

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This year the Chicago Cubs scored the win in the World Series. The last time they won Teddy Roosevelt was President. Incredibly there are still people alive who were alive then. All of Chicago was one great party that night, just as all Puerto Rico partied the night Bold Forbes won the Derby back in 1976, (Good heavens, has it really been forty years?!) I may actually have to think about acquiring some Cubs gear next payday.

Today marks the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. Today I pause to remember the dead and those who survived the attack. There are still survivors but every year there are fewer to tell their stories on this anniversary.

— Lisa

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Joe's Birthday is **December 24, 2016**.

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Reviewer's Notes

There are times when I wonder if we are not going on out of inertia. The world has shifted past us; different sets of values are put forth as excellence. Cliques form their values in isolation, then when they clash, their vehemence is destructive.

My health and life have been constrained, a series of events which I know some people will find most pleasant news. I have finally approached the age at which I can get Social Security, and will be being paid next year. I hope this will make the falling sales of my books to be less significant.

My writing tastes there are so out of alignment with the current market, it seems. If I could make myself write a tale of lesbian steampunk vampires fighting time-traveling Nazi zombies, it would sell magnificently. Even in the fields I do write, I am contrary to the trend; I do not tell tales of alienated teens fighting an overarching Nazi occupation, the oppression of their own collaborating parents, and why life is like so totally uncool.

And yet I don't want to change to do something I don't like. That way lies the once-acclaimed, thoughtful, skilled author doing *Tratyn Runewind #47: The Fight of the Feejees* (under, of course, the corporate house name). Is the potential of the audience *that* low?

In that masterpiece of learned vitrol, "The Bull against the Enemy of the Anglian Race", Hadrian VII delivered a merciless critique of the low qualities of the *Daily Mail* and its publisher, Lord Northcliffe, alike. "It is not essential, either to temporal politeness or to spiritual progress, that Christians should know or note the gestic mummings, buffoons, misers, innkeepers, gladiators, snobs, bounders, the criminal classes, or the Set fatuously dubbed Smart, all self-damned," the pope declared.

Things have gotten worse since then. It is just as well that neither he nor his sub-creator, Frederick Rolfe, lived to see Page Three of the *Sun* — to take one example.

The news issue that excited the *Courier-Journal*, once a paper that gave local issues, national issues, and world issues alike deep and considered coverage, is the awarding of a Heisman Trophy to a football player at the University of Louisville. As one who remembers all too well the arrogance of the football players there, I do not find this anything to celebrate?

And what are the chances of this supposed majestic credit to local education and sports? Drafted out of college, burned out after a mediocre year or two in the league, sitting in a cheap apartment taking krokodil to relieve the pain of his injuries?

What, then, of the culture that encourages such a life?

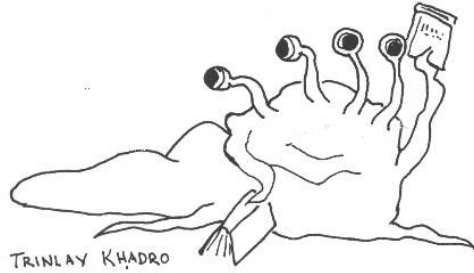
We will keep on going. However, the rewards for doing so are declining. Not being a popular blog, not being a minor pro with a blog, not being a member of a closed circle — all those do not help.

I am reminded of the story Dale Speirs told about going with his father to a meeting of the local Social Credit Party. It didn't surprise him that he was the youngest person there. What did bother him was that his father was the second youngest person there.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Buy my books. (All available on Amazon.com for quite reasonable prices, except the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, which can be bought from NESFA for a reasonable price.)

— Advt.

ConGlomeration has announced their guest of honor for the 2017 ConGlomeration: **J. G. Hertzler**. He played Martok in *ST: DS9* and several other roles in various *ST* venues.

April 7-9, 2017<http://www.conglomeration.info/>

“Nigel West” [Rupert Allason] has just come out with *Cold War Counterfeit Spies* (2016; Frontline Books; \$39.95 (Kindle \$23.97)), a sequel to his devastating analysis of WWII fakers. In this volume he discusses many of the fantasists who have enlivened the history of the Cold War with tales of their derring-do, such as William Stevenson (author of *A Man Called INTREPID*), Greville Wynne (courier for Oleg Penkovsky), Sir Ranulph Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennes (of the Transglobe expedition), and Steve “Andy McNab” Mitchell (SAS venturer); and their exaggerations, fantasies, and outright lies. The problem with such stories is that people accept them as true and fundamental to their world-view.

