our respect. However, they should not be the last word, and there is certainly room for another biography. The Heinlein estate can do two things to be helpful — it should remove its interdict against Leon

Stover's biography and allow it to be published. Moreover, Patterson said that around 1981 Heinlein switched to a word processor and the Heinlein estate has never had the computer files translated. This is a worthy use of the estate's funds, and I encourage Heinlein's executors to spend the money on computer translation programs.

Joe's review of Ben Macintyre's book on Ian Fleming reminds me of Fleming's appearance in, of all things, the TV adaptation of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple novel *A Caribbean Mystery*. Miss Marple is visiting in Jamaica where she meets Ian Fleming. Fleming explains that he is writing a spy series but can't come up with a good name for the hero. In the next scene, Fleming and Marple go off to a lecture by the real-life author of *Birds of the West Indies*. The author introduces himself by saying, "My name is Bond. James Bond." It was a pretty funny scene.

And I remember the Sherlock Holmes pastiche where he helped a young lady find about her fiancé's problems, which broke up the engagement. So she remained "Miss Marple."

— JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** Nov. 25, 2014
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,
PA 19143-3310 USA

As the deaths of popular entertainers are reported — untimely or in the fullness of years — I reflect on how far they were outside my orbit. Did I even recognize the names of Robin Williams or Joan Rivers? I did not: of their performances, I had not seen even one minute, and their personal shenanigans were beyond my visible magnitude. (Contrast Michael Jackson.) I simply do not watch TV shows, and movies, from what I chance to read about them, do not appeal to me.

By contrast, my mind is cluttered with the history of magazine science fiction, not omitting the artwork — some of it before my time or beyond the range of the collection I had in the long ago. Who now cares that Wesso or Dold ever existed? Contrast the early illustrators of Sherlock Holmes, who made his image for us.

I have lately been reading up on Mary Queen of Scots; I need not explain here what makes that story interesting. And I am simply not able to explain why some historical personages are of more interest to me than others: Prince Eugene of Savoy more than Marlborough, for instance.

An interesting chance find was *A Tree Is a Tree* by King Vidor, whose work as a director covered two decades of silent movies and two of sound. His insights on the art and craft of cinematography are convincing. There are lots of Hollywood anecdotes. Whether an actor uses a stage nose or not, I don't care; but

I had wondered about the name of Zasu Pitts, and now I know that it's her real name. She was named for her aunts Eliza and Susan.

Theodosia Goodman's nickname was "Theda" and she had a grandmother Bara, so she became "Theda Bara".

The Brown Derby, Hollywood restaurant of some fame, did not fail to be mentioned in passing; and the very next day in a work of fiction I was reading *The Neddias* by Pinkwater) the characters ate at the Brown Derby.

A History of Ireland in 250 Episodes has been interesting and goes on the shelf. I can't imagine I need a whole book on the Parnell scandals, but I happened to get a book about the woman in the case, and I will read at least parts of it.

And her brother was of some note himself.

— JTM

The project of reading the "Lymond Chronicles" of Dorothy Dunnett (fiction) is still in the future.

Why do I feel that I am slumming when I read science fiction?

From: **Trinlay Khadro** Nov. 24, 2014
1734 S. 56th Street, West Allis, WI
53214-5281



TRINLAY KHADRO

New address.

Your bedbug problem is one of those things which has been a worry for me. Everyone that I deal with has had to deal with them thinks that they were acquired via a hotel visit and rode home in the luggage.

One crafty person thinks that despite going to cons and hotels

hers arrived in a shipment of fabric . . .

Everyone who has been rid of them has had to use professionals and either had all their belongings frozen or heated. Hope you'll be rid of them soon.

Thanks for the zines, we'll hopefully catch up soon.

I finally got my knee MRI-ed and will hopefully have some news Monday afternoon.

