

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This morning Mr. Chunk is supervising my morning coffee. Since January his world has gone through huge changes. Grant has left. Sarang and Gemellus are no more. He clings to us. I consider getting him a new companion but the vet persuades me not to. Another cat would just stress him further. And so I politely refuse the overtures of a local group of strays. One of them is particularly determined. It accosts me while I am tying loose shoelaces and if Animal Control were to see it I don't think I could convince them this animal was not mine. How do these animals know where vacancies are? I don't want any more animals. I'm burned out on having to end their little lives. It has killed something in me every time I've had to do it. It was a relief when the vet said another cat was a very bad idea. Perhaps in time I will feel differently but just right now I don't want any more animals.

— Lisa

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Comments are by **JTM** or **LTM**

The 141st Running of the Kentucky Derby ws **May 2, 2015**.
American Pharoah won by a length.

The 140th Running of the Preakness Stakes was **May 16, 2015**.
American Pharoah won driving in driving rain.

The 146th Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 6, 2015**.

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Printed on May 22, 2015
Deadline is **June 15, 2015**

Reviewer's Notes

Sorry about this being so late, but the pressure on us has become very great. We hope to gradually return to a more regular schedule.

My niece had an iPad. She thought it was very nice. Her stepmother, my sister-in-law, got one and it had a keypad cover. That was very interesting.

So I got one. I did go a little wild on getting free games and stuff, but I also got some useful interesting stuff, such as an Enigma machine emulator. Yes.

Then the Kindle I had broke down. The user can get a Kindle app (application) for the iPad. It is extremely handy. The font size can be reset, which helps with ageing eyes. The screen is lit up, which should show those rubes at Cracker Barrel who turn down the lights in the dining room.

There is also a Nook app, for those who prefer the competition. And there are ways to get books. Lisa has hundreds of free books. Hundred Zeros (hundredzeros.com) has a lot, though not all the free books are free, their selection is becoming almost 100% romances, and often you get what you pay for. The Hugo Nominations Packet now has e-reader versions. (And I had already bought a copy of *Three Body Problem*, on Guy Lillian's recommendation. Review forthcoming.) Alas, the Arthur's Bookshelf site, which had a lot of the old classics, has vanished.

Grant got an iPad to get him through the lonely nights in the nursing home and he is gradually learning it, and enjoying it. It's in a hard shell case (with a keyboard) and should be well protected against breaking.

I mentioned this to my niece, going back to the beginning, and she said she uses hers to stream Netflix.

Oh, and it has email and Facebook. The cellular version makes it even more useful (albeit it is now all too possible to use up the allocation).

Did SF predict this? No, not in so many terms. But it did foresee the sort of mindset that this would produce.

Old age sneaks up on me. I remember being shocked that Chris Garcia's father had been born more recently than me. And now Chris is a father. Congratulations to Vanessa, who had to do the hard labor.

They were twins; if only they were triplets they could be Burgess, Danny, and Robin Lord Garcia y Applegate. A single boy could be Oswald C. Garcia y Applegate.

And now — *The Drink Tank: The Next Generation!*

Or maybe not. One indication of the transformational paradigm shift has been that to the best of my knowledge not one printed fanzine has been involved in the Puppies affair. And has anyone ever got an actual LoC from RequiresHate? We may be at the level of people who collect 8mm prints of feature films in an era of DVD and Blue-Ray.

I hope nextish will have a report of some sort of a resolution to my current woes. A positive one, I hope, but there are some things that seem to linger.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Lance-Corporal **Joshua Mark Leakey**, Parachute Regiment, has been awarded the Victoria Cross for "valour and extreme courage beyond that normally expected of a British soldier in the face of the enemy" (*Zulu*) in Afghanistan, where on August 22, 2013, during a combined American-British operation against a Taliban position in Heimand Province he not only fought off the insurgents under severe fire but provided medical aid to wounded US Marine Captain Brandon Bocian, who has gone on record with his gratitude.

There are now six living recipients of the Victoria Cross along with three living recipients of the Victoria Cross for Australia and one living recipient of the Victoria Cross for New Zealand.

Doolittle Tokyo Raider **Robert L. Hite**, co-pilot, plane 16, *Bat out of Hell*, died on **March 29, 2015** in Nashville, Tennessee. He was one of four Raiders who survived Japanese captivity. Born **March 3, 1920**, Hite joined the Army in 1940 and was commissioned in 1941. After liberation, he remained in service until 1947, being recalled for service in the Korean War.

Ill health prevented him from attending the final few reunions. There are now two surviving Doolittle Tokyo Raiders, Richard E. Cole and David Thatcher.

Toujours Danger

Paul Feig, director of the next *Ghostbusters* movie, is also working on another project. A live-action movie . . . based on Play-Doh.

"These are people of the land. The common clay of the new West. You know . . . morons."

— *Blazing Saddles*

If you ever wanted to know how art imitated life, read *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe: The Past, Present, and Future of a Multimillion Dollar Franchise* by Chris Taylor (2015, 2015). Taylor collected all kinds of amusing and informative tales about

the story, from its early days in George Lucas's book of dreams to the near-present. Oh, art imitating life? Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher had an affair during the filming of the first movie. I know.

Alas, it had neither chicks nor puppies, and so was ignored.

I acquired from Amazon.com a book titled *The Battle of Dorking and Other Invasion Stories, 1871-1914* which has quite a sampler. It gives a context for *The War of the Worlds* (1897, 1898), which is included, and indeed contains a variety of works. Besides the original work (1871), there is the ultimate satire of these works, P. G. Wodehouse's *The Swoop!, or How Clarence Saved England* (1909), the tragically serious *When William Came: A Story of London Under the Hohenzollerns* by "Saki" [H. H. Munro] (1913), and yet another science-fictional work, *The Angel of The Revolution: A Tale of the Coming Terror* by George Griffith (1893). Griffith begins with his hero exulting over his discovery of the means of heavier-than-air flight on September 3, 1903; clearly he has the Wright stuff.

OBITS

We note the death of **Art Widner** from prostate cancer at the age of 97 on **April 17, 2015**. Widner was one of the legendary figures of First Fandom, marked by such incidents as his organizing a drive to the first DenVent in a disintegrating car. His fanzine *YHOS* was well-received by separate generations of Fandom — literally, as he had a long gaffiation in the fifties and sixties before coming back strong.

His death leaves four surviving attendees of the NyCon: Erle Korshak, Dave Kyle, Bob Madle, and Jack Robins.

Leonard Nimoy 1933-2015

Growing up I watched *STAR TREK* every chance I got. As a gawky awkward kid with a memory for trivia which seemed only to annoy people it was the character of Spock I most identified with. There were in time to be better science fiction shows than *STAR TREK*, like *Babylon 5* and *StarGate* but they would not have been possible without the success of *STAR TREK*. When the news came that EMS had taken Nimoy from his house I prayed that he would be okay but the answer to my prayers was no.

MONARCHIST NEWS

Broke Mountevens, that is to say, the Right Honourable Edward Patrick Broke Evans, Lord Mountevens of Chelsea, grandson and heir of the last man to see Captain Scott alive, died last year and was succeeded by his brother, **Jeffrey Richard de Corban Evans**. Jeffrey is married to the Honourable Juliet Wilson, daughter of the second Lord Moran. This means that the next Lord Mountevens will be descended from

Captain Scott's subordinate on one side and Winston Churchill's doctor on the other side.

Jeffrey Evans was also Sheriff of the City of London for 2012-13. This is The City, the inner district, not the entire city, Greater London, so the Hon Jeffrey (as he was then) did not report to Boris Johnson. The office is primarily ceremonial, too.

HIGH ANXIETY

A Report on

Grant C. McCormick's Health Problems
by his landlord Joseph T Major

Grant spent most of March in bed, complaining about the cold. On April 1, I came down about 4:30 to go to dinner and found him lying on the floor beside his bed, unable to get up, and beyond my power to lift. He would have called me on the cell phone, but he was lying on it.

I called the EMS, they sent an ambulance, and he was taken to University Hospital. His health had apparently deteriorated severely and he had kept it to himself. He has had an amputation and will not be returning to 1409 Christy.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There was a solar eclipse on **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 was two minutes 47 seconds, at 64° 24' N., 6° 36' W., in the Norwegian Sea. It was 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.

There will be two solar eclipses in 2016, a total eclipse on March 9 and an annular eclipse on September 1.

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

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

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

A little advance notice for the August 21, 2017 solar eclipse. The eclipse is the twenty-second in Saros 145, which began January 4, 1639 and will end April 17, 3009. The previous eclipse in this saros was reported on in *Plokta* 15.

For those wanting to go, every hotel room in Hopkinstown and the area is already booked. Also, the DC in '17 bid is counterbidding. Helsinki anyone?

GEMELLUS

c1998 — April 27, 2015

God, may I have a moment?
This is another of Your lesser servants,
Gemellus by name.

Lisa saw Delenn out of the house,
Brought her in to comfort her . . .
And there she was, on the couch.
This was an impostor.

We saw him out and about after that,
Begging for food.
Then, that day, he came up to us.
He was just bones. Not even flesh.
We couldn't let him die.

He had been mutilated.
No way to get his own food.
So, we took that over for him.

He thrived. And survived.
He would try to go out now and then
But we managed to stop him.
He wanted companionship.
Sometimes it was inconvenient.

One by one the others left.
Then he became bones again.
Except for the lump over his hip.

It finally broke open.
We had to let him go.
Here he is.
Please, make sure he gets enough to eat.

Monday April 27:

I come home to be told by Joe that the tumor on Gemellus is cracked and bleeding. We take him to the vet to be told that at this point it will be a struggle to keep him comfortable. For the first time I decide to take the life of one of the cats while he is still enjoying that life. I do not want him to collapse and suffer while I am at work. The vet puts the catheter in his leg and brings him back. We hold him as she slides the fatal dose in. Almost instantly he is an inert, dead mass.
— Lisa

A WORLD FOR LANGUAGES

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE MAN OF GOLD

by M. A. R. Barker

(1984, 2015; Amazon Digital Services;
\$5.99)

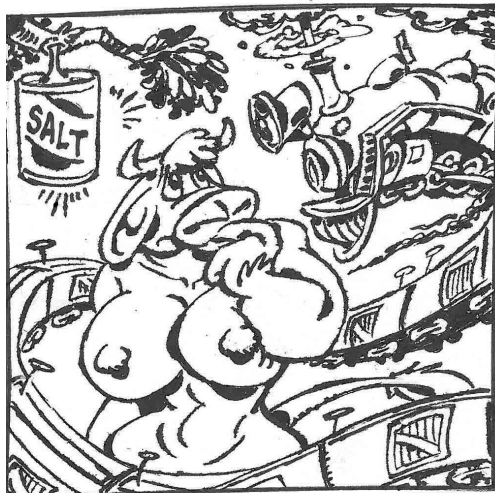
In 1984 Don Wollheim took a flier, and published a fantasy novel that didn't have the *Tough Guide to Fantasyland* setting. For those people who had been playing the role-playing game it stemmed from for the past few years, it was welcome.

For Professor Barker had copied, unknowing at first, the methodology of J. R. R. Tolkien, inventing his own languages, then

describing a world in which they were spoken. While he kept on wargaming, his novel was supposed to be an introduction to the world.

On top of that, he has an almost Hitchcockian plot, with his protagonist, a junior priest of unusual background, wrenched from a quiet life of linguistic research and thrown into international political intrigue and face-to-face confrontations with far too many beings and things that could kill him, some of them even unintentionally. But he also met a couple of hot good-looking women who bedded him, so it wasn't all bad.

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



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO FARMER AL FALFA

One feature of Barker's world was borrowed, with some change in the possibility of mobility, from Hindu culture, so it isn't totally Mesoamerican. In the exotic land of Tékumel, wherein our story is set, everything is clans. Clans are like super-extended families, with various rankings of social status. Among other things, as they also specialize in the many and varied industries and productive efforts needed to sustain the economy. How many fantasy novels think of that?

But our priest Hársan, being the stereotypical orphan, has no clan. He is nobody in spite of his own skills.

Not all of which are linguistic. In the course of this adventure he will learn a magic ability, survive being poisoned by a recreational drug (if slow suicide is a recreation), get kidnapped into slavery, fight a number of particularly nasty beings, encounter one beautiful woman out to seduce him and another who helps him escape, and in a dramatic climax confronts royalty and the religious hierarchy. Oh yes, and he finds the title item, which to him doesn't seem to work, but ends up changing the course of an ongoing

war.

Barker is a bit clumsy in some of his dialogue. The principal problem the reader will note (it will be very hard *not* to note it) is that he is so interested in ensuring that the reader knows that this is not the world of the *Tough Guide to Fantasyland* model through having every being, item, and activity scrupulously and repeatedly named. It's almost the standard technothriller method.

Maybe it was thought less of because Hársan didn't have to sadly renounce his girlfriend (or girlfriends) for Duty, or have one conveniently die, or even choose between them. I said this was not a *Tough Guide to Fantasyland* world; they have polygamy, so he marries both!

(The sequels are *Flamesong* (1985), *Lords of Tsámra* (2003), *Prince of Skulls* (2002), and *A Death of Kings* (2003); the last three were reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #6)

IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE

Review by Joseph T Major of

JOE STEELE

by Harry Turtledove

(2015; RoC; ISBN 978-0451472182;
\$27.95; Kindle \$14.99)

In 1970, British biographer Mervyn Jones published a novel titled *Joseph*. It was not about the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, though the protagonist does adopt the name "Joseph Smith". It is not about the Pharaoh's vizier Yussel ben-Yitzchak, though the protagonist does become leader of effectively a foreign country. Neither is it about the carpenter of Nazareth, such a nice boy his wife had. (Searches for this book will turn up a large number of "hits" about the other people, not to mention such individuals as Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, who fortunately for the entirety of non-Polish humanity chose to write as "Joseph Conrad".)

Jones would have an interesting time writing a novelistic analogue of the subject of his novel, the thirty-second President of the United States. Born to immigrant parents from the southern reaches of what was then the Russian Empire, he was a man of toil. He worked in the fields, saved money and went to law school, and finally in 1932, a congressman from the great state of California, ran for the office of President of the United States.

As you've probably guessed, Joe Steele, or to give him his full legal name, Joseph Vissarion Steele, had a different sort of destiny and life experience in our time line. So do his Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Mitchell, three emigrants named Skriabin, Kagan, and Mikoian. At a deadlocked Democratic convention, with Huey P. Long and Franklin D. Roosevelt facing Steele, the votes are fast and furious and the deadlock hard and fast.

