

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

It is an odd thing that if and when our bodies change our images of ourselves do not. Even well after I have slimmed down it feels like I am looking at a stranger when I look in the mirror and see not a fat person but a chunky one with a somewhat toned body. It is a bit like when at the museum they had a box which if you looked in showed what you would look like as an Egyptian. This is not a box, however. The image I see in the mirror is truly myself. I have gone from being a total couch potato to someone who regularly walks close to a mile at a time. That walk to work has taken more than thirty pounds off my body and changed me from fat to chunky. I will always be chunky. I don't have the frame to be truly small and slender. Had anyone told me five years ago that I would be deciding not to wear a particular pair of pants because they were too big I would have sat on the floor and laughed for several minutes. That is exactly what I did this morning. The only reason I keep some too big pairs around is that on really cold days they serve as extra layers.

— Lisa

Paul Gadzikowski.....7
 Alexis A. Gilliland..... 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
 Trinlay Khadro..... 2
 Marc Schirmeister..... 5

Printed on December 34, 2015

Deadline is **February 1, 2016**

Reviewer's Notes

My job situation remains unchanged. A magnificent indifference.

It's a symptom of the internet that Carrie Fisher was being berated for having aged. It's been a few years in internal continuity between *Return of the Jedi* and *The Force Awakens*. **Of course** Leia Organa would age. And she has so much on her mind, too! But the New Republic seems not to have been doing well since Chris Hughes took over. Oops, that's *The New Republic*.

There is a great efflorescence of new books out there. And if you happen to have an unfulfilled desire to read dino porn, then your unfulled desire will be sated. (I had seen the ones that had women with dinosaurs, but there also seems to be gay dino porn.) And every other bizarre little desire. The world of fan fiction has evolved past perfect-bound small-shop printed novels into all sorts of ebooks.

And that's fine if you are looking for something to fit your desires. But things get lost in the surge; editing, preparation, publicity, and so on. Many of these books are not even copyedited. On a higher level, even Heinlein did better when he had to defend his beliefs, and most of these people are no Heinleins.

It's not entirely dismal. This was the means by which we got *The Martian*. The problem is finding it.

Back in the days when UseNet was still going strong, the newsgroup soc.history.what-if was the alternate history center. From time to time it would get dominated by various obsessions, and I remember at one point thinking that a stock posting could be made on the theme of "You Wake Up as <a prominent political leader> whose <political unit> has been Cast Back In the Sea of Time and is about to be struck by giant meteors." Nowadays the dominant site seems to be the Alternatehistory.com website.

Its historical people can be merciless in ferreting out historical improbabilities (it's where term "Unspeakable Sea Mammal" comes from). The more speculative sub-page has, however, become overwhelmed by *Game of Thrones* what-ifs, where people wonder about changing the ways or fate of one or another of these murderous types. As I said, it goes through fads.

I bought William Forstchen's *Rally Cry* (1990) for kindle, reread it and started wondering; what would happen if one of those travelers found himself/themselves in a world where there *wasn't* a looming war of destruction? But then, if Forstchen had made the sequel more like *Down to the Sea* (2000), without the repetitive set of books between, it might be considered more of a classic..

— Joe

Table of Contents

Editorial.....	1
Reviewer's Notes.....	1

Worldcon Bids.....	7
--------------------	---

Book Reviews

JTM Barrett, <i>Sealion</i>	3
JTM Downie <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Year of Ravens</i>	4
JTM Forsyth, <i>The Outsider</i>	4
JTM Larsen, <i>Stealing Trinity</i>	3
JTM Lourens, <i>The Georgia Secession</i>	2
JTM Novik, <i>Uprooted</i>	2
JTM Peake, <i>Caesar Ascending: The Invasion of Parthia</i>	3
JTM Stewart, <i>Out of Time</i>	3

Film Comments

LTM <i>Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens</i>	5
---	---

Con Reports

SB HispaCon XXXIII.....	6
RSK LosCon 42.....	5

Random Jottings.....	2
----------------------	---

Letters.....	8
--------------	---

Sue Burke, Richard A. Dengrove, Tom Feller, Alexis A. Gilliland, Dave Haren, John G. Hemry, Robert S. Kennedy, Rodney Leighton, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Murray Moore, Lloyd Penney, George W. Price, Joy V. Smith, Rod E. Smith, Milt Stevens, R-Lauraine Tutihasi

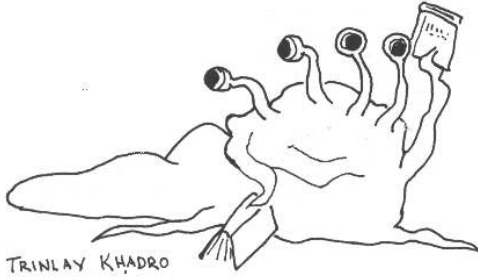
Comments are by JTM or LTM

Trivia.....	16
-------------	----

Art: Sheryl Birkhead.....	7, 8, 13, 15
------------------------------	--------------

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



IPSE DIXIT: In response to the decision to use a different statuette, Lovecraft scholar **S. T. Joshi** has returned his two World Fantasy Awards and has declared that he does not wish to ever be considered for another.

Thanks to Leeman Kessler, though, we have learned that Lovecraft has dibs on them. Joshi appeared with him at the H. P. Lovecraft Film Festival in Portland, Oregon.

In 1973 “To Tell the Truth”, the detection quiz show, hosted Secret Agent TRICYCLE. **Dušan M. “Dusko” Popov**. Sidney Reilly never had such luck.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWi--54cctw>

(Two of the four panelists guessed right.)

It is somewhat annoying that *The Last Unicorn: The Deluxe Edition* seems only to be available on Kindle (\$9.99). The book contains not only the original novel, but the Hugo and Nebula winning story “Two Hearts”, sequel to the book, an interview with Peter S. Beagle in which he describes the long and painful process by which he wrote the book, and a complete Beagle bibliography. It’s worth getting. Have a taco.

[No, “Two Hearts” is not “Schmendrick the Magician Meets the Doctor” — why do I think there is a slash story, or several, about that?]

Graeme Cameron is publiciaing his forthcoming VCON 41 with pulse-pounding energy. He has managed to draw Spider Robinson out of his withdrawal to be Toastmaster. He is also producing a fanzine, *The VCON Vanguard*.

Date: **September 30-October 2, 2016**

<http://www.vcon.ca>

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **George Clayton Johnson** on **December 25, 2015**. It had been reported on December 22, but he refused to die until he could have a last

Christmas.

Johnson was one of the more fannish pros around, making repeated appearances at Texas cons of all sorts. He was a friendly and engaging man.

His most noted work was *Logan’s Run*, but he was also famous for having written stories and screenplays for *The Twilight Zone* and the premiere episode of STAR TREK, “The Man Trap.”

MONARCHIST NEWS

The British Army Rumour Service webpage (ARRSE — Thomas Atkins tends to get scatological when he isn’t being obscene) has an informational directory called of course ARRSEpedia. One of its entries is on regimental nicknames, some of which we can actually print (no matter what the Defence Ministry says, LGBT affairs do not do well). For example, the Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment is known as “**Camilla’s Gorillas**”.

<http://www.arrse.co.uk/community/>

WORKING CHICKEN

Review by Joseph T Major of

UPROOTED

by Naomi Novik

(2015; Del Rey; ISBN 978-0804179034; \$25.00; Random House (Kindle); \$11.99)

When I was in third grade, between the teacher who said I couldn’t marry the girl who had the same last name as me (so she wouldn’t have to change it) and the teacher who made fun of my handwriting in front of the whole class, I read a bunch of stories in a children’s magazine about Baba Yaga, the grumpy and possibly malicious wise woman witch who lived in the forest in a hut on chicken legs. I’d love to find those again.

Slavic mythology has not done well in the writing process. James Branch Cabell picked bits from it (i.e., Mother Sereda, who bleaches everything, controls all Wednesdays, and figured out an innovative way to stalk Jurgen), other writers, such as Larry Niven, took a few terms (Niven’s Lésy stories), and the devouring maw of Dungeons & Dragons™ has scraped up items for its olla podria of background (I wonder what the D&D™ stats for the Devouring Maw are?). Nevertheless, a great body of myth not made nigh-trite by overuse is out there.

Agnieszka lives in a village on the edge of the wood, and once every ten years the Dragon takes a girl as his tribute. Time for a dragon-slayer, or a brave lass willing to fill herself with a slow-acting but powerful Worm-slaying venom?

Nyet. The Dragon is a wizard, a wizard of immense power and no wrath, except perhaps against the inept. The tribute-woman gets an education, good treatment, and when her term is up, goes off to someplace important, as a woman of promise. It’s the Wood that’s the

problem.

The Wood is malevolent. It has horrible beings in it, and it expands. The Dragon is there to keep the Wood back,

And Agnieszka is so sure her friend Kasia will be taken this choosing time. Kasia is the special girl, not only good looking but skilled, which is what the Dragon is after. The only thing Agnieszka is skilled at is making a mess.

Yet she is the one chosen. She may be messy, but she has the magical talent. If she can learn it, between making messes trying to clean up and putting up with the other demands on the Dragon’s time.

Like, for example, the prince who wants to rescue his mother, the Queen. She was taken by the Wood. This gets personal for Agnieszka when her friend Kasia is also taken by the beings of the Wood.

So, against his better judgment, the Dragon sets out to be the assistant at a royal rescue. This turns out to be costly, and the Queen has not quite survived her imprisonment by the Wood in a good state.

Which brings them to court. Between jealous wizards, concerned clergy, and political intrigues, Agnieszka is at loose ends.

Oh and did I mention there’s a war brewing?

Novik has told a tale with a lot of surprises and a chronic habit of standing cliché on its head. Agnieszka is not quite sure of herself and yet she is going to have to make it anyhow, through perils both natural and magical.

JUNETEENTH, 1809

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE GEORGIA SECESSION

by Jack Lourens

(2015; Jack Lourens Publication; \$3.99)

Sequel to

1809: The Year They Freed the Slaves

They got out at the Replica Jefferson Memorial, walked into the rotunda, and felt the same hushed awe that millions have felt when looking at that giant wise figure. . . . Leda whispered, “This place always gets me — it’s like a haunted church. You know who he is? He founded America. Ancient history is *awesome*.”

“He did something else.”

“What?”

“He freed slaves.”

— Not from *Citizen of the Galaxy*

The concept is fascinating: What If Thomas Jefferson had freed the slaves in 1809? One can question the practicability or the plausibility of the matter and still be interested in the change in America’s fate generated by such a decision.

But such a change has ramifications and results. There was always the comment that Calvin Morrison quoted: “And rioting in Kyblos; the emancipated slaves were beginning to see what Samuel Johnson had meant when

he defined freedom as the choice of working or starving.” And the former masters might have had something to say, too.

Not to mention that the world does not end at America’s borders . . .

Charles Rutherford is a man in Buckley Flashman’s mold, a rakehell, dissolute, spendthrift, but resolute and daring. Which is why H.M. Government, worried about the Brother Jonathans deciding to purloin the Canadas while they are fighting Boney, lights on him as a deep-penetration agent. Pursued by debt collectors and outraged fathers, Charles accepts, and is dispatched to Georgia to stir up division among the American States.

Georgia society is quite accepting, and there is a certain annoyance at the disconnect between their voters and the government in this new Washington City. The agent’s blandishments fall on welcome ears.

