

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This year I followed the Superbowl somewhat. I chose to back the Denver Broncos because I came to love Colorado when I visited there. From everything I could gather I didn't really think the Broncos had much chance of actually winning. I missed most of the actual game because we did not get home until well after the game started. I must admit to falling asleep during the game. When I woke up the Broncos were celebrating and I realized then that I, who know very little about football, had actually managed to pick the winner of the Superbowl.

— Lisa

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Printed on April 7, 2016
Deadline is June 10, 2016

Reviewer's Notes

My job situation remains unchanged. I am wondering if I should set that statement up as a permanent comment.

There have been times when I wonder if I have some vast obvious flaw, so obvious that no one I know tells me, because they think I know, and no one mentions out of concern. I have not been what I am supposed to be, and why is beyond me.

One thing I am becoming more aware of by observation is the matter of narrative. I began to notice this when reading the discussions of conspiracy theory. The anti-conspiracists were quite telling in their analysis of the alleged small lapses and deviations that proved the conspiracy. These made no impact on the conspiracists, who took such things for granted, and reflected on the wider scale of the conspiracy. They had their own narrative, which was unchallenged.

This can also be seen in the immunization controversy. Any discussion of it provokes a torrent of comments from anti-vaccination people, who cite not only personal experience but studies, scientific papers, and the like all purportedly supporting their thesis. It seems there is an independent body of work, unconnected to other scientific investigation, promoting that view.

So when (for example) Penn and Teller perform their brilliant little demonstration of the effectiveness of immunizations, it is ineffective. The anti-vaccination people have claims contradicting every one of their claims, and heart-rending tales of poor little children injured for life. They have their own narrative, which is unchallenged.

At one convention, back in the old days when everybody knew everybody or at least knew someone who knew them, John Campbell was as usual laying down the law on a panel, and he proclaimed that if fandom quit buying *Astounding* it wouldn't make a noticeable difference to their sales. Whereupon someone in the audience stood up, holding the latest issue, and asked, "But where would you get your writers?" All the writers in that issue had come from fandom.

But now they mostly don't.

One reminder; no politics. Such arguments seem incapable of resolution, but not provoking anger and disgust. Perhaps that is the problem with the world, that we can no longer have common ground any longer.

See you in June.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



ANNOUNCEMENT

Now available for Kindle is my novel *A Man and a Plane*, an alternate history of Germany and other related issues from the end of the World War on. The cost is an economical \$2.99 plus sales tax, available from Amazon Digital Publishing. If it does well I will do some more of my books.

A few years ago I wrote an article about "Anthony Godby Johnson", a notorious AIDS hoaxer, for *Challenger*. Guy appreciated it. Not surprisingly, the creator of this hoax was neither the first nor the last. I happened to run across an article in the *Guardian* (why a British paper should have that, I have no idea, and the article is free of both capitalism-bashing and typos) about Taryn Wright, a Chicagoan who exposes Internet dying-people hoaxes. There are a depressingly large number of these, and for the sake of the memory of my cousin Maddie Grace Major (who died of leukemia last year at the age of ten after a seven-year struggle) they ought to be exposed.

Her blog is:

<http://www.warriorelihoax.com/>

An Extract From The History of Marxism: The revue "I'll Say She Is" opened on May 19, 1924 at the Casino Theatre, starring veteran vaudeville performers Adolph Arthur Marx as "The Beggarman", Herbert Marx as "The Doctor", Julius Henry Marx as "The Lawyer", and Leonard Marx as "The Poorman". Due to the coincidence (or good fortune) that renowned critic Alexander Humphreys Woolcott had no other show to review that night, the play received a glowing review. Woolcott did, however, recommend that the stars henceforth use their nicknames in billings. ("You're a middle-aged Jew who picks up spit.")

The script (by Will B. Johnstone) was lost, but then the Marxes were never much for sticking to the script. Scenes from the performance were reused as a section of the Paramount (yes, as in STAR TREK) anniversary film *The House that Shadows Built* (1931) with the brothers repeating their roles in the "Theatrical Agency" scene, and as a section of the Rankin-Bass (yes, as in the animated *The Hobbit* (1977) and *The Return of the King* (1980)) animated special *The Mad, Mad, Mad Comedians* (1970) with Groucho voicing his role as Napoleon.

A reconstructed script is being performed at the Connelly Theater in New York.

The House that Shadows Built
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0166220/>

Theatrical Agency scene
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW5bZB18XU>

The Mad, Mad, Mad Comedians
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0305778/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjp9em8uQIU>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QtWZZf3o6I>

Hmmm . . . Zeppo Marx as The Doctor . . .

The British are building a new ice-breaking ship to patrol the British Antarctic Territory and resupply their Antarctic stations. They are holding an online contest to determine a name for the ship. The leading entry, with ten times the number of votes that the second-place entry has, is RRS *Boaty McBoatface*.

I'm wondering if someone created a bot to do voting. The originator, one James Hand, has apologized for the volume of votes but not the concept. Could he have got it from Mark L. Van Name's planet Pinkelpunker?

At least there is some hope, the bloom may be off one particular rose. The British charity Oxfam has asked donors to please please quit giving them used copies of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. They have so many that one shop built a fort of them.

Harper Lee
April 28, 1926 — February 19, 2016

On February 20 I was listening to the radio when the newscaster announced the death of Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I froze at this, for I remembered reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* in high school. I had recently bought an e copy on sale. I bowed my head, for Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* was one of the great books of the twentieth century. Published in 1960, it is still widely read today. The literary world is much poorer.

"I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do. Mrs.

Dubose won, all ninety-eight pounds of her. According to her views, she died beholden to nothing and nobody. She was the bravest person I ever knew." It is this quote from *To Kill a Mockingbird* that has always stuck in my mind. Harper Lee was one of the greatest American writers of the twentieth century. I never had the good fortune to meet Ms. Lee but when the news of her death came I grieved.

— Lisa

Earl Hamner

Creator of the Waltons, the TV family many of my generation grew up with. I was surprised to learn he had also worked on a show called *Falcon Crest* which was quite different from the Waltons. There was a science fiction connection to Mr. Hamner's life in his work on the *Twilight Zone*. I will miss his blog.

— Lisa

OBITS

Louisville fan **Cliff Amos** died on **February 22, 2016**. He organized the U of L Free University Science Fiction class and the Falls of the Ohio Science Fiction and Fantasy Society, which were my portals to organized Fandom. He was the first chairman of RiverCon and an active member of Fandom for as long as his health permitted.

He had just celebrated his sixty-eighth birthday (born January 26, 1948). Time's winged chariot is drawing near.

I miss him.

Real Fan Artist (i.e., she sent illos to fan publications, not to art shows or her own blog) **Peggy Ranson** died **March 16, 2016** of cancer. Her fan art had lit up many good fanzines and done wonders in the publicity for NoLaCon II. She won the Best Fan Artist Hugo in 1993 and her work was declared Best In Show at ChiCon in 1991. The world has become less artistic.

MONARCHIST NEWS

Prince Leka of Albania, the claimant to the throne, has announced that he will marry his fiancée **Elia Zaharia** on **October 8, 2016**.

Nicholas Medforth-Mills, once and not so very long ago **Prince Nicolae of Romania**, second in line to the claim, has wondered why he got disinherited. Was that he was seeing a Romanian girl? Anyhow, he has hopes his aunt **Princess Margareta** will reverse the decision after his grandfather **Mihai** (King Michael of Romania) passes on.

Nobody thought to ask **Paul-Philippe Hohenzollern**, the other claimant (son of **Mircea Lambrino**, the son of **King Carol II** and his other mistress (or illegal morganatic wife; he was seeing a Romanian girl), **Joanna Marie Valentina "Zizi" Lambrino**) about the matter.

BOND VS. THE FLYING SAUCER

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

THUNDERBALL

by Ian Fleming[, Kevin McClory, Jack Whittingham, Ivar Bryce and Ernest Cuneo] (1961)



"Thunderball"

He always runs while others walk.
He acts while other men just talk.
He looks at this world, and wants it all,
So he strikes, like Thunderball.
He knows the meaning of success.
His needs are more, so he gives less.
They call him the winner who takes all.
And he strikes, like Thunderball.

Any woman he wants, he'll get.
He will break any heart without regret.
His days of asking are all gone.
His fight goes on and on and on.
But he thinks that the fight is worth it all.
So he strikes like Thunderball.

— Music by John Barry, Lyrics by John Black, sung by Tom Jones

In a war-torn world an imaginative man devises a way to make a living. He creates a ring of imaginary spies, planted in the nerve-centers of the world. Manufacturing seemingly useful information, he sells it to both sides, making big money. As the world becomes more stable, he winds down his efforts and looks for a change of venue.

Paul Fidrmuc was a Czech businessman who lived abroad. When his country was gradually absorbed by Nazi Germany, he saw opportunity where others saw despair, and promptly created his notional spy ring, basing it on research, guesses, and credulity. The German Abwehr, never known for its discernment, paid him generously, giving him the code name OSTRO.

When he got too close to the mark, the British began to investigate. They found him not worth the bother of either hiring or disposing of. As for the former, they already had a quite suitable worker, Juan Pujol Garcia (MI-5 Agent GARBO; Abwehr V-Mann ARABEL) and he was quite enough.

Ernst Stavro Blofeld, the arch-villain of this and the next few Bond novels, a Pole from Gdynia who got around, got started that way himself. However, he was more persistent than Fidrmuc (who faded away after the war) and more organized than Pujol (who set up a string of enterprises in Venezuela, which went bankrupt). Blofeld went into organized crime on a grand scale, with pretensions to political action. This might be assumed from the grandiose title of his organization, "The Special Executive for Counter-Intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion". Today they'd take the last part as the defining one. As most of the members shown are from non-English-speaking countries, it seems curious that the organization's name and acronym are English, but perhaps that was a deliberate attempt not to favor any one group. (In the Bond satire *Alligator* (1962), the eponymous villain Lacertus Alligator refers to his gang, The Organization Organized To Hate, or in short T.O.O.T.H., as "a sort of special executive for counter-intelligence, terrorism, revenge, and extortion".)

Many of the representatives in this meeting are from criminal organizations, but there are also three men who are said to be Soviet operatives, dismissed when SMERSH was disbanded. This might reinforce that previous attribution (Fleming seems to have been misinformed about the fate of Stalin's special counterintelligence agency, which was mostly absorbed into the re-styled Ministry of State Security (MGB) in 1946. For more detail see *SMERSH: Stalin's Secret Weapon. Soviet Military Counterintelligence in WWII* by Vadim J. Birstein (2012; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 11 #2)), not to mention the three former Gestapo officers.

Towards his subordinates, Blofeld's attitude is reminiscent of Professor Moriarty's:

... In the first place, I may tell you that Moriarty rules with a rod of iron over his people. His discipline is tremendous. There is only one punishment in his code. It is death.

— *The Valley of Fear*

As we see when a subordinate is electrocuted for having failed to return a kidnapp victim in the same state that she was when she was captured, even though the change may have been because of her activity and desire. This attitude will end up being beneficial to someone further along.

But for the moment, James Bond is not concerned with special executives for counter-intelligence, terrorism, revenge, and extortion, or even teeth. He has received his annual medical checkup, which details his rather disturbing state of health. In spite of drinking heavily and smoking sixty cigarettes a day, he is alive. (The observation that "The blood pressure a little raised at 160/90" comes across as an example of British understatement; here in

the States we'd say "high blood pressure" and recommend serious measures.) This is something M., the Chief of the Secret Service, finds hard to believe.

Unfortunately for Bond in the short term, though not as much so for others in the long term, M. has become a health fanatic. His digressions on detoxification, proper nutrition, and the like sound very familiar in this era, and his diagnosis is decisive. Bond finds himself packed off to a health spa named Shrublands, to be shaken, if not stirred, out of his bad habits. He might have enjoyed more going to Shenley Lodge, owned by Edward Arnold "Eddie" Chapman (Agent ZIGZAG) but the Service may have been mad at Eddie for having spilled the beans in *The Eddie Chapman Story* (1954).

The menu at Shrublands is the sort that made P. J. O'Rourke stand on a chair yelling, "Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, dinner is served!" [*Republican Party Reptile* (1987)] and the rest of Bond's initial objections seem to parallel those of this Irish-American hippie. The doctor in charge is a naturopath and he seems to have taken his treatment procedures from some of those medical works that Martin Gardner deplored. Massage is very popular but not the fun sort.

Another patient, a Count Lippe, is there being decarbonized. (If he really were having the carbon extracted from his body that would be quite catastrophic.) He makes a fuss about not taking off his wristwatch, and when he does, Bond notices a tattoo that seems to be a gang mark. It is; the mark of a tong, a Chinese gang, working out of Macao.

Count Lippe proceeds to pull a dangerous prank. Bond is on a torsion machine, getting stretched. Lippe comes in and sets the machine to maximum strength pull. So much for abolition of the rack. However, someone happens to notice the machine is straining and Bond is released. He claims he accidentally hit the control lever.

On Bond's last day there, Count Lippe is in a steam cabinet, getting some heat treatment. Bond notices, figures one good turn deserves another, and puts the temperature on high. These seem rather damaging schoolboy pranks, and indeed Lippe is severely burned.

Detoxified, enervated, drained, Bond returns to the headquarters of the Secret Service and proceeds to extol the gospel of healthy living. (O'Rourke's Safety Nazis have brainwashed him.) He drifts through the next few weeks until things start happening.