Then a fire burns down the governor's mansion in Albany. Rather hard for a man in a wheelchair to get out of the second floor of a burning building, isn't it? And so, the party of

Jefferson, Jackson, and Wilson puts before the American people a man of the people, a worker, the son of immigrants, Joe Steele!

Only, a reporter noticed Skriabin making a telephone call to some one to urge him to hurry up a certain affair. For a wet affair it was a hot one. And then, later on, Long is conveniently shot by a sniper.

This is one of the two Everymen of Turtledove's novel, two reporters who have very different attitudes and fates. The listener-in, Charlie Sullivan, rises to be President Steele's speech writer, while his less fortunate brother, Mike Sullivan, is unmasked as a wrecker and sentenced to corrective labor in Montana.

President Steele is somewhat more direct than others might have been. When the Supreme Court declares his Four-Year Plan unconstitutional, why then, it just happens to turn out that four of the Justices are traitors, who speedily confess their crimes, plead guilty, and receive the Highest Measure of Punishment. And it goes on. Later on President Steele has the leaders of the Army and Navy arrested and likewise given HMP, under the direction of Attorney General Andy Wyszynski, a tough Polish lawyer from Chicago. (Imagine him pointing at a gaggle of defendants from the Capone Organization shouting "I demand that these mad dogs be shot!!!". Well, maybe not.)

It seems President Steele decided that there was a national emergency, suspended the right of Habeas Corpus, and set up military tribunals to try wreckers, dealing out swift justice. He also launched massive social projects, including vast communal farms on abandoned land (someplace to send rotten little Philip Roth and his nasty family of *The Plot Against America* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #6)), and a Tennessee Valley Authority to light up Hopkinsville, Oak Ridge, and places between.

As we've said, having been swept up in one anti-wrecking campaign or another, Mike Sullivan is cutting trees in Montana. Evidently he can't find *The Way Back* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #1) to Canada.

Charlie is drawn closer into the circle of President Steele and his camarilla. As the situation in Europe gets direr and direr, the security of the American state becomes ever more paramount. The Republican Party pointlessly continues to put up candidates, with Alfred Mossman Landon and Wendell Lewis Wilkie graciously conceding. Oh, and a non-immigrant becomes a person of importance, a young crime-busting lawyer named of all things Hoover, who becomes chief of the Government Bureau of Investigation.

Abroad, Hitler and Trotsky continue to menace, with the German leader taking over first Austria, then the Sudetenland, then the rest of Bohemia-Moravia, until finally the Soviet foreign minister Maxim Litvinov — flies to Berlin and signs a pact with German

Foreign Minister Ribbentrop!

Another world war begins. President Steele is opposed to both Hitler and Trotsky, and sits on the sidelines, building and preparing, until his effort to curb Japanese aggression in China falls apart. Shortly thereafter, the commanders in Hawaii, General Short and Admiral Kimmel, are subjected to the Highest Measure of Punishment. Not long thereafter, the commander of the beleaguered Philippines is ordered out and treated likewise. (Pause for the cheers of thousands.)

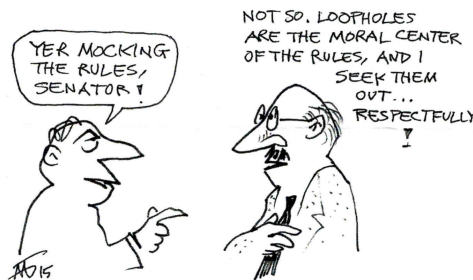
The war grinds on. Steele has to lower himself to meeting Trotsky *in person*. He provides war equipment to his allies. Beyond that, he allows prisoners to earn their release by volunteering for special units of the army. Mike Sullivan joins one, and fights his way through Tarawa, Okinawa, Kyushu, and Honshu. Many don't make it. With the end of the war with Germany, Trotsky sends troops east, and they invade the north of Japan. By the time everyone gives up, Japan is divided. (How did the Soviets get this amphibious capacity, anyhow?)

Over the next few years, a red curtain falls over Europe, in Charlie Sullivan's striking metaphor. This requires extraordinary vigilance. Not to mention the war in Japan, which ends with mutual demonstrations that both Steele and Trotsky can say "Our words are backed by NUCLEAR WEAPONS!" America's were delayed because Albert Einstein didn't try to influence their development, since he didn't want Joe Steele to have nukes.

Then, preparing to be elected to his sixth term . . . Joe Steele has a stroke and dies. After which things begin to fall apart, capped with a political paradox.

The sweep of the story is such that the erosion of society is more obvious to the reader than to the characters, who are living in it day to day. Turtledove shows the evaporation of social mores; how it becomes obvious that such restrictions are now commonplace.

And I like the ending; it has the sort of evocativeness that one finds, for example in Kuttner's and Moore's *Fury* (1947, 1950).



WARNING

HISTORY GEEK SECTION

The OTL equivalents of these people tended to change their names frequently, so for the reader's convenience I have appended a list of those people who came to America, or didn't:

Joseph Vissarion "Joe" Steele = Joseb Bessarion Dzugashvili -> Iosif Vissarionovich Dzugashvili -> I. V. Stalin
Vince Scriabin = Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Skryabin -> Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov

Stas Mikoian = Anastas Hovhannesi Mikoyan -> Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan

Lazar Kagan = Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich
Andy Wyszynski = Andrzej Wyszyński -> Andrey Yanuarevich Vyshinsky

There are some nice butterflies. For example, evidently the entire Mikoyan family came to America, since it seems that Stas Mikoian's brother works for Donald Douglas — and so Soviet airplanes are from the Gurevich design bureau, i.e., Gu-9 (instead of OTL MiG, "Mikoyan-Gurevich", the Mikoyan being Artem, the older brother.). Or Trotsky's secret police chief being Yagoda (Yenokh Gershevich Iyeguda -> Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda — but his father was a *landsman*!).

It's not that hard to check Wikipedia, even if it can't be trusted wholly. And as a result, one finds that the Army Chief of Staff was General Mallin Craig, while the Chief of Naval Operations was Admiral William D. Leahy. But then, would most of the readers care?

There's naturally a lot about baseball. But not so much about letters. Is there an equivalent of *It Can't Happen Here* (1935)?

BRAVE NEW WE

Review by Joseph T Major of

MECCANIA:

The Super State

by Owen Gregory

(1918)

<http://manybooks.net/titles/gregoryoother10meccania.html>

This book is one that I haven't encountered in the histories of dystopias and utopias. This seems particularly odd because in his description of this land, Gregory anticipated a large number of the features of later works.

The book represents itself as the private diary of a young Chinese scholar come to study European ways, and finds himself somehow cast into the future. Ming Yuen-hwey (I think someone botched the transliteration) begins by having trouble getting into Meccania. Nobody wants to go there and foreigners are just not welcome.

Once he gets there, he finds out that he has to account for his time and the government will check his journal. Wherever he goes, he is accompanied by a guide who explains to him how amazing life is in Meccania. It seems

rather like *Ecotopia* (1975) [And is that all that different from how investigators were treated in say the People's Republic of China in 1970?].

Meccania is organized and regulated, every facet of human life down to the last breath. Think of the comment in Robert Conroy's *1901*:

Schofield kept a straight face. "Everything runs on time in Germany. Everything is done precisely and to the numbers, and that includes the pious act of copulation for the betterment of the fatherland."

Meccanian society is divided into seven classes for the seven basic colors, with the ruling class being the top all the way down to various manual laborers. They are numbered, not given Greek letters, but what with the different-colored uniforms (along with subtle indications of promotion) the whole is reminiscent of the social structure of *Brave New World* or the dress code of *Voyage en Icarie* (1839). At least there is opportunity for social advancement.

Are the arts neglected? No. Though some of their topics might be thought a bit outré; Ming meets an expert on drama:

"... If you are acquainted with the development of the drama, you will know that about ninety years ago a great advance was made by means of what was then called 'The Problem Play.' Some of those plays had a real subject. We have gone much further, of course. Take the subjects of some of our best-known plays: *Efficiency*, *Inefficiency*, *National Self-Consciousness*. These are all by our Chief Dramatic-Composer Grubber. His latest play, *Uric Acid*, is in my opinion even better than these."

That's enough to make you go to the Feelies again to see *Three Weeks In a Helicopter*. (Come to think of it, how would Huxley's people do the *Brave New World* version of *Fifty Shades of Grey*?) At least it's better than the 101-act play of the Life of Mephis, weekly attendance required, in *Carson of Venus* (1939). And the Meccanians don't kill Atorians because they have large ears, either.

As for letters, the escorts gladly describe to Ming how the great centralizer and organizer of Meccanian society, Prince Malchow, took care of that little matter. And indeed, not just letters but all industry; the government bought up all the businesses and organized them. (If you had read *Equality* (1898) the "thrilling" sequel to *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1888), you would have encountered Bellamy's explanation of how they had got from there to here; the trusts absorbed all business, then merged with the

government.)

The first book by Roland Huntford I ever read was not one of his Polar Exploration histories. It was his sociological survey of Swedish society, *The New Totalitarians* (1971). His thesis was that Swedish society was becoming totalitarian not by oppression, but through the redefinition of concepts to make it the norm. I doubt he would find Meccania all that different.



SALTARE PISTRIS

Review by Joseph T Major of

CLASH OF EAGLES

by Alan Smale

(2015; Del Rey

ISBN 978-0804177221; \$27.00;

Random House; \$11.84)

Volume One of the Clash of Eagles Trilogy

I am beginning to get an idea why Roman alternate histories are so rare. The book is set in the XXIXth Centuria AUC, also the 12th Century AD/CE. A new emperor, feeling the need of a quick conquest to rack up some credibility, sends a legion across the Ocean to the new lands, discovered by the Scandians, of Nova Hesperia.

The legion marches into the interior of the continent, in search of the fabled city of gold, gets ambushed in proper Varus fashion and is destroyed... which is as far as I could get.

The legion's equipment and organization are quite thoroughly described. The only — the only! — change in the past thousand years has been to have archers in the ranks.

The natives conduct their first ambush using hang-gliders. That's right, *hang-gliders*. When our hapless lot get to the nearest big city, they get attacked by hang glider archers again. Launched from a catapult in the city.

And that was where I stopped.

"GREAT SHACK!"

Review by Joseph T Major of

SHACKLETON:

By Endurance We Conquer

by Michael Smith

(2014; Oneworld Publications;

ISBN 978-1780745725; \$30.00;

Amazon Digital Services; \$20.99)

Shackleton's unwillingness to succumb to the demands of everyday life and his insatiable excitement with unrealistic ventures left him open to the accusation of being basically immature and irresponsible. And very possibly he was — by conventional standards. But the great leaders of historical record — the Napoleons, the Nelsons, the Alexanders — have rarely fitted any conventional mold, and it is perhaps an injustice to evaluate them in ordinary terms. There can be little doubt that Shackleton, in his way, was an extraordinary leader of men.

Nor did the Antarctic represent to Shackleton merely the grubby means to a financial end. In a very real sense he needed it — something so enormous, so demanding, that it provided a touchstone for his monstrous ego and implacable drive. In ordinary situations, Shackleton's tremendous capacity for boldness and daring found almost nothing worthy of its pulling power; he was a Percheron draft horse harnessed to a child's wagon cart. But in the Antarctic — here was a burden which challenged every atom of his strength.

Thus, while Shackleton was undeniably out of place, even inept, in a great many everyday situations, he had a talent — a genius, even — that he shared with only a handful of men throughout history — genuine leadership.

— *Endurance*, by Alfred Lansing (1959)

Thirty years seems to be the term for Shackleton biographies. The first, *Shackleton and the Antarctic*, by Margery Turner Fisher and James Fisher, came out in 1958. Next came Roland Huntford's *Shackleton* in 1985. And now this.

There is a little in the way of justification of a new biography; for example, Lansing briefly mentions the financial haphazardness that made Shackleton "out of place, even inept" in the mundane world, and Huntford gives some examples, and what Smith does is to combine these.

Yet Smith, author of *Tom Crean: Unsung Hero of the Scott and Shackleton Antarctic Expeditions* (2002; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #4) and *I Am Just Going Outside: The Tragedy of Captain Oates* (2002; reviewed in *Alexiad* V.3 #1), along with two other books about Crean, and biographies of Sir James Wordie of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition and Francis Crozier of the Franklin Expedition, can

certainly be said to know the setting.

And in a short life span Shackleton lived and did enough for many lives. This is in one volume the tale of the four expeditions that he took to the south, and the life he lived preparing for them, planning for them, and paying for it. If he might go after a donor's wife, well, some women are drawn to alpha males, or are all those romances on the stands merely dreams?

Some of the revelations that have come out since Huntford's book have been less positive. About others, that is; some of the men on the boat journey were close to not making it. (Considering that Lansing discusses the poor shape of the ship's navigator on the last stage of the journey, what's new is knowing he wasn't the only one.)

In spite of this, people came back. Most of the members of Shackleton's final expedition were men who had been with him before. He drew them, as he drew everyone. Consider how so many of the veterans of expeditions (e. g. Lord Mountevans) came to admire him over Scott, over the public perception otherwise.

And, Smith goes along with Lansing's description of the dramatic moment at Stromness on May 20, 1916:

Sørlle, a burly Norwegian with a heavy moustache, knew Shackleton, having entertained him before *Endurance* sailed in 1914. But the dirty, ragged, hollow-cheeked figure before him was unrecognisable. Sørlle asked: 'Who the hell are you?' 'My name is Shackleton,' came the reply. We have lost our ship and come over the island.' Sørlle was staggered. The expedition, out of touch for so long, was presumed lost. 'Come in, come in,' said Sørlle, almost dragging the men over the threshold.

— Shackleton

SOME THOUGHTS ON CONGLOMERATION

by Joseph T Major

While the con suite was run on the "Bradbury Schmadbury" approach, they were letting anyone into the dealer's room, because what were they going to do, spend money? So we went in there before going to dinner with Tim and Elizabeth.

A lot of the people we would have liked to see were not there, including **David Herrington** and **Rod Smith**. Others were reconsidering their plans, like **Leigh Kimmel** and **Larry Ulery**. And some were just tired out, like **Bob Roehm**.

Everyone wanted to know how Grant was doing. He was going to have surgery Sunday morning.

I handed out the Hugo nominations list. Everybody was bewildered. No one had heard of most of the non-novel fiction nominees. (It

turned out a lot of them were published by a press run by Theodore "Vox Day" Beale.)