Meanwhile, the War Hawks agitate for the liberation of the Canadas from the iron heel of King George, the Royal Navy keeps on recruiting from American ships, and so on. But America may not be united for this war.

George finds happiness among his new neighbor(s); his assistant less so. It looks as if Georgia is about to create a confederated states of secession . . .

The idea is interesting, but there are too many grating changes in British organization and too much reliance on conspiracies. It seems almost Stalinist that so many people in the upper reaches of the government of the new country are so eager to end its independence.

For a portrayal of the days of a slightly different Young America, this is an interesting read. It looks like the Feds are going to have even more trouble in this time-line’s war of 1812 when the story is . . . **To Be Continued.**

NOT JULIAN BUT JULIUS

Review by Joseph T Major of

CAESAR ASCENDING: The Invasion of Parthia

by R. W. Peake

(2015; R. W. Peake;

ISBN 978-1941226148; \$20.99;

Amazon Digital Services; \$4.61)

Caesar dixit: Idibus Martiis
dévenerint.

Spurinna dixit: Immo Caesaris non
profectus.

Well, so much for there being a shortage of Roman AH. Peake is author of a number of novels about Caesar’s campaigns. Evidently he decided to take a flyer into additional ones, and there was only one way to do it: have Caesar listen to Spurinna the haruspex and not go to the Theater of Pompeius that day.

Having learned of the disaffection of M. Iunius Brutus, C. Cassius Longinus, and the rest of the gang, Caesar makes a few shifts. Like, taking Cassius out east with him, making Antonius Master of the Horse and the man in charge in Rome, and having only a few minor

figures punished. That done, he moves up the campaign.

On the footsoldier front, we have a number of recurring characters from the “historical” novels participating, including the *primus pilus* of *legio X Equestris*, one Titus Pullus. That’s “**Pullus**”, not “**Pullo**.”) And so they plunge into Parthia.

The Parthians figure they’ll repeat history,. However, Caesar has become professional, unlike M. Licinus Crassus Dives, and he outfights the Parthians in the field, following it up with a siege of Cteisphon. Which turns out to have its own nastinesses as when the Romans discover the properties of naptha the hard way.

Meanwhile, there is much court intrigue in the Parthian court, as one prince dies in battle, his father abdicates, and then also abruptly dies. Which could make the Parthians somewhat suspicious.

And then, we’ll find out what happens when this is . . . **Continuandum.**

ANOTHER UNMENTIONABLE SEA MAMMAL

Review by Joseph T Major of

SEALION

by Steve Barrett

(2015; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

The point of departure is that after the fall of Poland Hitler has one of his strokes of Indomitable Will and appoints a Director of Combined Operations in the OKW. The man in question is a bureaucrat who until last year had been a civilian and now is abruptly promoted from Major to General.

He has a staff of one; a malicious secretary whose principal occupation is reporting on him to the Gestapo. He starts investigating landing craft.

Somehow this inquiry immensely increases the efficiency of the *Kriegsmarine* and *Luftwaffe*. The Germans win the Norwegian Campaign handily, with only light damage to the cruiser *Blücher*, while the Royal Navy is battered. Then, the *Luftwaffe* prevents the evacuation from Dunkirk.

And then . . . I couldn’t go on.



WE WERE HAND IN HAND

Review by Joseph T Major of

OUT OF TIME

by Michael Stewart

(2015; Bookworm Publishing; Priceless)

James Cunnion is at two with technology, which makes him not quite the ideal person for working at a library these days. But he perseveres, for he enjoys seeing the remaining old buildings of Bedford.

His marginal life begins to come apart when he finds a note addressed to him in a book that hasn’t been opened in seventy years, since during the Second World War. The disintegration continues apace when he thinks about calling Mum and Dad, only to discover that not only doesn’t their telephone number exist, the street they live on doesn’t!

Then he finds out why he gets ill whenever he goes into the storeroom at the library. Next thing he knows, he’s still in Bedford, but it’s December, 1944, seventy-one years earlier — and he’s a decorated RAF officer in 617 Squadron, no less. And flying a mission day after tomorrow. If he only could remember how to fly.

Particularly when his next mission involves a bit of double-dipping. Before dropping another of Barnes Wallis’s innovative additions to the conventional arsenal on some hapless Jerry fortification, his plane has to drop off a couple of SOE agents, into the Netherlands. (This is post *Fall NORDPOL* and the SOE needs to rebuild there.) All this goes well until the bomber gets shot up, and after all the other crew get out, Cunnion has to ride it down into the Channel. Fortunately he was there in a life raft when an aborting mission managed to score an “own goal”. He rescues the sole survivor and recognizes him!

Unfortunately, they are rescued by the Germans, and fall into the hands of a Gestapo officer who is dutifully obeying Goebbels’s orders about what to do about *Terrorflieger*. However, the man was too Germanically precise and repetitive . . .

When it is all over much to his amazement, Cunnion finds out about himself and why all this is going on, and gets a new job offer. Something quite surprising even though it’s lacking call boxes.

(OBAristo: Oddly enough, Woburn Abbey, the residence of the Dukes of Bedford, is in Bedfordshire, not far from Bedford.)

YOU CAN’T TRUST ANYONE

Review by Joseph T Major of

STEALING TRINITY

by Ward Larsen

(2008; Oceanview Publishing;

ISBN 978-1-933515-17-5; \$15.00;

Amazon Digital Services; \$9.99)

One afternoon, as the project was winding down, one of the teachers at the Manhattan

Project university-level teaching institution invited one of his top students to meet a couple of other scientists working on the enormous project. For some reason, one of the mechanics from the shop crashed the party, and a contractor who had helped build the place came back to check on his work.

If this had happened, and the police had arrested Klaus Fuchs [CHARLES], Alan Nunn May [PRIMROSE], Bruno Pontecorvo [HURON], Theodore Allen "Teddy" Hall [YOUTH], David Greenglass [CALIBER], and Russell W. McNutt [PERSEUS] much grief would have been averted. However, at the time, the security agencies were more concerned about Nazi spies in the Project. Of which, apparently there were none. But what if they had?



Our story begins when, in the dying days of the Reich, three mid-level intelligence officers meet and work out a plan to send an agent to the U.S. who will actually work out; Alexander Braun (né Brown), a crack sniper from the Russian Front who was actually born and raised in the U.S.A., and is reliable, thus unlikely to funk out like those Arschlochen of Operation PASTORIUS. He is to travel to the U.S. and meet with a German physicist working on that project who has been accumulating data, get him and his material out of the country, and head to the refuge in Argentina where they can start working for the Third Reich, Second Version.

Major Michael Thatcher, a British interrogator of German prisoners, finds out from one that something suspicious is happening regarding something called "Manhattan Project". He doesn't seem to think it's important until some American officers rush in and order him to get cracking on the details. Alexander Braun, it turns out, went off on U-801 — which it turns out surrendered off the coast of Massachusetts. (In the real world, whatever that is, U-801 was scuttled after being attacked by an American escort carrier group off the Cape Verde Islands on March 17, 1944.)

And so we have the parallel courses of Alexander Braun and Michael Thatcher across the U.S., one in search of the other and the other in search of a bonanza. They have their past lives to deal with; Braun as "Alex Brown", as he had been at Harvard, using an old connection to live well while he prepares,

Thatcher struggling with his hard life since his wife was killed in a bombing raid (something like Captain Shepard of *Sink the Bismarck!*) and his struggle to do something, first at his RAF assignment and then after his wounding his transfer to the Army. Which last doesn't quite prepare him for some enthusiastic counterintelligence work,

Braun is still ruthless, and he gets across the country leaving a trail of corpses. Thatcher gets caught between his duty and the American desire to get the job done themselves and have all interfering Limeys pushed aside. And then, there is Lydia Cole, Alex Brown's old friend, new lover, and enraged dupe.

Money and connections can almost make up for ruthlessness, but both will do in getting spy and pursuers out to the island of Tinian, where a confrontation has potentials for some very bad results. . .

RULE BRITANNIA

Review by Joseph T Major of

A YEAR OF RAVENS:

A Novel of Boudica's Rebellion

by E. Knight [Eliza Knight], Ruth Downie, Stephanie Dray, Russell Whitfield, S. J. A. Turney, Kate Quinn, and Vicky Alvear Shecter

(2015; CreateSpace;

ISBN 978-1517635411; \$17.99;

Amazon Digital Services \$4.99)

The idea of a multi-threaded multi-author work had its inviting features. The introduction to the very first **Thieves' World**™ work put before the reader the idea of a small village where the great heroes of sword and sorcery could encounter each other and much of interest would result.

The concept spread. Several of the writers who stuck with the series (a lot didn't) ended up in other similar ones such as **Heroes In Hell**™, **Merovingen Nights**™, **Liavek**™, and so on. Yet somehow it never seemed to work.

The big problem, it seemed to me, was that none of the stories could really resolve anything. The plot was set by the editor, and the authors could only have their characters perform their fixed antics. This led to a sort of strange character inflation, where each character grew more powerful while remaining ineffective. At least these were the main complaints about **Thieves' World**™.

Then, when the authors tried to leave the setting, the results were less than positive. To read *Lythande* by Marion Zimmer Bradley (1986), *Shadow's Pawn* by Andy Offutt (1980), and worst of all, *Jamie the Red* by Roland Green and Gordon R. Dickson (1984) was to find oneself in three different worlds. (And Dickson had done something; it seems, after *Jamie the Red* was published, "**Thieves' World**™" was trademarked and the book was cited as Not Official, Not Canon.)

The other series had their own issues, such as the conflict with Mercedes Lackey rewriting her **Merovingen Nights**™ stories for her *Heirs*

of *Alexandria* series — including characters and situations created by other contributors to the series.

So this work might be under a shadow. The contributors are a diverse lot, including romance writers such as Knight, Roman Milfic writers such as Turney, and others, such as Ruth Downie, author of the *Medicus* series. Perhaps setting it in a specific historical setting and limiting it to one volume kept the continuity and character-inflation problems from getting out of hand.

Thus, we have what Bob Asprin offered us, but couldn't quite deliver, for **Thieves' World**™; a complex story seen from a variety of perspectives. They range from the fictional — a druid-candidate who abruptly becomes the last, a daughter of Pratsugas (but not Boudica), a new soldier in the ranks — to the known-but-not-very, such as Boudica's younger daughter or Catus Decianus's wife — to the known, such as Cn. Julius Agricola, the later victor of Mons Graupius, or Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes.

The varied perspectives of the rebellion show how brutal and cruel war can be. At that they left out some of the more grisly bits, like what happened to the Roman women who were captured by the Britons. A spoiler; a lot of the protagonists don't make it, and one even vanishes. Try to find this.

MEMOIRS OF A MANGY OUTSIDER

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE OUTSIDER:

My Life In Intrigue

by Frederick Forsyth, CBE

(2015; G. P. Putnam's Sons;

ISBN 978-0399176074; \$28.00
Penguin Group (Kindle); \$13.99)

To write an autobiography of Groucho Marx would be as asinine as to read an autobiography of Groucho Marx. He can no more be put on paper than Lawrence of Arabia, garbed in his burnoose and turban, can be pulled out of the hot sands of the Middle East and set down in bald print.

— *Memoirs of a Mangy Lover*, Page 213

It seems questionable that the mousy little truck driver who drove the bomb into the King David Hotel would spontaneously confess the whole affair to a Gentile who happened to pass by. Or that a simple mention of Guinea-Bissau in chat while a coup was going on there would get Mrs. Forsyth's computer locked up by a NSA virus.