The new healthy-living, unmotivated Bond is summoned to speak with M., who suddenly seems to have lost his enthusiasm for wheat germ. Probably because of the informative letter the Government have just received:

Mr Prime Minister,

You should be aware, or you will be if you communicate with the Chief of the Air Staff, that, since approximately 10 p.m. yesterday, 2nd June, a British

aircraft carrying two atomic weapons is overdue on a training flight. The aircraft is Villiers Vindicator O/NBR from No. 5 R.A.F. Experimental Squadron based at Boscombe Down. The Ministry of Supply Identification Numbers on the atomic weapons are MOS/bd/654/Mk V. and MOS/bd/655/Mk V. There are also U.S.A.F. Identification Numbers in such profusion and of such prolixity that I will not weary you with them. This aircraft was on a NATO training flight with a crew of five and one observer. It carried sufficient fuel for ten hours' flying at 600 m.p.h. at a mean altitude of 40,000 feet. This aircraft, together with the two atomic weapons, is now in the possession of this organization. The crew and the observer are deceased and you have our authority to inform the next-of-kin accordingly, thus assisting you in preserving, on the grounds that the aircraft has crashed, the degree of secrecy you will no doubt wish to maintain and which will be equally agreeable to ourselves. The whereabouts of this aircraft and of the two atomic weapons, rendering them possible of recovery, will be communicated to you in exchange for the equivalent of £100,000,000 in gold bullion, one thousand, or not less than nine hundred and ninety-nine, fine. Instructions for the delivery of the gold are contained in the attached memorandum. A further condition is that the recovery and disposal of the gold will not be hampered and that a free pardon, under your personal signature and that of the President of the United States, will be issued in the name of this organization and all its members. Failure to accept these conditions within seven days from 5 p.m. G.M.T. on June 3rd, 1959 — i.e. not later than 5 p.m. G.M.T. on June 10th, 1959 — will have the following consequences. Immediately after that date a piece of property belonging to the Western Powers, valued at not less than the aforesaid £100,000,000, will be destroyed. There will be loss of life. If, within 48 hours after this warning, willingness to accept our terms is still not communicated, there will ensue, without further warning, the destruction of a major city situated in an undesignated country of the world. There will be very great loss of life. Moreover, between the two occurrences, this organization will reserve to itself the right to communicate to the world the 48-hour time limit. This measure, which will cause widespread panic in every major city, will be designed to hasten your hand. This, Mr. Prime Minister, is a

single and final communication. We shall await your reply, every hour on the hour G.M.T., on the 16-megacycle waveband.

Signed S.P.E.C.T.R.E. (The Special Executive for Counterintelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion)

— Thunderball



There is an auxiliary page describing how the ransom is to be delivered, by parachute to a location on Mount Etna, along with the usual threat about no retaliatory measures or else.

The drop zone is in Sicily. How are the British supposed to keep the Italian government from putting patrols of alpini or carabinieri in the area, or their somewhat ominously named *Reparto Sabotatori Paracadutisti* ("Saboteur Parachute Section"), their airborne special forces unit at that time. And how are the jolly lads of SPECTRE supposed to detect that SAS patrol hiding in a layup in the mountains? Never mind if don Tommasino, on a tip from Michael Corleone, happens to have some men prowling around there.

They are also talking about moving twenty thousand standard (400 troy ounce) gold bars. Each one weighs about twelve and one-half kilograms, so we're looking at moving 250 tons. Over the surface of Mount Etna? This was the same sort of objection that the various mobsters made to Goldfinger when he proposed robbing the Fort Knox gold depository. His solution involved convoys of semitrailer trucks. The Kentucky State Police would have fun. (Since Goldfinger seemed more to have been more interested in devastating the American gold reserve, this proposal seems more to have been for show.)

The cause has been identified, since the letter from SPECTRE included serial numbers. A RAF nuclear bomber disappeared on a training mission. Something of a live-fire one, since the bomber had actual working nuclear weapons on board.

Now M. has a different bee in his bonnet. There was a vague radar signal indicating that the bomber may have turned south from its course to the west. It may have headed for the Bahamas. So, instead of deploying a horde of investigators, he is sending one trusted and skilled man.

Bond steps out the front door to go off on the assignment but Things Happen; there is a spectacular automobile accident right outside the headquarters of the Secret Service.

Count Lippe had been disabled and unable to fulfill his assignment on time. He decided to get revenge on the man who had burned him; the SPECTRE leadership had decided that he was unreliable and should be eliminated. Things had literally come together in front of the building, with no one having any idea of the overall context. And on this dubious note Bond goes back to his flat, packs, and orders some real food. His housekeeper is relieved that things are back to normal.

The theft required some good fortune and someone with a keen eye for a man on the make. The man on the make being *colonnello* Giuseppe Petacchi of the *Aeronautica Militare* (the Italian Air Force). Petacchi was a go-getter, having been qualified as a pilot in the *Aeronautica Nazionale Repubblicana* (the Italian Saló Republic's air force) by the time he was eighteen, then having engineered his defection to the Allies with a German Focke-Wulf FW-200 Kondor and a load of new German mines after killing the German pilot and navigator. This gave him a leg up in post-war Italian aviation, leading to his current post.

But he's bored. He wants money, fine things, and women. So when someone offers all three, he's attentive. The plan is simple enough, he will assassinate the crew of the RAF bomber he is being an observer on (bit repetitious there), fly the plane to the Bahamas, and ditch it near there. Which goes off to perfection. Except, of course, when the rescue crew meets him and declares him surplus to their current needs. One good turn deserves another.

The bombs are removed and transferred to their new vehicle, which is somewhat more comfortable, the *MY Disco Volante* ("flying saucer"). Her commander is also an Italian. Emilio Largo is a large powerful man and a high-ranking person in SPECTRE. He had begun in the black market in Naples, gone into various other criminal enterprises in that part of the world, all without having fallen afoul of the authorities, and finally joined up with Blofeld.

The *Disco Volante* is as striking as her owner; the yacht is a hydrofoil, which makes the name not inappropriate for its evocation of speed. The cover story for their presence is that Largo is the boss of a treasure hunt, looking for Spanish treasure among the islands. (This was before the "Bermuda Triangle" became so prominent.) With the bombs loaded on board the *Disco Volante*, the German nuclear-weapons scientist who will work on installing a functioning fuze is informed and Largo takes off for Nassau.

He seems to have a good reason for making haste, above and beyond his cargo. The next chapter introduces the lovely, spirited, and adventurous Domino Vitalli. We see her stepping into a store and trying to buy the worst cigarettes they have. She wants to have an impetus to give up smoking. Another customer has a relevant comment: "My name's Bond, James Bond. I'm the world's authority on giving up smoking. I do it

constantly. You're lucky I happen to be handy." (So that's where that self-intro in the movies came from!)

Naturally there was nothing coincidental about this meeting. Bond was looking for a way into Largo's confidence, and in Flashmanesque measure decided to get acquainted with his mistress. He is thoroughly impressed with Domino. In his book *The James Bond Dossier* (1965) Sir Kingsley Amis discusses the portrayals of women in the series. He highlights the independence and indeed forwardness of the women, and Domino is quite an example of such. And Bond is drawn to her, even as he knows the wilderness of mirrors she is entrapped in.

For now, however, he has to let her go back into the wilderness, as he has to pick up his gear. Under the terms of the deal between the Service and the CIA, they will provide equipment. (This was the UKUSA agreement, which also included the security services of Canada and Australia, but Fleming doesn't mention that.) Then he meets the courier.

When last the readers then had seen what was left of Felix Leiter, CIA operative, he was dumped on a doorstep with the note, "HE DISAGREED WITH SOMETHING THAT ATE HIM", having been fed (partly) to sharks in *Live and Let Die* (1954). Bond had thought Leiter was retired and working for Pinkerton's. So did Leiter, but the CIA recalled him and sent him to Nassau because he could work with Bond. (I suppose there was also the matter of the Anti-Pinkerton Act, passed in 1893 after some scandalous work done by the "We Never Sleep" people on behalf of the government, which specifically forbade the US Government from hiring Pinkerton's or other private detective agencies; nothing to do with Birdy Edwards's mysterious disappearance.)

They have lunch, with some comments on pretentious menu descriptions and lousy food, then get down to business. One item Leiter has is a Geiger counter concealed as a camera. With this item, Mr Bond of New York and his lawyer drop in on the *Disco Volante* to see about a property. The current renter, Mr. Largo, is effusively helpful, even offering to show off his wonderful new boat. He lovingly explains how she works and discusses his treasure hunt, and how his partners are coming in to see the climax. (An infodump, but Fleming justifies it.)

However, there is no sign of excessive radioactivity on board. On the other hand, there's a lot of space on board they didn't see. Baffled, Bond and Leiter withdraw to consider their next option. They do some checking and find that one of Largo's comments just isn't so, which puts him even more under suspicion. They go off to discuss the matter.

This requires another comment on the good things of life, or how bartenders fiddle with the liquor content of a martini in order to boost revenue. The martinis are dry, but

nothing is said of "shaken, not stirred". From there they adjourn to the casino. Leiter gets in a bit of a dig when he says, "Then we'll go along to the Casino and see if Mr. Fuchs or Signor Pontecorvo is sitting besides Largo at the blackjack table."

Emil Julius Klaus Fuchs (Agent CALIBER) had just been released after doing time for atom-bomb espionage. Bruno Pontecorvo had defected to the Soviet Union in 1954. Both were British spies for the Soviet Union. Bond was in sort of a trap there as Julius and Ethel Rosenberg (Agent LIBERAL and his wife "who did not do work") had been executed, Harry Gold (Agent GOOSE) was still in prison, David Greenglass (Agent CALIBER) probably still couldn't get a passport, and the others such as Teddy Hall (Agent YOUTH) and Russell McNutt (Agent PERSEUS) could not be publicly discussed then, as VENONA was still classified.



The last time Bond went to a casino he ended up gaining an understanding of what Christian Gray wanted to do to Ana (*Casino Royale* (1953) — the initial American title was *You Asked for It* which was also the title of a syndicated TV show that did requests from the viewing audience: "And now, you're going to see Secret Agent Jimmy Bond sliced in half by a laser — because *You Asked For It!*"). This time will be a little less abusive.

Bond gets into a game of *chemin de fer* with Largo, manages to win, and quits when he's ahead. Domino, who has become curious, takes him away so Largo can get his luck back and proceeds to provide some interesting information. For one thing, her name isn't really Vitalli; it's Petacchi. She has a brother, Giuseppe, who is an officer in the Italian Air Force, but wants to have the finer things in life. Small world.

While everyone else is busy, Bond decides to do a reconnaissance of the underside of the *Disco Volante* with the other Geiger counter. He finds out that Largo's crew has security, some of the local fauna is also aggressive, grenades are a bait that all fish rise to, and nearly Bond, too. Recovering quickly, he gets back and gets the news from Leiter.

Largo's associates are a remarkably closed-mouthed and suspicious lot. Except for one nervous fellow, who looked familiar. Leiter

asked a couple of questions and then remembered why the man looked familiar; he was an East German nuclear scientist who had defected to the West, then gone off on his own.

This man was introduced in the earlier chapter, at the meeting of Blofeld's associates. In fact, it seems that the "associates" are the rest of Blofeld's central committee. This seems more than a little strange, but from what we've seen Blofeld is rather casual with the lives of his subordinates.

(The underwater reconnaissance was contrasted, at the time and later, with the inspection of the Soviet cruiser *Ordzhonikidze* in Portsmouth harbor in 1956 by British diver Lionel "Buster" Crabb, GM. Crabb disappeared and was presumed dead; since he was in poor condition due to excessive smoking and drinking (hadn't been to Shrublands) that might not be surprising, but some extraordinary claims were put forth, ranging from defection to termination.)

In the morning, Bond and Leiter go out to where they estimate the bomber was ditched. They are lucky and find it fairly soon. The bodies of the crew are in the bomber, except for Petacchi's, which is on the ocean floor nearby. Largo takes the cue from his boss. Bond takes the man's identification disk and watch, for delivery to the next of kin.

Who has an owie. Domino was swimming with an aqualung and managed to get some sea-egg spines in her foot. She can't get to them anyway, much less with the tank on her back. Fortunately this kind man she met the other day happens to show up, and with a little rough work he extracts them. She has a very ready way to reward him and it's fortunate they weren't interrupted.

However, he has some bad news. He shows her her brother's identification bracelet and tells her how he got it. Domino is now disillusioned about Largo. Bond makes her an offer; take one of Leiter's hidden Geiger counters on board the *Disco Volante* and see if there is any radiation belowdecks. She is upset enough to do it.

Meanwhile, the reinforcements have arrived. And here Fleming's research falls down. The Navy has sent their latest Polaris-missile submarine, the USS *Manta*. Nope. Polaris-missile submarines were named after famous Americans, attack submarines were named after fish. Thus, in Edward Beach's *Cold Is the Sea* (1978), the Polaris-missile submarine was the USS *William B. Cushing* and the attack submarine the USS *Manta*. (I suppose he had read *Thunderball*.)

Bond gets the tour (Fleming did a lot of research, and it shows, and when he slipped up it also shows), and comments that they will have to send help. The captain of the *Manta* rallies every man who knows how to use scuba gear. What, no UDT on board? The nearest "valuable property" is the missile tracking base on Grand Bahama, and Bond has concluded that Largo will plant his first bomb there.

Largo has some other issues to deal with.

It seems that Signorina Vitalli was prowling around the yacht with a disguised Geiger counter. Not that it'll matter, they can plant the bomb, and are going to head to Grand Bahama to do so, but he has a few questions to ask. And with the help of the hot end of a cigar, he proceeds to do so to Domino. He has all the time in the world and can lead the men out when the boat gets to its destination.

The *Manta* finds the *Disco Volante* anchored near Grand Bahama, and Bond leads out the frogmen team. The SPECTRE team is pre-occupied and they don't notice the ambush. Some really nasty underwater fighting ensues.

Finally, however, Largo has Bond cornered, out of ammunition (speargun harpoons), and is about to deal the fatal blow when . . . he gets shot in the back. By Domino, who has slipped her bonds, put a swimsuit on, got an aqualung, and is out to get back at her tormentor. Why she bothered to dress at all is an interesting question. A wetsuit would have covered over those burns, which must be hurting. Sir Kingsley understood Domino.

Domino as his mistress while having her brother assassinated. From his general attitude the latter is more likely, since we see other examples of his extreme self-confidence. It seems likely that if SPECTRE had stuck to middle-range revenge and extortion, eventually if not sooner Blofeld would have decided to do something about him, or that he would not try to take over. (The FidoNet Evil Overlord List stemmed from a *Saturday Night Live* skit where the Bond villains were selling a book titled *What Not To Do When You Capture James Bond*.)