Membership was way down, just over 300. I have my doubts about whether there will be a con next year. All the same they have announced it, for **April 8-10, 2016**.

HORSE NEWS

by Lisa

American Pharoah won the first jewel of the Triple Crown. He slid home by a length. I am left with the impression his run has to be carefully timed which turns out to be wrong. In the Preakness in driving rain he goes to the lead early in the race and slides home by seven lengths. He still has to face the real test of champions, the Belmont, but he's proven he's a better horse than his Derby performance indicated. Should he triumph in the Belmont the Pharoah will enter into Thoroughbred legend. If he fails he will join the list of honorable mention which includes my former favorite horse Sunday Silence.

Aggiecon 46

Review and Commentary
by John Purcell

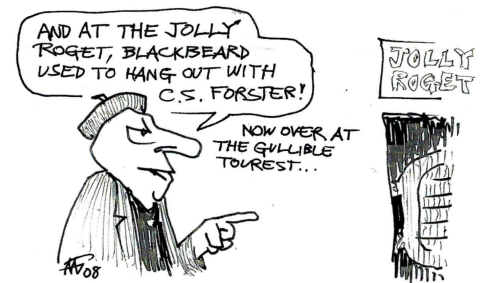
The theme of this year's AggieCon, held March 27-29, 2015 at the College Station, Texas Hilton Hotel and Convention Center, was "Where's my Super-Suit?" I personally think a more accurate question would be "Where's my SF Convention?" Held every year since 1969, hosted and run by Texas A&M University's student SF club, Cepheid Variable, AggieCon has had a long (46 years running) and rich history: past Guests of Honor have included Harlan Ellison (three times!), Ben Bova, Harry Turtledove, Anne McCaffrey, Michael Moorcock, George R.R. Martin, and dozens more; on the club's website is the statement that the club was formed for the "support and promotion of all things science fiction, fantasy, horror, science and technology." Like many other sf clubs that host conventions, former members of the student group still make regular appearances at AggieCon. Many vendors and artists put the convention on their regular calendar.

Ever since the convention moved off-campus to the Hilton five years ago, the general atmosphere of the convention has been more "fannish" in the sense that it "feels" more a true con that I am used to because being in a hotel/convention center frees the event up from constraints that campus regulations might inhibit a more active fan gathering. Granted, there are still rules in place (because this convention is hosted by a sanctioned university student organization, so therefore whatever happens – good or ill – reflects back on Texas A&M University) to keep any wild carousing or untoward behavior in check. For the most part, those checks and balances work well. In fact, since 2009, the first year AggieCon was at the Hilton, I would say that overall the con has done

well, improving its image and drawing in a solid 400+ attendance figure each year. Two years ago when George R.R. Martin was the special GoH, the convention held its own very, very well, rising to the challenge of having one of the genre's top draws.

So with all of this background stated, why did I rephrase the slogan of AggieCon 46 to "Where's my SF Convention?" Well, it's all about content: programming, dealer's room, and other items. AggieCon, being run by a collegiate organization – making its committee membership ages range from 18 to 27, depending on grad students being involved – the content is more media-oriented than literary. Friday afternoon, when I placed a stack of Contraflow 5/DeepSouthCon 53 flyers on the freebie table, I made my typical cursory run through the dealer's room to see what was there, and while there were books available, those were either authors or an indie press promoting their own works. Oh, yes: there were only four of those present. Everything else was either gaming, old comic books (six vendors), and lots and lots of clothing, jewelry, weaponry, and gaming – mostly gaming – vendors. But nobody was selling old paperbacks or pulp magazines. Pity.

A quick glance at the programming schedule mirrored this interest. Only four panels are rooted in the literary of SF: Young Adults in Speculative Fiction. The Hidden Roots of Fantasy, World building 101, and Story Time!. This last is readings by the writer GoH (Kimberly Hix Trant, who recently wrote (2014, Tate Publishing) her first novel, *#hashtagged* – and she's also a TAMU graduate) and scheduled for 1-2PM Sunday.



Pretty much the remaining programming schedule is focused on comics, gaming, cosplay, costume making, and naturally, the midnight showings of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, an AggieCon tradition for thirty-plus years. I suspect the World Building 101 panel discussion was actually a group of game designers talking about their craft. Speaking of crafts one of the con's long-running events, the two hour long Iron Artist battle, was held on Friday night. That is always fun, and I usually go to that.

Sadly, that is not much to base a good time on. Yes, there is a party floor – the hallway of cabana rooms past the Operations Room – that is nowhere near as jumping as the room parties

one might find at, say, FenCon, ApolloCon, ArmadilloCon, or ConDFW. Minicon or any WorldCon? Don't even go there. The main convention suite is on the 10th floor, and is fairly laid-back. If you're an A&M or local high school student who likes gaming and media sci-fi/fantasy, then AggieCon 46 is definitely designed for you.

In the past I have had some very good times at Hilton-located AggieCons. The year that Bland Lemon and the LemonAids played was a damned good time (2010, I doth believe), and 2013 when GRRM was GoH was up there, too. This year... Meh. I was so uninterested that quite frankly I didn't even register (security, anyone?), and Valerie did not contribute work to the Art Show (she has other, bigger art events to prepare for).

To wrap up, it needs to be noted that the AggieCon committee is in constant flux, losing veteran con runners to graduation and gaining new club members as underclassmen. So it doesn't surprise me that this convention embodies the interests of its target age range. Veteran fans like myself wouldn't find it of much interest: depending on GoH's, though, that helps. We shall see what next year's version holds in store.

HUGO NOMINEES

Courtesy of File770.com

BEST NOVEL (1827 ballots)

- Ancillary Sword* by Ann Leckie (Orbit US; Orbit UK)
The Dark Between the Stars by Kevin J. Anderson (Tor Books)
The Goblin Emperor by Katherine Addison (Sarah Monette) (Tor Books)
Lines of Departure by Marko Kloos (47North)
Skin Game by Jim Butcher (Roc Books)

BEST NOVELLA (1083 ballots)

- Big Boys Don't Cry by Tom Kratman (Castalia House)
 "Flow" by Arlan Andrews, Sr. (*Analog*, Nov 2014)
 One Bright Star to Guide Them by John C. Wright (Castalia House)
 "Pale Realms of Shade" by John C. Wright (*The Book of Feasts & Seasons*, Castalia House)
 "The Plural of Helen of Troy" by John C. Wright (*City Beyond Time: Tales of the Fall of Metachronopolis*, Castalia House)

BEST NOVELETTE (1031 ballots)

- "Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust, Earth to Alluvium" by Gray Rinehart (*Orson Scott Card's InterGalactic Medicine Show*, May 2014)
 "Championship B'tok" by Edward M. Lerner (*Analog*, Sept 2014)

"The Day The World Turned Upside Down" by Thomas Olde Heuvelt (*Lightspeed Magazine*, April 2014)

"The Journeyman: In the Stone House" by Michael F. Flynn (*Analog*, June 2014)

"The Triple Sun: A Golden Age Tale" by Rajnar Vajra (*Analog*, Jul/Aug 2014)

SHORT STORY (1174 ballots)

"Goodnight Stars" by Annie Bellet (*The End is Now (Apocalypse Triptych Book 2)*, Broad Reach Publishing)

"On A Spiritual Plain" by Lou Antonelli (*Sci Phi Journal* #2, Nov 2014)

"The Parliament of Beasts and Birds" by John C. Wright (*The Book of Feasts & Seasons*, Castalia House)

"Toteled" by Kary English (*Galaxy's Edge Magazine*, July 2014)

"Turncoat" by Steve Rzasa (*Riding the Red Horse*, Castalia House)

BEST RELATED WORK (1150 ballots)

"The Hot Equations: Thermodynamics and Military SF" by Ken Burnside (*Riding the Red Horse*, Castalia House)

Letters from Gardner by Lou Antonelli (The Merry Blacksmith Press)

Transhuman and Subhuman: Essays on Science Fiction and Awful Truth by John C. Wright (Castalia House)

"Why Science is Never Settled" by Tedd Roberts (Baen.com)

Wisdom from My Internet by Michael Z. Williamson (Patriarchy Press)

BEST GRAPHIC STORY (785 ballots)

Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal written by G. Willow Wilson, illustrated by Adrian Alphona and Jake Wyatt, (Marvel Comics)

Rat Queens Volume 1: Sass and Sorcery written by Kurtis J. Wiebe, art by Roc Upchurch (Image Comics)

Saga Volume 3 written by Brian K. Vaughan, illustrated by Fiona Staples (Image Comics)

Sex Criminals Volume 1: One Weird Trick written by Matt Fraction, art by Chip Zdarsky (Image Comics)

The Zombie Nation Book #2: Reduce Reuse Reanimate by Carter Reid (The Zombie Nation)

DRAMATIC PRESENTATION (LONG FORM) (1285 ballots)

Captain America: The Winter Soldier screenplay by Christopher Markus & Stephen McFeely, concept and story by Ed Brubaker, directed by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo (Marvel Entertainment, Perception, Sony Pictures Imageworks)

Edge of Tomorrow screenplay by Christopher McQuarrie, Jez Butterworth, and John-Henry Butterworth, directed by Doug Liman (Village Roadshow, RatPac-Dune Entertainment, 3 Arts Entertainment; Viz Productions)

Guardians of the Galaxy written by James Gunn and Nicole Perlman, directed by James Gunn (Marvel Studios, Moving Picture Company)

Interstellar screenplay by Jonathan Nolan and Christopher Nolan, directed by Christopher Nolan (Paramount Pictures, Warner Bros. Pictures, Legendary Pictures, Lynda Obst Productions, Syncopy)

The Lego Movie written by Phil Lord & Christopher Miller, story by Dan Hageman, Kevin Hageman, Phil Lord & Christopher Miller, directed by Phil Lord & Christopher Miller (Warner Bros. Pictures, Village Roadshow Pictures, RatPac-Dune Entertainment, LEGO System A/S, Vertigo Entertainment, Lin Pictures, Warner Bros. Animation (as Warner Animation Group))

DRAMATIC PRESENTATION (SHORT FORM) (938 ballots)

Doctor Who: "Listen" written by Steven Moffat, directed by Douglas Mackinnon (BBC Television)

The Flash: "Pilot" teleplay by Andrew Kreisberg & Geoff Johns, story by Greg Berlanti, Andrew Kreisberg & Geoff Johns, directed by David Nutter (The CW) (Berlanti Productions, DC Entertainment, Warner Bros. Television)

Game of Thrones: "The Mountain and the Viper" written by David Benioff & D. B. Weiss, directed by Alex Graves ((HBO Entertainment in association with Bighead, Littlehead; Television 360; Startling Television and Generator Productions)

Grimm: "Once We Were Gods" written by Alan DiFiore, directed by Steven DePaul (NBC) (GK Productions, Hazy Mills Productions, Universal TV)

Orphan Black: "By Means Which Have Never Yet Been Tried" written by Graham Manson, directed by John Fawcett (Temple Street Productions, Space/BBC America)

BEST EDITOR (SHORT FORM) (870 ballots)

Jennifer Brozek
 Vox Day
 Mike Resnick
 Edmund R. Schubert†
 Bryan Thomas Schmidt

BEST EDITOR (LONG FORM) (712 ballots)

Vox Day
Sheila Gilbert
Jim Minz
Anne Sowards
Toni Weisskopf

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST (753 ballots)

Julie Dillon
Kurt DuPonce
Nick Greenwood
Alan Pollack
Carter Reid

BEST SEMIPROZINE (660 ballots)

Abyss & Apex Wendy Delmater editor and publisher
Andromeda Spaceways In-Flight Magazine Andromeda Spaceways Publishing Association Incorporated, 2014 editors David Kernot and Sue Bursztynski
Beneath Ceaseless Skies edited by Scott H. Andrews
Lightspeed Magazine edited by John Joseph Adams, Stefan Rudnicki, Rich Horton, Wendy N. Wagner, and Christie Yant
Strange Horizons Niall Harrison Editor-in-Chief

BEST FANZINE (576 ballots)

Black Gate edited by John O'Neill ‡
Elitist Book Reviews edited by Steve Diamond
Journey Planet edited by James Bacon, Chris Garcia, Alissa McKersie, Colin Harris and Helen Montgomery
The Revenge of Hump Day edited by Tim Bolgeo
Tangent SF Online edited by Dave Truesdale

BEST FANCAST (668 ballots)

Adventures in SF Publishing Brent Bower (Executive Producer), Kristi Charish, Timothy C. Ward & Moses Siregar III (Co-Hosts, Interviewers and Producers)
Dungeon Crawlers Radio Daniel Swenson (Producer/Host), Travis Alexander & Scott Tomlin (Hosts), Dale Newton (Host/Tech), Damien Swenson (Audio/Video Tech)
Galactic Suburbia Podcast Alisa Krasnostein, Alexandra Pierce, Tansy Rayner Roberts (Presenters) and Andrew Finch (Producer)
The Sci Phi Show Jason Rennie
Tea and Jeopardy Emma Newman & Peter Newman

BEST FAN WRITER (777 ballots)

Dave Freer
Amanda S. Green
Jeffro Johnson
Laura J. Mixon
Cedar Sanderson

BEST FAN ARTIST (296 ballots)

Ninni Aalto
Brad Foster
Elizabeth Leggett
Spring Schoenhuth
Steve Stiles

Award for the best new professional science fiction or fantasy writer of 2013 or 2014, sponsored by Dell Magazines (not a Hugo Award).

CAMPBELL AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER (851 ballots)

Wesley Chu *
Jason Cordova
Kary English *
Rolf Nelson
Eric S. Raymond

*Finalists in their 2nd year of eligibility.

‡ Withdrew but not removed from ballot.



It looks as if the Rabid Puppies campaign has won. Castalia House, which you have never heard of, is run by Theodore "Vox Day" Beale. There was no "Chicks Dig" book on the nominations list. On the other hand, Bill Patterson's biography of Heinlein was shut out. It seemed that John C. Wright and Michael Z. Williamson were far more significant in the history and development of the Science Fiction

field that they are so so concerned about.

Sasquan has already removed two nominees for not fulfilling the requirements. And Andy Weir's *The Martian* (2011, 2014; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 13 #2), the best-liked book of the year, was ineligible because of that 2011 publication. (But it will be a movie!) Not to mention that several people have withdrawn.