The kitties are enjoying the new house. We've got at least 500 more square feet on the main floor and there's a nice Master suite on the 2nd floor which "the kids" have claimed. I've got a "Master bedroom" on the 1st floor

and another "Master bedroom" has been dubbed the library and a smaller "bedroom" is getting set up as my studio/sewing/craft room. We're really excited and love it so much.

From: **George W. Price** Nov. 28, 2014
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL
60690-3228 USA
price4418@comcast.net

October Alexiad:

Alexis Gilliland refers me to an Economist article "on the criminalization of American business, in which they lament the lack of clarity in US laws that makes the legal system an extortion racket." It's not just a lack of clarity. There is also deliberate misinterpretation of law, and even some laws that are intended to facilitate legalized extortion, such as "civil forfeiture of assets."

The Chicago Tribune (and presumably other papers elsewhere) recently ran a one-eighth-page display ad inviting inquiries about the settlement of a class-action suit in California against Jimmy John's LLC. "If you purchased a sandwich listed on the menu as containing alfalfa sprouts at a Jimmy John's between February 1, 2012 and July 21, 2014," you may qualify "to receive a voucher good for the purchase of a side order (pickle, chips, or cookie) or ooh." It appears that Jimmy John's had been — ooh, the horror! — scanting on the alfalfa sprouts.

So each victim of the villains at Jimmy John's will get a voucher worth two or three dollars in trade — if he bothers to claim it. But we may be sure that the lawyers pulling off this settlement will collect many thousands of dollars in fees. How's that for unnecessary litigation? Dare we call it "frivolous"?

Poetic justice, now, would require that the lawyers' share of the settlement not be paid in cash, but in those same vouchers that the victims get. That should keep them in sides and soda for the next century or so.

How do you go about proving you bought a sandwich containing alfalfa sprouts at Jimmy John's during the period in question? How many people keep every receipt they ever get, anyway?

— JTM

Both Richard Dengrove and Alexis Gilliland find my analysis of the great financial crisis unconvincing. No surprise there. Rather than keep going around and around with more arguments, I suggest reading *The Housing Boom and Bust*, by economist Thomas Sowell.

I will add that, apart from the particular ins and outs of the crisis, a major underlying cause was "crony capitalism," where the government rescues businesses that screw up. Which, of course, encourages screwing up.

As I've said before, the obvious preventive

is to let everyone know with cold certainty that there will be no taxpayer bailouts for anyone ever. There should be no “government-sponsored enterprises” — the only reason for government sponsorship is to let those businesses tap into the U.S. Treasury at need. Likewise, kill all government insurance and guarantees for private businesses.

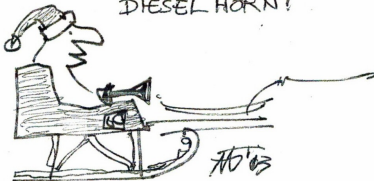
Nor should any outfit be “too big to fail.” If a company is really so big that its failure would be catastrophic for the economy, then it should damn well be broken up into units that can safely be allowed to fail when they screw up.

However, I suspect that fears about “too big to fail” are too often based on a misunderstanding of bankruptcy. We talk as if a bankrupt company suddenly disappears, leaving a big hole in the economy. That’s not how it usually works. What happens is that the owners (stockholders) lose their investment, top managers lose their jobs, and unsecured creditors get stuck with uncollectible debts. But in most cases the company keeps operating with new owners and new managers — and, we hope, wiser policies. The workers keep working, the company keeps producing, and there’s no big hole torn in the economy.

It just might be that “too big to fail” is a scary notion encouraged by the old owners and managers and creditors who stand to lose their shirts, and would much rather get a taxpayer bailout. No, let the buggers fail.

Taras Wolansky approvingly mentions Heinlein’s view that “a spell in the brig . . . never did an offender any good, while a right proper flogging might.” Yes indeed. Let’s consider flogging rather than imprisonment as the standard punishment for most offenses. We would still need imprisonment for life for capital offenses, and for those who have taken so many floggings that it is apparent that they are incorrigible. And there would need to be safeguards against sadism. An added benefit is that closing most prisons would be a hell of a lot cheaper.