Blofeld is physically somewhat protean, as his physical appearance in this novel does not match his appearance in the next two in which he appears, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963) and *You Only Live Twice* (1964). (Perhaps his having been played by several different actors was appropriate.) He seems to find plastic surgery essential, but losing 50 kilograms weight in the year and a half between the settings of the novels (*Thunderball* in May-June 1959 and *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* in September 1961 to January 1962) would seem to be rather stressful on the system. Did he go to Shrublands?

For some reason I did not read *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* when it came out. I only did so recently. An interesting point is that there is a gap between Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of that book, and it is established that *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962) takes place in that gap.

The origins of this book are somewhat more muddled than those of the usual Bond book. In 1958, a friend of Fleming's named Ivar Bryce, apparently not concerned about *Climax!*: "Casino Royale", began talking with Fleming about doing a Bond movie. They roped in writer and director Kevin McClory and lawyer, ex-NFL football player, and OSS veteran Ernest Cuneo. Fleming, McClory, and British screenwriter Jack Whittingham wrote a screenplay that didn't sell. Fleming then adapted it into this novel.

McClory sued. After various legal entanglements, they came to some sort of an agreement. The movie (1965) is credited as "based on a story by Ian Fleming, Kevin McClory, and Jack Whittingham". McClory got a producer credit, though Cubby Broccoli and Harry Saltzman did the actual work. And if you like oddball trivia, Henry Ford II is an extra in the casino scene. (His Bacon number is 3; Ian Bulloch was in this movie and *Black Sunday* with Joseph Oliveira who was also in *Cop Car* with Kevin Bacon. Henry Ford I, his grandfather, also has a Bacon number of 3.) McClory was also in the casino scene.

Fleming seems to have independently discovered Tuckerization. This novel has some, somewhat less rancorously than the origin of the villain's name in *Goldfinger* (1959). Fleming disliked the architect Erno Goldfinger, who in response sued. In this case, Fleming had an Etonian classmate and fellow member of Boodle's club (the original of Blades in the books) named Tom Blofeld. Presumably he got

Tom's permission first. There is also a reference to a property owner named Bryce, presumably after Ivar.

The movie made Domino and her brother French instead of Italian, which makes a little more sense given which country actually had nuclear weapons, but the change was mostly because Claudine Auger played Domino. (Another actress considered for the role was Raquel Welch.)

The movie *Never Say Never Again* (1983) is based on the original screenplay treatment by Whittingham. Because of the rights issue, nothing from *Thunderball* could be used in the *James Bond 007: Role-Playing In Her Majesty's Secret Service* game (1983).

Thunderball
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0059800/>

Never Say Never Again
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086006/>

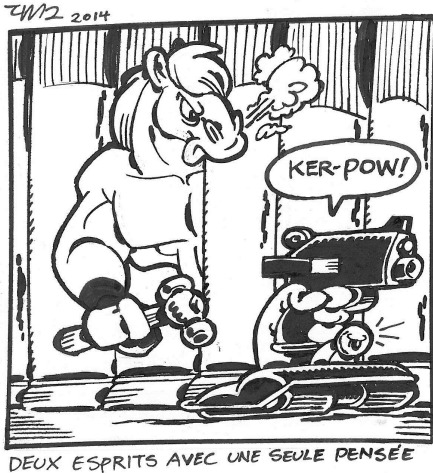
SOME MYSTERIOUS QUESTIONS

by Joe

A few weeks ago, I posted this question on the International Skeptics Foundation message board:

I occasionally read murder mysteries. I found them less interesting once I discovered true crime books, which had more complex crimes, more plausible and yet outré murderers, and so on. Nevertheless, for the record, I would like to know if anyone has ever encountered:

- 1) A murder where the victim invited several people, all of whom disliked him, to his house for a weekend, and the only solution to the crime required a minute-by-minute reconstruction of the activities of everyone there, during which several Dark Secrets and Old Malfeasances were unearthed.
- 2) A murder where the Obvious Killer was proven more and more guilty by every clue discovered during the course of the investigation, only to be exonerated by a surprise discovery.
- 3) A murder solved by a cynical hard-boiled hard-drinking private investigator who had solved a large number of them, mostly allegedly committed by passionate young trophy wives against their aging rich husbands.
- 4) A murder where the suspects, all with comparable motive, equal access to the murder method, and alibis of about the same plausibility, banded together to hire a private detective to solve the crime, even though he would inevitably find one (or more) of them guilty.(i)
- 5) A murder that was solved by an exotic talented amateur — a kindly nun with a cat,



When Bond comes to, he is in a clinic in Nassau. Leiter comes in and gives him the news; the bombs have been recovered, the surviving team arrested, the background of SPECTRE exposed. The next target was Miami. Blofeld has vanished.

The doctor comes in next and informs Bond that he has utterly exhausted himself and desperately needs a long rest (probably not at Shrublands). Domino is about as bad off, but fortunately in the next room. Bond drags himself out of bed and staggers there. She makes a demand: "You are to stay here. Do you understand? You are not to go away." Since he promptly falls asleep on the floor that's an easy order to obey. Feeling safe, she falls asleep herself.

Largo comes across as either profoundly careless or incredibly arrogant, having

a 3' 7" dwarf, a priest/monk/rabbi, a cat! (ii)

- 6) A trial where the defendant's attorney got the real killer to blurt out a confession on the witness stand. (iii)
- 7) A murder solved by the officers of one particular police district, all of whom were bizarrely eccentric if not outright deranged. (iv)

Notes:

- i. Okay, so I've read too many Nero Wolfe books.
- ii. Not to mention Anthony Boucher. Also, I can't say "high government official", because Sir Isaac Newton did solve counterfeiting cases when he was Master of the Royal Mint (yeah, he really had a license to coin money). [Reference *Newton and the Counterfeiter* (2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #4)]
- iii. And seen too many episodes of *Perry Mason*.
- iv. Or *Hill Street Blues*.

The only one that had an answer at all was item 5, where someone cited the case of Joseph Francis "Joe" Karam, a New Zealand rugby player who spent fifteen years investigating the David Bain murder case there and got Bain's murder conviction overturned. Then they went back to talking about booze.

There was one well-known detective who would, I think, count as a "grotesque" as in item 5; the Mexican-American investigator Jay J. Armes (né Julian Armas), who has two artificial hands because of a stupid trick with explosives he did when he was eleven. But Armes is best known for a child-custody case.

<http://www.thrillingdetective.com/eyes/arnes.html>

What we have is that mystery novels have their own set of rules. There is the usual consideration that the protagonist has to be principal operator of the plot, which given the various skills required to investigate a crime makes such a person uncommon.

A real-life note: There are many detectives who are forensic profilers. However, what I have been seeing is that it is a skill that many profess to but few do well. Thus profilers fingered the Unabomber as a working-class guy who had a neat little house in a suburb with an elaborate workshop. The Beltway Sniper was an angry white guy (with a white van). The Centennial Park bomber was a would-be cop. Theodore John Kaczynski,

Ph.D., John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo, and Eric Robert Rudolph were greatly advantaged by this. As for Larry Jewell...

IT ENDS WITH A FLICKER

Review by Joseph T Major of

MY REAL CHILDREN

by Jo Walton

(2014; Tor; ISBN 978-0765332653; \$25.99; Tor (Kindle); \$9.99)

Max Alben was a desperate man, for the world had been ravaged by famines since the Blight of 1976, when a nuclear missile on a test flight had aborted into the Brazilian jungles, causing a string of plagues that had destroyed foodstocks worldwide. Fortunately, as the great-grandson of Giovanni Albeni, the only man who could travel through time and remain conscious, he could be sent back to then to make the mission go properly.

Mac Alben was a proud man, the father of two children, in a world where sterility had become the norm for humanity ever since 1976, when a nuclear missile on a test flight had detonated in the Pacific, causing a new and more powerful form of mumps. Fortunately, as the great-grandson of Giovanni Albeni, the only man who could travel through time and remain conscious, he could be sent back to then to make the mission abort.

As you can see, these two versions of the same person have somewhat conflicting goals, and "It Ends With a Flicker" (*Galaxy*, December 1956) by "William Tenn" [Philip Klass] as they try to cancel each other out. (*Moonraker*, anyone?) Walton may have read this, or given her background, read the dreary book the author forbade anyone to criticize, Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975).

But our point of view character might not be reading either. She is in a nursing home, suffering from dementia, and when she can remember, wondering why the place around her, and her memories of the past, never quite seem to settle down.

And then, we find Patsy Cowan, back in the threatening period between the wars, trying to decide what she wants to do with herself. Walton's evocation of that different country that is the past is quite incisive and moving and proper — she would never have decimalised currency in 1940's Britain, and to rub it in, Patsy goes through the intricacies of shillings and pence, not to mention the many other historical coins that made up the pound.

Then Patsy, deciding to be known as "Pat" from now on, falls for a man, they make elaborate plans for their future, then abruptly he needs to get married, and they have a very unsatisfactory love life...

Then Patsy, deciding to be known as "Tricia" from now on, recalls how much her life changed when she decisively returned her fiancé's engagement ring. And here we go, back and forth between time-lines.

Tricia has a rewarding life living with another woman; she becomes an expert on the

culture of Italy and she and her lover Bee go back and forth, dodging the difficult lives of "lesbos" in a repressive culture, concerned about the profligate use of nuclear weapons, even though their children grow up happily enough in their diverse careers. Finally, as those around her that she loved die of radiation-induced cancer, she gradually sinks into dementia at the end of her long and limited life.

Pat settled down to an unhappy married life, feeling unfulfilled personally, even though her children grow up happily enough in their diverse careers. But her marriage winds down, her husband turns out to be gay but that's not at all illegal, and she gradually sinks into dementia at the end of her long and limited life.

Neither of these is our time-line, and one certainly wouldn't want to live in Tricia's. Pat's has a moonbase!

The parallels and differences are noteworthy, and again, Walton brilliantly evokes the era. For all that their lives are different, both Pat and Tricia are members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, though one would think that in Tricia's world, it would have enough bad examples. (But one thing, which Walton may not have intended, is that the CND could never imagine that their efforts for peace would climax when "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen." And no, they would be discarded once they had filled their purpose of subjugating the Main Ally of the Main Adversary; those people had not a jot nor tittle of gratitude in them.)

Some of the events smack of fantasy, as when the Soviet response to the Prague Spring is live-and-let-live, or when the Egyptians consent to allow Israeli cargoes to transit the Suez Canal. At least the two of them don't get into BDS (which is not BDSM, though more savage).

Finally, the declining old woman in the nursing home, not quite sure if she is Pat or Tricia or both or neither, switches from "It Ends With a Flicker" to "Time and Time Again", and her younger self plunges into the unknown...

PILGRIM PROJECT

Review by Joseph T Major of

MOONLAB:

Humanity's First Home Away from Home

by J. L. Avey

(2014; Amazon Digital Services; \$1.00)

This is a straightforward history of NASA's first lunar base. It just happens to be entirely fictional. It's not a novel, like Mark Whittington's *Children of Apollo* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1), Hank Searls's *The Pilgrim Project* (1964; discussed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #2), or Martin Caidin's *No Man's World* (1967), it's more of a history from its own time-line, a spaceflight equivalent of Sobel's *For Want of a Nail* (1973).

As a history, it recounts the moonbase

missions; having nothing as dramatic as Caidin's lunar war or even Whittington's sabotage, though the slow progress of knowledge and advance of the competing programs are the sort of thing to alarm the souls and warm the hearts of *Rocket Boys* staring into the *October Sky*.

The program continues until a shock, though there are promises of a future. This is the sort of AH a space geek would want to read.

A VIEW TO A KILL

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE JAPANESE OBSERVER

by M. F. Smith
(1989, 2012; Amazon Digital Services;
\$2.99)

It was suggested that the U.S. facilitate the presence of an observer team from the Japanese to view the TRINITY atom bomb test, in order to impress them with the power that was about to be unleashed upon them. This seemed like a good idea until it was pointed out that the test might not work, which would not help security. Further consideration indicated that the observers probably would not be able to convey to those in authority there the capabilities of the weapon.

But this book, written by the son of a Counter-Intelligence Corps member who served in Japan, has very little about the observation and a great deal about the effort to cover it up. Indeed, Smith seems to have taken his cue from the sort of cynical thriller that proliferated in the seventies and after, in the aftermath of the Church Commission, as he describes how the Secret Powers killed off one witness after another.

And the main plot is about tracking down the witness and disposing of him. Add to that the portrayal of the naive young officer who abruptly becomes a cynical burned-out professional, and there may be a bit of presentism involved here.

The portrayal of the chaos of post-surrender Japan and China is not without interest or realism, just as the observer's description of the ineffectual nature of his observations is true to type. All the same, this seems more a cynical Vietnam War style book, when a concentration on American attitudes similar to that shown for Japanese ones might have made for a better story.

THE MODERN VAMPIRE

Review by Joseph T Major of
VAMPIRE TRINITY

by Joey W. Hill
(2010; Berkley Trade; \$15.00;
Penguin Group (Kindle); \$9.99)
"A Vampire Queen Novel"

Towards the end of his life, Aleister Crowley was taking a lethal dose of heroin on a daily basis. This was his maintenance dose; he was not getting high.

His smack-up was a residue of his high life, where he had gone through women, leaving them broken and occasionally pregnant, disciples, leaving them imbued with the belief that they had contact with Higher Powers, and money. (The history of Wicca must and tries not to deal with the consideration that it was founded in quite recent times by two men who wanted women, drugs, and money.)

What happens is that such indulgences, while initially stimulating, soon become surfeited, and require greater quantities in order to initially create pleasure, but in the end merely to survive.

I was thinking of this when reading this story of fearless vampire hunter Gideon Green, his profound one-night stand Anwyn, and the vampire master Daegan Rei. They get involved in what ought to be **Hot Sex™** but is unsatisfying, in and among a nonstop orgy of vampires and their slaves. Beyond that, there is a hierarchy of vampires that is so powerful that it seems impossible that it would not rule the world, then drain and exterminate all humanity, and consequently become extinct itself.