We regret to report the death of **Al Broadax** on **November 24, 2016**, in Danbury, Connecticut. After service in WWII as a medic, receiving the Purple Heart for his own wounds in the Battle of the Bulge, he went into the TV industry, helping develop *Your Show of Shows* for Sid Caesar. In 1960 he became the chief of King Features Syndicates cartoon department, producing (and writing) adaptations of many old cartoon favorites such as Popeye, Krazy Kat, Barney Google [probably not his adventures as Fleet General Barney Google, the kingpin of all provocateurs and dispatcher of the USS *Pueblo* to penetrate the waters of the DPRK], and others. And, surprisingly, the Beatles. Which was followed up by his writing and

production of *Yellow Submarine* (1968). (The Fab Four had disliked the cartoon series, but when they saw the initial cut of the movie they resoundingly approved of it.)

After this Broadax joined Forrest J Ackerman in an approach to J. R. R. Tolkien to do an adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien wasn't impressed by the story treatment they had. (It had a lot of Eagle Airlines and magic meal lembas.)

Broadax went on to become chief of the ABC animation department and then a consultant for Marvel Comics.

Yellow Submarine<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0063823/>

The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry has announced the official names of four new elements.

Element 113, discovered jointly by the Russian Joint Institute for Nuclear Research (Dubna) and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in August of 2003, temporarily designated ununtrium (Uut), and also referred to as eka-thallium, has been named **Nihonium** (Nh), after the Japanese name for their country, Nihon.

Element 115, discovered by a joint Russian-American team at Dubna in 2003, temporarily designated ununpentium (Uup), and also referred to as eka-bismuth, has been named **Moscovium** (Mc), after the Russian capital.

Element 117, discovered by a joint Russian-American team at Dubna in 2010, temporarily designated ununseptium (Uus), and also referred to as eka-astatine, has been named **Tennessee** (Ts) after the state.

Element 118, discovered by a joint-Russian-American team at Dubna in 2003, temporarily designated ununoctium (uuo), and also referred to as eka-radon, has been named **Oganesson** (Og), after Russian physicist Yuri Oganessian.

Tennessee and Oganesson are postulated to be in the so-called “island of stability” of certain higher transuranics. The most stable isotope of Nihonium has a half-life of 20 seconds. Only four atoms of Oganesson have been observed to date. Though Oganesson should be a noble gas, observations seem to indicate that it is more of a solid and indeed might be chemically reactive.

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unaging intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing

For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

— William Butler Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium”

That is no country for old men. After becoming the oldest man ever to visit the South Pole, Moon Lander **Buzz Aldrin** collapsed and had to be evacuated to a hospital in New Zealand. At current report he is improving but life is fleeting.

MONARCHIST NEWS

We regret to report the death of **Rama IX, King of Thailand**, better known by his personal name of **Bhumibol Adulyadej**, on **October 13, 2016** in Bangkok.

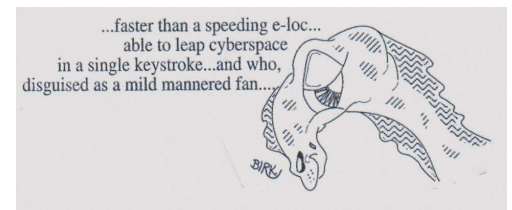
The King was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA on **December 5, 1927** to Prince Mahidol Adulyadej and Mon Sangwan, where his father was a student at Harvard University. He spent the war in Switzerland studying. In 1942 he took up the saxophone and became an enthusiast, composing several jazz pieces.

He succeeded his brother, **Ananda Mahidol** (Rama VIII), on June 9, 1946 after the King was shot under questionable circumstances. He was crowned on **May 5, 1950**.

He married Mon Rajawongse Sirikit Kitiyakara on April 28, 1950. They had four children, who all survive, including his successor **Maha Vajiralongkorn** (Rama X).