I GOT RID OF THE JUNGLE BELLS IN FAVOR OF AN INFRA-RED SENSOR THAT TRIGGERS A DIESEL HORN!



From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Nov. 29, 2014
2651 Arlington Drive, #302,
Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

I am back again with comments, this time on the October Alexiad.

One has to do with alternate history. Of course, you’re right, Joe, that the Mexicans couldn’t have defeated North America without shipbuilding facilities and a better population base for an army. However, I suspect the Zimmerman Telegram wasn’t a total fantasy. Some Germans hoped a hostile Mexico could preoccupy the US sufficiently, and prevent it from entering World War I on Britain’s side.

Another certain loser, according to Rodford Emiston, is the rocket belt. For now, it can’t carry enough fuel. I was told recently another future invention remains technologically stillborn, the flying car. For now, it would either be based on the airplane and need a runway, or the helicopter and produce a dangerous under draft.

Not an actual loser, however, is the idea that God made the universe 6000 years ago to look like it was billions of years old, and a going concern, à la Philip Gosse’s *Omphalos* (1857).

You Joe, Darrell Schweitzer, and the new Cosmos were wrong to fault it because light from some galaxies requires billions of years to get to Earth. It might be true that most Creationists would be stumped. On the other hand, logically speaking, as a going concern, God could have placed the light beams as if they had been traveling for billions of years.

No, the trouble with the universe created as a going concern is that no evidence can support such a thesis. In short, God left no evidence that the universe is 6,000 years old; only evidence that it is billions of years old. That, for instance, the galaxies, and light waves, have to have traveled that long. The idea it was created as a going concern is an unprovable Conclusion.

Proof for a going concern is not the only problem here either. Also, there is the problem of who supports it. Joe, you say some Creationists advocate the universe as a going concern. Do you know of any? I know of none. As far as I can tell, along with Evolutionists, the Creationists have rejected it. For Creationists, a going concern looks too much like the Lord God has been fooling us; and, despite all evidence to the contrary, Creationists are emphatic ‘he’ couldn’t do that.

I didn’t say that.

While the idea of the universe as a going concern is a slippery concept, and it is too easy for brilliant people to turn out wrong, I say another comment is resoundingly right. It is the type of comment I, of course, never get enough of.

I am talking about John Purcell’s concerning my zine. He says, along with others, I did research and actually answered points made. I like that.

While I am at burnishing my ego, I have a word for Sheryl Birkhead. She could not use her old typewriters because she lacked ribbons for them. I might be able to help her. A few

years ago, I dealt with a fellow in New Jersey who sold old typewriter ribbons, among other ancient typewriter accessories. He seems to be doing it as a hobby. If she wants, I will look for his name, address and email.

From ribbons, we go to something that wasn’t winning any ribbons, *Galaxy*, the science fiction magazine. You complain to me, Joe, about *Galaxy*’s tendency to expand current social trends ad nauseam. You intimate it wasn’t much better than a pulp writer who, with a few edits — very few — turned a western into science fiction.

In all honesty, I gauge the extrapolation of current fads was several steps above pulp boiler plate. You could get some imaginative SF that way. However, also in all honesty you get lots and lots of turkeys if you expand every trend that way, like H.L. Gold attempted.

By the end of the fifties, the three main surviving SF magazines had each become stuck in a rut. There were outstanding stories in each (I mind the “Robert Randall” stories, where Silverberg and Garrett deliberately put in every one of Campbell’s obsessions, and he got them to take them out), but *Astounding*, *F&SF*, and *Galaxy* each had as the average stories that stuck to the editor’s obsessions. Whether that contributed to Earl Kemp’s wondering “Who Killed Science Fiction?” as much as the great dieout of lesser magazines is a topic that could be explored.