Above and beyond that there is a problem in that this represents an example of the modern literary obsession with death, of which the other is zombies of equal power and potency, with equal problems of destruction and extinction. There is something troubling in this desire.

This is the sixth book of a series of twelve.

GRAND PERFORMANCE

Review by Joseph T Major of

DEATH EX MACHINA

by Gary Corby
(2015; Soho Press;
ISBN 979-1-61695-519-9; \$26.95;
Penguin Random House (Kindle); \$14.99)
"An Athenian Mystery"
<http://www.garycorby.com>

Euterpe glowed with the praise. She said, "Did you really like it? I can also do a fake orgasm —"

— *Death Ex Machina*, Page 290

Now that we know that Meg Ryan is descended from Diotima's mother, we can begin to understand the depths that this book descends into.

It's the Dionysia and Athens *has* to put on a good show. So when things start going wrong at the theater during the rehearsals of Sophocles's new play *Sisyphus*, Pericles sends his chief investigator, also the only investigator in Athens, to find out what's going wrong and stop it.

Things don't stop going wrong. First, one of the actors falls and gets a compound fracture. Then another actor is found hanged from the crane. Since he was playing Thanatos, the god of death, there is a curious propriety about it all, except that it shouldn't be happening at all.

The amusing thing is that a considerable part of the action takes place on the same day, the ninth of Elaphebolion. Except that there are

several days that are the ninth of Elaphebolion, since in order to have the crime investigated before the Dionysia starts, Perikles has them stop the calendar. (Nicolaos could in the afterlife commiserate with Decius Caecilius Metellus, who had to live through the *Year of Confusion* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V.9#3)) Before the end of this investigation, Nicolaos and Diotima will discover the power of beer, the speed of a well-kept trieres, the problems of the acting profession, and what an annoying younger brother can do.

Indeed, there is a substantial amount of historical information in this work; the nature of metics, the structure of the theater, the way in which a warship was commissioned and maintained, the organization of a funeral . . . and all of it is relevant and explained without any "As you know, Rhobertos . . ." The case is even resolved in the good old mystery way when all the suspects are assembled and Nicolaos lays out the solution — and the murderer confesses! But he's immune, so Nicolaos and his associates have to figure out how to publicly pin it on him.

This is both fun and informative. And, if you want more, the next book, *The Singer from Memphis*, is coming out May 17, 2016, wherein Nicolaos and Diotima escort this guy named Herodotus to Egypt to do a little research in the middle of a war zone. Don't step on my blue suede buskins . . .

SAVING CORPORAL HASTINGS

Review by Joseph T Major of

LOST IN SHANGRI-LA:

**A True Story of Survival, Adventure, and
the Most Incredible Rescue Mission of
World War II**

by Mitchell Zuckoff
(2011; Harper;
ISBN 978-0061988349; \$26.99;
HarperCollins (Kindle); \$12.99)

. . . But really, they did it because every human being has a basic instinct to help each other out. It might not seem that way sometimes, but it's true. If a hiker gets lost in the mountains, people will coordinate a search. If a train crashes, people will line up to give blood. If an earthquake levels a city, people all over the world will send emergency supplies. This is so fundamentally human that it's found in every culture without exception. Yes, there are assholes who just don't care, but they're massively outnumbered by the people who do. And because of that, I had billions of people on my side.

— Andy Weir, *The Martian: A Novel*

By 1945, the island of New Guinea was a rear area in the great Pacific War. So much so that the Army Air Force could provide recreational flights for base personnel, to see exotic uncontacted places such as the giant

valley in the middle of the island that had just been discovered by the outside world.

Every mission has an opportunity for error, and when the C-47 *Gremlin Special* had one or two, the result was catastrophic. As a result, a diverse band of ordinary but special people found themselves dragged into the center of an uncharted jungle island.

Zuckoff provides almost mind-numbing detail about the lives of the survivors, and those who didn't survive, and some have complained, but the past is a different country and so many are as lost in it as they are in the interior of New Guinea.

Corporal Margaret Hastings was one of a group of Women's Army Corps soldiers who wanted to see what this unusual land was like. She was also the only one who survived more than a day after the crash. With two men, one of whom had lost his twin brother in that crash, she struggled to not emulate their example.

The survivors set out to get to someplace where they could be seen. They had no idea of the people who lived there, except what had been seen from the air. Somehow, they managed not only to get to a place where they could be seen, but actually were seen. (A standard feature of survival narratives seems to be the bypassing ship/plane that utterly ignores any attempt by the survivors to make contact.) The rescue mission then kicked into high gear, with first a supply drop, then a rescue group.

This last was equally unusual, as it consisted of Filipino parachutists commanded by an American officer whose father had forbidden him to go into the Philippines. Said ban was handed down when they met on the shores of Leyte, when Father was commanding anti-Japanese guerillas and Son was coming on a submarine to join him.

Once the rescue mission and the survivors had linked up, the survivors began receiving some kind of medical treatment. They were in such bad shape (the word "gangrene" comes up) that it seems hard to believe they were surviving. Then the problem arose of how to get out.

The natives were friendly, or at least not hostile. If this seems odd, the community there was one where there was constant low-level war between different groups. They would only fight during the daytime, and there would be rain delays. These exotic intruders were thought bothersome — because they kept on handing out shells, which the locals had no use for whatsoever.

The commander had a choice for a march out of the valley, either north into a region of headhunters or south where there were some ten thousand bypassed Japanese troops. He preferred south because the Japanese were a known factor. However, they managed to find another option.

The Army Air Force had developed a system for snatching a Waco cargo glider off the ground. Assuming the glider survived the

landing in the valley, that was the way out. Surprisingly, when they tried it, it worked. (Zuckoff keeps on referring to helicopter extraction. Were there any that had any capacity in that area at that time?)

And so the diverse group of rescuees and rescuers returned to America. Margaret Hastings had a temporary fame, but it passed. The others faded into comparative obscurity.

Some readers found the book padded with background. For an exposition of Mark Watney's point about the "basic instinct to help each other out", this is a thorough recounting.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There was a total eclipse on **March 9-8, 2016** (the path crossed the International Date Line), visible along a path through Sumatra, Borneo, and Celebes. The maximum totality was 4' 9", at sea in the Pacific Ocean at 10° 6' N., 148° 45' E. It was part of Saros 130, which began on August 20, 1096 and will end on October 25, 2394.

The next one will be an annular eclipse on **September 1**, visible in Africa along a path through Gabon, Congo, Zaire, Tanzania, and Mozambique, and Madagascar. The maximum eclipse will be 3' 6", at 10° 42' S. 37° 48' E., in Tanzania. It is part of Saros 135, which began on July 2, 1331 and will end on August 07, 2593.

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

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

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

TIME TO RETIRE?

By Joe

On April 12, 2016, Yuri's Night will turn 55; the fifty-fifth anniversary of the first manned spaceflight, Vostok-1, by Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin (Юрий Алексеевич Гагарин). He died in 1968; many of those who followed closely after have also passed on. Who are the dozen surviving senior astronauts/cosmonauts?

John Herschel Glenn, Jr.

Born July 18, 1921 (94 years old)
Mission **Mercury-Atlas 6**
Call Sign "Friendship 7"
February 20, 1962

Valery Fyodorovich Bykovsky

(Валерий Фёдорович Быковский)
Born August 2, 1934 (81 years old)
Mission **Vostok 5** (Восток-5)
Call Sign "Yastreb" ("Ястреб" [Hawk])
June 14-19, 1963

Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova

(Валентина Владимировна Терешкова)
Born March 6, 1937 (79 years old)

Mission **Vostok 6** (Восток-6)

Call Sign "Chayka" ("Чайка" [Seagull])
June 16-19, 1963

Alexey Arkhipovich Leonov

(Алексей Архипович Леонов)
Born May 30, 1934 (81 years old)
Mission **Voskhod 2** (Восход-2)
Call Sign "Almaz" ("Алмаз" [Diamond])
March 18-19, 1965

John Watts Young

Born September 24, 1930 (85 years old)
Mission **Gemini 3**
Call Sign "Molly Brown"
March 23, 1965

James Alton McDivitt

Born June 10, 1929 (86 years old)
Mission **Gemini 4**
June 3-7, 1965

Frank Frederick Borman II

Born March 14, 1928 (88 years old)
Mission **Gemini 7**
December 4-18, 1965

James Arthur Lovell, Jr.

Born March 25, 1928 (88 years old)
Mission **Gemini 7**
December 4-18, 1965

Thomas Patten Stafford

Born September 17, 1935 (85 years old)
Mission **Gemini 6A**
December 15-16, 1965

David Randolph Scott

Born June 6, 1932 (83 years old)
Mission **Gemini 8**
March 16-17, 1966

Eugene Andrew Cernan

Born March 14, 1934 (82 years old)
Mission **Gemini 9A**
June 3-6, 1966

Michael Collins

Born October 31, 1930 (85 years old)
Mission **Gemini 10**
July 18-21, 1966

Glenn, the last survivor of the Mercury Seven, has been the Senior Man in Space since the death of Gherman Stepanovich Titov (Герман Степанович Титов) on September 20, 2000. The order is:

Yuri Gagarin: 1961-1968

Alan Shepard: 1968-1968

Gherman Titov: 1998-2000

John Glenn: 2000-present.

How Great Science Fiction Works

The Great Courses
Professor Gary K. Wolfe
Roosevelt University
\$269.95. \$79.95

Review by Robert S. Kennedy

Over several years I have purchased a number of The Great Courses. (Actually, too damn many.) A few months ago I made a vow not to purchase any more until all the ones previously purchased had been watched. Then they came out with How Great Science Fiction Works and the vow was broken.

Gary K. Wolfe is not only involved in SF, but is a Professor of Humanities at Roosevelt University. This course consists of four discs containing 24 lectures of approximately 30 minutes each.

Wolfe defines what Science Fiction is and is not and it's not fantasy or horror unless the horror is rooted to real science. He starts with Mary Shelley and the Birth of Science Fiction. Wolfe continues with subjects such as its Treatments of History, Utopian Dreams, the Pulp, The Golden Age, Spaceships, Mars, Invasions, Aliens, Feminism, Cyberpunk, Space Opera, and ends with The Future of Science Fiction.

I have only a couple of problems with Wolfe. A few times he feels it necessary to make political comments which are unnecessary and detract from how the lectures in which they occur are presented. I guess he just can't help himself. Second, in commenting on the New Space Opera he never mentions writers like John G. Hemry/Jack Campbell or David Drake. These are minor complaints on my part. What I don't understand is why they have not given this course more publicity. Recommendation: **Highly Recommended!** You can access information about the course at:

www.thegreatcourses.com/courses/how-great-science-fiction-works.html

It is available as a DVD, Video Download, Audio CD, and Audio Download. (The DVD comes with a Course Guidebook.) All The Great Courses I've watched have all been excellent. **Do Not** ever pay full price! This DVD is listed as \$269.95. I paid \$79.95. Watch for sales as they always have courses on sale.

WORLDCON BIDS

2017 NASFiC
San Juan, Puerto Rico
<http://www.sanjuan2017.org/>

Valley Forge
<http://www.valleyforge2017.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
Fort Worth

2022
Chicago
Doha, Qatar

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

2025
Perth, Australia

Steve Davidson, the publisher of *Amazing Stories*, put forward a series of proposals for the re-invigoration of WorldCon. What he wanted to see was the national conventions of various countries all be recognized as parts of "WorldCon". The U.S. would have to set up its own national SF convention, preferably in one location. (He chose Chicago. I wonder where he lives?) The WorldCon would be bid for among the national conventions.

Now this isn't an outsider; he has a fannish pedigree going back to the seventies, and reading the stuff before that. He organized the Banquet at SunCon, which indicates he has contact with conunning. (Now if he had organized the Crab Feast at Bucconeer . . .)

In his proposal he left out one little bit, though. Is he going to propose it at the Business Meeting at MidAmeriCon?

NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS

Novel

Raising Caine, Charles E. Gannon (Baen)
The Fifth Season, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit US; Orbit UK)
Ancillary Mercy, Ann Leckie (Orbit US; Orbit UK)
The Grace of Kings, Ken Liu (Saga)
Uprooted, Naomi Novik (Del Rey)
Barsk: The Elephants' Graveyard, Lawrence M. Schoen (Tor)
Updraft, Fran Wilde (Tor)

Novella

Wings of Sorrow and Bone, Beth Cato (Harper Voyager Impulse)
"The Bone Swans of Amandale", C.S.E. Cooney (Bone Swans)
"The New Mother", Eugene Fischer (*Asimov's* 4-5/15)
"The Pauper Prince and the Eucalyptus Jinn", Usman T. Malik (Tor.com 4/22/15)
Binti, Nnedi Okorafor (Tor.com)
"Waters of Versailles", Kelly Robson

(Tor.com 6/10/15)

Novlette

"Rattlesnakes and Men", Michael Bishop (*Asimov's* 2/15)
"And You Shall Know Her by the Trail of Dead", Brooke Bolander (*Lightspeed* 2/15)
"Grandmother-nai-Leylit's Cloth of Winds", Rose Lemberg (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies* 6/11/15)
"The Ladies' Aquatic Gardening Society", Henry Lien (*Asimov's* 6/15)
"The Deepwater Bride", Tamsyn Muir (*F&SF* 7-8/15)
"Our Lady of the Open Road", Sarah Pinsker (*Asimov's* 6/15)

Short Story

"Madeleine", Amal El-Mohtar (*Lightspeed* 6/15)
"Cat Pictures Please", Naomi Kritzer (*Clarkesworld* 1/15)
"Damage", David D. Levine (Tor.com 1/21/15)
"When Your Child Strays From God", Sam J. Miller (*Clarkesworld* 7/15)
"Today I Am Paul", Martin L. Shoemaker (*Clarkesworld* 8/15)
"Hungry Daughters of Starving Mothers", Alyssa Wong (*Nightmare* 10/15)

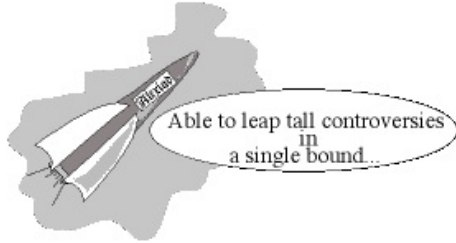
Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation

Ex Machina, Written by Alex Garland
Inside Out, Screenplay by Pete Docter, Meg LeFauve, Josh Cooley; Original Story by Pete Docter, Ronnie del Carmen
Jessica Jones: AKA Smile, Teleplay by Scott Reynolds & Melissa Rosenberg; Story by Jamie King & Scott Reynolds
Mad Max: Fury Road, Written by George Miller, Brendan McCarthy, Nick Lathouris
The Martian, Screenplay by Drew Goddard
Star Wars: The Force Awakens, Written by Lawrence Kasdan & J. J. Abrams and Michael Arndt

Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy

Seriously Wicked, Tina Connolly (Tor Teen)
Court of Fives, Kate Elliott (Little, Brown)
Cuckoo Song, Frances Hardinge (Macmillan UK 5/14; Amulet)
Archivist Wasp, Nicole Kornher-Stace (Big Mouth House)
Zeroboxer, Fonda Lee (Flux)
Shadowshaper, Daniel José Older (Levine)
Bone Gap, Laura Ruby (Balzer + Bray)
Nimona, Noelle Stevenson (HarperTeen)
Updraft, Fran Wilde (Tor)

Letters, we get letters



From: **Rod E. Smith** February 3, 2016
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY
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stickmaker@usa.net

Timothy Lane states: I recall that during the Falklands War modern ships were described as eggshells with triphammers — fragile but powerful. This is one reason I was skeptical when John Birmingham had modern planes using modern weapons make short work of the *Tirpitz*. Why would such weapons be effective against armor that none would ever expect to encounter?