In this collection of some sixty stories from a successful thriller writer's career, Forsyth tells the good and the bad, the credible and the fantastic, with the same panache and detail that one would expect from reading his fiction.

Or his nonfiction. His career really began, so to speak, when he went to Africa as a journalist and found himself reporting on the

doomed existence of the breakaway Republic of Biafra. The most horrific portion of the story was the slow starvation of the inhabitants of the country, as the war ground on far beyond the ability of the combatants to win or lose. Forsyth even has a man to blame for it.

From the way he describes his researches, he tried to go through all the experiences his protagonists did. This gained him, for example, an utter revulsion at the beliefs of and believers in Nazism, which may have made *The Odessa File* (1972) particularly credible. (Also, Simon Wiesenthal had previously confirmed Forsyth's story of their encounter.)

As for *The Dogs of War* (1974), it seems he did not actually try to overthrow the government of Equatorial Guinea, as reported. Or so he says. He certainly did the legwork, he knew people with the skills, and his description of the appalling cruelty and massive paranoia of Francisco Macias Nguema, the president of Equatorial Guinea, made it seem certainly possible, and surely the results would have been better for the people there.

And, when they were doing the movie version of *The Day of the Jackal* (1973; book 1971), he took Edward Fox, who played the title character, to a tavern in Paris to meet a man who may well have been a professional hit man. Not surprisingly, the neighborhood was full of streetwalkers, who commented avidly while Fox did his research. Many years later, Forsyth and Fox were at a party, and Fox asked what the women had been saying. They had been offering freebies to *l'acteur hollywoodien*. Fox thought for a moment and then said, "I don't suppose there is any point in going back?"

One is entitled to believe or not anything Forsyth says. Such as his story about being a courier for an anonymous organisation known only as "The Firm", taking a package out of East Germany. His description makes it more trivial than shoot-em-up, so there even may be some truth in it.

Since these are confined to his doings, and those he directly dealt with, there are some matters that come to mind that the reader might wish he had commented on. His opinion of Tom Clancy, for example.

Whether or not you believe all the things here, they are enthralling stories, told by a master of such, and will keep your interest and show you how to write.

So, dear reader, though they lived worlds apart and though I am no seer, nor a prophet of any moment, I predict that some day these two will meet; perhaps on some other planet, perhaps on some mountain top, perhaps riding a monsoon on high over the skies of the Indian Ocean.

These are men to give one pause.

— *Memoirs of a Mangy Lover*, Page 214

Commentary by Lisa Major on
Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens

We went to see *Star Wars the Force Awakens* on New Year's Day. It was quite entertaining. Disney does not seem to be making the mistake the Star Trek people made in not bringing along new characters. Disney went back to the roots of Star Wars and made something very like the first movie two young girls whined, begged and pleaded until they got their parents to take them to see it thirty-nine years ago. It has its dark elements. I don't think I can say any more without plot spoilers. It remains to be seen where Disney will take *Star Wars* next.

LOSCON 42

Con Report by Robert S. Kennedy

Thanksgiving afternoon I drove down to the LAX Marriott as usual. I didn't notice the time that I left home. But, the distance is about 50 miles and I would estimate that it took about an hour and ten minutes. Thanksgiving dinner was had at the hotel. It was quite good. But too much food and a lot of it was wasted. After eating I went down stairs and obtained my badge, the program book, and the Pocket Program. Then it was to my room to read for a while and to bed. The book being read was not SF. It was *Empire Rising* by Rick Campbell (2015). It is highly recommended as is his first book *The Trident Deception* (2014). He is a retired Navy Commander having served on submarines. I emailed Rick to let him know how much I enjoyed *Empire Rising* among other comments. Part of his response follows: "It's great to hear you love Science Fiction - that's my first love as well, and once I get around 10 of these military thrillers out, I plan to convince my publisher to let me write a 5-book military science fiction series, set about 5 centuries in the future. If we're still in touch then, I'll let you know about them and you can see if they look interesting." Since I am 82 it is highly unlikely that I'll still be around for his Science fiction novels. But, I'll continue to read his military thrillers.

Friday morning it was the breakfast buffet. This year they did not have Eggs Benedict as they did last year. However, being that I am such a nice person they made them for me anyway. Programs started at 11:30 am and the first one I went to was "Virtual Reality: Making an Unreal Life". I got to the room early and the only other person there was Larry Niven. I introduced myself and reminded him that we had met at the Burbank airport and traveled on the same planes to SASQUAN. All I received from Larry was a blank stare. At 1:00 pm was "Alien Colonialism: Culture, Race, and Religion in the Face of Invasion" with the panel consisting of Jerry Pournelle, Gregg Castro, Harry Turtledove, and Larry Niven. As far as I am concerned that was the best panel of the convention. 2:30 pm saw "How to Use Research to Enrich Your Novel, or When to Let Your Imagination Rule the Page" where again appeared Harry Turtledove.

4:00 pm it was "Writing in the Anthropocene: SF and the Challenge of Climate Change" with panelists Jerry Pournelle and Keith Henson. Other than one member of the audience who loudly proclaimed it meant the end of the world the discussion was quite subdued and rational. Then it was dinner followed by the always wonderful Ice Cream Social. They again had two tubs of Chocolate Chip and I not only had a first serving, but went back twice for more. Since there did not appear to be any entertainment scheduled it was back to my room to read for a while and to bed.

Saturday the first program attended was "Robots at Work" and there was Jerry Pournelle again. Next was "Why are there No Aliens" which basically involved the Fermi Question, why haven't we met any aliens, or is life even more rare than we thought? After lunch it was the Dealers Room and the Art Show. I bid on two items losing one and obtaining the second. Then it was "The future of the Driverless Car" which again saw Jerry Pournelle. The last program attended was "Writing THEN & NOW: Masters of Speculative Fiction" with the panelists being Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, Barbara Hamby, and John DeChancie. An excellent panel. It was then about 7:00 pm so it was off to dinner then my room for the usual. I skipped the Masquerade.



Sunday the first panel was "YA: No Swearing, Violence, Sex or Drugs". Among the panelists were David Gerrold and again Harry Turtledove. Next was "Message Fiction: Depicting Religion in Science Fiction" with Isabel Schechter, Ayana Jamieson, Harry Turtledove (again), and Fr. John Blaker. The last panel attended was at 1:00 pm and was "Will the Martian Spur Humans To Go To Mars?" Not having seen the movie this panel spurred me to go see it after returning home. The movie is outstanding and I highly recommend it. Hopefully it will be nominated

for and win a HUGO.

I had a very enjoyable time as usual and on Saturday had signed up for 2016. But, now it was about 2:30 pm and time to go home. The drive took about one hour and five minutes. After unpacking it was off to the Lure Fish House for and excellent swordfish dinner.

Oh, by the way, on two different panels Harry Turtledove said that years ago people of my generation and my parents were bigots and racists (or something like that). Both times I loudly denied his charge. Harry really pissed me off.

Hispacon XXXIII / GRXcon
The 33rd Spanish national science fiction convention
October 30 to November 1 in Granada
Reported by Sue Burke

Friday, October 30 Madrid - Granada

My husband and I departed from Madrid on a high-speed train from a station near our home at 9:35 a.m.; 2 hours and 20 minutes later, we had traveled 495km/307miles (at an average speed of 212kph/131mph) and arrived at Antiquera Santa Ana station in Andalusia. Then we had to get off the train. Construction on the high-speed tracks from there to Granada were almost but not quite complete, so we were efficiently ushered onto a bus, which took us to the Granada train station 128km/80miles away in 1 hour and 15 minutes (at an average speed of 102kph/64mph). The highway, at times alongside the almost-finished tracks, took us through the foothills of the snow-peaked Sierra Nevada mountains. Lines of evenly-spaced olive trees covered the hills like polka-dots on the ruffles of a flamenco dress.

From the train station, we could see the Alhambra perched on a hill overlooking the city. We took a short taxi ride in the opposite direction to our hotel, ate lunch, and then hiked 1 kilometer/.6 mile to the Caja Granada Cultural Center, a new modern concrete and stone building located amid museums in a park. We knew before we arrived this would be a smallish convention. Although Granada's beauty and historic sites attract tourists and American students on their semester abroad, its location in far southern Spain is a bit off the beaten path. About 60 people had registered, although somewhat more attended because, as a condition of using the cultural center for free, all events were open to the public.

At the opening ceremony, guest of honor Miquel Barceló, a leading editor, author, and translator, talked about the importance of Hispacons. He told how Harry Harrison and other authors at a Worldcon convinced him that an annual Hispacon would serve "as a reference point." At that time Hispacons were being held sporadically, so he and some other fans and writers decided to renew Spain's national convention, which has been held annually since 1991.

From there I went to a talk on science fiction as ideology. The presenter said science fiction, as popular culture, has been dismissed by Marxists, modernists, and post-modernists as something less than art because it does not criticize society, an idea he easily demolished.

Following that, another talk discussed real-life fantasy in Granada, including all the movies filmed there pretending it was Cuba, Baghdad, or the American West, and the different cities impersonated by its train station, and all the different films that featured the same picturesque street corner.

By then it was 7 p.m. and the cultural center had to close – far too early, we all agreed, but we were using its facilities for free, after all.



Saturday, October 31, Halloween Granada

Our hotel came with a breakfast buffet that turned out to offer the best of British, Spanish, and American foods: fried and scrambled eggs, churros, broiled tomatoes, bacon, croissants, a variety of cereal, cheeses, fruit, sausages, yogurt, jamón, baked beans, tumaca, lots of kinds of bread, sweet rolls, coffee, juice, cake, and more, and I ate enough to fuel me for most of the day.

Welcome packs were handed out Saturday morning: three books, a chapbook, and other gifts – but we all got different books, so we engaged in multi-party trading. The sales area was also fully up and running in a hall outside the main meeting rooms: seven tables hosted nine vendors selling books and fan-related material.

Spain is enjoying an explosion of new writers in addition to established authors, so most of the weekend's 40 sessions presented new novels, anthologies, books, and magazines. Other sessions on Saturday dealt with topics including superhero movies, 1980s videogames, short videos, and why politicians should read science fiction. Three or four sessions were held at the same time.

Fans of the classic Spanish science fiction novel series *The Aznar Saga* held their annual convention-within-the-convention on Saturday, the Aznarcon. Their sessions examined the saga's treatment of utopias and distopias, and its use of exoplanets.

American diplomat and writer Washington

Irving, who lived in the Alhambra in 1829 and wrote *Tales of the Alhambra*, was GRXcon's ghost of honor, so I organized a dramatic reading of a translation of his spooky short story "Sleepy Hollow" on Saturday. The audience was rapt, and then we discussed how the story differed from its movie and television versions, as well as the legacy of Irving in Granada.

All too soon, it was 7 p.m. again, and we dispersed, only to regroup at a nearby hotel at 9:30 p.m. for the awards dinner. We feasted on leek and salt cod cream soup with black olive crackers; veal steaks with boletus mushroom sauce and potato cakes; and white chocolate cream with red berry compote for dessert – and a different wine (and plenty of it) for each course.

Although there had been no cosplay during the convention, a couple came to the dinner dressed as Doña Ines (a nun) and Don Juan (the legendary seducer) from José Zorrilla's play *Don Juan Tenorio*, romantic-era theater traditionally presented on All Saint's Day, Nov. 1. I sat at a table with some other translators, and we talked shop.