It is not that I am the only one criticizing others, however. No, Robert Kennedy criticizes me. He does it for once more throwing into the ring the idea of power from geostationary plants. He asks what would I do about terrorists? As all good debaters, I have decided to answer his question with another question. Why does he think that those plants would be impossible to protect against terrorists?

Another letter writer who disagrees with an opinion of mine is George Price. He believes I said the price of gold has only risen three times in the past hundred years; and points out that inflation has gone up twenty-four times. No, I said the price of gold has increased three times as fast as that twenty-four times, or eighty times.

I confess that while eighty, i.e., \$1,600, was a recent price, the most recent price puts gold at about \$1,200, or sixty times the price a hundred years ago. That makes it less inflationary, on the one hand; but, on the other hand, it does not say much for its stability. A quality gold needs equally if we are to base our currency on it.

I cannot prate at George too much, though. I have to admit he is, at base, honest and perceptive here. He does agree that if gold doesn’t settle into its past stability, currency

shouldn't be based on it. Fair enough.

While I believe I have dodged the bullet of criticism twice before, I must admit Sue Burke hits the mark with her criticism. Fortunately, it has nothing to do with the big issues, e.g., the price of gold or geostationary solar satellites. However, I made a big enough gaffe.

I said that Senator Proxmire remains among the living, and his mind is sharp as a tack. Sue corrects me: not only did Senator Proxmire die in 2005, he suffered Alzheimers before that. Wikipedia verifies that she is right on the money. So much for my friend who met someone while playing bridge.

Now I am returning to disagreeing in my comment to Tim Lane. He says that few can treat utopias as literary ideas; that a utopia is written to be implemented, and their authors are convinced they have the One True Answer.

He is probably right about most authors of utopias, and some readers of utopias. I am not going to argue with that. However, the vast majority of readers have been unpersuaded. They read *The New Atlantis* and *Walden Two* mostly as literature. For every John Humphrey Noyes and Etienne Cabet, who rallied followers, a thousand utopias were dead on arrival.

Then what do they read Ecotopia as? Or Love Me Tomorrow? (Robert Rimmer acknowledged Noyes as one of his inspirations.)

— JTM

At times recently, the fashion has been for purely literary utopias. In the '40s through the '60s, there was a fashion to read utopias as a stimulus to the mind. In short, literary reasons. I remember when I was in college, one liberal arts program had everyone write their own utopia. If any utopias escaped that program and became the blueprint of woodland beatniks, I didn't notice.

We go from utopia labeled grand to utopia labeled microbial. However, if you're the person involved, that microbe means as much as the coming of one of the grand utopias. Maybe better because it works. Lloyd Penney says that he and Yvonne finally have jobs where working conditions are not so bad. Everyone will agree a true micro-utopia indeed, and one that works.

With good news, about utopia, albeit micro rather than grand, and capitalist rather than socialist, I end this letter. I am looking forward to the next *Alexiad* and the one after that.

From: **AL du Pisani** December 1, 2014
945 Grand Prix Street,
Weltevredenpark 1709, REPUBLIC
OF SOUTH AFRICA
du.pisani@telkomsa.net

Jacarandas sneak up on you. One day you

are driving along and suddenly you see the first Jacaranda in full bloom for the year. And then every Jacaranda tree is in full bloom. Almost overnight the colour of the city changes to accommodate the purple of the Jacarandas.

But that only happens once the summer rains have started. This year the rain came early – first rains was in late August. Then another day of rain in September, and then in late October the rains started in earnest. We had and are currently having weeks in which most of the days are overcast and rainy, with sunshine days in between.

This summer is cooler than normal. While the daytime temperatures are normal for this time of year, the nighttime temperatures last longer than normal, and are cooler than normal. So that quite often when you get into the shade, the wind is cool. Once you are out of the shade, the sun dominates.

Not that this winter was really all that cold, other than a couple of weeks at the beginning and end. At least here – My mother in the Northern Cape complained bitterly about the cold winter they experienced.