I think that was part of Birmingham's presentation of the present being ever so much better, not only technologically but morally. My breakpoint was when the Abwehr agent stole the laptop full of decisive information, got it straight to Berlin, and they immediately believed it and put everything into production. This grossly overestimates the capabilities of German espionage.

— JTM

After the Falklands War there was a joke going around among fans of the *Iowa* class ships. "What does the Captain of an *Iowa* do after getting hit by an Exocet? Have two ratings sent to the impact site. One with a broom and dustpan. One with a can of grey paint and a brush." A mild exaggeration. :-)

However, since that conflict antiship weapons have, indeed, become more potent. In part because they are also expected to take up the shore bombardment role previously filled by the big guns of battleships. Some modern cruise missiles could definitely wreak major havoc on a traditional battleship.

Otherwise, RAEBNC.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** February 4, 2016
6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA
19149-2128
darrells@comcast.net

Not surprised to see our old comrade

Timothy Lane railing "homosexual militants" threatening "religious freedom." He is not an unintelligent fellow, although I never took him for a Fundie, but he is apparently assuming the old Puritan view that "religious freedom" means "the freedom to practice my religion and persecute your wickedness." This latter is defined as "anything I don't approve of." Indeed, you can find 17th century Puritans complaining that their need to persecute is a matter of their individual conscience. To a Puritan, allowing a Quaker to persecute unmolested was a violation of conscience.

Of course the Constitution was written to protect us from precisely that. It intentionally does NOT give Christian fundamentalists the right to force their ideas on others. If you don't like homosexual marriage, don't marry a person of the same gender. But you have no business telling the gay couple next door what they can do. The government should not intrude into citizens' lives to this extent. Religious ideas cannot be given the force of law, or no one is safe. This is an important thing to keep in mind, particularly in these dangerous times as numerous would-be Nehemiah Scudders line up in the Republican primaries calling for outright theocracy. I am myself married in the conventional manner, to a woman, Mattie Brahen, whose book review appears in this issue. Homosexual marriage does not threaten OUR marriage. That is because neither of us is gay.

I would certainly agree with you that the '50s was Heinlein's best period. If you're used to his later, blathering books, it can be quite a shock to go back and see how good a writer he was before he went bad. *The Door into Summer* is fascinating as an "obsolete future" since we've now lived well beyond both of the "future" dates in it. One of the more dated, embedded assumptions in it, common to '50s SF, is that World War III is inevitable, so it is better to just get it over, like a painful visit to the dentist, before the "real" future can begin. This seems remarkably callous in retrospect. A few million people die horribly, but that is just a necessary speed bump on the way to a better tomorrow. Heinlein even at his best, it seems, could be glib with his throw-away ideas.

Inevitable WWII stories weren't just in the field. I listed a number of them in my review of *Turtledove's Bombs Away* (2015; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 14 #4) dating back to Philip Wylie's *The Stolen A-Bomb* (1949). He wrote two more, getting darker and darker until *Triumph* (1963) in which the U.S. is totally destroyed. (The Soviet nuclear weapons technology and delivery systems in the books seem to have been grossly exaggerated.)

— JTM

I have to agree, too, with Richard Dengrove

on the Fermi Paradox. I don't see any paradox, just hugeness. There are billions of galaxies. There are billions of stars in each galaxy. We now know that planetary systems are common. If there were, say, a dozen space-faring civilizations in our own galaxy, but limited by the speed of light, there is no reason to believe any of them would ever find each other, or us, except by the most extraordinary coincidence. If other galaxies are the same, that means billions of civilizations throughout the universe, all of them perfectly isolated by distance and time. A friend suggested (jokingly) that maybe this is evidence of the existence of a god, who in his wisdom spaced us all far enough apart that we don't fight with one another.

From: **Joy V. Smith** February 6, 2016
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

I enjoyed the reviews and con reports; and, wow! The high tech article covered a lot of territory with its roads taken, etc.!

Re: *Gentleman Jole* and *The Red Queen*. I've ordered that and am still waiting for it, but now I'm not sure how much I'll enjoy it. It depends on how it's handled. (Btw, I always appreciate a heads up; I'm not one of those people who want to be completely surprised — and sometimes annoyed....)

I think it would make a nice closure for the series, ending where it all began.

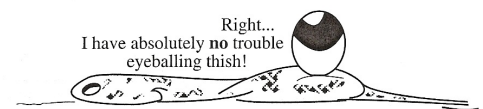
— JTM

And I enjoyed Sue Burke's letter. I like learning about other places and cultures and what they're thinking. And all the best to AL du Pisani and his new career path. To Timothy Lane, re: *Sink the Bismarck!* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*: Are you aware that Robert Mitchum sang "Thunder Road", but that version wasn't used in the movie? It's on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdwUpxkfSJw>

(Other versions are available too.)
Thanks for another great issue of *Alexiad*.

From: **Sheryl A. Birkhead** Dec. 1, 2015 —
February 6, 2016
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD
20882-3422 USA



How did the year zip by so fast? Ali well, can't undo it so better make the best of the

month (almost) left!.

Sorry to hear that the legal action (s?) have not proved fruitful — keep trying!

Jumping ahead a bit I already have *The Martian* firmly ensconced on my list. Just recently they have changed the manner in which the list is displayed and I find the new system a bit distracting (i.e. look at the cover picture next to the listing and see that each listing now takes up at least 5 times the space and just text used, too). But, the information is there and I just double checked to be sure my memory wasn't faulty about *The Martian* on the list. Interestingly, I just tried to use TM to stand for the movie (no space between the letters) and this application persists in turning that into the small trademark (™) symbol. I gave up and just put a space between. I have seen and heard quit a few comments about the movie. All seem positive — including the ones that say . . . *well-it didn't stink*.

Yes, those big draft breeds have a lot to admire. Granted they need more of just about everything (to the point that specialty companies seem to make the draft horse shows circuit so owners find appropriate gear (etc.) as a regular shelf item instead of costly specially made items if they can find a merchant willing to cater to the big ones. Of course there is the downside in that the big breeds tend not to live as long as the lighter breeds. Stalls etc have to be bigger and bedding . . . well, you get the idea. I'll look forward to the Anheuser Busch commercial in the Super Bowl — even if I'll still be working — I am sure I'll find it online eventually.

Have you ever read *The Horse the Wheel and Language* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #4)? Lots of interesting stuff on prehistoric horses.

The “local” horse Rescue (Days End Farm Horse Rescue — DEHFR) has a “new” mascot — Barney a retired Police horse . . . a Belgian — so the big breeds are ridden. A friend just bought her third horse (the first two are now retired and just having a great existence!). I am trying to remember what cross Indy is (haven't seen her yet) — but she is young. I think she just turned 5 or 6? and is from a breeder who specifically crosses the draft with lighter . . . She is green broken only and apparently has the same cool head of the second horse Bally (a warm blood) and totally different from the first horse, Patrick — a thoroughbred ietired off the track.

It sounds as if InConJunction won't make the cut for Leigh (Kimmel) next year. Sad, since it seemed as if they enjoyed the con, but there were enough simple glitches and (I am guessing) angst about making expenses to make this a con that might not make it on to the schedule next year.

Ah..and on to Sasquan!

It sounds as if a better time (both personally and financially) was had in

Spokane. Thanks for letting those of us who could not be there get a bird's eye view!

And on to Archon — which also sounds as if it was enjoyed.

Interesting comment about conventions in the future. I agree. Before internet fandom it seemed that fans “usually” helped out a con or two in whatever way they could (or were needed to). Being a fan was an active hobby. Those who just want to attend don't view it the same way and ‘slowly that is’ going to take its toll. We'll see who the SMOFs will be in the future, or if there will be any.

Uh, I was not paying close attention, so this might be a spoof, or something I misheard — but I think I heard that there is about a 90% chance there is another hidden room in (I think) King Tut tomb. I think there was some mention of the political problems with someone getting to open it — oh, I see you mentioned this in your comments — so guess I was more or less correct after all!

Thanks for running the list of Worldcon and NASFiCs. I hope anyone truly considering a NASFiC bid is prepared to move quickly — that is not a lot of lead time! I see that Puerto Rico is bidding for the NASFiC — and that Milt Stevens also mentions it. I tend to agree about the probable weather. Their site shows a nifty (Brad Foster I believe — but I can't figure out where the accent marks are to give the name of them!) mascot and says July 2017 — not the actual days . . .

Ghood hints from Trinlay (Khadro) identifying potential strokes.

I had heard that Lloyd was let go — now I hope we continue to get some updates on addressing the illegalities involved.

For some of the Hugo categories — as long as the actual definition is elastic and no one questions nominations, then they will make it to the short list and onto the ballot. What I think is, eligible is not the issue, but one is naive in thinking that paperzine readers can now get their nominations onto the ballot — at least not without some massive definition changes or a lot of politicking. My preference is that the definitions be changed (and of course I'd prefer they come closer in line with my personal definitions — ah well).



(Yeeouch Feb 4, 2016 — how did that happen?) Waay too many things happened (tug of war between my back and several cases of LRS — the LRS won — still ache), no back

ups ever occurred so when my thumb drive with all my business records for 2015 died — um er — I am re-creating everything for tax time, part of the tree next door (the one I warned the homeowners about) fell straight down- so damaged only my fence-rails and posts — I decided I ought to just replace them even though the neighbors are actually responsible (negligence) — since they had certified notice and photograph that there was a risk of damage . . . and they chose to do nothing — then the HUGE tree on the back of the property fell and demolished the fence (not mine and woven wire not rails) — but since I never told them about it . . . and the generator died — so I just prayed that the blizzard would not have any power outages or water build-up in the basement — fingers crossed, but no time to even think about letters.

So, I am trying to re-create where I ended up — all I can find is November, so hope I have not misplaced anything. I really want to get this mailed. “Spare” time is at a premium. I still have a lot of bills, snow, and tax records to re-create.

I need to be sure *Star Wars* is on my Netflix list — yup — for whenever it wends its way there.

As I get further and further away from having any kind of a membership in the Worldcon, I have no feel for deadlines and don't get responses form any of the publications committees (etc.) — when I email to ask if they are interested in fillos. Since I am not getting any PRs, I just forget about it all. Now that I can't nominate or vote, things will get more and more forgotten. I'll still get irritated at nominees, but now won't have any “legal” standing/recourse (not that simply being a member of any kind actually makes any difference anyway).

Like I said to Lloyd Penney, fandom is gafiating from us; we're seeing a transition from participation to consumption, at giant professionally managed cons with something for everybody and nothing for us.

I'll be following the job trials (literally???) and tribulations for both Lloyd and JTM as both follow their paths to satisfaction after job terminations. Ghood luck to you both.

I continue to wish Lloyd Daub would put out his own zine.

He used to, all those years ago, but it was the clubzine *MSFire* and he left.

— JTM

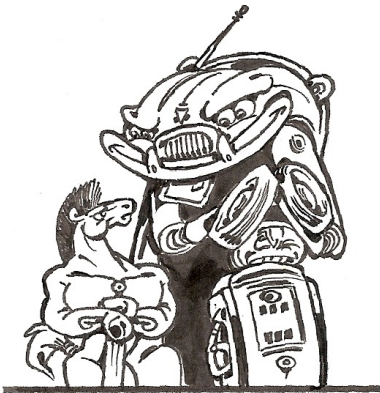
I know there must be a lot more I need to say, but since this has sat here (literally) months — need to get this done and out.

As always (along with my apologies!) thank you.

From: **Milt Stevens** February 9, 2016
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley,
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miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* #85, Joseph mentions the impact of gerrymandering. I recall the observation that there is less change in the US House of Representatives than there is in the British House of Lords. One of the classic examples of local gerrymandering was for the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. It was said that Zeb Yaroslavsky's district contained every synagogue in Los Angeles. That was a little bit of an exaggeration, but not by much. He did have territories on both sides of the Santa Monica Mountains. His overall district looked like something that only could have been produced by ill considered dynastic unions.