Finally the Ignotus awards were presented by Hispacon's sponsor, the Spanish Association for Fantasy Science Fiction, and Horror (AEFCFT in its Spanish initials). The winners were:

Novel: *El mapa del caos* (The Map of Chaos), by Félix J. Palma, the conclusion of his Victorian trilogy. The novels are available in English.

Novella: "Los centinelas del tiempo" (The Sentinels of Time), by Javier Negrete

Short story: "Casas rojas" (Red Houses), by Nieves Delgado. I am translating that story for the *Spanish Women of Wonder* anthology, to be published in November 2016.

Anthology: *Terra Nova 3*, edited by Mariano Villarreal

Article: "20 autores de relatos de ciencia ficción que deberías estar leyendo" (20 science fiction short-story authors you should be reading), by Elías F. Combarro

Illustration: Cover for *Retrofuturismos*, by Alejandro Colucci

Audiovisual production: Los VerdHugos (podcast), by Miquel Codony, Elías Combarro, Josep Maria Oriol, Leticia Lara and Pedro Román

(<http://verdugos.blogspot.com.es>)

Magazine: *Scifiworld*

(<http://www.scifiworld.es>)

Foreign novel: *El marciano* (The Martian), by Andy Weir

Foreign short story: "El jugador" (The Gambler), by Paolo Bacigalupi

Website: La Tercera Fundación (The Third Foundation)

(<http://www.tercerafundacion.net>)

Due to insufficient nominations, no awards were presented for comics, poetry, or non-fiction.

The Domingo Santos Award, a juried prize for the best unpublished short story, went to

“El otro niño” (The Other Child), by Eduardo Delgado Zahino

The executive board of AEFCFT presented the Gabriel Award for significant and valuable contributions to the world of speculative fiction to Francisco Torres Oliver and his brother-in-law Rafael Llopis for their translations and other efforts that brought the Cthulhu myths to Spain in 1969.

By then, it was sometime after midnight, and while some people went out on the town, I had enjoyed a lot of wine, and my husband and I went to our room to sleep soundly.

Sunday, November 1, All Saint's Day Granada - Madrid

On Sunday morning, AEFCFT held its annual meeting, and among other business, it approved the coming year's editors for its two annual anthologies, *Visiones* and *Fabricantes de Sueños*. This year's *Visiones* includes an award-winning story from the Italian science fiction association RiLL. The two associations have agreed to exchange stories for their anthologies, and AEFCFT hopes to organize similar exchanges with other countries.

AEFCFT also continued to tweak the rules for the Ignottus awards, which are somewhat like the Hugos. And like the Hugos, the Ignottus awards have an ongoing controversy, but a quite different one: not enough people vote. For a popular award, “you should have the biggest, highest, and strongest representation possible” from all fans, said Antonio Navarro, president of AEFCFT.

To do that, AEFCFT has made a series of changes over the years to encourage more participation. In the past, only association members were allowed to vote, but now anyone can register to vote, including non-Spaniards, and the previous year's voters are automatically carried over. Participation is free. The nomination phase is finished before the summer holidays to give voters time to read the works. This year, a web page for voting was instituted. In coming years, AEFCFT hopes to organize a free or low-cost electronic-format voter's packet of the nominated works.

A key element of expanding award participation, Navarro said, has involved getting the word out to potential voters through official channels, media, and social networks, and “being insistent and repetitive, even annoying, with voters and potential voters” at every stage of the process. So far, participation has doubled.

The sites for coming Hispacons were also set: 2016 in Barcelona, 2017 in Valladolid, and 2018 possibly in Murcia.

The 2016 Hispacon will coincide with the Eurocon on Nov. 4, 5, and 6: the first Eurocon in Spain. In a session during GRXcon, organizers reported that it will feature tracks in English, Spanish, and Catalan; films; and tours of the city focused on George Orwell, Don Quixote, dragons, or the city's legendary bookstores. Attendance will be capped at 800, and 400 people have already signed up. More information is at www.eurocon2016.org

As Miquel Barceló said, an annual Hispacon is essential as a reference point, and this Hispacon fulfilled its duties, but it looked forward to 2016. Spanish fandom is excited about the Eurocon.

On Sunday afternoon and evening, after the convention ended, a guided tour explored the most mysterious locations of Granada, with stops to satisfy hunger and thirst. But my husband and I needed to catch a train, so instead we took a city bus to the historic city center and admired the cathedral and other baroque architecture, wandered through the old silk market's tiny stalls and shops, enjoyed a snack, and bought a few trinkets.

Then we hiked back to our hotel, picked up our suitcases, caught a taxi, boarded a bus at the train station, and were on our way home. A thunderstorm deluged the Antiquera train station as we transferred to the high-speed train, which outran the rain and arrived in Madrid at 11 p.m. We were home and sleeping before the storm struck Madrid.

WORLDCON BIDS

2017 NASFiC

San Juan, Puerto Rico
<http://www.sanjuan2017.org/>

2018

New Orleans
<http://neworleansin2018.org>

San José

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

2019

Dublin
<http://dublin2019.com/>

2020

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

2021

Dallas/Fort Worth

2022

Chicago
Doha, Qatar

2023

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

2025

Perth, Australia



OF COURSE MY
WIFE'S DEATH
BROUGHT ME
FACE TO FACE
WITH MY OWN
MORTALITY

SHE DIED A WEEK BEFORE THE
NEW DOCTOR WHO SEASON
STARTED LAST YEAR. IT MADE
ME REALIZE THAT ONE DAY
THERE'LL BE DOCTOR WHO
WITHOUT ME DRAWING
CARTOONS ABOUT IT.

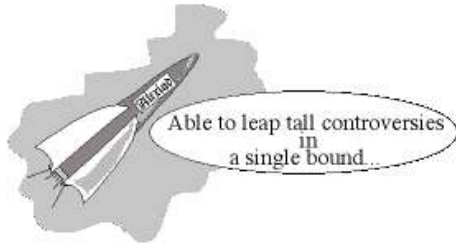
THIS OFFENDS ME



<http://arthurkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

© PAUL GADZIKOWSKI 7/31/15

Letters, we get letters



To the Gold Standard people:
Could you please take your
discussion private? Thanks.

From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** Nov. 10, 2015
Ste. Julie, Quebec, CANADA
cathyp1@sympatico.ca
<http://www.monsffa.com/>

Thanks for *Alexiad*, always enjoy reading it. Interesting to read a con report from the point of view of a dealer. They do seem to experience a different con.

I'm not so much into naval battles anymore, but one of my friends is almost obsessive about war ships. He recently took a holiday into the States specifically so he could visit ships. © Hundred of photos! My eyes were starting to glaze over, LOL. I sent him the *Alexiad*, I'm sure he'll enjoy it.

From: **Joy V. Smith** November 10, 2015
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL
33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

Thanks for a newsletter crammed full of interesting reviews, con reports, and LOCs. I especially enjoyed your thorough review of *Sink the Bismarck!* I saw the movie years ago — and I remember the song. But I was especially pleased to see how accurate the movie was. (I am so used to avoiding movies from Hollywood or checking out the facts on them.) The movie and your background was a fantastic history lesson. Thank you!

From: **Milt Stevens** November 12, 2015
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley,
CA 93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* #83, Joseph mentions he feels isolated in regard to science fiction. I feel some misgivings about the current state of science fiction and fandom, but isolation doesn't exactly describe how I feel. I've described how I go about finding new reading matter. I always find some excellent science fiction in any given year, and there are lots of things from previous years to read. I never thought of it before, but my slower reading

rate is an advantage of sorts. I don't run out of material as rapidly.

I don't object to science fiction with a message. I'm not pleased when the message is all there is. A writer should think about things before he puts them on paper. I may not exactly be sure as to what art is, but I'm sure it is more than simple regurgitation.

Most of what bothers me about fandom is located in internet fandom. I'm bothered that I can't communicate with these people. The almost universal use of monikers makes internet writers seem unreal. Maybe the use of monikers indicates that whoever or whatever is writing the comments really doesn't want to communicate. Communication isn't the only reason we use language. At the most basic level, we use language to remind the universe that we exist.

I wonder if the internet promotes solipsism. Maybe I'm alone in a computer at the end of the universe. Maybe all the comments other than mine are produced by the Great Green Frog who lives on the other side of the moon. I suppose that would mean that the Great Green Frog is schizo. It's not surprising that he only gets mentioned in totally silly discussions. That would be enough to unhinge even the most balanced of entities.

Remember that serial in *Science Fiction Five Yearly* about the guy who thought he was taking part in fanzine fandom but was actually on the moon, being experimented on by aliens?

— JTM

Leigh Kimmel's con report on Sasquan made me realize I am already forgetting some of the details after just a few months. It took me a couple of minutes to remember where the con suite had been. It was in a bunch of small rooms with different dietary restrictions for each room. On thinking about it, that sounds like something that ought to be in a nightmare of some sort.

I've never understood collecting autographed books. I've known some writers quite well, some well enough to speak to, and some not at all. An autograph doesn't change that in the slightest.

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Nov. 17, 2015
Post Office Box 5323, Oracle, AZ
85623-5323 USA
laurraine@mac.com
<http://www.weasner.com/>

With regard to Murray Moore's LoC, we subscribe to DirecTV; because they compress their signals least of all the cable and satellite TV services. Because of the terrain where we live, there is really no reception unless we ran an antenna up several hundred feet.

It was like that in Frankfort.
We lived in the river valley and

the *only* way to get TV was with cable. They could pick up signals from Louisville, Lexington, and Cincinnati. If a show was pre-empted for a ball game, no problem, you could watch it on another channel. And there was even a weather channel; a camera panning back and forth across a line of gauges.

— JTM

From: **Rod E. Smith** November 17, 2015
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA
stickmaker@usa.net

Read and enjoyed the latest issue. Things are fine here for the most part, except that my back yard is a muddy mess due to ongoing sanitary sewer upgrades. (The storm sewers have their turn next year.)

Lisa: You're still a youngster at 53 (and no wonder you didn't know about "Istanbul, Not Constantinople." ;-)) I turned 60 last October 29. © (Tried to get my Mother to wait two days so I could be born on Hallowe'en, but noooo... At least I was born on a full Moon.) I like to tell folks I was born the same year James Dean and Albert Einstein died and Disneyland opened.

Joe: Was both surprised and saddened to read about your court loss. Good luck with the appeal.

Not much to say about the zine except for a comment about the sinking of the *Bismarck*. There is a pre-Internet meme that the Fairey Swordfish torpedo biplanes weren't shot down because they flew too slow for the anti-aircraft guns to track. This is nonsense. The real reason was that they flew too *low*. They came in at wavetop height, and the guns couldn't depress far enough to aim at them once they passed a certain distance.

Oh, and I did appreciate all the background information on the movie and those who made it.

One mild criticism about this issue: I noticed several odd typographical errors.

Not much happening in getting published since last time. DAW just rejected a novel and I'm waiting for news from Angry Robot about another. Have a short novella at *Analogue*. Really need to send a couple of other short stories out to new markets, and also complete a couple in progress, as well as work on the next novel.

Good luck, and looking forward to the next issue.

From: **John G. Hemry** November 23, 2015

Another excellent issue. Thank you for the work you put into *Alexiad*.