As a country, we are sliding into night. We have major and long strikes – Platinum miners were on strike for a good four months, with the usual high levels of violence, not curbed by government. There were other long strikes – the only major one affecting me has been the postal strike – More than four months, in which I have received only one piece of mail. Government eventually fired the Post Office board of Directors, and caved to the demands of the strikers. I hope to start receiving post sometime soon.

I read recently that during the 100 years of existence of the ANC, they have only had one major schism, in the early 1960s when the PAC splintered off. Since Jacob Zuma have been elected ANC leader, they have had two schisms in the party itself, and one in their major alliance ally, the trade union COSATU.

In most African countries the first 20 years after "Independence" were OK, but then the new governments finished running through the goodwill and capital, and had to start producing. It is usually at this time that the wheels fell off. This is where we are today with the ANC government.

One of the areas of mismanagement has been electricity: We ran out of electricity in 2007, and at the time the government initiated a new building program. Medupi and Kusile are the two major new coal-fired power stations that have been built. Both of them are at least three years behind schedule, and billions over budget. Mismanagement of the build program, cozy insider deals regarding sourcing of equipment and services, and striking workers all collaborated in the mess.

The first generating unit (of six) of Medupi is scheduled to be linked to the grid on Christmas Eve. After that it should take about six months before it will start producing electricity, allowing some desperately needed and postponed maintenance of the current

power stations to be done. And it looks as if the target date is unrealistic.

In the mean time we have entire power stations down for unscheduled maintenance, others only able to function at low capacity due to accidents indicating either incompetent management, substandard work, inability to address problems when they are small, or all of the above.

So currently I can expect to sit without electricity for at least a couple of hours every day, every weekend.

Last year December tolling on the main freeways in and around Johannesburg and Pretoria was initiated. This had been the best part of a year after the initial plan, and government had great expectations of a decent revenue stream. But it required that at least 70% of road users buy into the tolling scheme, and get their e-toll units. This did not happen – estimates are that a peak it had a penetration of 40%, and have gone down since the peak, once people realized how unpopular e-tolling is. Government has been making noises about alternatives, which have dampened the very low enthusiasm for e-tolling even further.

How bad has it been? At one stage the e-toll concessionaire published figures indicating an income of about R52 million, and expenses of R56 million in collecting the income. This is not sustainable, and this figures date from a time when more people were reluctantly compliant.

New York has a similar setup. The highway design has not been so optimal. The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, for example, has the e-toll booths on the left and the cash toll booths on the right, just before the Staten Island exit, producing chaos as e-toll commuters try to get off while cash-paying travelers (like us) try to go straight on.

— JTM

They are not the only people expecting to make a living off motorists that have been disappointed: Johannesburg Metro Police, the spiritual successors to the old Traffic departments, i.e traffic cops, have a budget figure of R400 million in fines which they have to collect. And I am unsure if that is per month or year. As it is the postal cost of sending the fine notices out is more than the income they are getting.

Not that they deserve anything – they are mostly utterly useless. The main idea behind the Metro Police was that they would function as more than just traffic cops, and have a valid policing function. It looks as if anything that does not generate income has since been eliminated from the JMP's functioning, and that the only thing they can do is manage speed traps. That and drive past and stand at the side of the road doing something. Apparently being unable to do pointsman duty, and direct traffic

when traffic lights are out of order.

The last is something which official spokecreatures for the JMP have stated: That a lot of their officials have only been trained to man a speed camera, and that they have no idea how to do pointsman duty. So the officials would sit and man a speed trap meters from a non-functioning traffic light, and ignore the backed up traffic.

This, and non-enforcement of traffic rules if a taxi driver is involved, have trained a generation of people who do not believe that the traffic rules apply to them. We regularly have bad accidents which close down a highway. But more often than that, just bad driving. And our road death figures in quiet times are higher than in more civilized countries during terrible times.

Yet I am reluctant to leave. Part of my heart is here.

This year I have been finding more books that I thought worth while reading – I have read more than last year. It looks as if the long drought in Science Fiction may be over.