I live in a conservative district. I used to refer to our representative as our hereditary landsman. That was about it. I've lived in Simi Valley for 24 years. In that time, I've never seen a placard or sign for a Democratic candidate. I don't recall the Democrats as even having a candidate for the house on the ballot. As strange as it may seem, our congressional district isn't the result of gerrymandering. Simi Valley is a contiguous area ringed by hills. There isn't any other way to organize a district in these parts.



I was surprised by the Academy Award nominations for best picture this year. Science fiction doesn't usually make it to the best picture nominations. In the case of *The Martian*, it is a worthy choice. The story is basic and dramatic. The production values were first rate and the pacing was excellent. Then there was *Fury Road*. Somebody must have been in bed with somebody else. Whole crowds must have been in bed together. The film can't have been a financial success, since I saw it on television within a year of its release date. As car chases go, it was a good car chase. There weren't any characters to speak of. The film exercised my eyeballs but not my emotions. I never cared what

happened. *The Force Awakens* would have been a better choice for best picture than *Fury Road*.

I did get around to reading *Uprooted*. It was a bit different from the run of the mill fantasy. The novel made me think of Jane Eyre. This in turn made me think of the sorcerer as looking like Orson Welles. That image seemed to work rather well. This novel might be a Hugo contender.

Oh boy. "Agnieszka hovered over the bed where the Dragon was taking his final breaths. She leaned closer, hearing to his last words. 'Rosebud,' he said, and dropped the magic globe with the tiny tower of sorcery..."

— JTM

As far as a name for Planet Nine is concerned, I'd go for Osiris. Since the Egyptian pantheon is more ancient than the well known Roman pantheon, it seems more remote, and Osiris is the god of the hereafter.

From: **Lloyd Penney** February 10, 2016
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON
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<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 85, always a pleasure to see and read. As far Groundhog Day goes, our own groundhog, Wiarton Willie, says there will be six more weeks of winter. Not bad, Willie, we've hardly had any winter so far, so six more weeks of chilly and no snow would be fine. There aren't many Canada geese around here, although they usually congregate in our parks here.

I sympathize with your current plight, Joseph. I am still looking for more work, as well, and I know my government benefits can last only so long. My only interview has been on the phone, and was unsuccessful. Fanzine fandom is fading, even though I still get enough zines to give me reason to write 250 locs a year. (Did you get mine from last issue?) Fandom as we know it is fading, too. The fandom that is succeeding ours doesn't resemble ours, and I have to wonder what kind of community they have, if any. We are lucky to have found additional and related interests that have allowed us to have some fun, and make younger friends, good to have in our later years.

Jack Robins... he had written an article on being one of the last Futurians, and it was being printed in current N3F publications when his death was announced.

There is only Dave Kyle left of all that band. Even the mysterious Rudolph Castown has passed away:

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=476961>

— JTM

Your article on Asra Nomani's book shows that there is still a lot of prejudice against Muslims, to the point where they are being called today's target, with Jews being called yesterday's target. Some may disagree with that... with the Canadian government accepting and bringing in about 25,000 Syrian refugees, the US government is concerned about this, and some readers are fearful we're admitting rapists, but the refugees are screened, and most are comfortable here, and many are moving forward with good jobs, and a few, their own businesses.

I think I might have done all I can here, Joseph. I hope there is justice for you, and if not that, at least some new employment. I hope I find something new soon, too. It shouldn't be this difficult to make a living. This is why there is often talk of an annual guaranteed income in many European countries. I'd rather make my living the usual way, but I can see why this is happening. Take care, good luck, and see you next issue.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Feb. 18, 2016
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria,
VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

I just finished an *Alexiad* and I am onto another. This is one is shorter but sooner. I hope they don't become weekly or daily. I remember when someone wanted to take an APA of mine from a monthly to a two or three week basis. Didn't fly. The APAs rose up in arms. However, your zine Joe will fly because you're the editor.

What else flies? Not only aircraft but government officials. They fly as part of the revolving door, which you speak about, Joe. After high governmental officials leave their jobs because of politics or retirement, they can make a mint by becoming high priced lobbyists.

That has been true even in the agency I retired from, the Food and Nutrition Service (Food Stamps, School Lunch and WIC, etc.). Even though it is known in many circles as the armpit of the government, one high governmental official there, long ago, didn't bother to wait. In less than a week, he had a job paying six figures.

So much for high government officials. How about writers? In your commentary on "A Different Sort of Anthropology," you grouse about idiot plots. Plots that treat either the heroes or villains as idiots because the writer does not feel like thinking up a more intelligent plot.

I was guilty of that in my one and only novel. One example occurred when the hero lands at an airport, and is to embark on a secret mission. Though this mission is a very important, he is given a guard of rather poorly armed refugees. Of course, they are all killed off by the villains, except for him. Funny thing about that. Fortunately, my turkey was never published.

However, Joe, you give examples of seasoned writers who make characters idiots so

that they don't have to think about the plot. At least, I hope it is due to writing over fast; and not because some of our laureates are actually bad writers.

On the other hand, Rod Edmiston, in "The Joy of High Tech" promotes a smart view rather than a dumb one. His paratime corps would not only provide security for its agents, but would provide the past and future equivalent of nuts and bulbs.

Rod points out that new technologies usually take over from older technologies because users see advantages in the new technology. Air rifles could not shoot as far as the new repeating fire arms. Bubble storage on computers could not hold as much information as a chip. Recently, vinyl records have been replacing CDs to a small extent, because the sound is better.

I suspect, however, the big reason why one technology wins over another is how close the paradigm in inventors' and developers' minds is to that technology. What is their predilection for finding particular solutions. Is it the Sun going around the Earth; or the Earth going around the Sun? In my mind, whether a technology prospers generally depends on it being developed in the right place at the right time – with the right paradigm.

'If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work.'
Sherlock Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet*

I have no idea how much scientific proof there is for this. I. was inspired to make this comment after remembering Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Despite a gap of many decades, memories of the book still sound right to me.

I suspect, with the right paradigms, we could have colonies on the Moon right now. On the other hand, with another paradigm, they would be centuries off.

We go from the ebb and flow of technology to a more commercial topic. As opposed to being the preserve of scientists and engineers, one that is on the mind of the masses, and even some beyond the masses. One even *Alexiad* is talking about.

What I have in mind is the new *Star Wars* movie, *The Force Awakens*; specifically, that people criticize Carrie Fisher for getting old. The complainers should get over it. Almost forty years have passed; what is she supposed to look like? So none of us are supposed to get old? At her age, all women are supposed to look like Cheryl Tiegs? Where are these people's brains – out to dry?

Carrie Fisher may have aged, but the post-World War II controversies continue like new. Unlike in a lot of such arguments, I am not going to state a disagreement. I am only going to ask a question.

Joe, in your comments to George Price, you say the atom bombing ended the war with

Japan. Do you believe the simultaneously Russian invasion of Japanese territories had any effect on the surrender? I am not saying, as some, that only one or the other had an effect.

The *Gyokuon-hōsō* ("Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War") says nothing whatsoever about the Soviet invasion. It does say:

"Moreover, the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is, indeed, incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. Should we continue to fight, not only would it result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization."

While the dropping of the atomic bomb had something to do with physics, I think whether duplicates are the same person has more to do with philosophy. Taras Wolansky claims that a copy of someone standing beside the original person cannot be the same person.



As I said, it depends on how you look at it. If your criterion is the sequence of their coming into existence, the answer is no, because the copy branched off the original. And thus is different. If your criteria is whether you interact the same way with the original and copy, the copy might very well be regarded as the same person. And thus is the same.

Then there would be problem with naming the original and copy. Just as there might be a problem with naming, the new ninth planet, ten or fifteen times Earth's mass. Alexis Gilliland mentioned that planet as a possibility; and, Joe, you responded that it should be called Yuggoth. It is totally appropriate as the planet Lovecraft imagined at the edge of the solar system.

The problem is that astronomers prefer mythological characters over modern literary characters for naming planets. Usually Ancient Roman, although I hear one of the planetoids beyond Pluto received its name from Inuit mythology. To meet the criterion of Roman Mythology, someone I know likes, the name Proserpina, the Roman name for Persephone, Pluto's consort.

"Proserpina" is the name of the tenth planet of Sol in James Blish's *Cities in Flight* series.

— JTM

With the Ancient goddess Proserpina, I end this letter. I will expect the next *Alexiad* at any time, and, having whatever size that time frame permits. When it comes, I am sure to read it with gusto, and give my opinions on all and sundry.

From: **Tom Feller**
TomFeller@aol.com

March 15, 2016

Thanks for sending the zine. Sorry to hear there is no improvement in your job situation.

We have been watching Rachel Bloom in *The Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. It is a weekly musical-comedy with original songs that actually have something to do with each episode's plot. We enjoy it.

The Academy liked *Mad Max: Fury Road* a lot more than we did.

I kept my new year's resolution to read more recent short fiction and nominated the ones I liked the most for the Hugos. I ignored all the recommendation lists and voting slates.

You couldn't take seriously a list/slate that rated a collection of rejection slips as worthy and the second volume of the Heinlein biography as unworthy.

—JTM

Timothy Lane compares the movies *Sink the Bismarck!* and *A Night to Remember*, but forgot to mention that both starred Kenneth Moore, who became quite familiar to American audiences a few years later as one of the stars of *The Forsyte Saga*.

From: **John Hertz**
236 S. Coronado St., No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057

March 15, 2016

I'm big on Better to promote the good than rail against the ill. I'm for fanzines. The way to have them is to make them. You publish a good one, so I'm for you.

You may, dare I say it, be less than fair to Uncle Don, who got Art, Morrie, Ross, and himself to the Moon because he knew there was no use waiting for anyone else. He also, like others of us who achieve the seeming impossible, saw resources and chances which folks around were neglecting.

But how will the UN Air and Space Museum deal with the case of the First Man to Step on the Moon, SS-Sturmabannführer Hans Helmstucker, and his epochal First Words: „Ein kleiner Schritt für Mann, ein riesiger Sprung für die arische Rasse."

I'm for Lafferty's *Okla Hannah* (1972). As his best novel I think it must compete with *Past Master* (1968); as his best at novel-length, also with *The Fall of Rome* (1971). He was a strange dreamer, a strong drink.

Of course losing interest in philosophy is an act of philosophizing.

That Moroccan pigeon-meat & almond pastry topped with sugar and cinnamon sounds like bistihlah. I always burn my fingers.

Have you read *Saturn Run* (2015), by John Sandford and Ctein?

You might appreciate this item I saw on a blog:

Help me! I am trapped
in a Haiku factory.
Save me, before they

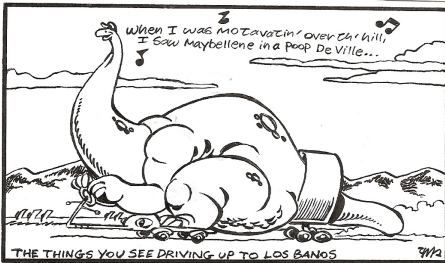
<http://www.scribendi.com>

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 26, 2016
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Thank you for Vol. 15, No. 1 (January 2016), Whole Number 85.

I read *Welcome to Night Vale* by Joseph Fink & Jeffrey Cranor (2015). But, as of now I have not listened to the podcast. The following will only make sense and/or be of interest to someone who has read the novel and/or listened to the podcasts. I know where King City is located, driven by King City, stopped in King City, eaten in King City, bought gas in King City. It's there off the 101 freeway. I know that it is there and will watch for it the next time I drive North on the 101 freeway.



I hope their realization of it is better than in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #6), which showed an abysmal ignorance of Louisville (i.e., having Bowman Field, which was then on the edge of town, five miles outside of it).

Time and Time Again by Ben Elton (2014/2015) was read and enjoyed. The ending in the next to last chapter was not what was expected. I can't quite see that what I perceive would be the result of what happened is what the author means to happen. Comments from anyone who has read the novel will be very much appreciated.

The Martian DVD was obtained from the library. It was just as outstanding and emotional as when I saw it in the movie theater. It did not receive even one Oscar. An added shame on the Academy.

Here's a plug for a couple of interesting books by Brian Kilmeade and Don Yeager — *George Washington's Secret Six: The Spy Ring that Saved the American Revolution* (2013) and *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War that Changed American History* (2015).

I enjoyed your review of *Gentleman Jole and the Red Queen* by Lois McMaster Bujold (2015). I was about half way through the novel when four books previously ordered from the library arrived and Bujold's book had to be placed aside. I agree that it seems to have the feel of being the last Vorkosigan novel. Maybe she is tired of the stories or maybe she has just run out of ideas. But, I certainly hope that is not the case. What I don't understand is why the big fuss over Admiral Jole's 50th birthday. I can hardly even remember my 50th. ☺

Publishers can want too much of the same thing. H. Beam Piper didn't want to write another Fuzzy novel, he wanted to write about yet another era of the Terrohuman Future History. But the publisher wanted a new Fuzzy novel and then a new editor sabotaged it and left him stuck with the unsaleable manuscript of a third volume.

— JTM

"The Joy of High Tech" by Rodford Edmiston was enjoyable as usual. It has long been my claim that if we have problems with nuclear power plants why don't we ask the French?

Joe: *Galaxy Quest* is a fine movie and I have watched it several times. I'm not surprised that *Galaxy Quest* won the Hugo. I've always felt that it won because the fans saw themselves in the movie.

Taras Wolansky: "Little planets" it is. We must be politically correct. Yes, I guess that Rick Campbell will need a pseudonym when years from now he starts writing Science Fiction. Joe's suggestion of Richard Henry sounds good. ☺ Thank you for your good wishes. But, I really do not expect to live long enough to see Campbell's Science fiction. In the meanwhile I'll enjoy his Military thrillers.

From: **George W. Price** March 27, 2016
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February *Alexiad*:

In Reviewer's Notes, Joe sees a pattern explaining why space development is so slow: The government awards a project to a firm that supported the administration. Mission creep makes the project "ever more complex and troubled," which delays it. And then a new administration comes in, cancels it, awards a new project to its own supporters, and the cycle starts all over.