These events are provoking a storm of proposals, most of which are utterly insane, including voting "No Award" on everything, setting up a "Mulligan Awards" where only the right sort of books will be eligible, wrecking the Hugo Awards in some sort of undefined menacing fashion, pre-vetting planks of nominees so only the right sort of works get on, and the year's still young . . .

Congratulations to Brad W. Foster, Chris Garcia, Mike Resnick, and Toni Weiskopf on their nominations.

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
Thanks to Mike Glyer for the updates.

Letters, we get letters

From: **Rodney Leighton** February 2, 2015
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
CANADA

Thanks for *Alexiad* 78 which arrived Jan. 5 I think. I kind of lost track of some things. I don't see any need for you to be apologizing for anything. Issue was not that late.

Did you know that there is a book called *The Sasquatch Hunter's Almanac*?

Yep. It is, apparently, a novel by someone named Sharma Shields, seems to be a Fantasy in which the Sasquatch is better than the human. So says *Entertainment Weekly*. Not sure how much I trust that mag. They sent me about 9 renewal notices last year. I ignored them until I noticed that they were sending postage paid envelopes so I sent a note explaining that I would not be renewing my subscription because I couldn't afford it and besides which I only read about 25% of any issue. Notices kept coming and then there was one with stickers, one was for a "deal" which was a sub, one was "no deal", I would not have the opportunity to read EW. Sent that one in Still, somehow, they added 6 months to my subscription and started sending payment demands in place of renewal notices. Wrote and told them I had not renewed the thing, I had no idea where or how they got that from but magazine is still coming.

Not a novel that I would go searching for although If you got Lisa, to collect a copy through the library and read it and included a review. In a future issue of *Alexiad*, that would be one book review which would interest me. Maybe it is a ebook? Possibly our bright new library could get it. One of the more intriguing things that happened to me this month was that I lost all interest in reading. I read those few zines which appeared but for the majority of the time when there were none, I thought about the books and magazines that I have; nothing in the house that I wanted to read. They built a new library awhile ago; I have never been in it. Sort of: with a few hundred books I have never read. In the house why go through the trouble of checking out a book and making sure to get it back on time.

There is a book called *UNVEILING THE SOUL: Spirituality In the Dimensions of Opposites* by Rosalyn Becker. It is a book which, according to the ad in the latest *Christian New Age Quarterly*, reflects on the nature of God, unravels the mystery of the earth dimension and steers you toward enlightenment and oneness with God. Available in Ebook form for \$3.99, www.balboapress.com or in softcover for \$8.99. I was thinking this would be a good book for me to read and should try to seduce someone into buying me a copy. But that wouldn't be nice. Might check the library. Kind of sounds like there might be some

preaching in it.

I am not sure about this dimensions business. I tend to believe that there are many dimensions and many levels of a person living different lives. There is likely one where a Rodney Leighton can type fairly fast and not make typos, especially not in his own name. I sometimes have these vision like things or dream states which are really weird. There are even dimensions in which that version of me drinks coffee and beer. And attends bloody Conflus.

I am going to try to carry on. Going to try writing my egocentric letters to everyone who sends me zines through the mail. Still debating the email business. Although, I am going to try to continue doing a zine but it will be mostly distributed via email and the web. Thus, the next zines you get from me should be via that route. Probably I should quit. But it is mostly fun. I am usually bemused or sometimes amused when people write that they like my zines but would not want to meet me in person but in fact, I feel the same way. Lots of people in fandom I enjoy reading their writing but I have no desire to ever meet Guy Lillian for instance.

I still haven't done anything with that issue of *Challenger* other than read what I wanted to. Some kind of a review coming before too many more months.

Chuck thinks I should put everything under one title and since he will be doing a lot of the actual work and bearing a portion of the cost I will accede to his opinion. Regardless of page 4 of the general letter I don't know what the title will be. Haven't mailed any of those yet and have already switched from *Look* to *The Life* to *RF* and back to *Look*. Sigh. Anyway, I think I can do some zines by typing things up and shipping the master copies to England and getting a very few paper copies for people who don't have computers. I am told that email is free for Internet folks. So that is the way to go. I was thinking you could email me *Alexiad* if that would save you anything.

Emailed zines appear in bundles of loose sheaf s, as I wrote earlier. There is some discrepancy in time, depends on various factors. If Chuck gets involved in real life, or there are not many zines. I just got copies of 3 issues of *Broken Toys* at once. And I tend to respond, if I do at all, to emailed zines via email.

Thus, *Alexiad*, emailed to England, copied and mailed to me, loc written, mailed to England, emailed to you. I think I estimated this would save you about \$1.30 every two months and me about the same. Lloyd Penney once wondered how cool it was to have an email station over in the U.K. I never answered. I am somewhat ambivalent about it to be truthful. I got that issue of *Chall* but he could have taken it off the web, no way for me to know the difference. I know that *Broken Toys* is emailed. But again, it is on the web. Some confusion arises. Chuck thinks I should loc every zine I see, regardless of origin.

Maybe he's right. I seem to have a feeling that anything that is on the web is free for the

taking or leaving, anything I might have to say is not going to matter to the publisher and I feel no obligation to write to them. Obviously I am about to get into a real conflict with myself. Andy Hooper might just list my zine under whatever title I choose (and *Alexiad*) and not read them although I can't see any reason for doing so. Joe and John and Lauraine and Mike and Rich and Bob and etc. might get my zine read it and I will never know. But I also won't know if the thing got lost in the mail or the electronic circuits failed to connect or who knows what. I still do not feel anyone needs to write to zines printed off the web. I am aware of the value of doing so. Certainly I would like to hear from every person who read *Rodney's Fanac* #2.

But, well, that is not going to happen. I suspect I will use that title.. #3 should be out sometime. Many copies emailed. It will be on the web. Few paper copies.

This means that Murray may not read it. Well . . . unless I get him a paper copy. But, well, any paper copies will be computer generated printed out things. Anyone with a computer and printer and internet access can print his own and save me the expense.

From: **Jason Burnett** February 22, 2015
jason@jason-burnett.com

Hopefully things will soon be going better for you than they seem to have been recently — surely a streak of bad luck can't go on forever!

The Worldcon bid lists for 2017 and 2018 are certainly filling up. It'll be interesting to see how the voting shakes out. While part of me thinks that a hotly contested site election is a good thing, because it puts pressures on the organizers and makes sure they're bringing their A-game, another part of me thinks it's not so good, because the organizers end up spending a lot of energy on the site election that would otherwise be devoted to the con itself.

I agree with Martin Morse Wooster that Bill Patterson's Heinlein biography is valuable despite its problems. Reading through the footnotes, you get a sense of the amount of paper that Patterson had to sift through in order to find the actual "story." Of course, reading through the footnotes you also find many part of the story that should have found their way into the main text of the book — someone who reads just the text of the book without looking into the footnotes gets a rather watered-down version of the story. I think future Heinlein biographers will be very happy to have Patterson's book as a guide to the source materials.

I think Taras Wolansky's description of the Virginia Edition of Heinlein's works as an "elegant mausoleum" is particularly apt. While they're beautiful books, even at the \$999.99 sale price they're still far beyond my wallet's reach. But given the option of buying individual books, I'd do that. I'd buy the

volumes of correspondence and other writing first. Then I'd buy the volumes of my favorite books. I'd probably buy volumes to give as gifts. Eventually I'd see how close I was to having a complete collection and I'd buy the volumes to finish it out and be very happy with it. But finding enough cash all at once to replace my computer twice over, and choosing to spend it on Heinlein?

Not gonna happen. As much as I love Heinlein, the economics just don't work out for me — and I'm sure I'm not the only one.

I know. I would like to see the letters too, so at least I could do a little better if I ever got around to revising Heinlein's *Children*.

— JTM

Again, hope this letter finds you doing better than you have been. Take care.

From: **Dale Speirs** February 25, 2015
opuntia57@hotmail.com

I enjoyed reading Rodford Edmiston's article on nuclear-powered bombers. *Opuntia* #278 had a review of Hilbert Schenck's 1988 novel *Steam Bird*, which supposed that one such bomber had been built, deployed to a backwater AFB in Maine, and then forgotten. It was accidentally ordered aloft by a general who didn't realize what it was, after which many consequences. A good humorous novel.

New uses of nuclear power always seem to be on the horizon. (A horizon is a line that recedes at the same speed as you approach it.) Fusion reactors are always ten years away. Thorium is about to replace uranium, a favourite meme put out by junior mining companies who have thorium deposits but no customers.

And the Kings of the High Frontier are always just about to launch their cheap practical space rocket, once nasty old NASA gets out of the way.

—JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** February 28, 2015
 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley,
 CA 93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* #79, Joseph discusses comic books and the future of movies. When I was a kid comic books were for kids. When I was in college there was a vogue for Spider Man and the Fantastic Four among college students. From then on, the readership for comic books became older and older. Steve Stiles said that most of the funny animal comics folded in 1995. Donald Duck comics were one of those things I thought would last forever. Why wouldn't future generations of

children not like Donald Duck. Steve also mentioned showing some issues of Donald Duck to his young relatives. They weren't interested. Modern children are too sophisticated for Donald Duck. Personally, I still like Donald Duck. I can imagine what that says about me.

Comic books have been largely replaced by graphic novels in the same way mom and pop groceries were replaced by supermarkets. I know very little about graphic novels. I've only read a couple of graphic novels, and I enjoyed them. I've never pursued graphic novels any further, because I've already got more than enough things to do.

Comic book material is easy to do from the moviemakers point of view. You don't need much of a plot or much in the way of acting. You do need a special effects department and some fight choreographers. As a challenge, someone should try making a movie consisting of beginning credits, ending credits, and one incredibly long fight scene in the middle. A movie like that would need a strong score.

There are whole libraries of material that could be made into movies. The only limitation is the imagination of the movie makers. Unfortunately, that's a pretty big limitation. If I was looking for material for a movie, I'd go through copies of *Argosy* from about 1920 to 1940. They paid top money for fiction and got the best stories. Secondly, I'd go through issues of the Saturday Evening Post. Zorro, Horatio Hornblower, and "The Guns of Navarone" come from those magazines.

Now would be a good time for WWI air war movies. For all its age (1928) *Wings* is still an exciting movie. They could remake *Wings* or draw on a whole mountain of material from air war pulps. Hollywood has seldom dallied with restoration comedies. They are generally on the raunchy side, but some of them are pretty funny. How can you go wrong with a formula that includes sex, sex, and more sex.

George Macdonald Fraser took a vacation from "editing" the *Flashman Papers* to write *The Hollywood History of the World* (1988, 1996) where he discussed such matters.

— JTM

From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** March 1, 2015
 Ste. Julie, Quebec, CANADA
cathypl@sympatico.ca
<http://www.monsffa.com/>

Sad Puppies, and sad loss of Sarang. I was in tears before I got to page 3. Last year, I lost 2 beautiful dogs and I am still grieving. They leave behind huge empty spaces when they go. You wrote:

The Internet, far from being the universalizing medium of nineties hopes, has become a set of pools for like-minded thinkers not wishing to

confront those who do not agree. And it's somewhat disheartening that one of the most popular books and movies of the year is a slightly retouched *Twilight* fan fiction.

I would have hoped that the Internet would bring us together, the global village, but it's become a place where idiots, zealots, and perverts find validation.

As seen by recent events, where separate pools have been thrust into confrontation, with much attendant clamor.

— JTM

On a happier note, MonSFFA has a new website, <http://www.monsffa.ca> and we are busy archiving our publications. *WARP* 89, our latest, is up, and I've just about completed *WARP* 90. We aren't much into horses and royalty, but very big on vintage airplanes!

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** March 9, 2015
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If you're old enough, doesn't the Sad Puppies affair remind you of the New Wave all over again? Surely the campaign for Good Old SF Values started by Larry Correia and his pals is nothing more than a poor man's version of John J. Pierce's Second Foundation, only less well reasoned, and with a lot less dignity. The "Sad Puppies" name needs to go. It needs something that sounds less like a joke, something like "Science Fiction Restoration." The arguments are pretty much the same ones we all hashed out about 1970. On the other end of things, the Really Literary/Pretentious stuff is the same too. "Not a story," you complain about last year's Nebula winner. That was a common cry during the Wave Wars. In fact some of the material in *New Worlds* and *Orbit* seemed so incoherent that it not only lacked story value, it seemed to lack any content at all. The term "non-functional word pattern" gained some currency. (My coinage, I admit, originally used to describe a Ballard "condensed novel.") James Sallis seemed to make a small career out of writing non-functional word patterns. And someone, quite cynically, wrote the most incoherent thing he could imagine, larded it with New Wave clichés, and sold the result to *New Worlds*.

Yes, we have been there before. We are led to the conclusion that in every generation there will be (usually young), pretentious writers who think they are too advanced for mere story-telling, or developing ideas, or any interest in human interactions. They therefore come up with some "new" method of producing "fiction" that lacks content. These "new" methods begin to look very much alike, very quickly. "Experimental fiction" is actually

one of the most conservative of literary forms, a veritable fossil, so that an “experimental” non-story of fifty or sixty years ago — or, taken from the mainstream, of a hundred years ago — with just a bit of retooling, could seem just as “fresh” today to those inclined toward such things. What happens, as we saw by the middle ‘70s, is that publications devoted to such things lose their readership. The writers who survive are the ones who learn that, yes, writing a story is a better idea after all. Those who **can’t** or won’t fade away. Of course today, in a world of niche markets, e-zines, and small presses, this process could take a little longer than it did back then. But in the end a kind of Darwinian selection takes place. Stories prevail over non-stories, because readers prefer stories. Content is good. James Blish told us long ago that “Science fiction must be *about something*.”

However, there is the additional insistence that the author be from a marginalized group. As a result, we got **RequiresHate**, who was always purer than anyone else.

At the same time, merely digging in one’s heels and insisting that real science fiction was what John W. Campbell published in 1950, and nothing ever need change from that model, is not a viable approach either. If SF does not grow and change with the times, it will become a fossil. We build on the past, but we have to go on building. Mere repetition tends toward the kind of sterility we saw in, indeed, the later Campbell *ANALOG*, which helped inspire the New Wave. Real innovation usually comes by expanding the range of available content and the means of expressing it. I can remember when a leading pundit in our field explained to me, about 1983, how science fiction was played out and could no longer be written. A year or so later there was this enormous growth-spurt called Cyberpunk, which was very much a response to the times, and a mixture of new and old content and technique. (The old being a large dose of ‘40s detective noir, the new being the burgeoning cyberculture.) Cyberpunk was mostly written by writers who had never gotten the word that what they were doing was impossible.