Good luck to all for the remainder of the year. I wish all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

From: **Taras Wolansky** December 1, 2014
100 Montgomery Street., #24-H,
Jersey City, NJ 07302-3787 USA
twolansky@yahoo.com

The October 2014 *Alexiad*:

Lisa: In the true spirit of Halloween, you should have perched that large black artificial spider on the visor of Joe's car ...

Joe: If Dame Angelina (Jolie Voight) were a fiction writer's invention, she would be considered too far-fetched. BTW, it says here she got her damehood – from Queen Elizabeth's hand – for her work against rape camps and the like.

She would have made a great Phedre for a movie of the Kushiel series: "You play a sacred prostitute who gets whipped and has a tattoo running from her behind to the nape of the neck." "When do we start filming?"

Taral Wayne ("The Undigitalized Man"): As paper books age, they tend to emit mold spores.

The advent of word processing made writing fiction less laborious than it had been. As a result we should expect the supply to increase and the "wages" decline. Thus, it's been asserted that, over recent decades, there are more and more books, dividing up an unchanging SF readership into smaller and smaller slices.

Milt Stevens: Always figured the Klingons were inspired by Samurai movies.

Darrell Schweitzer: Funny how John Hertz and I hold such similar views on so many subjects!

Judging from the several Barnes & Nobles I visit, Heinlein still has his chunk of shelf. In fact, the last time I visited one, a new Baen edition of one of Heinlein's early novels, with introduction and afterword, was ensconced in the "New Science Fiction".

Which is not to say Heinlein's legacy has been very well-handled: the "Virginia Edition" of his work, like the "Vance Integral Edition" (available only to subscribers), is an elegant mausoleum, not an outreach tool.

The Virginia Edition was on sale for \$999.99 for a few days in November. They were also trying to sell copies of the original version from Meisha Merlin.

One big mistake – Heinlein's own, David Hartwell told me – was failing to come to an agreement about the use of his stories in the Asimov-Greenberg "Great SF" series. The 1939 volume alone was supposed to contain five Heinlein stories: only Asimov's intros to the five were included. Heinlein felt they weren't paying what the stories were worth. (Under similar circumstances, Harlan Ellison waged jihad on the editor; Heinlein simply didn't pursue the matter.) The ironic result is that those collections now write Heinlein out of the Golden Age.

I picked up an audiobook version of a Heinlein juvenile not long ago, and it struck me how weirdly modern it is. It could be Hollywood-adapted without adding the obligatory feisty female or dominant minority character – because they're already there. Back then, of course, Heinlein was running a risk including such characters.

Politics plays a role, of course. Feminists ought to celebrate Ayn Rand, for example, a woman strong enough to dominate every man who entered her circle. On the other hand, Theodore Sturgeon is forgiven for writing a story in which a spinster's rape does her a whole lot of good.

John Purcell: It's possible *The LEGO Movie* is one of those that can be enjoyed only once (like *Wedding Crashers*). At any rate, when I tried to watch *TLM* again (in 2D, admittedly), it failed to hold my attention.

Joe (comment to *John Purcell*): At MidAmerican, "**Robert Heinlein explained why women weren't suited for combat, power suits or not**". Then what are those fighting women doing in *that* Heinlein book, and *that* one, and *that* one ... Or maybe he meant not ideally suited? Which is obviously true.

I just reported what I heard.

Alexis Gilliland: Personally, I would have shut down the gold standard discussion and kept climate change!

"Taras Wolansky misreads my letter when he says that the Ukrainians [sic] overthrowing a kleptocrat led to Putin's

intervention." Sorry, in this matter I'm reading the situation, not your letter. In other words, that's what actually happened.

Coincidentally, I shared a Thanksgiving dinner with one of the people who did the overthrowing. He's in the U.S. to have his knee, shattered by a bullet in the *Maidan*, put back together. My family is in constant communication with relatives there, and visit frequently. I might also mention that the name, Ukraine, was originally transliterated by French geographers in the 17th century. It has four syllables: in English, it might be rendered as "Ukra'ina".