Contrast this with the progress in aviation when I was a child. From 1930 to 1940 fighter planes went from open-cockpit biplanes with fixed landing gear and a top speed of about 180 mph to streamlined monoplanes hitting 350 mph. No doubt the technology was so much simpler back then — but perhaps also because there was less bureaucracy and paperwork. I haven't researched it, but my impression is that private aircraft companies designed new warplanes, and then offered them to the government, which had little to do with the design phase beyond setting basic performance requirements. There were also a lot of competing companies, not just a few huge military contractors.

And it's not only military aircraft. Airliner design now seems to be a "mature technology." The last radical innovation was the jet engine. We are still riding airliners designed fifty or so years ago — the workhorse Boeing 737 went into service in 1968. Improvements are only incremental. Might government regulation and bureaucracy have something to do with that?

Rodford Edmiston in *The Joy of High Tech* says that "Taste, politics and individual whims all influence what becomes the standard. In the US electric trolleys were mostly destroyed by buses — a largely political decision — but today light rail is making a comeback in some places."

No, it wasn't largely political; there were compelling reasons for getting rid of the old streetcars that I grew up with. And I say that despite being somewhat of a streetcar buff who really prefers them to buses. (I can regale you with odd facts about Chicago's erstwhile huge streetcar system. For instance, we had the longest straight car line in the world. The Western Avenue route ran from Howard Street to 111th Street — 22.5 miles in a dead straight line.)

Yes, trolley cars are nicer to ride than buses, and they don't pollute — but the disadvantages are overwhelming.

To start, building and maintaining tracks and overhead power wires is expensive.

One reason streetcars are nicer to ride is that, being on rails, they do not swerve from side to side like buses. But that virtue has a fatal defect. Precisely because the cars are confined to the rails, they cannot go around obstacles. When the

tracks are blocked — which on a busy street will happen frequently — a car can't swerve to the other side of the street, or detour onto a different street — it is stuck right there until the obstacle is removed. The cars coming along behind it are stuck too. Likewise, if a car breaks down, those behind it cannot pass it.

Buses are also more flexible in their routing. We can change a route simply by putting up new signs, without having to lay new tracks and tear up the old ones.

Streetcars were fine when the other traffic was mostly horse-drawn wagons. With heavy motor traffic, streetcars are practical only when they have their own separate right-of-way. "Light rail" is making a comeback principally where it can enjoy a private right-of-way without being mixed with autos and trucks. And here is where politics does play a huge part: the political elites think light rail is "cool"; there would be far fewer light rail systems if the taxpayers could not be milked to pay for the additional costs compared to buses.

"Cool" and "nostalgia" are significant in transport proposals. Every few years there is another announcement that lighter-than-air craft are about to come back big. They require enormous ground crew, must avoid storms, and generally are niche craft; very useful in what they do, but only in certain fields (i.e. very carefully photographing Churchill Downs so as not to show the working-class neighborhood around it). And then there's the ever rebounding prospects of steam-engined automobiles.

Mr. Edmiston also recounts the history of the M-16 rifle, which started as a lightweight substitute for the M-14, to be used by troops such as artillerymen and truck drivers who didn't need a full-power infantry rifle.

We went through something similar in the previous generation, with the M-1 carbine. Most of my military service was at the Army Chemical Corps research headquarters in Maryland during the Korean War. My duties included reading battlefield reports of weapons effectiveness. The reports on the carbine were particularly damning.

The carbine was much lighter than the M-1 Garand that was then the standard infantry rifle, and it fired a .30-cal. cartridge that was more powerful than a pistol cartridge, but smaller and weaker than the Garand's .30-06 Springfield cartridge. It used 15-round or 30-round drop-out magazines; the Garand used 8-round clips. The carbine was intended for self-defense by support troops (just as the M-16 was originally).

On paper the carbine looked fine — lighter and handier than the infantry rifle, longer range than a pistol, and with a bigger magazine. In practice it was a disaster. What the troops reported was that it was too big and clumsy compared to a pistol, and also lacked striking power.

One incident was definitive: A Chinese soldier made a suicide charge against an American position. A trooper shot him several times with a carbine — and knew he was hitting him because he could see dust puff out of his jacket with each strike (and there was no body armor in those days). The man staggered but kept coming. Then another trooper shot him with a .45 pistol, and that put him down instantly.

ALT. TREK
ALT. TREK, THE
RATING GENERATION

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



The troops much preferred the M1911 pistol or the M3A1 submachine gun (the "greasegun") which both used the same .45-cal. cartridge. At close range those weapons had far more stopping power than the carbine. To be sure, the carbine was much more accurate at long range, but that wasn't what support troops needed. The consensus of the troops was that the carbine might be great for hunting squirrels and rabbits, but as a combat weapon it wasn't worth a pinch of shit.

On Mr. Edmiston's testimony, it looks like the lessons never get permanently learned and must be repeated in each generation.

Also, I wonder how much the "Not Invented Here" syndrome harms us. By all

accounts, the AK-47 is hands down the world's best infantry rifle. It's not the most accurate at long range. But it is very reliable and easily maintained, which is far more important in actual combat. (Drop an M-16 and an AK-47 in a mudhole, and see which one can be stripped, cleaned, and reassembled first.) But the U.S. won't even think of adopting the AK-47, because it was Not Invented Here.

Arthur T. Hadley, author of *The Joy Wagon* (1958), a novel about a computer running for President that Damon Knight commended in his *In Search of Wonder*, reported in his critique *The Straw Giant* (1986) on what the troops called "blip krieg", the employment of complicated high-tech arms that never worked in the field. (Hadley died on November 25, 2015.)

— JTM

Time to go another round with Sue Burke. She says I seem to have forgotten the 9th Amendment: "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." I'm familiar with it. The question is, how do we determine what these other rights are? We got into this discussion because the Supreme Court discovered a right to same-sex marriage that nobody had ever heard of before, and I denied that the 9th Amendment allowed the Court to invent new rights.

My take is that the 9th refers to rights that already existed — and that everybody knew existed — when the Constitution was adopted, but that are not specifically stated in the Constitution. For obvious example, the right to hold slaves. The 9th effectively forbade Congress from simply passing a law to abolish slavery. Abolition required amending the Constitution. At the time, everybody understood this.

Likewise, there is little mention in the Constitution of the right to private property in general, so the 9th means that Congress must not casually pass laws violating the rights of private property as those rights already exist in the several states.

Relevant to our argument, the Constitution says nothing about marriage, so the 9th means that marriage is left to the states to regulate as they choose without federal interference. That's why Obergefell was wrongly decided. The Supreme Court should have said that it was up to the people of each state (acting through their respective state governments) to choose whether or not to allow same-sex marriage, and that it would take a constitutional amendment to create a national right to same-sex marriage.

Ms. Burke's interpretation, as I understand it, would allow the Supreme Court to invent new rights out of nothing, unlimited by custom

or history or anything else. That certainly runs against my understanding of the Constitution — and specifically the Bill of Rights — as setting strict limits to the powers of the federal government.

From: **AL du Pisani** March 31, 2016
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I read Joe's note on the space program and promising vehicles that go nowhere. It prompted me to dig out some 20 year old paper printouts of Usenet posts that I thought significant at the time, which I wanted to keep for a rainy day. Unfortunately, this did not go anywhere interesting in a short enough space, so I have not written my thoughts up. But the general gist was that there are certain ideas, technologies and proposals in spaceflight which dates back to the 1960's, but which nobody have taken anywhere. Or where it had been taken anywhere, it have been done under research agreements with restricted data release policies.

For instance, the aerospike engine. The base idea is more than 40 years old. But there have been limited development of the idea, not enough to see if the suspected advantages of the engine is real. There have been base technology demonstrations that show that the engine will work, and it had been proposed seriously as the main engine of the X-33 vehicle.

Unfortunately the X-33 vehicle had three separate areas in which the technology required was not at the desired level, and needed serious development. The engine was one. The program ran into difficulties in one of the other areas, and not much have come out of the program to indicate how much progress had been made on the engine, before the failure of the program. I am not aware of any serious proposals since then by the primary contractor which an aerospike engine features, so suspect that not a lot of progress had been made.

This morning I read that last year the US Department of Defense had provided money to a small company to investigate the aerospike engine, in annular plug configuration. Specifically, to see if the suspected performance improvement and altitude compensation actually work. I do not know how freely the results of this investigation will be available once completed.

There are other examples, but I do not plan to mention them now.

I was posting there too. I once said that we would live to see Cape Canaveral turned into the site of condos, the Center Spatiale Guienne turned into a Club Med, and so on. To which

one poster spoke of a jumpin' space program with dozens of launches from those places as well as Baikonur, along with a thriving private space industry with several companies. By the way, the Russian space budget has been cut 30% recently.



Since my last letter, the politics have been somewhat insane. First, a bit of background. After 1994, there was an independent investigative organization nicknamed the Scorpions. Among other things they investigated corruption. Unfortunately, they turned over too many rocks exposing ANC politicians, and in 2008 the ANC decided at their political conference that the Scorpions must go, and the Scorpions went. In their place a new organization was created, part of the police and under control of the Minister of Police, called the Hawks. And the Hawks have been very savvy to not bite the hand which feed them, and the number of high profile corruption case in which ANC politicians feature have dropped a lot.

Item: The leader of the Hawks does not seem to have any qualification for the job, other than party loyalty. So a civil society organization have launched a court case to find out what his qualification is and why he has been appointed in the first place. The organization's offices has recently be burgled, and the thieves made off with old computers and some paperwork.

Item: The South African Revenue Service (SARS) (think of it as similar to the IRS) had a unit investigating tax evasion by high profile people. Some of the rocks they turned over exposed corrupt ANC politicians, not paying taxes on bribes etc. The unit has been closed down, and a report from an audit firm is expected. However, a version of the report had been leaked, and it apparently follows the current Government line that the unit had been set up illegally, and had not had a mandate. Given that this is apparently the third version of the report, and that it apparently ignored the recorded history of the legitimate process by which the unit was set up, the report is generally considered a whitewash. Search term for those interested in following this up is SARS rogue unit.

Item: Pravin Gordan was in charge of SARS when the unit was set up. He then

became Minister of Finance, retired, and was recalled as Minister of Finance at the end of last year when our glorious President was in deep trouble after firing the then Minister of Finance and replacing him with somebody not known for his financial savvy. The Hawks have now decided that it is imperative that Gordan urgently respond to a questionnaire regarding the "rogue unit". This is widely regarded as an intimidation tactic. Most people are supportive of Gordan's response, namely ignoring the questionnaire and daring the Hawks to make anything of it.

"SARS" also means "severe acute respiratory syndrome". Were they meaning to imply that "We'll tax you until you choke."?

Item: The South African financial situation is in some ways dire and not sustainable. The Budget was widely considered to be the best indication as to how we are to survive. And Gordan received lots of adulation for the fine line he treaded in the Budget. Unfortunately, in my opinion all he did was to kick the can down the road. The difficult decision to cut spending on Government workers and welfare recipients was not taken. Instead an employment freeze was announced, in which unfilled positions will not be filled. While there was no income tax increases, there were a number of increases in fuel levies and general sin taxes. A new item has been placed into the sin bin: sugar. There will be a tax on sugar in drinks starting soon.

Item: Over the last couple of years the India based Gupta family have been prominent in investing in the South African economy. But it always seems to be in places where the return on investment is maximized by how close you are to the Government. And the Gupta family seems to be very close to the Government, especially our glorious President, Jacob Zuma. There had been the incident where a private jet of the Gupta family landed at a major Air Force base, apparently so that the people on board could attend a wedding.

Item: Earlier this year the current Deputy Minister of Finance told reporters that he had been offered the job of Minister of Finance, by a member of the Gupta family, about ten days before the great Minister of Finance shuffle. And a couple of other senior ANC politicians have come forward with similar stories, for other positions.

Where this is going to end up I shudder to think.

Come here to Kentucky. You already know how our political system works.

In other news: I finally got hold of the second volume of the Patterson Heinlein biography. And I found it fascinating. It caused me to reread *Glory Road*, and see a lot more than I did when I first read it, some twenty odd years ago.

I can also see why so many people want to ignore the Heinlein biography, since it shows a couple of interesting things in a new light, and not always to the advantage of the commonly accepted narrative. I wondered why it was released with so little publicity – I am tempted to say that the author dying shortly before the second volume was published was publicized wider than the release of the book itself.

I will probably go read a lot of Heinlein's books again, this time with more knowledge of the background of the times and situations he was writing in, and of what Heinlein tried to achieve.

I know what you mean. I may have to do a revised edition of *Heinlein's Children*, though there will not be that much in the way of revisions.

— JTM

I have recently moved into another area at work. I had high expectations at first, but it is not going as well as I had hoped. I hope that by persevering a bit things will go better.

As always, I am glad that I know fans in other places, and hope that I might meet some of you in person someday. It does not look like that someday will be soon.

From: **Sue Burke** April 1, 2016
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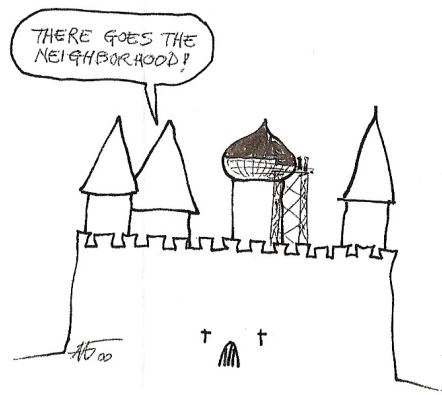
I'm pleased to share this news from the March 11th edition of *Publisher's Weekly*: *Fiction: Sci-Fi/Fantasy* – Sue Burke's *SEMIOSIS*, a novel of first contact, a multi-generational story about colonists on a planet where plants are the dominant life forms – and they see animals, including humans, as their pawns – to Jennifer Gunnels at Tor, in a nice deal, for publication in January 2018, by Jennie Goloboy at Red Sofa Literary.

I'm not entirely pleased with the publishing date, but fortunately I'm in good health. I've been trying to sell this book since I finished it in 2004, so I've learned patience. "Semiosis," by the way, refers to any means to convey meaning through signs, such as human speech and bees dancing in hives about flower locations.