Nice overview of *Sink the Bismarck!*. One of the things I got out of Baron von Mullenheim-Rechberg's *Battleship Bismarck* was finally comparing the range that *HMS Hood* was destroyed at with the ranges at which the British battle cruisers were blown up at

Jutland. Pretty much the same. The conventional narrative is that at Jutland the British battle cruisers were doomed by a design flaw that allowed a hit to a turret to flash down into the magazine. But *Hood* had the modification to prevent that. What the encounters had in common was that the ships were engaging at a range far enough for naval gunfire (normally firing on a fairly flat trajectory) to become plunging fire, striking down through the deck. Since decks on battle cruisers lacked meaningful armor, plunging fire could penetrate to magazines with very bad results. (Even battleships were built with armor primarily aimed at taking flat trajectory hits, which was why a bomb dropped on the USS *Arizona* could penetrate to her forward magazine.) What hadn't been learned since WW I was that battle cruisers were not battleships and should not be employed just like battleships when fighting battleships. But since they looked like battleships and were armed like battleships...

As I pointed out there were veterans then who knew the score. Even one who was there, and was acting in the film, too — Esmond Knight.

Which leads into the other common narrative, that experiences in both world wars thoroughly discredited the "battle cruiser model" of unarmored, heavily armed warships depending on speed, so no one built battle cruisers after WW II. The only problem with that common narrative is that (with the sole exception of the Sverdlov light cruisers built by the USSR in the early 1950s) every warship built since the end of WW II has employed the battle cruiser model. Armored belts, armored citadels, armored anything went away to the extent that it is now physically impossible to construct a heavily-armored warship because the skills and tricks needed to weld such thick armor have been lost as the workers with those skills died. I suspect the reasons for the abandonment of armor were (1) Nuclear Weapons Had Changed Everything (except that they hadn't), (2) the carrier Navy was running things and they didn't want resources wasted on armor or non-carrier surface ships that could be spent on aircraft, and (3) it was a lot cheaper to build all warships without armor.

The true lesson of the battle cruisers (and battleships sunk by aircraft) was an old and universal lesson, that any weapon system will fail if it is not employed properly. Carriers also get sunk if sent out without enough air cover and surface escorts. Roman legions shouldn't ignore their flanks (Cannae) or get into death grapples in dense forest (Teutoburgerwald) or march into deserts controlled by enemy cavalry (Carrhae). Yet look how many times similar mistakes have been made since Rome fell. We change the

tools, but the basic lessons don't change. Nor do the mistakes. And so time and time again people die because their leaders have decided that because of X "everything has changed" and the old rules no longer apply, or at least don't apply to them.

Speaking of old rules, I think they matter in writing, Story matters. Characters matter. It's all about the reader, not the writer. What someone is matters far less than Who they are. And Adventure Is Out There! I am currently working with Titan on a *Lost Fleet* comic series in which I write the stories and approve the art. Yes, hard SF comics! How cool is that? This is the sort of experience that pegs the geek meter. (Alas that the expression "pegs the meter" is now obsolete. Is there a good substitute?)

You might let Lisa know about one of my real life experiences at what was then NIS (they added the "Criminal" later to limit what the organization saw as its scope of action, which was a shame in one way, because prior to that when we entered across the rug in the front of the building it said NIS but when we left walking over that same rug it read SIN which sort of seemed like a directive). While I was checking in with a senior supervisor, he kept talking exactly like Sergeant Joe Friday. I kept waiting for him to smile and admit to the act. But it wasn't an act. TV and reality had merged.

I just happened to read an article about a problem Billy Dee Williams had. People would approach him in public and berate him for having betrayed Han Solo.

—JTM



From: **Lloyd Penney** November 27, 2015
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON
M9C 2B2 CANADA
penneys@bell.net
<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Many thanks for *Alexiad* WN 83. It's Friday, and I am at home...once again, as said last loc, I am job hunting. At least, I take Fridays off from the hunt, and take some time to write a few letters.

These days, it is difficult to meet and befriend total strangers. You never know what hidden agendas are behind those faces. It is also

difficult to simply give charity. Our generosity has always been on standby, ready to give, and it will be given quite a test, with 25,000 Syrian refugees coming to Canada. We know why they're coming, and we welcome them. With Christmas nearly here, and thousands of people being laid off by rich companies, can we be generous to the refugees when so many of us can't even be generous to ourselves? I hope we can accomplish all we want to do, for ourselves and for the refugees, without financial pain and regret.

As we carry on in what's left of our fandom, I am entering my late 50s, and Yvonne her early 60s. Much of what we liked about our first 20 years of fandom are largely gone, replaced by younger generations who like Doctor Who, anime, comics, gaming and cosplay. We have tried to keep busy with forays into steampunk and the young fandom around *Murdoch Mysteries*, and we've been successful. Yet, I am sure that fandom will change even further. We've been getting the impression from some people around us that perhaps we've been in local fandom just too long, and at some point, we will not have gafiated, but it will have been done for us. If and when we do leave, it will be because we have nothing to do in it. We need to be active, and fandom around us seems more passive than anything else. I see you say exactly the same thing at the very end of page 16. The active fan is becoming a thing of the past.

We hope you had a great anniversary! It's difficult to celebrate, especially with it being at the start of the big end-of-year celebrations we all enjoy. Yvonne's birthday is just before Christmas, so I try my best to make sure that it is always remembered. I am pleased to say that I have already finished her birthday and Christmas shopping, so now just have to concentrate on where to take her for a birthday dinner.

I think you and I have reached a stage of fandom that Bloch could not have anticipated...we're perhaps not gafiating, but the fandom we loved is dissipating around us, moving on faster than we care to go. An essay on *Who Killed Science Fiction Fandom?* might be quite illuminating, and oddly consoling. I should take the time to have another look at *Amazing Stories*, and see what's there for me.

We're not gafiating from fandom, fandom is gafiating from us. But all the other activities that are crowding us out were started by fans, and taken up by a large number of others.

— JTM

Later on today is the start of a local convention called Fan Events Forum. It is a conrunner's convention, and even though Yvonne and I retired from conrunning a few years ago now, it's still interesting to go to, and tell the youngun's about how things were in the 80s and 90s, and tell a few stories, and enjoy a well-laid-out consuite. It is a full weekend, but

we will have the time to go the highway to Hamilton to drop a sales display for our steampunk business, and see if we can generate some remote sales. Perhaps we're not as busy as we used to be, but we are trying.

Thank you for this issue, I'm a little more timely this time. Take care, and see you again.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Dec. 7, 2015
2651 Arlington Drive, #302,
Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

Ah, the November *Alexiad*. Didn't I just finish the last *Alexiad*? Not exactly just; it was a month ago. Also, by the alchemy human relations, I am committed to an immediate response. So here it is.

One response will be to Lisa. I sympathize with her because I have often allowed some great act, and even some bon mots, to pass. Is it because of social bashfulness? It is. Have I missed making plenty of many friends? I have. Have I missed quashing many enemies? I have too. But we are whom we are.

We go from social relations now to more than seventy years ago and the north Atlantic. To the short reign of the *Bismarck* in the Atlantic. It sounds like that battleship had an advantage over other battleships because of its size, which was added in defiance of international treaties. Tell me if I'm wrong, Joe.

The *Bismarck* was declared as being built to the standards of the Washington Naval Treaty, with a displacement of 35,000 tons. In fact her displacement was 41,700 tons.

— JTM

We go from the mid-Atlantic to the heart of our being. A complete shift in perspective. Algis Budrys wonders what makes us human? It doesn't seem like he ever figured it out. I think it depends on what you're looking at.

If the criterion is whether a person would consider himself as the same person, any being or thing with the same memories and knowledge would consider himself the same person. Hence, a person's memories and knowledge which had been uploaded to a robot would remain that person.

On the other hand, if the criterion is that a person had to be identified as such by friends and acquaintances, then that would depend on the cultural milieu. In some cultures, a person who had lost all his memories might strike friends and acquaintances as the same person. In other cultures, they might consider him a different person.

From the heart of being, we go to the heart of almost nothing. What could be the heart of almost nothing? Balloons. Rod Smith argues that hydrogen for balloons was easy to obtain during the Civil War. There was city gas, i.e., coal gas, which you could get in Washington

and Richmond. Also, it could be made from sulfuric acid and iron fillings.

Maybe I was wrong that military balloonists on both sides ran out of hydrogen. I just took this one author's word for it. However, I now have another author's word. According to the Wikipedia article "The History of Military Ballooning," the Union Army just lost interest in ballooning even though it was a success.

On the other hand, the same source claimed the source I remember was right about the Confederate Army: it literally could not get supplies of hydrogen. Not even from Richmond, whose inhabitants didn't generate much in the way of coal gas.

Now, we go from the light weight to the heavy weight; or at least weight in gold. A heavy enough weight so that it doesn't float, like hydrogen or helium. In fact, I don't think it is supposed to float, much even though its price currently does.

I am talking about the gold standard, which George Price rebuts me on. He argues that the gold standard is still good as gold because the wild swings in the price of gold have been caused by distrust in our fiat paper money.

I respond this way: I thought the advantage of gold was that it didn't change in price much even when fiat money was undergoing manic-depressive episodes. Its stability has been the argument about why we should base all money on it.

Apparently, until the 1930s, the price of gold hardly moved. It did not change much even during the Civil War when both the Union and Confederacy issued paper money unbased on anything. The only exception occurred during the Napoleonic Wars. However, the halcyon period of steady gold prices has passed: after 1973, the price of gold fluctuated wildly.

http://www.nma.org/pdf/gold/his_gold_prices.pdf

Another argument George makes is that any industrial demand for gold would be too small to affect the price much. The reason is as all the world moved closer to a gold standard, the price of gold would increase. This would discourage manufacturers from using it in electronics, and they would satisfy their needs with some other metal.

What can I say about this? The reverse appears to be true. When gold was used most extensively as a basis for money, its price stayed low compared to now. Now that it is no longer the basis for most nations' currency, the price of gold has grown by leaps and bounds. This remains the case even though gold has fallen substantially from its highest price.

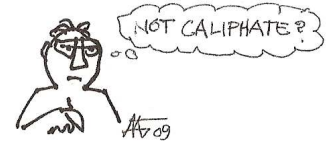
In short, George has presumed making gold the basis for money will increase its price. However, its uses in electronics, or whatever, have boosted the price far higher.

With the gold standard, I think that's about it. I took a little more time to deal with this subject. I suspect, on issues as heavy as this, the reader has to take them in leisurely.

Having written my response, the gold standard joins the other topics I have written about: the battleship *Bismarck*, what makes a person a person, and ballooning during the Civil War. Am I an expert in all these areas? By no means, and I welcome any critique of my views on these things.

A. E. VAN VOGT
REVISION 213.75

"THIS THE RACE THAT WILL
CALIBRATE THE SEVAGRAM!"



From: **Tom Feller** December 10, 2015
TomFeller@aol.com

Thanks for sending the zine. I hope you get your SS disability. I plan to take regular SS when I turn 62 next year.

No such luck, so far.

— JTM

It has been a few years since I last saw *Sink the Bismarck!*, but I remember liking it. I also read the novel by C.S. Forester, which, as I recall, does not have the movie's romantic sub-plot.

I read *Rogue Moon* many years ago as well and recall it as a powerful story.

Anita and I went to the Spokane Worldcon and enjoyed ourselves. Of course, we weren't working like Leigh and her husband, and we stayed in a much nicer hotel. Also, we flew rather than drove so the trip took a lot less out of us. The smoke from the wildfires really bothered me on Friday of the con, but I still had a good time.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Dec. 10, 2015
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA
93010-2451 USA
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for Vol. 14, No. 5 (September 2015), Whole Number 83.