And then there is the received wisdom of Lew Rockwell that the whole thing is a setup by the neocons to get us into war with Russia.

— JTM

Sometimes terrorism works, as when Spain was intimidated into leaving the War on Terror (that is, into hiding behind other countries). It all depends on the character of a country's leadership. For example, after the first attack on the World Trade Center, Bill Clinton talked tough, but did little; and he continued to follow that pattern as attack followed attack in the Nineties.

As always, thank you for your cartoons.

Richard A. Dengrove: "**When I have heard Conservative justices justify their opinions, I have never heard the Founding Fathers mentioned once.**" See, for example, one of the most important "conservative" decisions, *United States v. Lopez* (1995), which quotes James Madison and John Marshall in the first few paragraphs.

Timothy Lane: According to the *Washington Post*, under considerable pressure, Neil Degrasse Tyson grudgingly and partially admitted that his favorite George W. Bush quote was wrong, a "fabrication" but not an intentional one. It was just that Tyson was too eager to believe the worst about his political enemy – like those idiots who swallowed the Internet hoax about Bush having an IQ of 95.

Sue Burke (Loncon 3 report): I found much less food available in the "tent parties" in the Fan Village than there would have been in a North American con's room parties. Food in general was expensive – and the Brits don't seem to understand hamburgers and hot dogs.

My impression is the convention center is a white elephant, built by Arabs looking for a safe place to invest their money.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.
Sheryl Birkhead with a letter which, alas, I cannot read.

THE PROFILE

If you read a lot of fan fiction, you find out that the ordinary Starfleet officer . . .

Was born to a Deryni mother . . .

Grew up on the World of Two Moons and rode with the Wolfriders, even though she was "a five-finger" . . .

Graduated from both Hogwarts and the Jedi Academy with honors . . .

Was a Companion of three regenerations of the Doctor . . .

Is a close personal friend of Bella, Buffy, Katniss, Tauriel, and Xena . . .

Survived the wars of Game of Thrones. . .

Hatched her cute l'il fire lizard with the warmth from her matrix stone, and taught it to look after her Queen's Companion . . .

And admires her mentors from Starfleet Academy, who have diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

Office Notes By Paul Gadzikowski

AT WORK THEY FINALLY MOVED US INTO OUR NEW SEATS BACK IN OUR ORIGINAL BUILDING.



IN THE CUBICLE AT THE END OF THE ROW ACROSS THE AISLE FROM ME IS A NEARLY LIFESIZE CARDBOARD TARDIS CUTOUT.



AFTER THE I.T. GUYS SET UP OUR COMPUTERS AND I SET UP MY WIFE'S DOCTOR AND ROSE ACTION FIGURES, I WANDERED DOWN THE AISLE TO SEE IF ANYONES ALREADY IN ANY OF THE CUBICLES WE'RE NOT.



I THINK I'LL LIKE IT HERE.



<http://art.thinkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

© PAUL GADZIKOWSKI 10/31/14

Co-Editors: Lisa & Joseph Major
Co-Publishers: Joseph & Lisa Major
Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa, & McCormick, Grant
Tech Staff: Grant C. McCormick

This is issue **Whole Number Seventy-Eight (78)**.

Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in (by Grant) and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

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

Material in *Alexiad* is copyright © 2014. All rights reserved. Upon publication, all rights revert to the original contributor, but we reserve the right to use any item more than once, unless otherwise specified by the contributor. All letters sent to *Alexiad* become the property of the publishers. Any material by the editors is available to other fanzines if they provide proper credit and send a copy.

Available for The Usual (letter of comment, trade, contribution). Sample issue available upon request. Back issues \$1; subscription \$10/year. *Alexiad* is also available by email in Adobe Acrobat .pdf format.

ALEXIAD

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major

1409 Christy Avenue

Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA

jtmajor@iglou.com

<http://efanzines.com/Alexiad/index.htm>