The recent terrorist attack in Brussels has changed nothing here in Spain except for giving us heavier hearts. We were at terrorist alert level 4 before March 22 and remain at level 4 after it: high risk, which means there are police with very big guns in key locations, in addition to less obvious precautions. Spain has decades of experience with terrorist threats and has developed what security experts consider a model response. Basically,

it treats terrorism as a criminal activity overlapping with ordinary organized crime. Spain leads Europe in arrests and operations against terrorist groups, and in digital and virtual infiltration and cultivation of informants. It works closely with France and Morocco – and to the extent possible, with other European countries, but the European Center Against Terrorism "still has work to do," says the Spanish colonel heading it up. For example, countries can't easily share data about terrorists because they use different database software.

In Spain, both police and politicians have worked hard to define Islamist terrorism as a criminal rather than a political, ethnic, or religious phenomena, and the backlash against Muslims has been limited. A sign saying "Welcome Refugees" still hangs from Madrid's city hall, and Spain, under a conservative government, has agreed to accept more than 17,000 refugees, with no reconsideration after the Brussels bombing. The refugees are fleeing the terrorists, after all.



Spain's experience with terrorism started with the Basque separatist terrorists, who began killing in 1968 and, after relentless police work, officially ceased armed activities in 2011 after killing almost 1000 people. I have heard their bombs go off. Basque separatism from its beginning had close connections with the Catholic faith. Easter Sunday is considered its founding day, and due to its members' faith, even its terrorist arm long enjoyed tacit support from Basque churches until Pope Benedict XVI finally, and not easily, brought that to an end. Most Catholics, it seems, aren't terrorists.

Way back in my December LOC, I mentioned that Spain's parliamentary election on December 20 had given no party a majority, so they would have to compromise, negotiate, and reach agreements to create a new government. Foolish me. Since then, they have merely traded insults and refused to meet. Spain will probably have to hold elections again in June. The United States might have a new president – God bless America, please – before Spain has a new prime minister.

Taras Wolansky asks if Joseph de la Vega was related to Diego de la Vega. Well, no, but as a child I did enjoy the television show *Zorro*. The name *de la Vega* is more or less equivalent to "Meadows" in English.

He also asks if Syrian refugees will be taught that rape is not okay. They already know that, of course. Almost none of them were involved in the New Year's Eve riots in Germany, and every man there, from whatever origin, knew that, too. And Bill Cosby knew it was not okay to drug and rape women. And pederast priests knew it was not okay to rape children. But some men will do whatever they can get away with, and will rape, threaten, grope, and harass women and girls. This is why no-men-allowed subway train cars operate in Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Japan, and India. In some ways, all cultures and all religions are the same. None of them seem to be able to fully civilize all their men.

They have different definitions.

As for Robert S. Kennedy's surprise that *The Martian* won a Golden Globe for comedy/musical, I agree that it was neither, despite humorous and musical moments. However, I'm not as sure it will lose in the Hugos to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. I've seen them both: one was fun and the other was actual science fiction.

I also share his despair at proofreading. What helps me a lot are text-to-speech programs that read my writing to me. I hear things I could never see.

Regarding reading, my Kindle has suddenly started working with our home's wifi. It didn't before because that model of Kindle was not compatible with a Class C wifi router. None of the hardware has changed, and yet, suddenly, they have started cooperating. I'm pleased but baffled.

Finally, as you know, both Cervantes and Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, which is causing great excitement this quadricentennial year. Except that Cervantes was buried on April 23, so he probably died on April 22, and England at the time was using the Julian calendar, so Shakespeare died on the equivalent of May 3.

They could always have mentioned "Cardenio" by Shakespeare, based on a section of *Don Quixote*. And Hendrik Willem van Loon had Shakespeare and Cervantes (and Molière) over for dinner in *Van Loon's Lives* (1942). (Yeah, he invented *Meeting of Minds*.)

— JTM

Despite that, April 23 is World Book Day, according to UNESCO. Madrid will celebrate Book Night on April 22 with events across the city, and I'll be taking part in an international

poetry reading. If you're in town, drop in, and I'll buy you a drink.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Martin Morse Wooster, the same.

Mattie Brahen, Bruce Gillespie,

Arthur D. Hlavaty, Earl Kemp,

Patrick McCray, Rickey Sheppard, who got it.

DRAGON AWARDS

Dragon*Con has announced that it will hand out best of the year awards. The categories are:

Best science fiction novel
Best fantasy novel (including paranormal)
Best young adult/middle grade novel
Best military science fiction or fantasy novel
Best alternate history novel
Best apocalyptic novel
Best horror novel
Best comic book
Best graphic novel
Best episode in a continuing science fiction or fantasy series, TV or internet
Best science fiction or fantasy movie
Best science fiction or fantasy PC / console game
Best science fiction or fantasy mobile game
Best science fiction or fantasy board game
Best science fiction or fantasy miniatures / collectible card / role-playing game

Anyone can vote. The voting will be on a website:

http://application.dragoncon.org/dc_fan_wards_signup.php

There are a number of criticisms that can be made of this. It used to be that anyone could vote for the Hugos. Caz Cazedessus reprinted a Hugo nominating ballot in *Erb-Dom*. It won the Best Fanzine Hugo in 1966. Afterwards, only members of the convention could vote for Hugos. (Then we got the "money-order" ballots of 1989, then we got the Puppies . . .)

There were some errors in the dating given for eligibility, it was not clear which publication dates were valid. This is a new effort and such goofs will happen. Some of the categories seem a bit confused and the same point applies, I think.

You'll notice there are no short fiction awards. This is an interesting concern. Also, defining the various categories could cause problems. Chris Barkley was happy to note that they could have a Young Adult category. That might be merged with the "apocalyptic" category since the going thing in YA these

days is bleak oligarchies and young rebels being the only people who have any objection to them.

The distinction in the dramatic presentation awards seems to be a little better drafted than the Hugo Award version, but short pieces still seem to be getting the short end of the stick. "I Passionately Desire You to Form a Carnal Connection With Me, Ray Bradbury" had to go up against episodes of television series, for example, and other short subjects, standard animated cartoons, and the like were in the same fix.

There will probably be a wave of comments about this being the real reader's voice. Years ago, I had a nightmare of the "Hugo Awards" being a poorly-attended panel in a small room in an outlying part of the convention center, being alternately at Dragon*Con and ComicCon. Now we can imagine them graciously offering to merge the awards.

Or, it could become "just another award". I remember someone listing a batch of special awards and then imagining a novel somehow winning all of them.

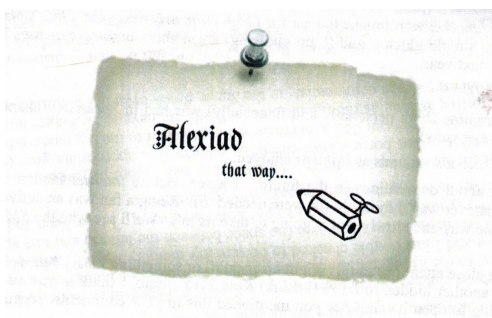
THE TECHNICOLOR™ TIME MACHINE

Archaeologist Sarah Parcak, Ph.D. (Cantab.) may never have read Harry Harrison. Her investigatory methods are science-fictional, though; studying photographs taken by satellite, she identified what she believed was a Norse settlement in Newfoundland, at the southwest corner of the island, a considerable distance from L'Anse aux Meadows. Digging there, her team found signs of turf walls, and signs of ironworking, such as fire-marked stones and items of smelted bog iron.

The site, called Pointe Rosee, is still under question as a Norse site. Dr. Parcak will return this year to excavate the site further. Carbon dating has indicated the site to have been used somewhere between AD 800 CE and AD 1300 CE.

The meaning of this, as well as its probability, is still under debate. Some argue that it demonstrates the marginality of Vinland to the community in the Greenland colony.

(Finding a film can with PROPERTY OF CLIMACTIC STUDIOS would be interesting.)



In another timeline . . .

You Asked For It -- Jimmy Bond, Secret Agent

On October 21, 1954, the CBS anthology show *Climax!* ran an episode titled "Casino Royale", featuring American Combined Intelligence Agency agent Jimmy Bond bankrupting a sinister Russian spy at a casino. A producer thought the show had merit, and after buying up the rights, *Jimmy Bond, Secret Agent* premiered on CBS in 1955.

The original show's star Barry Nelson was unavailable due to contracts with *My Favorite Husband*, where he played the lead character, so after a search relatively unknown Irish-American actor Patrick McGoochan was cast as Jimmy Bond.

The first two years saw relatively high ratings for the show, with its combination of exotic settings, beautiful women, and the commanding presence of McGoochan, who stressed the difficulty of his job, but with the waning of the cold war the popularity of the show declined. In the final season the opponents were changed to members of the "International Crime Executive", or ICE, which made the scripts even more lackluster.

The original source, a book by British journalist Ian Lancaster Fleming, published in America as *You Asked for It*, ran into copyright problems and was subsequently kept off the stands. Fleming wrote a small number of sequels, which sold adequately in Britain and Canada, but they never gained the American market and the last one, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1958) ended with the marriage and retirement of the agent.

Spy shows languished until the mid-sixties, when *Matt Helm*, starring Peter Falk as cynical, burned-out counter-intelligence agent Matt Helm, became a hit. The show featured Helm having to deal with threats to American society and government by various unspecified foreign powers, the most significant of which was led by recurring villain Dr. Liang Chun (Khig Dhiagh).

Based on the rising popularity of the show, the British series *The Avengers*, starring Ian Hendry and Julie Stevens as ordinary people swept into fighting espionage and international crime with the help of a secretive government agent played by Patrick Macnee, which was very popular there, was imported, but did not appeal to American audiences.

The final season of the series added a team of support workers to the show, including Leonard Nimoy as analyst Tony Roma, British actor Tom Baker as pathologist Dr. Ian Gatniss, and Billy Mumy as intern William "Fish" Kopf. The reboot did not do well and the series was canceled in mid-season.

HUCKLIGHT

... After we got back from the Territories, the widder's idee of sendin' me off to Miss Meyer's Academy didn't seem so bad. I had a hard time the first couple of months till I found a place where I could go and smoke without the teachers noticin'.

That was where I met Jake Black. He was a big feller and even had to shave. I found him a-starin' at the moon, with this downright odd look on his face. When I blew out a puff of smoke at him he sort of jumped.

We got to be not too bad friends. He got regular letters from his Uncle Lawrence with a decent sum of money, and I would cover for him while he went out at night. He didn't tell what he was doin' and I figgered it warn't my place to ask, as long as he brought me back some tobacco when I wanted it.

Now Jake, he was powerful in love with this girl in the other side of the school, Bella Swan. Me, I didn't see much to her, as she was kinda blank. And when she did act like it, she had eyes for this other boy, a feller named Eddie Cullen.

Now Eddie was right good-lookin' and I for one didn't see why he was so attracted to a ninny like Bella. But he was, not that it mattered to me any.

Then Tom Sawyer came around with sone wild idee.

"That Eddie Cullen?" he says to me as we were a sittin' on the rooftop, smokin' some of Jake's tobacco. "You know his secret?"

"You mean that there talc-um powder he uses, as makes him all pale and glittery?" I said.

"That ain't nothing. Huck Finn, are you blind!? He's a hant, is what he is."

"You been listening to old Jim for too long. Next thing you know you'll be tryin' to make me believe he's a count with a great big castle over in foreign parts, and why would anyone with money like that care for that empty twit Bella?"

"He's a hant, I'm tellin' you. Don't you see — he don't got no reflection in the mirror!"

"I never looked."

"And he's dangerous. He drinks blood. That's why there's so many folks around here who look like they got the pellagra. He's slippin' out and drinkin' their blood."

"If he goes and drinks it all, then that person dies, and if he ain't buried right, he becomes a hant hisself. Or herself. That's what he's a-gonna do to that Miz Bella."

I took me a good drag on my pipe, thinkin' of this. It was one of Tom's wild idees, and the last time I'd done listened to one I like to get scalped by Indians.

What happened the next day was somethin' else. Bella came a lookin'. "Huckleberry Finn!" she said when she seen me, "Have you seen Jacob?"

"Can't say as I have. Something the matter?"

She looked all cut up. "It's Edward. He's changed. He says he's a Christian now, and he wants me to prove my love. He wants to tie me up and —"

It seemed like the world a'turned to fifty shades of gray . . .

— Not by Mark Twain, Stephanie Meyer, and/or E. L. James

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This is issue **Whole Number Eighty-six (86)**.

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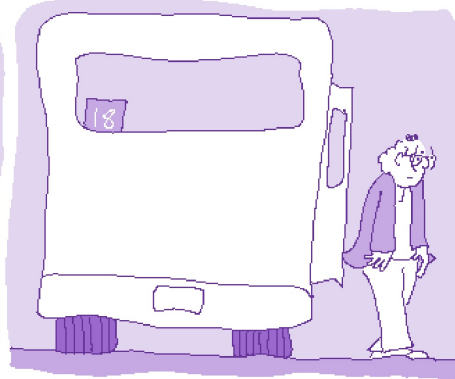
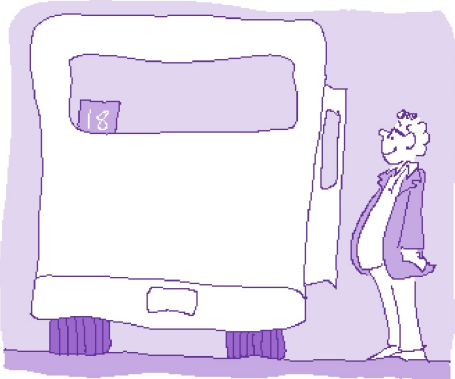
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LAST WEEKEND WHEN MY CAR DEVELOPED TROUBLE I WAS ACTUALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO RIDING TO WORK ON THE BUS FOR AWHILE JUST TO SWITCH THINGS UP

I HAD FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH THE ENFORCED WASTED TIME SUCKS ALL THE MEANING EVER OUT OF EVERY SINGLE FACET OF YOUR LIFE



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