Receiving *ALEXIAD* as an e-mail attachment works just fine. My printer handles two sided printing. First it prints one side of a page. Then it sucks the page back in, turns it over, and then prints the other side. It works great.

You have my continuing sympathy regarding your work problem. The ruling by the judge sounds a bit convoluted. I get the impression that your former employer's

redefining a number of job descriptions was actually a move to get rid of some employees. Sadly, you got caught up in the maneuver.

I was the only one so got rid of.

Your commentary on *Sink the Bismarck!* was overwhelming.

Sasquan—In my previous truncated Sasquan report I left out several things that should have been included. It looked like I did not do much.

It was nice seeing Maggie Bonham again. Maggie is married to my second cousin Larry Bonham. Prior to the HUGO Award Ceremony I took Maggie, my niece Sheila Kennedy, her husband Brad Cozzens, and their son Jacob Cozzens to dinner at my hotel. Maggie had something else to do, but the rest of us went to the HUGO's. Maggie has a long history in Science Fiction Fandom, is the author of a number of books, and is the owner of Sky Warrior Book Publishing. I first met up with Maggie at Denvention 3 in 2008. She and Larry live in Montana. Sadly, I have yet to actually meet Larry.

I did attend a number of activities. Among them were the following: Discworld/Terry Pratchett activities, especially the memorial service. The Discworld exhibit was magnificent. The Art Show. The Exhibit Hall. Pluto in Your Rear-View Mirror. From Starship Troopers to Honor Harrington and Beyond: The Past, Present, and Future of Military SF. The Year of the Dwarf Planets. Dystopian Realities: What if Fictions Most Dire Prophecies Come True? Also, a reading by Jack Campbell (John G. Hemry) thanks to Brad Cozzens pointing it out to me. Like when a teacher read to us in Elementary School, Campbell left us hanging.

Oh, one last thing. While I was sitting at the main food court with family Milt Stevens walked by. I called hi and he said hi. That's the only time that I saw Milt.

This was probably my last WorldCon. Well, maybe San José if it wins in 2018.

The DVD *HUMANITY FROM SPACE* (2015) was obtained from the library. Overall it is OK. But, on my rating scale of 1-5 I downgraded it to a 4.6 for the following reasons. 1) It made short mention of Nikola Tesla working for Thomas Edison. No mention that Tesla only worked for Edison for a short time or that his Alternating Current replaced Edison's Direct Current. 2) No mention of Desalination Plants to convert sea water to useable water. If the oceans are going to rise, let's use it. 3) No mention of Solar Power Satellites. They did cover a large solar array here in a California desert, but did not mention that it has caused problems. 4) Big mention of Wind Farms which some of you may remember I oppose because they take up large amounts of land and kill birds. Despite my reservations I recommend the DVD. Oh, one more thing. They did cover

the vast numbers of we humans on our planet and our already immense numbers are going to incredibly increase. There are already too many of us and something has to be done about our extremely increasing.

Another DVD obtained from the library was *A MURDER IN THE PARK* (2015). Basically what happened is that a professor and his students caused a convicted murderer sentenced to death to be freed and another man to be convicted. The case resulted in the pardon of the first man and the abolition of the death penalty in Illinois. The professor was avidly against the death penalty. The problem was that the first man convicted was guilty and the second man was basically framed. The real goal of those involved was not justice; it was to do anything to abolish the death penalty in Illinois. A lot of guilty people here — the professor, the students, prosecutors, private investigators, lawyers, journalists. How the former students can live with themselves is beyond my understanding. I know that innocent people have gained release mainly based on DNA. But, this case brings into question the process in general. I highly recommend the DVD.

ASTEROID OF
ANGST!

COMET OF
CHAOS!

PLANET OF
PANIC!

HOW IS "STAR OF
STUPIDITY" GOING?

FEH,
MAYBE

"SUN OF
SINICISM?"



I finally worked my way through *Hell's Foundations Quiver* (2015) by David Weber (the 8th novel in the SAFEHOLD series). I use the word "worked" because the print was smaller than usual. The novel itself is 679

pages. Then, with *Characters* and the *Glossary* it goes to 784 pages. In the past there has been one novel a year. But, there was no novel in 2014 so Drake is a year behind. One can always hope for two in 2016. But, I will not hold my breath. A disappointment in the current novel is that on the inside of the dust cover it is indicated that "a new player has arrived, one who knows many secrets, including Marlin's. Will they be an ally — or a foe?" However, unless I missed something, no such "new player" appeared. Nine years this series has been appearing. I just hope that Drake brings it to a conclusion during my lifetime. Of course, if I'm gone then I probably won't care.

You know, there's a reason I don't get invested in those things.

Sometimes there are TV shows that keep going after they should have reached an ending. One that I watched from the beginning is *Once Upon a Time*. I found it quite enjoyable. But a month or so ago I just got tired of it and thought that it should have ended. So, I've stopped watching it. Another show that I've watched from the start is *Haven*. I'm still watching it. But, it needs to come to a conclusion and end.

Jurassic World was finally obtained from the library. A waste of time. On my scale of 1-5 I gave it a 1 just because the special effects were good. The lead actress was terrible. And that's not just because she never lost her high heels even while running over rough ground and through the jungle. Actually, the best part was the two kids.

As Lisa put it, given that every *Jurassic Park* has been an utter disaster, why do they keep on setting them up?

— JTM

Leigh Kimmel: Your comment that "caffeine is a diuretic" reminded me that is the reason I stopped drinking coffee. So, you traveled through and stopped in Rapid City, South Dakota. In 2010 I attended the U.S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association reunion that was headquartered in Rapid City. I've been to five reunions and given the various tours and activities Rapid City is my favorite reunion.

Rod E. Smith: Thank you for the site of your Sasquan photos. But, why am I not in any of them? ☺

From: **Murray Moore** December 15, 2015
1065 Henley Road, Mississauga Ontario
L4Y 1C8 CANADA
murrayamoore@gmail.com

My copy of the September issue was interfered with in transit. I can see the two holes where the staple was inserted in the upper left corner. Else you ran short of staples and you gave my copy's staple to a more faithful correspondent.

Horse owners and fanzine publishers have in common the penchant to give their respective horse/fanzine a quirky name/title. Also, small craft owners naming their boats. Revenge Shark the horse also could be a band. Wiggle It Jiggled it could be a children's entertainment band.

Joe you gave *The Three Body Problem* a pass. Maybe I have mentioned, I tried to read *The Three Body Problem*. I bogged and put it aside. I picked it up and I continued but I stopped sooner. My not finishing a novel is highly unusual.

I do not know if the deputy premier of China has read *Three Body Problem*, or if he has been briefed about either breed of Puppies, but he invited the winner of the 2015 Hugo Novel award to meet him.

I learned this fact from a Science Fiction Studies journal editor, Dr. Veronica Hollinger (Trent University). Hollinger spoke during the annual Friends of the Merrill Collection Christmas Cream Tea.

Hollinger also said that Anglo-American authors translated in China are authors like Asimov and Heinlein and that Chinese SF reads like our 1950's SF. She finds Chinese SF interesting but for entertainment and depth she reads the new big books by Kim Stanley Robinson and Neal Stephenson.

During World Fantasy Con in Saratoga Springs I saw an autographed copy of *The Three Body Problem* priced at \$200. Liu Cixin's autograph is a harder get than, say, the autograph of George RR Martin.

If your eBooks are disassembled by EMP, Lisa, you of course will have more pressing problems than loss of your reading.

True, Chris Garcia was absent from the Hugo Awards stage in 2015, but James Bacon gave a fine and funny, albeit I agree not amazing, acceptance speech. Chris owns the amazing Hugo Award speech.

You might indeed Joe find yourself more and more isolated, yet you have your grateful readers here. Your *Sink the Bismarck!* article is amateur (for the love of) writing that makes reading fanzines worthwhile. I have a copy of *Rogue Moon* and of *Who?* without having read either one. Your discussion of these Budrys novels stirs my interest.

Do you know, *The Martian* is a nominee for a Golden Globe in the Best Musical/Comedy category? The other nominees are *The Big Short*, *Joy*, *Spy* and *Trainwreck*.

I read somewhere that during this year's Novacon that interest in a bid for a British Worldcon in 2024 was sounded.

Milt Stevens wonders about humidity in Puerto Rico in August, in relation to a NASFiC there. I expect the weather would be more pleasant during the 2016 Eurocon, in Barcelona in November.

Earlier today I submitted this letter to the *Globe and Mail*. Your equivalent newspaper is the *New York Times*. The context is the arrival in Canada of the first of 25,000 Syrian

refugees.

Welcome to Canada. Soon you will be driving. Here is what you need to know.

Speed limits on signs are suggestions. Because Canadians love their jobs and their families, they drive between home and work as fast as possible.

When turning right at a stop sign and at a red light, without actually, you know, stopping, turn right slowly enough to allow the driver with the right-of-way the chance to stomp his vehicle's brakes. Stopping and starting your SUV contributes to climate change: think of your grandchildren.

When you see someone you know in another vehicle, or you want to compliment a stranger on his driving, honk your horn. Join the happy chorus.

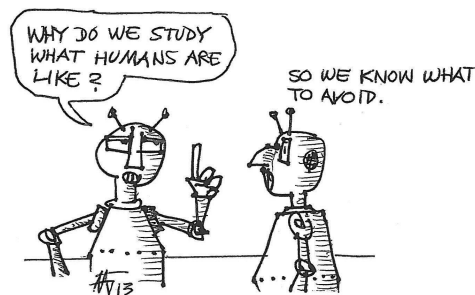
Lastly, and I expect this point is universal, the yellow light means go faster.

Now you are Canadian.

Why does that make me think of the Guide for New New Yorkers that explained:

New York policemen are affectionately called 'Big's'. If you are ever lost, find one and say "Hello, Big." You will be told where to go.

— JTM



From: **George W. Price** December 15, 2015
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL
60690-3228 USA
price4418@comcast.net

November *Alexiad*:

Joe's commentary on Algis Budrys' *Rogue Moon* is titled "Halt, Passenger," from the novel's epigraph, taken from an old gravestone: "Halt, Passenger! / As you are now, so once was I. / As I am now, so shall you be. / Prepare for Death, and follow me."

I first read this 55 years ago, and I still wonder if Budrys quoted it right. "Passerby" would make better sense than "Passenger," and would also rhyme with "once was I." I checked online but could not find the original source.

Rod E. Smith reminisces that "Large home iceboxes were sometimes built against an outside wall, and an access door cut all the way through. This way the iceman could refill the ice chamber without disturbing the household or dripping water from melting ice on the floor."

In the 1990s I lived in a second-floor apartment that had just such a door in the kitchen's outside wall, onto the back porch (though of course it had been sealed off for many years). Back in the 1930s my family had the more common arrangement: the iceman came into the kitchen and put the block of ice into the top of the icebox. The food was stored under the ice compartment, and at the very bottom was a drip pan to catch the water as the ice melted. Mechanical refrigeration was still uncommon enough that an "apartment for rent" ad would say if it had a refrigerator instead of an icebox — that was a plus. We got our first refrigerator circa 1943 when war factory work made my family not quite as poor as we had been in the Great Depression.