Gold at Galaxy and Boucher at F&SF had also got stuck in ruts, I understand. But they could resign, and their magazines got into new ruts.

So, yes, we’ve seen this all before, and we know how it’s going to turn out. What we cannot predict accurately is what the next wave of genuine innovation is going to be.

I appreciate your comments and perspective. It’s a pity that none of the contestants will. It’s

the old bit about not studying the history so as to learn by making one’s own mistakes, which is less fun since they make the same old mistakes instead of some interesting new ones.

As for alternative Roman histories, well, I can humbly point out that I wrote one, called “The Last Heretic,” which was published in a *Postscripts* anthology. Taking a cue from de Camp’s “Aristotle and the Gun” I made my hinge-point be an idea, not a battle coming out differently. What if the Nicene Creed described Jesus as “made not begotten, different in being from the Father”? That is, what if the Arian Heresy won? It almost did in the last years of Constantius II (337-361) when, throughout the Roman Empire, Arianism had become the official orthodoxy. In our timeline, Constantius caught a nasty cold while on his way to confront the rebellion of his caesar Julian (the Apostate) and died suddenly at age 40. Julian recalled the Athanasian (to us “Orthodox”) exiles, hoping Christianity would destroy itself with bickering. Instead, Julian was killed in battle and Orthodoxy reasserted itself. But during the period of Arian ascendancy, missionaries had been sent to the Germans. Most Germanic peoples became Arian “heretics” instead of Catholics. This left an unbridgeable religious gap between the two peoples, which is why someone like Stilicho, or even more obviously, Ricimer or Gundobad, didn’t just shove his feeble puppet emperor aside and assume the diadem himself, as Pepin the Short later did when he deposed the last Merovingian. But, if somebody had sneezed in a different direction, and Constantius II hadn’t died and had gone on ruling for, say, another 25 years, Arianism’s victory might have become permanent. Constantius was tough and capable, with a long history of winning civil wars and putting down usurpers. Very likely he would have defeated Julian. Constantius’s wife was pregnant at the time. (It was a girl.) If a couple years later he had had a son, who continued the dynasty in strength, all of history would have been quite different. (My story then went off into alternative realities, with the suggestion that an infinity of worlds is required to make sense out of Christian theology.)

I don’t think that the mere defeat of the Vandals, whether achieved by Aetius, Majorian, or anyone else would have saved the west. The decay was too pervasive. After 406 the Western frontier was irreparably broken, and wave after wave of Germans flooded into Gaul and Spain. But Aetius’s day there was an established Visigothic kingdom in western Gaul, and there were also Ostrogoths, Sueves, Heruls, Burgundians, and that lot to worry about. (And Huns. Did anybody mention Huns?) An attempt to destroy the Vandals was made in the reign of Leo and Anthemius, in 468, but it was completely bungled and bankrupted the East for a generation and doomed the West. My guess is that if this had succeeded, it would have taken

some of the pressure off Italy, and enabled the East to hold onto and absorb the remains of the West, including Italy, Sicily, Dalmatia, and parts of North Africa. But Gaul, Spain, Britain, and formerly Roman parts of Germany were already permanently lost.

You’re probably right that (ridiculous prices aside) Jake Saunders’ *The Martian Legion* is not going to turn out well, particularly after the ERB Estate comes down on it with a ton of bricks, or lawsuits, as they did when S.J. Byrne’s *Tarzan on Mars* was suppressed. That *Tarzan on Mars* is reportedly awful is beside the point. It is one of the true “underground” works in our field, which is only circulated in samizdat form. It is illegal to own or sell one, I am told, and ERB lawyers try to enforce this and destroy all copies. I have only seen a copy in a glass case at a worldcon, once. There are trademark issues all over this. *Tarzan* and John Carter (and Barsoom) are trademarked and most emphatically in use by the owners. Probably Carson Napier too. Doc Savage is trademarked. The Shadow presumably is. Yes, I have a bad feeling about this, to coin a phrase.

They seem to have got permissions from ERB, Inc. The others, there is that; probably Alley Oop, too. That’s one problem with Caleb Catlum style works today; so many copyrights, trademarks, and the like.

— JTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** March 10, 2015
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New issue of *Alexiad* in the mailbox this week, and so pleased to see you were able to fit in my last weird little fillo this time. Been too long since I had some sort of contribution to an issue, and I start to feel really guilty about getting a zine if I don’t do something tangible to support it! Yeah, I know you send them in return for locs, but mine tend to range from barely adequate to miserable, compared to the comments others send. So, having a bit of art now and then helps to assuage the guilt of getting a print zine sent six times a year.

To that end, new one is attached that I hope might find a space to fill in an upcoming issue, and keep my subscription going!

We just sent in our Hugo nominations — at least as much of it as felt comfortable, knowledgeable enough to put some candidates down for. This was the first time in over a decade we have been able to nominate, and tried to take it seriously. Your right, the fan categories in particular have gone through major changes in last several years, I’ve no idea what will be there in the end. We’ll see... we’ll see...

Condolences on the passing of your Sarang.

I remember holding one of our sweet boys like that in his final moments as well. Miss them so much, but so happy to have been able to share their lives.

Regarding the news that there are 34 movies planned in the next six years based on comic books. My first thought was: how many of those are based on superhero comics? It is interesting how many non-superhero movies have come out in recent years that are based on comics, but without the superhero label, most people aren't even aware of it. There is a broad range of material out there. Second thought was, with all the things here about "what will the studios do if comics stop being published?", is that they would be no more inconvenienced than they are now. No one is writing new comics? So, we'll write new movies. Hell, with all the comments and complaints over the years from hardcore fans on how the movies keep "changing" the comics, clearly there is no problem with putting together brand new material if they want.

Personally, first few big Hollywood superhero movies were a blast, mostly because, after a lifetime of being a lonely fan in the wilderness, seeing my buddies get the big screen treatment, and full-budget, was part of the fun. Now, announcements of the next several movies have had me shrugging my shoulders — we'll see if they are worth the time or not as they churn them out.

I've seen *Frankenweenie*, missed out on *ParaNorman* so far. But, thanks to Taral's review, I'll keep an eye out to getting a look at it in the future. We can't afford to see too many movies in the theaters these days — but we have a couple of kind friends we get together every other month or so. They have a huge-screen tv, and we all agree what three or four movies we'd all like to see for a long evening. We split the costs of a Chinese dinner being delivered, they cover the cost of renting the movies (or simply copies they went ahead and bought), and we have a good time trying to put together a mix of drama, adventure, humor, etc each time. I'll have to remember to nominate *ParaNorman* as a possible choice for the next good around.

From: **Lloyd Penney** March 11, 2015
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Many thanks for *Alexiad* whole number 79. Time has passed, and I am hoping that life is easier for you and Lisa, and that either justice has come through for you, or other employment has come. Time for some comments on the issue.

We really can't go to Worldcons any more, so I have no Hugo vote. Just as well; I would hardly recognize any of the people on the ballot, and now, voters are taken to task because of their politics, whether they are

left-wing or right-wing. And, it looks like there are so many out there who are trying to sway the vote. Every year, it becomes more difficult to care, but I suspect that every generation of fans has gone through that.

A report on Loscon 42...after LA fandom's hospitality for us at Loscon 39, I cannot believe it is already 3+ years since it happened. I really do want to go back some time. (Or was that Loscon 41 Robert Kennedy was at?)

My own letter...not much to say on it, other than I am still working, coming up on ten months now, and while we have not travelled far, we do have some tentative plans to head out of town and visit with friends. It is a step in the right direction, but we are still paying back money that we borrowed from our own investments, and we expect that to be paid back by the end of the year, as long as we stay working.

Good to hear that Jeff Boman is back up and running, so to speak. I look forward to his fanzine, whenever it comes about.

At this time, I wish I had more for you. The job may be a job, but it is dull and mind-numbing, and if it weren't for those great paycheques... Anyway, take care, we're hoping for the best for you, and see you next issue.

From: **Timothy Lane** March 12, 2015
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I can well sympathize with Lloyd Penney's point that social media time has cut into his reading. In my case, it's blogging rather than social media, but the results are very similar. That's also why my pubbing is ever further behind that Jeffrey Allan Boman's.

I would remind Brad W. Foster that "brand spanking new" is used for anything new, not just years. However, I have no more idea why we spank new things than he does.

Because the color motif is fifty shades of gray?

George W. Price mentions that the dual nature of bank deposits making the depositors also creditors means that creditors (always targeted by "social justice" liberals) include millions of ordinary people as well as the relatively tiny number of rich people. Of course, that's exactly why the "social justice" crowd try to obfuscate that fact. It's so much easier to engage in successful class warfare when most of the victims think they'll be beneficiaries.

A good illustration of the long-term effect of inflation is demonstrated by the Rule of 72 (my thanks to F. Paul Wilson for citing and explaining this in *An Enemy of the State*): If your annual rate of inflation is a very modest 2%, then in 36 years your money will be worth half as much. Does Alexis Gilliland really wish to express his approval of this process?

As for the use of gold as a hedge, a good

description of this comes from Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger* (and not from the title character): "Gold is the talisman of fear." Economic/fiscal fear, but still fear.

Eric Mayer's comments about roaches occasionally crawling over him (luckily for him, in the past) unfortunately sounds all too familiar to me. At least, I think they're roaches, but I have been itching a lot more lately. His comments about the different background for historical novels of all sorts are interesting, but I can say that in my case this is part of the attraction. I think science fiction, history, and historical fiction can all be linked that way, and people will tend to share an interest in all of them or none of them.

I doubt we will ever get to Williamsburg, but I would be interested to know how much there is of historical touring and material for the May 1862 Battle of Williamsburg (which did indeed take place mostly around Fort Magruder).

Our mailbox is at our door, so we never fail to pick it up now that we don't have the *FOSFAX* mailbox. Of course, it might never be delivered — or it might disappear into the large piles of mail on the dining room table. Usually that doesn't happen to bills.

I'm not surprised that there would be skepticism about the actual existence of Robin Hood; like William Tell, he's a mythic figure who at best is loosely based on someone. On the other hand, someone wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and it didn't take long for the poet to be named Homer.

Ὁ δὲ Ὀμηρος οὕτως ἦν ὁ Σίμωνος.

["Indeed, recall that Homer's last name was Simpson."] — JTM

No doubt there were those who insisted there would be no bailouts of unsuccessful companies. But such bailouts occasionally happened in the past (such as Chrysler), and those with a lot of influence could anticipate that they might receive such bailouts.

From: **Jim Stumm** March 13, 2015
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Brutal Winter: The month just past was the coldest February in Buffalo in over 100 years that records have been kept here. It was so cold that the water pipe coming into my house froze, somewhere between the house and the street. That never happened before in the 40 years that I have lived here in this house. That pipe is about 6 feet underground. The plumber used electricity to get the water running again. He brought a generator pulled on a trailer behind his pick-up and ran a strong current through the pipe, which is probably steel. The main water line is steel pipe in the basement. That heated the pipe and melted the ice. It shouldn't freeze again as long as we keep the

water running continuously, day and night. How long should we keep it running, I asked. Until May, he said. His bill: \$1000. Digging up the pipe would have cost 4 times that. I know of 2 others on my block who also had frozen pipes. It's enough to make me a believer in climate change. The climate is definitely getting colder.

Robert S. Kennedy: About China destroying a satellite with a rocket, that shows us how easy it is to do. If there's an all-out war between 2 space-faring nations, I expect that an early battle will be for each side to shoot down all the other side's satellites, especially GPS and comsats. Satellites are valuable assets on which we depend more and more, and yet they are entirely undefended. I wonder if the US Navy is prepared to navigate ships without GPS, or would all US warships be instantly lost at sea if they lose GPS. Also, would cruise missiles and drones be able to navigate without GPS? And would the military be able to communicate around the world without satellites etc. If you're going to put all your eggs in one basket, you really should be prepared to defend that basket.

JTM: Lew Rockwell is a bit of a loose cannon among libertarians with his occasional forays into bizarreness. For more mainstream libertarian views see cato.org or reason.com.

**"Occasional forays? I'd say
"Occasional forays into
rationality."**

— JTM

Eric Mayer: NASA funding is subject to the whims of Congress. And in coming years, as growing social security and medicare disbursements devour more and more of the Federal budget, NASA's budget will probably shrink further, if it even survives. I hold out greater hope for private, companies driven by a single person, like Elon Musk and SpaceX.

TIMEX-SINCLAIR required you to write programs for it in BASIC which is similar to the FORTRAN I learned in college. I found writing programs in BASIC to be easy and fun. The difficulty lay in working within that very limited memory.

Lloyd Penny: I, too, am a fan of Murdock Mysteries, though not a member of any Murdock fandom. I'm gradually buying the series on DVD. I have seasons 1 and 2. Up to season 7 is listed in catalogs I get. I don't know how many seasons have been aired. I intend to buy them all eventually.

Back when TV was analog, I could get several Canadian stations over the air from Toronto and one from Hamilton, though quality of reception varied day by day. I was able to watch enough episodes of Murdock to get hooked. But now that TV is digital, I can only get an occasional spark from Canadian stations with too much freezing and pixilating to be watchable. So I buy DVDs of Murdock.

George W. Price: Many years ago, even money market funds paid 5% interest, and you

didn't have to tie your money up for a number of years like you do with CDs. You can withdraw money from money market fund at any time without any penalty by simply writing check. But for several years now, thanks to the Federal Reserve, money market funds have been paying close to 0% interest.

Taras Wolansky: Your comments on protecting a space elevator from a terrorist bombing are not very useful and suggest that you don't know much about the design of such a structure. A space elevator would be a single, super-strong cable stretching from Earth's surface to many 1000s of miles into space. It wouldn't have "many lines holding it up" like a suspension bridge, just one line. Cutting that cable would be like cutting one of the 2 horizontal cables of a suspension bridge, which would surely bring the bridge down.

As for safely disposing of broken pieces, if the cable is cut in one place, there would be only 2 pieces, above and below the cut. A space elevator would be in tension with the section below geosynchronous orbit, about 22,000 miles up, exerting a downward force due to gravity, and the section above exerting a slightly greater upward centrifugal force. Cutting the cable would destroy this balance. The section above the cut would fly off into space. The section below would fall to Earth. If it's cut high up, there would be the immense weight of up to 22,000 miles of cable falling out of control. I don't see any practical way to safely slow its descent.