Outside access doors were also used for coal delivery. Many Chicago apartment buildings from the 1920s had a door about a yard square near ground level on one side. A truck would dump the coal into a wheelbarrow to be trundled up to the access door and tipped through into the basement coal bin. We thought it quite an advance when coal trucks started carrying powered conveyor belts to move the coal from the truck right through the access door. Most of those apartment buildings are still there, with the coal door sealed off with a big steel plate. By about 1975 they had all switched to gas.

In Fred Saberhagen's *A Century of Progress* (1983) the time-travellers recruited an old man because he'd lived through all that and knew, for example, how to put up the ice sign to get the right amount of ice. It was the beginning of a series, but didn't take off.

— JTM

R-Lauraine Tutihasi says "Typing '40s and '60s make no sense, since an apostrophe is used to indicate missing letters or numbers, such as can't for cannot. Where did George (Price?) get such a crazy idea?"

Well, the apostrophe is used to stand for the missing "19" when we write '40s and '60s instead of 1940s and 1960s. The same applies to missing letters at the start of a word, as in "up and at 'em," where the apostrophe indicates the missing "th" in "them."

A minor correction: Joy V. Smith mentions *Hungry for Wood*, a memoir by Herb Rhodes, which covers, among other things, “the fear of having to invade Japan, the dropping of the H bombs [and] the landing on Japan after that.” That should be A-bombs; the hydrogen bomb was not developed until several years after the war.

Sue Burke disagrees with me that the Supreme Court erred in ruling in favor of same-sex marriage. She quotes the Constitution: “The powers not delegated to the United States [. . .], nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” She sees those last four words, “or to the people,” as meaning that “we have powers that the government, whether federal or state, cannot deny us.” She also says it is the business of the Supreme Court to decide which powers these are, and that the Court “has decided, whether we like it or not, that they include the power to abort and the power to marry.”

That’s a possible interpretation, but it is not what the Justices said — they rested their decision on the Due Process and Equal Protection clauses of the 14th Amendment.

Further, Ms. Burke’s interpretation would lead us into some terrible difficulties.

If the power to marry cannot be denied to us, wouldn’t that mean that the states really can’t have any marriage laws at all? Anybody can marry anybody without any restrictions — polygamy, polyandry, polyamory — anything goes.

My own interpretation follows the traditional idea that under the Constitution the powers of the federal government are “limited and enumerated” and the powers of the States are “plenary and comprehensive.” That is, the feds can do only what the Constitution specifically allows them to do, while the states can do anything and everything that the Constitution does not explicitly forbid. This leaves no room for powers that neither the feds nor the states can regulate.

How do I square this with powers that are “reserved to the people”? I take that to mean those powers which the people, acting through the state governments, have chosen to not have any laws about. For a trivial example, we have no laws about what rights our parents and in-laws have over how we raise our children. The states could pass such laws, but have chosen not to, leaving all such matters to “the people” as individuals.

My big objection to Ms. Burke’s interpretation is that if there are powers that neither the feds nor the states can regulate, how can the Supreme Court possibly know what these powers are? What guidelines can there be other than the personal preferences of the Justices? They can make decisions on anything at all as long as it is not a power “delegated to the United States, nor prohibited

... to the States.” That destroys the whole idea of the Constitution as setting strict limits to the power of government.

The courts — including the Supreme Court — are supposed to construe existing laws. But Ms. Burke would let the Court create new law out of nothing. Only Congress can do that, so this also destroys the separation of powers. It leaves the Supreme Court as the final and unchallengeable arbiter of anything it chooses to pronounce upon.

Part of the genius of our system is that we have no final arbiter of the laws. The Supreme Court decides only in particular cases, and its decisions can be rejected as “bad law” by judges in future cases, nullified by Congressional action, and of course overturned by future decisions of the Supreme Court itself. There is no finality, and there shouldn’t be, as that would prevent correction of errors. So it would be a gigantic change if we allowed the Court to both make decisions that could not be challenged, and — even worse — to choose what subjects could be so decided. That would turn the Justices into philosopher-kings indeed.



From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Dec. 22, 2015
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
22204-1552 USA
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for *Alexiad* #14.5 and congratulations on your 19th anniversary. On Halloween Lee and I celebrated our 22nd with a party instead of going out. In November we went to Philcon, where there was the con suite and one party Friday, and the con suite with a book launch and three parties Saturday, of which we got to the book launch and two. These days, alas, it is a stretch to stay up till midnight. Perhaps in compensation for the lack of parties I was on five panels one of which mutated into a discussion of the Sad Puppies-Rabid Puppies affair, telling me more than I had wanted to know about it, and in great detail. Two factoids stuck with me: First the Rabid Puppies ate the Sad puppies lunch, i.e. in their third attempt the Sad Puppies were once again ineffectual, while the newly launched Rabid Puppies got out the vote, second the well reported controversy tripled the mail-in vote for the Hugos, generating a flood of last minute money for the Spokane Worldcon, which

helped support a lavish con suite. The latest crisis with Lee’s pain doctor turned out to be that both their fax machine AND their phones went out while. Lee was trying to get her meds. She worked around it, but it made for a stressful few days.

I remember following the sinking of the *Hood* and the *Bismarck* on the radio. Also I read somewhere that the *Hood* was sunk by plunging fire from the *Prinz Eugen*, which survived the war and was scuttled after surviving an A-bomb test at Bikini atoll. The right-left business is a cinematic convention that reflects the map. When north is up, Germany in the east is on the right, while Great Britain is on the left, so to minimize audience confusion that is how they are shown in combat.

George Price and I continue to disagree about whether inflation is theft. However, when I said “A case can be made...” he says “That’s a claim....” Well, no, it is speculation that between 1814 and 1914 the pound was -stable because the stolen wealth of India was flowing into Great Britain, not to mention the stolen gold and diamonds of Africa. It helped that the British Empire didn’t have to fight any major wars. True, the Empire was running at a loss because of having to fight a lot of minor wars to keep that treasure flowing, but many individuals became enormously wealthy, banking and investing in Great Britain, (look up “nabobs”) so that the pound remained stable. After the Civil War the US dollar remained stable because of the gold from California — which had been stolen from Mexico, the imposition of an income tax, and peace. After World War II the income tax reduced and would have eliminated the national debt, but while there was no war, there was also no peace, and the Cold War forced a choice between a strong military and a stable dollar. Switzerland, which has a notably stable currency has also been notably successful in not having to fight any wars.

Perhaps inflation is theft, after all, in that a nation (not just merely politicians) chooses to steal from its future to survive in the present. We note the rampant inflation in the Confederacy as it was losing the War of Northern Aggression.

Mid December and we have been having unseasonably warm weather, yesterday hitting 72 degrees F. In no particular order, Happy Chanukah, Merry Christmas, Prosperous New Year, and Best Wishes.

Am I really in the
Alexiad lettercol...?



From: **Dave Haren** December 18, 2015
tyrbolo@comcast.net

Now you have done it !! I have avoided thinking about Dildo and Frito from *Bored of the Rings* and now have the Last Supper of Dildo Baggins imprinted in my mind as well.

A minor point from the lettercol. The H-Bomb wasn't invented until later the bombs that were tested on the Japanese Christians were A-Bombs. One was a plutonium version the other was a uranium bomb. Pacific veterans were quite happy that they were able to avoid Operation Olympic (invasion of Japan's main islands). One who had a troop ship ride to Sasebo, the scheduled landing spot for his unit during Olympic said, "I got down on my knees on the ships deck and thanked God for the atomic bomb." He could still see the fortifications in the channel coming in and then when they turned into the harbor and he saw the cliffs behind he was glad the war had ended before they tried it. He had been sent to Japan on R & R from the Korean Conflict (nasty euphemism for wars without congressional declarations).

You might want to read Paul Fussell's *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays* (1988). He was another one in that fix. There are various fictional versions of it but try Alfred Coppel's *The Burning Mountain* (1983).

— JTM

Star Crash was a visually stunning movie in parts, the dialogue destroyed the effects instantly. Some of the more horrid MST3K is at archive.org for those who missed it for another reason than on purpose.

Good review of *Sink the Bismarck!*.

From: **Sue Burke** December 22, 2015
calle Agustín Querol, 6 bis 6D, 28014 Madrid, SPAIN
sue@sue.burke.name
mount-oregano.livejournal.com
amadisofgaul.blogspot.com

First of all, happy birthday, Joe. I hope you get the perfect gift. With a nice salary.

No such luck.

Second, today was El Gordo, the big Spanish Christmas lottery. I won nothing. But I have my health, which is what matters. (This is the traditional thing for losers to say.)

Spain had a parliamentary election on December 20. Four big parties and a variety of small parties were running, and as expected, no party won a majority. In fact, no two parties that can stand each other added together amount to a majority. This is important because it takes a majority vote to elect a prime minister and, obviously, pass legislation.

Although some news reports made this result sound dire, it was what voters wanted —

the polls confirmed this ahead of the election, so the outcome surprised no one. Voters wanted to force the parties to talk to each other, to negotiate and come to agreement rather than one party imposing its will on everyone and everything.

Imagine politicians compromising and working together. If that happens, what a victory Spanish voters have achieved. And what a change.

In another matter, "...no courtesan studies this business [the stock market] to acquire patience; no rustic to become inured to disdain, nor the French to fury, the English to pride, the Turk to noise, the Italian to disguise, the Flemish to phlegm, the German to arrogance, the Polish to flight, or the Spanish to profanity." These words come from the first book ever written about stock markets, *Confusion of Confusions* by Joseph de la Vega in 1688. He was a Spaniard who moved to Amsterdam to reconvert to his family's original religion, Judaism.

Spain's stock market commission decided to re-edit the book to celebrate its 25th anniversary, and it hired me to translate a selection of de la Vega's work. The beautifully edited book was presented to the public this month at a nice reception with fine wine, and is available as an institutional gift from the commission. I worked on the translation in April and May, unraveling the complexities and wordplay of the pinnacle of Spanish Baroque prose. My biggest challenge, besides simply understanding the convoluted syntax, involved maintaining all the jokes, because the book is laugh-out-loud funny. Finally getting a copy in hand from that singular project was an exciting Christmas gift.

So you had to go for Baroque.

Rod E. Smith linked to some lovely Sasquan photos in the last issue, and he also mentioned ice boxes. I lived in a home in Milwaukee where the back hall had a space for an ice box, as well as a milk chute, and, if you looked carefully throughout the house, had traces from gaslight fixtures. It was a lovely American Craftsman style home, and I enjoyed living there.

Around a star in the constellation Ara, whose name I do want to remember — Cervantes! — orbit four planets: Quixote, Dulcinea, Rocinante, and Sancho. In December, the International Astronomical Union announced the results of a public vote for names for 14 stars and 31 planets, and Spain's massive participation at 38,503 votes blew away the competition to rename Mu Arae. The campaigns by estrellacervantes.es and YoEstrellaCervantes built on the anticipation of Cervantes Year 2016, the 400th anniversary of the death of the author. The innumerable commemorative activities include a ballet and a radio play of *Don Quixote*.

Alexis Gilliland's *Rosinante*

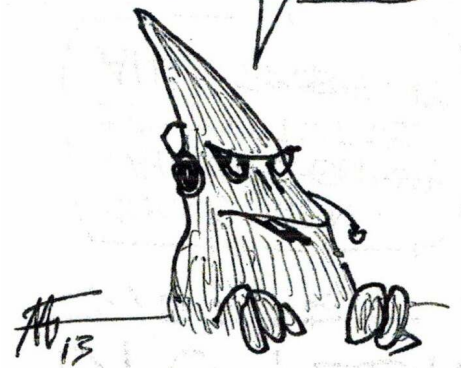
series is now available for Kindle.