Richard A. Dengrove: There is no such thing as the views of the Founding Fathers IN GENERAL, any more than there are today the views of Americans in general. The Founders agreed that they didn't want to be ruled by Britain, but beyond that they were individuals who disagreed on many points. Various delegates to the Constitutional Convention held views favorable to small States vs. large States, slave States vs. non-slave States, nationalists who wanted a strong national govt (Hamiltonians) vs. decentralists (Jeffersonians), etc. What we see in the Constitution are compromises agreed to by the delegates to the Constitutional Convention, some of which didn't match the views held by anyone.

And then, when the Constitution was sent to the States for ratification, another difference in view became apparent as some of the Founders, such as Patrick Henry, opposed ratification, becoming known as anti-Federalists. So the Founders held a wide variety of views which, in any case, have no legal standing. The Constitution, on the other hand, is a single, unified text which is the legal foundation of our Govt.

From: **Marc Schirmeister**
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Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*. And greetings to all of you disgruntled citizens reading this. And hello, Brad Foster — Brad, I

can explain the reasons why Winsor McCay's word balloons were so oddly crude looking. McCay spent most of his career as a staff artist for several different newspapers over the years. He had started with the Cincinnati *Commercial Tribune* in 1897, and was working for Hearst's *American* in New York City when he died in 1934.

Newspaper artists had it tough in the Way Back When. Sure, they made excellent money for the day, and some, like McCay, became big celebrities, but they paid for it by having to work like mules in a salt mine. Day in, day out, 7 days a week, they had to produce drawings no matter what, and McCay, well, for decades he cheerfully shouldered a weekly art workload that nowadays seems Sisyphean — that is, endless.

He wasn't just drawing the comic strips he was famous for, he was also producing editorial cartoons, spot illustrations, column-headings, advertising artwork, page layouts, and was also sent out as a reporter to crime scenes and various disasters to make on-site sketches for immediate publication. McCay was committed to his work, and he was fast, consistently turning out exceptional drawings and cartoons against incredibly tight deadlines.

But in spite of his amazing talent, his virtuoso draftsmanship, McCay was mortal like the rest of us, and corners had to be cut somewhere to reduce the daily pencil mileage, and I'm certain that his flabby word balloons and the haphazard lettering in them were the result of that need. He concentrated on the drawing first, then certain necessary lettering like titles, captions, and signage inside the drawing (billboards, posters, store signs, etc.), and when he had it all finished, then he added the word balloons, outlining them where he thought they'd fit, then scribbling in the dialogue freehand.

Some of this might have been the result of impending deadline-doom. A lot of old newspaper cartoonists would joke about desperately struggling to finish a cartoon at the last minute, with the editor glaring at you from his desk, and the press room foreman standing behind you saying menacingly, "Hey kid, the engraving room gotta have that cartoon in two minutes or it don't get into the paper, get me?" They would laugh about it later, but at the time it was a pretty terrifying situation to be caught in. With McCay, though, he was trying to ease his art burdens. This is why he also drew **Rarebit Fiend** and **A Pilgrim's Progress** in a simpler, more streamlined style than his **Little Nemo** Sundays.

It is disconcerting to look at a magnificent **Little Nemo** page and see McCay's amateurish word balloons embedded in such great drawings, but at least they don't utterly ruin them for the reader. You get used to them, and they fade into the background, almost unnoticed. You're too busy enjoying McCay's images to be bothered by them.

See for yourself:

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

This has not only the entire run of **Little Nemo**, but also **Rarebit Fiend** and **A Pilgrim's Progress**. The zip file for **Little Nemo** is 287.1 megabytes, so you had better either have a fast connection or be very patient.

And speaking of images, my drawing of the Angus Eve and the Tin-Plate Tempter — yes, it is a paste-up, and it hides a drawing of a salt can I wasn't satisfied with and couldn't correct with white-out. I was surprised that the paste up outline was visible in the printed cartoon. Usually, past ups blend into the drawing when it's printed, but for some reason that didn't happen this time. Sometimes I wonder about the fillos I draw — sometimes it seems like the only attention they get is if there's a printing defect.

Sometimes I wonder about the reviews & articles I write — sometimes it seems like the only attention they get is if there's a typo. So you're not alone.

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** March 16, 2015
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New email

Well, Joe and Lisa, here we are again, sitting at opposite ends of the aetherwaves. One of these years, most likely at MidAmeriCon II (the 2016 world convention), we shall finally meet and gab. In the meantime, here we sit.

Since this is my new email account - I got tired of my Yahoo! account getting phished 3 or more times a year - please put it in as an e-mail COA for me in your next issue. That would be greatly appreciated. The other email address is still active, but as soon as I finish getting all sorts of information transferred and updated, that one is going to be exterminated.

Naturally, Joe's musings about the Hugo awards — especially the fan categories — gets a response out of me. I am all in favor of eliminating the Fan Hugos, too, because I feel that they have become too irrelevant and uninformed as to fan history, even the history of the SF field itself. Just as you noted in your initial section of "reviewer's notes," all that the Internet has done is promote isolationism between assorted interest camps. I forget which philosopher made the initial observation, but the creation of the Internet has definitely sped up the the process of "like minds seeking other like minds." This is, undoubtedly, not an accurate quote, but the gist of the sentiment remains true to the original statement. As a result of this all too human trait, the Hugo Awards in general tend

to reflect this development. More is the pity. I am afraid nobody is reading, assessing, and voting based on the quality of work anymore, just acquiring the quantity of votes has become the norm. Ends justifying the means, sadly.

As for SF conventions themselves, I still go to them, but mainly to meet and hang out with friends. They always will be important to me for that reason, and sometimes for their guests and programming. For example, AggieCon 46 (March 27-29, 2015) finally released their slate of GoHs on its website, and I don't know any of them, and each one reflects the primary interest/direction of AggieCon: media-influenced. Last month I wrote to the programming head asking if there would be any Steampunk items, and received a response stating, "Yes, there are a couple panels about Steampunk." I am interpreting that as merely a polite nod to the literary side of fandom, but I will bet apples to pomegranates that those panels will be more about Steampunk fashion/costuming than any serious discussion of the genre itself. Valerie long ago decided to pass on putting items into their art show this year, and I'll probably only go on Saturday the 28th for just the afternoon to check out the dealer's room and see if there is anything worth seeing programming-wise. I suspect also that the con committee is going through another shift in personnel, being that this is a student-run SF con: the veteran committee members graduate, leaving the con to the freshmen and sophomores in Cepheid Variable (the TAMU student SF club) to take over. I may write a con report on it in time for *Alexiad* #80 since your deadline is April 1st. It will be brief, I assure you of that.

I think it was Lloyd Penney who found out that so many of the steampunk cosplay types he encountered had never read a book. They had got into it through music. Music?

What else is of note in this issue? Oh, yes. "The Future of Movies" article doesn't surprise me since Hollywood long ago ran out of original ideas. Retreads of old movies and themes is all the movie industry is capable of anymore. Given this projection of all those super-hero comic book movie projects, I have no qualms about waiting until they come out on DVD so I can rent them for a buck and then watch. Maybe the only one even worth venturing into the theater for is Doctor Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch in the title role, I understand); when I read comics a long, long time ago, Doctor Strange was one of my favorite characters, so this might be worth watching.

In the lettercolumn (always my favorite part of your fanzine) it is good to see Eric Mayer's name again. Have you read his newest fanzine, *Vexed*, on efanzines yet? Very interesting and enjoyable. Eric projects it to be an annual fanzine, so that's something to consider. I am

reviewing it in *Askance* #33, which is my big project during this week's Spring Break.

Bedbugs are a common thread in the loccol, and fortunately we haven't had such an infestation here. It's probably too freaking hot in Texas for them. We have other critters to contend with, such as fire ants, wheelbugs, and assorted creepy-crawlies. Oh, the joys of home-ownership.

Alexis Gilliland: In my office at school I have this big, honking book *The Encyclopedia of Utopian Literature* (1995) edited by Mary Ellen Snodgrass. It is an interesting tome to dig into from time to time, so I am curious if Alexis has a copy.

Does it list Robert Rimmer's Love Me Tomorrow?

— JTM

Murray Moore: There are only a few types of music that I simply cannot stand, and opera is one of them. In fact, I have only been to one: way back in the mid-1970s I saw Lohengrin and had really nice nap during the production. Bring a small pillow.

Well, that appears to do it for this issue. Like I said, if I feel so motivated, I'll write a brief review of AggieCon 46 for you as soon as it's over. Well, expect it on Sunday, March 29th, since I'm only taking in Saturday's events, if that much.

From: **Joy V. Smith** March 16, 2015
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What a lovely tribute to Sarang. All my sympathy on your loss.

Thank you for the other news and reviews. I'm glad there are books still coming out about early fan history. Btw, I have a copy of *Factsheet 5* that I used to get; I sent away for a variety of small press zines and wrote about them sometimes in my little zine, *Splish Splash*.

Interesting high tech article on ramjets, etc. Uh, are you sure they're gone? Btw, I enjoyed both versions of *Frankenweenie*, but I'll keep an eye out for *ParaNorman*. I enjoyed the con reviews, including the one from Spain. Thanks, Sue. More news and updates in the LOCs, and I appreciate your added intel, such as the Heinlein background. Is *Caleb Catlum's America* fiction?

YES! YES! YES! Thank all deities and divinities, yes!

— JTM

Your closing poem was touching, though I managed not to snuffle--again--or run out and get a cat...

In case you're interested, after I learned of Terry Pratchett's passing, I started a Terry Pratchett board on Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/joyvsmith/appreciating-terry-pratchett/>

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** March 18, 2015
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Thank you for *Alexiad* #14.4 whose arrival more or less coincided with the arrival of daylight savings time, that governmental attempt to make the sun do its bidding. Please accept my condolences on the loss of Sarang who was clearly a classy cat. We begin with noting that my newly replaced filling fell out, and was scheduled for replacement on March 5th, the date of a late snowstorm (which deposited six inches of heavy wet snow in my driveway) that closed schools, governments, and dental offices. The dentist rescheduled me for the following Monday, he replaced the filling at no charge. Other health news: after several years I went in for new glasses, in the process learning that my eyes have cataracts dead normal for my age, says the optometrist. That would explain why this winter had darker nights than last winter, and may eventually require an operation, but for now we will wait and see, or not see, as the case may be.

The attentive reader may also recall that we went down to Marscon for a Ravencon business meeting. A week later we went down to Richmond for an emergency Ravencon business meeting, called because of the death of Ravencon's vice-chair, John Jones, age 43.

John had had chest pains, and drove himself to the hospital, where he checked in to the emergency room, and was found dead of heart failure in the bathroom. We subsequently returned to Richmond for his funeral, and again for the wake at his favorite bar. Not so much for Ravencon. John had been one of Lee's best friends on the committee.

On returning from the wake Lee found an e-mail invitation to another funeral, this time that of her second cousin, three times removed over in Argyle, Scotland. He had been a Baron (which is why the lawyers had taken the trouble to seek out his heirs) living about ten miles north of town on an entailed estate think Downton Abbey only less magnificent) which over the last few decades had mostly been sold off to pay his living expenses. What was left consisted of a ruined castle (where he lived in the housekeeper's old room) out at the end of a long dirt road. A castle requiring repairs estimated at \$8,000,000 to make it safe enough for tourists to visit. Lee's older sister, now the Baroness, also inherited that castle, but the entail means that after she dies, title and castle will pass to Lee, regardless of her sister's wishes, because Lee and her son, James, are the remaining entailed heirs. However, James seems willing to let Lee donate the castle to the British National Trust eventually, and it was decided to skip the funeral, since we had never met the late Baron.

Is this a feudal barony or an actual title?

— JTM

George Price says that debasing the currency is theft. No. The rules are different for states and individuals, if an individual extorted money from you under threat, that would be theft. But it is not theft when the state collects taxes, also under threat, just as it is not murder when the state (or iLs agenL) kills an enemy (war is necessary), a convicted murderer (even if he is innocent), or an unarmed and unthreatening civilian confronting the police (accidents happen). Why? Because the state makes and enforces the rules about what theft and murder are. The debasing of the currency appears closer to counterfeiting than theft, but it is not counterfeiting either, since debasing the currency is (A) impossible for an individual, and (B) way too complicated to classify as anything simple. Do states commit crimes? Yes. However, the only time when individual officials are held accountable for the crimes of their state is when that state loses a war. Is debasing the currency even a crime? No. It may be an evil choice, but a state's gotta do what a state's gotta do, and that choice is arguably the least evil of all available choices. Maybe denouncing that evil choice is the Moral Equivalent Of War (MEOW) but for those making that evil choice the moral equivalent of accountability is losing reelection, which generally doesn't happen, suggesting the approval if not the complicity of the electorate.

Richard Dengrove notes that the Virgin of Almodena day, which celebrates the 711 hiding of a revered statue of the Virgin Mary in Madrid's city wall, must be misinformed since 711 predates the founding of Madrid. Richard makes a distinction without a difference. Perhaps the statue was hidden within what became Madrid's city limits in the wall of some city whose name is lost to history. Cromwell's Puritans made a similar argument to abolish Christmas, but truth and sweet reason did not prevail over sentimentality and habit.

From: **Murray Moore** March 19, 2015
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I am not dismayed by the demolition of Ray Bradbury's house. Unlike its occupant, the house appeared to have been supremely ordinary. I counter your "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot" with "ticky-tacky little box."

The knock against the Edgar Rice Burroughs' character mashup *The Martian Legion* known to me is the introduction in it of a Southern Baptist religious element. Martian gods are the only gods I recall from my reading many ERB titles in the 1960s, courtesy of the Ace and Ballantine reprints.

It's a pity the Poopy Panda Pals

scuppered John Carter. There was so much franchise material there. Imagine the climax of *The Master Mind of Mars*: "Speak, Great Tur, ere I strike." Never ask for what you want, you might get it.

— JTM

Our older son is in show business. He worked on the sand storm in Clint Eastwood-directed *Sniper*. And recently he sent us a text suggesting we catch up on *Game of Thrones*; he has joined GoT's special effects team. I asked him if he would be making sand storms? snow storms? Blood storms, he replied.

Rodford Edmiston Smith is an impressive name. I suppose, when your surname is Smith, a singular first name and a singular middle name is a benefit.

After reading the latest in Leigh Kimmel's series of reports of being a dealer at a convention I have to ask, why do they do it? The only part of the convention outside of the dealer room that they see are parties.