— JTM

Finally, since we're so far from family celebrations, my husband and I are taking a little vacation over the Christmas holidays to Tangier and Fez. Fezzes are cool. And December 24 is Mohammed's birthday this year, so there will be celebration — whatever they do for that in Morocco.

UFO TECH
SUPPORT

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



From: **Rodney Leighton** Dec, 18, 2015
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
CANADA

I have not seen an issue of *Alexiad* in awhile. Last one I have gotten is #81, back in July, with the idiocy by Murray Moore in it.

To be honest I had not thought about there being no new issues. A couple of issues of *The Zine Dump* appeared a week or two ago, loose sheet format, no idea if they were emailed or pulled off the Internet. I read them over. Being honest here, I am trying to get some things cleaned up, so no reason to do anything with those and recycled them through the fire.

However, I did note in his review of *Alexiad*, Guy said that you had been saying that you were going mostly electronic. I could not recall seeing any such notice.

Noted that there seemed to be issues I had

not seen. Hmnnn. Started digging around and found that the last I got was, as mentioned, #81.

So, just to confuse the issue: most of the bundles that Chuck mails me arrive but once in awhile one disappears. I happen to know that he mailed me a package on Nov.4 which vanished. Did it contain a copy of *Alexiad* #82.? If you have switched to that format, #83 might be somewhere in the system.

Or, maybe you just decided to drop me. Seems kind of weird after all these years. Although much of what I have been writing has been very egocentric. And sometimes a mix up.

It would appear that Hooper doesn't bother reading my zines and thus possibly not *Alexiad*. No idea why he prints that list of zines in *Flag*. Chuck sent him some issues of *Rodney's Fanac* and got no response as all.

I have been so fucked up the past few months I have no idea if I wrote you anything after #81 or if it was semi-coherent if I did. I did contact Jim Stumm who sent me some copies of the Low Cost Living Notes which have some good ideas and sensible suggestions but really need to be updated to be of much value and *Living Free* #115 which was semi interesting. Pretty cool that he has been going for that many issues.

Jim mentioned that he had sent a loc which somewhat ciastised Murray for his flight of fancy. I was looking forward to reading that.

Also told me that he doesn't have any email. So have you dumped him as well? Or me? Or have you not dumped me at all and I am missing mail?

I recall that I did suggest that you switch to sending email versions and that may be the case. It is quite possible.

For me, August was kind of bad, September just sort of evaporated, October brought, among other things, suicide attempt, bulldozed into hospital by a couple of guys, stay in there for a week, various other visits, VON nurses and homecare workers coming to my house and mixed in amongst that was a government sponsored house renovation thing which involved one or 2 guys at a time showing up every so often. Diagnosis of lung congestion and congestive heart failure they have me on drugs that chase me to the toilet frequently. Don't have much strength or energy and less desire to do anything. Trying to get some wood in. Trying to clean up my desk and correspondence.



Given the lack of interest in my bitty zine I am going to not waste my time on doing any. Might be something in *EAYOR*. Thinking I will try to write decent letters to anyone who sends me paper copies. I was thinking that I would guarantee a minimum one page loc to any paper zine which got here. But then I wondered what to do with *Askew* since they are small and rarely contain anything of interest but then I see that #13 has been published some time ago and none came my way. Then I also thought that, well, I am being treated for heart issues, I probably should not guarantee anything.

Anyway . . . it is possible that *Alexiad* 82 and *Askew* 13 and that bundle from Chuck are all in a bag in a corner of the warehouse in Halifax or something.

There has been a fair amount of *Alexiad* in recent years that has not been of interest to me. And I do realize that my letters have been too self serving.

I also seem to think I suggested to you not all that long ago that if money was tight you could drop me and I seem to recall that you scoffed at the idea.

I had to switch to about all email because of postage, as all CanFans have. I thought Chuck would take care of your issue.

I believe I have received a copy of each of the first 81 issues Seems a shame to stop receiving them.

However: if this is a mix up of some sort, it will become resolved. If you have decided to drop me, well, I would appreciate a note as to why but if you wish to just go, it's your choice. Hopefully things, are better for you.

No such luck.

—JTM

WAHF:

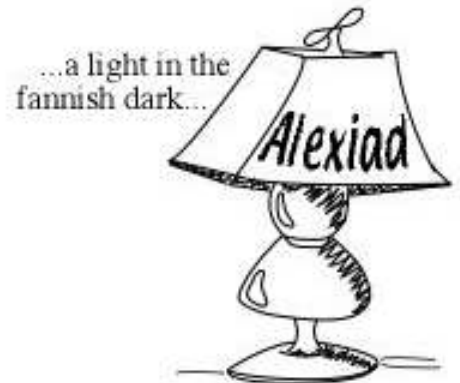
Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Martin Morse Wooster, the same.

Johnny Carruthers, Guy Lillian, Trinlay Khadro, and Tom Sadler, who got it.

Christmas cards from Gary Flispart, Nancy Martsch, and particularly Marc Schirmeister, who drew his own.

Bill Brewer, Jason Burnett, Johnny Carruthers, Carol Clarke, Jeff Daiell, Steve Fahrenstark, Paul Gadzikowski, Bruce Richard Gillespie, Mike Glycer, Tammi Harris, John G. Hemry, Arthur Hlavaty, Robert S. Kennedy, Trinlay Khadro, Chuck Lipsig, Lloyd Penney, John Purcell, Mike Resnick, Jim Rittenhouse, Steven Silver, Rod Smith, Garth Spencer, Julee Johnson-Tate, R-Lauraine Tutihasi, B.J. Willinger who sent birthday greetings.



HISTORICAL NOTE

Just before the great Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, two of the Coalition leaders, Tsar Alexandr of All the Russias and König Friedrich-Wilhelm III of Prussia, were conducting a reconnaissance of Napoleon's positions, and were very nearly captured by a patrol of French cavalry. What if they had?

How the Brigadier Won the War

It was the old Brigadier who was talking in the café.

Last week, my friends, the Czar came here on his annual state visit, and I was privileged to be commanding the escort. You understand, retired as I am, that I am not summoned to such duties often, and yet when an officer is given orders, he must go. I admit, given my reputation, that I am often used as an object of intimidation, but such is the price one pays for being of such small fame as I have. It was a long and wearying performance, as such duties are, and I am still thirsty — sir, you are a gentleman of great charity!

You must know, then, that the Hussars of Conflans had suffered direly in the Russian campaign, as all the cavalry had then. I was forced to take the field with a unit of half-strength, mostly boys, riding bad horses. They took tender nursing to keep in order and fit for combat, and I struggled desperately to maintain the honor of the regiment.

They had not done badly in the great battle of Dresden, where three officers won the cross of honor, and some twenty of the boys were likewise rewarded for gallantry. Thus it was that we were placed in the outskirts of the army, tasked with reconnaissance.

This is a more difficult task than merely charging down on a foe, understand. In such an assignment, the fiery champion will fail of his duty, for he will attack when his orders require him to watch and report. This requires much of a cavalryman, and yet it is one of his finest tasks.

Thus it was that I was with the lead squadron, under Captain Sabbatier, as he was then. We were in a copse when, much to our amazement, we observed a patrol of cavalry, perhaps half our size, with many officers. This much bewildered us, and I made up my mind on the spot. “We will attack and take them prisoner,” I said, “for they are doing the same task we are doing, and if we capture them it will disadvantage the enemy. Gather the men and prepare to charge. You will take half the squadron and encircle them, and I will lead the men down on them.”

We made our preparations in as much silence as a small squadron of cavalry can manage. All the while the troop of enemy cavalry drew closer, and I became bewildered at their temerity. When the messenger arrived from Sabbatier with his notice of being ready, I immediately gave the order, and we burst from the woods riding in fury.

My faith! Those boys had become veterans, in the way that the old veterans of the Revolution had become that way from the boys they were when the levee-en-masse had got them. They rode desperately, and if their order was not quite what their predecessors had been, it was good enough. We engulfed the enemy and fought desperately.

Finally I struck down the last armed man, and then I cried, “Your Majesty, you must surrender!”

For I had beheld the Czar Alexander at Tilsit, when he had treacherously made peace with the Emperor, and if he did not know the name of Etienne Gerard then, he had learned it since. Faced with the fierce soldier that I was then, he yielded.

Then, much to my amazement, one of the troopers, Brun from Alsace, came to me with a prisoner in his train. “Colonel, sir, I have taken the King Friedrich-Wilhelm!” he said.

Now he was a weak sort, which I remembered well. He had been a hand-dog bystander at Tilsit, while great chunks were being sliced off his country, and now that he was in our hands he was no better.

I looked at our two prisoners, noted the aides and flunkies who had accompanied them, and said, “Messieurs, you are now guests of the Emperor, and he is waiting to receive you!”

My faith! It was hard to bring those men along! They were all well-mounted and I had pondered making them give up their horses to my boys, but it is hard enough to ride a new mount in the stables. With much urging and many threats of carbines and sabres, we persuaded them all the same.

The Emperor’s headquarters was abustle. He had drawn in his armies to face the armies of the Coalition. It was the rally of the fighting Marshals. There were Murat and Ney, Victor and Macdonald, Poniatowski the Pole, Oudinot and Mortier with the Guard, and Berthier to plan it all out. The troops of the Chasseurs a Cheval, the old Guides from the Italian days, were forming the headquarters guard, and they let us pass once they recognized my face.

Indeed, such was my zeal that I rode up to the Emperor’s tent. The boys made our two lead prisoners dismount, and I stepped forward into the tent. “A message for the Emperor!” I cried, and pushed my way forward.

He was leaning over a map, with Berthier marking positions and his face drawn with concern. Small wonder, for we were outnumbered by three to two, and with our backs to the river. Even his genius might have been sorely tried.

I cried, “Your Majesty!”

He whirled and shouted, “Silence! You fool, there are important plans to make!”

“They will have to be changed, your Majesty, for I have captured the Czar and the King of Prussia!”

Every man in that tent was struck dumb. The Emperor pushed past me and went to the opening. I turned and saw him staring at the two monarchs. After a long silence, he said, “Have our . . . guests . . . conducted to safety. I will have to talk to them later.”

Then he turned and said, “I had meant to relieve you of your command for your insolence.”

“I am at your Majesty’s disposal.”

“And I will. You no longer command the Hussars of Conflans.”

That seemed a cruel reward for my achievement. I drew myself up, trembling at the ingratitude of those in power, even the Emperor.

“You will report to General of Brigade Lyon, where you will assume command of the Chasseurs a Cheval of the Old Guard. Oh, and . . .”

He took the grand cross of the Legion of Honor from his own uniform, and with one quick movement, pinned it on my breast. “But you will have to get a new uniform. And provide the Marshal Prince of Wagram with the names of those who distinguished themselves in the action, and you may take them into the Guard with you.”

As to what happened next, you know all that. But I — I, the Brigadier Gerard — did my part in the great victory without fighting!

— Not by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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

This is issue **Whole Number Eighty-four (84)**.

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.

Material in *Alexiad* is copyright © 2016. All rights reserved. Upon publication, all rights revert to the original contributor, but we reserve the right to use any item more than once, unless otherwise specified by the contributor. All letters sent to *Alexiad* become the property of the publishers. Any material by the editors is available to other fanzines if they provide proper credit and send a copy.

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

ALEXIAD

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major

1409 Christy Avenue

Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA

jtmajor@iglou.com

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