Alexis's and Brad's cartoons greatly complement the pages of *Alexiad*. And Alexis and Brad must like you a lot, because you print (some of) Alexis's cartoons too small and Brad's 'In God School' cartoon too small.

Joy Smith mentions Churchill and Turing. Joe, do you know about *One Day In August: The Untold Story Behind Canada's Tragedy At Dieppe*, David O'Keefe (2013)? Non-Fiction. One thousand dead, plus two thousand wounded or captured, most of them Canadian, in the disastrous and, until now, inexplicable raid on the French port. Why? To pinch four-rotor Enigma material for the desperate code breakers at Bletchley Park. Ian Fleming was in the thick of it.

Oh, I did not attend Operacon. I tried. My flight to Milwaukee was cancelled. Twice.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 23, 2015
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Thank you for Vol. 14, No. 1 (February 2015), Whole Number 79.

California is now in its fourth year of draught. Especially bad here in Southern California. Along with that while a large part of the rest of the country was buried in snow here we were having a heat wave. I even turned on my air conditioning a few times. If this is Winter what is Summer going to be like?

While browsing through the New Book Section in the library I noticed *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* by Jill Lepore (Alfred A. Knopf, 2014). I did not read it in its entirety. Rather, I scanned through it and focused in on certain sections. The main thrust of the book is Wonder Woman represented what we would now call Woman's Lib. I did have two problems. The coverage represented

just the comics and did not include TV. In the comics Wonder Woman runs for President of the United States and according to one panel she is elected. That is, of course, impossible under our Constitution where you have to have been born here. Wonder Woman was born (if not created) a very long time ago elsewhere in some Amazonian Society. As for TV, for any heterosexual male of a certain age Wonder Woman was, and will always be, Lynda Carter. I was disappointed that Lepore did not also cover TV. By the way, some scumbag prior reader of the book bent a number of the pages. People who bend pages in books should be executed. OK – For anyone interested in Wonder Woman and her history I highly recommend the book.

Wonder Woman was made from clay on the island of Themiscyra, the land of the Amazons.

The movie *LUCY* was obtained from the library mainly because of Scarlett Johansson and Morgan Freeman, but also because the concept appeared interesting. It was an incredible disappointment. On my rating scale of 1-5 I gave it a 0. If you haven't seen it, don't bother. As best as I can remember it is only the second movie that I have given a 0. The other one was *Starship Troopers*.

I put aside reading *Old Venus* (Edited by George R. R. Martin & Gardner Dozois, 2015) for a short time to read *Fear City – Repairman Jack: The Early Years* by F. Paul Wilson (2014). Highly recommended for anyone interested in *Repairman Jack*.

Also read was *Saint Odd: an Odd Thomas Novel* by Dean Koontz (2015). Actually, it's the final novel in Koontz's *Odd Thomas* series. Highly recommended for any Koontz fans, especially followers of the *Odd Thomas* series.

This has been a revolutionary era for series ending. We have lived to see those epochal words:

THE END OF THE WHEEL OF TIME

Similarly, Sookie Stackhouse, the simple waitress loved by everyone, particularly vampires, has served (or been) her last meal. Pug conDoin, the little wizard made immortal, has made his last saving throw, and chose to fail it.

This proffers hopes that Zanth will choke on its last pun and slide away into the void of paranomasia, or that Count Saint-Germain will inscribe his last long letter from some place where no one, live, dead, or undead, would have the sense to stay.

— JTM

Progress Report #3 for Sasquan arrived on March 17 including the ballot for Hugo nominations that must be received by 11:59 P.M. on March 10. Oh, well, any items I would have nominated would not have made the final ballot anyway.

James Stumm: I thank you for the books you recently shipped to me. Your periodic shipment of books is very much appreciated.

Rodford Edmiston: Interesting article "The Joy of High Tech", especially the part about Coors.

Joy V. Smith: Several years before obtaining a PC I had a Brother Word Processor purchased with the money received from a suggestion I made at the company for which I worked. It had a screen which was much appreciated. I loved it. It was donated to a thrift shop and none of the information on discs was ever transferred to the PC. That was a minor mistake, but hasn't really been missed. It would have been a massive job. Prior to that my typewriter was a Smith-Corona Silent-Super portable. It was a gift to me from my Maternal Grandmother in 1951. I still have it.

George W. Price: See my comments to Joy V. Smith. Excellent letter to the Chicago Sun-Times of Dec. 15, 1996—"Nearly RoboCop".

Murray Moore: Yes, on further thought the raccoon in my back yard might have been carrying a smaller raccoon. Quite possibly a baby it was moving to another location.

Sue Burke: Excellent comment on Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism. I would guess that 99% of the non-Islamic World knows nothing about it. Interesting idea, a Manhattan Project for the War on Terror.

From: **George W. Price** March 25, 2015
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February *Alexiad*:

Lo, the age of miracles is not over: I did not find a thing in this issue to quarrel with! While I don't agree with everybody on everything, the few differences are minor nits not worth picking.

Instead, let me fulminate about the drive to raise the minimum wage. It is bad economics — but then, it isn't really about economics, it's about morality.

The obvious rap against the minimum wage is that anyone whose production is worth less than the minimum has to go unemployed, because no employer can afford to hire him. But this argument bounces off the minimum wage proponents — they rarely dispute it, they just ignore it. Now why is that? Is it profound economic ignorance? Do they really believe that all you have to do to raise wages is to order stingy bosses to pay more? I think not.

Some years ago a young community-organizer lawyer surprised me by saying right

out that she realized that wages couldn't be raised just by fiat. No, she said, the point is that having to work for a very low wage is an affront to one's "human dignity," and it is better to be on welfare. I couldn't refute that, since it is entirely subjective. (My idea of human dignity requires me to be as self-supporting as possible, and accept public welfare or private charity only as a desperate last resort. So far I have never been that desperate.)

I now believe that her position was not (as I supposed at the time) a strange aberration; it is what actually animates the push for minimum wage laws.

The proponents' real position — usually unstated — is that basic morality requires that everyone be provided a certain standard of living just for being alive — and whether one has earned it is irrelevant. If this standard can't be achieved by one's own efforts, then it must be provided by government, either by a minimum wage or by a welfare stipend.

Seen this way, the real purpose of minimum-wage laws isn't to raise wages for particular jobs. It is to destroy those low-paying jobs, because they are insults to "human dignity" — it is immoral to expect anyone to work for so little. I do not agree.

I think that some of it is "Triple Revolution" ideology; that somehow some technological development will create the production of infinite quantities of goods, which accomplishment will end the need to work.

—JTM

I do not see any good outcome for the nuclear negotiations with Iran. It seems obvious that the Iranian leaders are flat-out determined to get the bomb, and will engage in whatever stalling and deception it takes.

The only way to be sure they have stopped is to send inspectors who can demand instant entry to any place at any time — and not just to the installations that the Iranians tell us about, but also to any others we might get wind of. Since there would be nothing to stop the inspectors from snooping into places that had nothing to do with nuclear bombs, this would mean that the Iranians could have no secrets about anything. I can't see any government — let alone Iran — tolerating that. But, given that the Iranians cannot be trusted an inch, would anything less intrusive do the job?

The unavoidable conclusion is that the Iranians will get the bomb in due time unless the U.S. and/or Israel stops them by outright military attack. Brace yourselves.

From: **Sue Burke** March 29, 2015
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At first when the windows started rattling at 5:17 p.m. on February 23, I thought it was the wind, but it grew too loud and the floor started to shake. Then the building swayed and the walls creaked. My husband and I looked at each other. "Earthquake!" And we laughed. Madrid's sandy soil acts as a damper, so the city has never suffered a serious quake, unlike southern Spain. Within seconds, the shaking and rumbling stopped – earthquakes are noisy! – and the chatter on social media began. In the end, a 5.2 Richter scale earthquake had its epicenter 80 kilometers south of Madrid, but without injuries or damage anywhere. It was just an unanticipated shakeup.

We were anticipating the solar eclipse on the morning of March 20. The day dawned overcast and stayed that way, and although it grew noticeably dimmer when the sun was 72% obscured at 10:08 a.m., I had my Eclipse Shades™ ready for nothing. Even worse, during the night, a Sahara dust storm had combined with a shower, so it had rained reddish mud, and what little we could observe was through windows that desperately needed washing.

Belgium is also anticipating the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, and as part of the celebrations and reenactments, it wanted to issue a 2€ commemorative coin. All sorts of special euro coins are minted: Spain produced a 2€ coin in 2014 with the profiles of both kings that reigned that year. Belgium's coin meant to show the Lion Hill memorial at the battlefield. But since euro coins circulate throughout the eurozone, every europower must approve every eurodesign, and France said no. It said the coin had "negative" connotations and "appears prejudicial, in a context where the governments of the eurozone are trying to strengthen unity and cooperation throughout the monetary union."

Last year, France issued a commemorative 2€ coin for the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings, and no one said a word, maybe because the European Union grew out of an effort to thwart another Nazi-like disaster. Or maybe the French are thin-skinned.

DNA tests have proved that Comte Alexandre Colonna-Walewski (the current heir) is descended from the Bonaparte male line, so as the descendant of Napoleon, he should be at the Bicentennial with the Prince Napoléon.

— JTM

Spain is anticipating the 400th anniversary of Cervantes' death in 2016, so it seemed like a good time to solve an old mystery: Exactly

where rest the bones of Spain's most illustrious and celebrated writer? He had been interred in the crypt of the church of the Trinitarian nuns in downtown Madrid, but the church was rebuilt in 1698, and the exact burial site was lost.

After years of negotiations between government and ecclesiastical authorities and an exhaustive examination of records, the city got permission to start a search. A team of 36 experts worked for 10 months below the altar, first looking for bones with radar, then examining them with microcameras, and finally opening a grave beneath the floor of the crypt. The contents were in poor shape, disordered and half-decayed, but eventually they were sorted and identified as roughly six men, five women, and six children, brought together from other crypts and reburied in about 1730.

Findings included a piece of a wooden coffin with nails spelling out "MC," remains of a simple robe of the type Cervantes was known to be interred in, and some bone fragments that seemed to be the right age, among them a jawbone missing the same teeth he was known to have lost in his lifetime (most of them).

And so the "Prince of Literature" may have been found. The investigators are certain it is possible, although not "with absolute certainty, so we must be prudent. We are convinced that we have something." Now they hope to find the remains of a relative or ancestor for DNA tests, which might be just as hard to locate.

If it is don Miguel, will his grave become a tourist attraction? Probably. Stay tuned.

Speaking of history, it's a hit on TV. *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (*The Ministry of Time*) shocked everyone: Spain has produced a good science fiction television show. In its premise, secret doorways lead to the past, and the Ministry's job is to keep the past from changing – at least Spain's past. "Our history might not have been the best possible, but it could have been worse," says the Subsecretary of Special Missions. The writers know and love science fiction and created something original and very, very Spanish.

None other than Diego Velázquez is the staff artist, and on his lunch break, he experiments with cubism on paper napkins. Everyone grumbles about pay cuts, just like real-life government employees in these times of austerity. During a rescue of Lope de Vega, a time patrol member complains that they've come almost too late. He's told: "We wouldn't be Spanish if we couldn't get everything done at the last minute." Another patrol member, a 16th-century infantryman, wonders why everyone keeps calling him "Alatriste," which is the name of a character of a best-selling 20th-century novel about a 16th-century Spanish infantryman.

The show already has a cult following after six episodes. And by the way, in real life, the painter Velázquez's mortal remains have been lost, too, in this case because the church in which they were interred was leveled on orders of Joseph Bonaparte, made King of Spain by order of this brother Napoleon. King José I is

still mocked in Madrid as Pepe Botella, "Joey Bottle," in allusion to his supposed drinking habit. History runs deep here.

Maybe it can be the setting of an episode of *Doctor Misterio*.
 Polluelos cavan Señores del Tiempo, ¿verdad?

— JTM

Finally, the crowdfunding for the bilingual science fiction anthology, *Castles in Spain / Castillos en el aire*, achieved 115% of its goal. The funds will pay for translation. Thank you, gracias, to everyone who gave, spread the word, or plans to buy the book.

From: **Tom Feller** March 30, 2015
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Thanks for sending the zine. I retired at the end of December and hope to get back in the habit of writing locs.

I liked Stephen King's 11/22/63, although the publishers should have found an expert of the 1957-1963 period to check for errors. I noticed several even with a casual reading.

I was the owner of a Timex-Sinclair personal computer once upon a time. It was really more of a toy than a truly functional computer. Rather than buying a keyboard attachment, I upgraded to a Commodore 64, which I could actually use for word processing. My next home computer was an MS-DOS machine produced by a manufacturer so obscure than I do not remember the name. My first Windows 3.1 home computer was an Epson, which I don't think is making computers any more, just printers.

From: **Taras Wolansky** March 31, 2015
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This is kind of interesting. Back in October, the *N.Y. Times* published an article about new evidence (about the nature of his opposition to the H-bomb) that supposedly suggested nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer shouldn't have had his security clearance taken away in the Fifties, considered a great injustice among progressives and in media circles, if nowhere else. When somebody posted the story on a local SF club list, I did what the *Times* hoped people wouldn't do and looked up the actual text of the AEC decision, discovering the real reason which had nothing to do with H-bombs:

Dr. Oppenheimer has now admitted under oath that while in charge of the Los Alamos Laboratory and working on the most secret weapon development for the Government, he told Colonel [Boris] Pash a fabrication of lies.

Colonel Pash was an officer of Military Intelligence charged with the duty of protecting the atomic-weapons project against spies. Dr. Oppenheimer told Colonel Pash in circumstantial detail of an attempt by a Soviet agent to obtain from him information about the work on the atom bomb. This was the Haakon Chevalier incident. In the hearings recently concluded, Dr. Oppenheimer under oath swears that the story he told Colonel Pash was a "whole fabrication and tissue of lies" (Tr., p. 149).

It is not clear today whether the account Dr. Oppenheimer gave to Colonel Pash in 1943 concerning the Chevalier incident or the story he told the Gray Board last month is the true version.

If Dr. Oppenheimer lied in 1943, as he now says he did, he committed the crime of knowingly making false and material statements to a Federal officer. If he lied to the Board, he committed perjury in 1954.

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/opp06.asp

After reading this, my first thought was, why should they think Oppenheimer wasn't lying *both* times? (I figure Oppenheimer admitted to the 1943 lies because on those he was protected by the statute of limitations.)

So Robert Stadler really was working for the Peoples' State of Russia?

Just recently I was reminded of the story when I looked at Charles Seife's *Sun in a Bottle* (2008), a history of fusion power. Unlike the *Times*, Seife gets the AEC story right, but also writes: **"It's not entirely clear why Oppenheimer and others who had expressed such deep moral qualms about the hydrogen bomb in 1949 reversed their position so dramatically in 1951 [after a successful technical test]."** The simplest explanation is Oppenheimer tried to block the program as long as he could, then when that was no longer possible switched to trying to get on the inside so he could misdirect and delay it. He came very close to assuring the first thermonuclear bomb would belong to Stalin. (Some unpleasant alternate history scenarios come to mind.)

On to the February 2015 *Alexiad*:

The Future of Movies: The March *Esquire* has a feature ironically titled "The Year in Ideas", giving last year's movie "franchise" releases and the number of films in each franchise. *Blended* (3); *The Expendables 3* (3); *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (4); *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* (5); *Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones* (5); *Step Up: All In* (5); *X-Men: Days of Future Passed* (7); *Leprechaun: Origins* (7); *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (8); *Godzilla* (?). (BTW, apart

from a profile of actress Olivia Wilde amusingly "annotated" by the brainy beauty herself, there is very little worth reading in this issue.)

The Joy of High Tech: **"The sonic boom alone would have pulped most living things under its path, while the radiation and heat from the reactor would sterilize everything."** Not too stealthy, it appears! I do wonder, at Mach 3, how much of a radiation dose would there be?

Taral Wayne ("Twice upon a Time"): My own reaction to *Paranorman* was that this is not a film for children, because of the tragedy it recounts. Imaginary tragedy, that is: in the real life witch mania of Salem in the late 17th century, the girls were not the victims but the accusers. And no one was burned at the stake.

In the Golden Age of Hollywood, the studios were run by conservative Republicans who played up the positive in American history. Today (with the honorable exception of Clint Eastwood and perhaps Angelina Jolie) the filmmakers are progressives, who think Americans are way too patriotic already and need to be taken down a peg.

Eric Mayer: In fact the Ivies admit students mostly based on SAT scores (so they can boast about the average score of the incoming class). Charles Murray recently had an article, "Why the SAT Isn't a 'Student Affluence Test'", in the *Wall Street Journal*. He explains, SAT scores are correlated with the taker's IQ, which is correlated with the parental IQ, which is correlated with the parental income; thus, the children of the upper middle class tend to dominate admissions to the "elite" schools.

Robert S. Kennedy (*Loscon 42 report*): **"That evening was the Masquerade ... there were only four or five participants"**. Have costumers moved to their own, specialized conventions, or media and anime cons, or is there a real winding-down of the activity?

Well, ConGlomeration had some fifteen or twenty entrants, so perhaps not.

— JTM

Sue Burke (*Hispacon XXXII report*): **"I ... saw some short fan-fiction videos about Doctor Who ... the stories suffered from small budgets"**. Wouldn't that just make the videos look more authentic?

Joe: **"Introduce a forty-year-old style from mundane writing and it's something new and wondrous in SF."** People also said that about John Brunner's great award-winner, *Stand on Zanzibar*, for borrowing techniques pioneered by John Dos Passos thirty years earlier.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Apr. 17, 2015
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This is for the February *Alexiad*. I, once

more, enjoyed it. Of course, the *Alexiad* band have become old friends by now. I have been commenting on *Alexiad* ever since 2010 sometime. Which means I have been reading it for that long, because, unlike some people, I do not comment on zines without reading them.

However, after giving you praise, I am now going to disagree with you, Joe. Not violently, though, I hope. Mildly. You mention the Sad Puppies campaign. Larry Correa's and Theodore Beale's hobby horse.

I disagree when you say the campaign is the product of people who don't wish to confront others. I thought the Sad Puppies' purpose was to give a black eye to perceived enemies. They claim the Left, but they are so Rightwing they aim at a significant percentage of the Right as well. With the Sad Puppies, they would be block voting to get Hugos for their impossibly Right Wing authors.

They made a mistake, though. Beale's in-your-face style has become so notorious that the opposition is being mobilized, and those very Right Wing puppies may yet remain sad.

I have another mild disagreement. In this, I go from sad puppies to bored trekkies. Would producers resuscitate in another timeline STAR TREK characters killed off in this timeline? I gather there is no ready market for those killed off in the old STAR TREK. They were prevented from becoming known to the public before they were killed.

That doesn't mean that the STAR TREK series doesn't present endless possibilities. I myself liked the young versions of the top Star Trekkers in STAR TREK (2009), although others would take exception.

I have been disagreeing. Do I ever agree with you? I do about publishing another Taral Wayne movie review. I love his technique: telling what hit him, how it hit him and whether that caused him to dislike the film. It makes me sad that I saw *Frankenweenie*, but not *ParaNorman*. It made me almost sad enough to go out and see it. However, given my lethargy with films, I haven't quite gotten in the mood.

Next comes the letters. First, we go from a pop subject, supernatural science, to Steam Punk, a pop alternate history. Lloyd Penney says that he has a Steam Punk business. I have to ask him what he sells. I might be in the market for something Steam Punk.

Now we go from Steam Punk to the Steam Punk monetary standard, gold. George Price argues that gold isn't that inflationary. Prices would have only gone up three times in a century rather than the twenty-four they did.

However, the price of gold has been unstable as well, especially since the year 2000. It recently lost one-third of its value in a very short time. This does not mean that instability did not dog it before then. In the '80s, it had lesser but sizable perturbations. Should we base our currency on a commodity like that?

I suspect the problem is that modern computers and other electronics demand gold

for their parts. It has become another commodity with prices that go sky high and valley low. It is not just used as jewelry and a basis for currency with a price that does not fluctuate.

Another comment by George concerns tax rather than currency. Of course not the normal taxes, the income tax or the outgo tax. What precisely George criticized me for was syntax. He faults me for presenting dates as '40s and '60s with half quotes rather than "40s and "60s with full quotes.

Does this violate good grammar? I presume the grammar books favor full quotes. On the other hand, I am not one to consider such matters written in stone. It's a matter of personality. As far as I am concerned, my use of quotes was OK as long as George understood what I meant. Of course if I was publishing a book or novel, I would follow the rules, maybe from *The Chicago Manual of Style*; and stick to 'good' grammar.

Now we go from economics to the war against terror. Robert Kennedy wonders what I would do to protect the one solar power producing satellite in the sky from terrorists. One answer is that the plan was for thirty satellites not one. No one could bring those all down at one fell swoop.

Another answer is that we have to protect power plants on the ground as well. I would imagine they are far more vulnerable to a terrorist attack. The original question concerned terrorists working in small groups who will destroy anything. Satellites lie beyond their reach for now.

How about governments? For the foreseeable future, only governments, like the Chinese Communists, could attack solar power producing satellites; and they have so far forborne conventional attacks lest they suffer retaliation. Just as they have forborne atomic attacks for the same reason.

Taras Wolansky has an argument that goes beyond outer space, where we were previously at, to God. His interest is not military science but theology. He says that the Bible is evidence for a Young Earth. I say all truth depends on your criteria for that truth. If faith is your criteria for the age of the Earth, it is. However, if your criteria is that normally accepted as science: e.g., radioactivity and geological layers, then that is more dubious. Rarely, do people specify their criteria, however. Usually, it is any argument but the kitchen sink they can throw at the enemy.

Taras is not only interested in theology but in public opinion. He argues that it proves the existence of God that billions of people believe in him. As I said, it depends on your criteria. If the numerical number of believers is your criterion, then God wins. If not, numbers need not prove God's existence.

Later on, in his letter, Taras gives his view on another somewhat related matter. It has to do with the universe as a going concern: Philip Gosse's theory that God created it in 4004 BC but made it appear that the universe

had a past.

Taras finds such a God a trickster God, who is not being honest with humans. That cannot be the God he worships. For him, God does not hide the facts of the universe.

The problem is God does indeed hide the facts of the universe, and man has to work hard to discover them. Hence, the Geocentric solar system has been superseded by the Heliocentric solar system; Aristotle's ideas about gravity have been superseded by Newton's Laws; and Newton's laws in turn have been partially superseded by Einstein's.

In the next topic, I, once again, disagree with you, Joe. As above, not violently. In fact, in this case, haltingly. It does not concern things cerebral like Newton and Einstein. Instead, it concerns matters farther down on the body. Of course, I am talking about the *Harrad Experiment*. Joe, you point out that while the *Harrad Experiment* may not have spawned actual attempts at instituting Rimmer's utopia, it spawned zines with many writers taking Rimmer as their inspiration.

I have to confess that believers in the *Harrad Experiment* did more than be satisfied to just read it. On the other hand, I thought my original point was that utopias have not necessarily inspired actual social experiments. So far, with the *Harrad Experiment*, it hasn't.

This brings us to the end of the letter. Here, I have been up and down, right and left, to TV and movies, to outer space and God, and ended up in the sexual revolution. I will stop there.

From: **AL du Pisani** May 2, 2015
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"Gatvol" is a useful word from Afrikaans which has slipped across the language barriers, and is now used by almost all South African languages as a loan word. It denotes being filled up to the brim, and is usually used to describe a situation with which you are fed up.

It is how I feel about the electricity situation in the country. The bad thing is that it may take another 6 years to sort out the current mess. In November last year Eskom lost some power plants, and with scheduled maintenance, emergency maintenance, accidents, inability to pay for fuel and other events, a total of a third of the country's generating capacity was unavailable.

This lead to regular load shedding leading into the Summer holidays, and continued after the holidays. It is eerie to get to a large shopping mall, and find almost all shops closed, and the interior of the building in darkness, because of load shedding. (In this instance we had barely gotten inside the building before the power came back on, and we could get what we were looking for.)

About once a week I experience load shedding, usually for four and a half hours at a time. At work it is liveable, since we have

generators. At home I just have to grin and bear it. Which is why I am considering spending as much as my house cost me originally to install solar power with battery backup.

It is becoming clear that the political intervention in running Eskom had been going on for much longer, and much deeper than previously suspected. So much so that we are now finding out that due to political interference in the day to day running of Eskom, much needed scheduled maintenance had been deferred. Due to political requirements, Eskom has to pay a premium for fuel, because they have to buy from black and BBBEE compliant suppliers. Where BBBEE compliant suppliers quite often means politically connected front organisations with almost no employees, which buy from the normal businesses, and resell at a huge mark-up.

Medupi unit 6, which was supposed to have been connected to the grid in December, and to have been generating power by now, may or may not be ready to generate power, as they could not do proper testing beforehand, and have had other issues. When it will start generating power nobody knows. The workers working on Medupi are on strike, but insist that the strike (which have stopped work), have had no effect on the date at which the power station will eventually generate electricity.

Final implementation date for Medupi and Kusile power stations had been moved out three years, and it is not know how much more that will cost. Given that we are already three years behind schedule, and at double the originally quoted price, I do not foresee that things will get better soon.

In the mean time I have been able to find new sources of written SF and fantasy. I am reading more than I did in years. Most of the authors are unknown to me, as they mostly publish independently, and electronically. This do mean that I rarely go to my local book shop any more. Most times I get to a book shop, I look at the shelves and see nothing that interests me. I belong to a loyalty club at one chain of bookshops, and have just had my quarterly update, during which I have bought no books. This is the second quarter running that that have happened. During this quarter they had their big annual sale – I could not be bothered to visit.

The world is changing. A lot I really dislike. But in between are a lot of good things.

I am especially interested to see what is going on the spaceflight, as we seem to be getting closer to a major breakthrough in technical capabilities and public perception. I am so looking forward to this. I have been waiting for this most of my life.

I hope that good things come across your ways. Good luck. Prosper.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.
Dainis Bisenieks, but the letter got eaten by the house.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE DEAD COLLEAGUE

... I had thought that delivering a paper on treating head injuries sustained in combat, depressing though the topic might be, would get me out of my rut. Then Mycroft had a little favour to ask.

The conference had a day's adjournment because of the tragedy. It was hard enough putting up with Sherlock's glee at the prospect of an enigmatic case to investigate. He had danced around the sitting room on the furniture, and I was concerned that he might have somehow obtained a gun. Or cigarettes.

The police had left the scene, but their markings were there. He knelt, looked at the outlines of the two bodies, then down the alley. "To all appearances, at least as far as the police know, a typical mugging. The assailant held Dr. and Mrs. Wayne at gunpoint, took their valuables, and only then shot them."

"The obvious scenario is a drug gang —"

"Sherlock!" I said. "Dr. Wayne was a reputable man, an inspiration to us all. He practiced medicine for charity while managing his fortune, unlike most of the monied fools in the world!"

He looked at me with that sort of look that he reserves for police detectives and other lesser forms of life. "That is out of the question. An old-time distributor would not have had the wife killed, while a more contemporary one would have seen to the boy."

"The presumption is that the parents could have identified the killer but their son could not..."

"I saw his face."

I jumped at the voice. "Who said that!"

"The young woman in the fire escape with the cat and the night-vision goggles." He looked up at her. "Come on down and explain the case."

The girl dropped to the ground, then straightened up. "You aren't cops."

"But I am."

I turned and saw an official-looking person standing there, face grim. "Detective Jim Gordon, Gotham City Police." He was holding up his identification booklet to confirm this.

"John H. Watson, with the British Ministry of Defence," I said as I dug for mine. The Northumberland Fusiliers deception wouldn't work any longer, as a very aggravated colonel from the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers had explained to me.

"And who's your friend?"

"Sherlock Holmes," Sherlock said.

The look on the detective's face was indescribable. "Down from New York, I see."

Before Sherlock could do or say anything I quickly said, "Identity theft. Happens all the time. You're the detective investigating this case?"

His hand snaked out and he grabbed the girl's arm. "Yes. As well as street thieves like Ms. Kyle here."

"Hey!" she said, particularly when Gordon proceeded to handcuff her.

"Perfect," Sherlock said. "John, you stand there, and if Ms. Kyle will stand between you... Yes."

He walked down the alley about halfway, turned, and said, "Was it here?"

"That's where he covered his face," the girl said.

"He was shadowed..." Sherlock took a quick picture with the mobile, stepped forward and said, "Did he have his gun out?"

"What the hell!" Gordon said. Kyle had picked the lock on the cuffs and taken a flier. He turned to run after her but she had disappeared.

"No matter, we can find her again. Now, Detective Gordon, if we can discuss the details of the case..."

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

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

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