We regret to report the death of His Imperial Highness **Prince Mikasa** of Japan, on the twenty-seventh day of the tenth month of the twenty-eighth year of Heisei (October 27, 2016). His Imperial Highness was born on the second day of the twelfth month of the fourth year of Taisho (December 2, 1915) to the Tenn and his consort Teimei-k g. At the time of his death he was the oldest living royal and the last person of six in the line of succession to the Imperial Throne. (By way of comparison the last estimate I saw of successors to the British throne had over two thousand names on the list.)

He is survived by his wife Yuriko, their daughters Yasuko and Masako, nine grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.



GETTING ALONG

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

"Testament of Andros"

by James Blish

(Future Science Fiction, January 1953)

*Beside the dying fire there lie the ashes.
There are voices in them. Listen:*

— "Testament of Andros"

March 18, 1976 was an unexceptional day. The Presidential campaign was proceeding with no more than the usual set of disruptions (it used to be much calmer), there was crop news, legal proceedings, and other ordinary marks of life. Grant McCormick turned twenty-one. It gave way in its turn to the nineteenth, another unexceptional day.

In this story, of course, March 18 was rather different.

James Blish was one of the Futurians, that pool of impecunious Fans and would-be writers who did so much to set the standards for the fifties. Beyond that, he had a broad range of interests, writing knowingly about music and being a recognized expert in literary topics, such as the works of James Joyce and James Branch Cabell.

This story, from an unexceptional pulp magazine from the last years of such, betrays this variety of interests. It tells a strange and doom-laden story from five perspectives — or are they, perhaps, only five viewpoints of one dreamer?

There are symbolic links among the sections. The narrator is named some variant of "Andrew". Now "Andros" is Greek for "man": Σ. The story, therefore, would be "Testament of Man", or "Humanity". The various Andrews are always involved in some fashion with a woman named some variant of "Margaret". Margaret is from the Persian for "pearl": Morvared. That seems to have no symbolic meaning in the context of the story.

(The parallel that comes to mind is from Keith Laumer's anthology *Five Fates* (1970), where he, Poul Anderson, Frank Herbert, Harlan Ellison, and Gordon Dickson each wrote a story from a beginning page by Laumer where a man walks into an Euthanasia Center and commits suicide. In the Anderson story, "The Fatal Fulfillment", the man is revived in one alternate world after another, and encounters among others a peculiar therapist named Birdie Carol and a French psychotherapist named Michel Chanson d'Oiseau — and in the end, a researcher named Michael Birdsong.)

The first story deals with brilliant but elderly scientist Theodor Andresson. His wife, Marguerita, is a renowned singer, said to be "the toast of twelve continents", who impressed him with her performance of Wagner's *Tristan et Isolde* in Moscow, after which she followed him to his current position at the University of Calimyrna. This is said

to imply that this section is set in an alternate Earth, but it may be just hyperbole, bad memory, and not wishing to finger a real institution respectively. Similarly, Marguerita is said not to have appeared to have aged, but this is not developed.

Dr. Andresson has formed a hypothesis about solar flares, and has concluded that a severe one, which may devastate the Earth, is about to occur. His assistant points out a possible erroneous assumption early on in the calculations, and they quarrel about it, ending with Andresson attacking and apparently killing the assistant. His wife had entered during the quarrel, and from a comment he makes he may have killed her too, then blacked out. Or perhaps not; the character seems very much the unreliable narrator.

This serves to set a scientific background for the story, the potential of a planet-sterilizing flare. This would be somewhat more powerful than the one in Larry Niven's "Inconstant Moon" (*All the Myriad Ways* (1971)) which died down quickly and only destroyed half the Earth.

The second story is in the style of the Revelation of St. John, and tells of how the prophet Andrew, a servant of the Sun, was given a revelation of great doom, and the power of prophesy to declare it to the people. But a great flaming star came from the heavens, offering a false hope, and its prophet, a woman named Margot, of beauty beyond compare, corrupted Andrew, and caused all to be destroyed.

This is presumably one of the Spenglerian Cultural Winter religions, as described in "At Death's End" (*Astounding*, May 1954), later a part of *They Shall Have Stars* (1956). It gets followed by a Ginnunga-Gap here, too.

ANYBODY CAN JUGGLE THREE
LIGHTBULBS. THE TRICK IS
TO MAKE THEM TURN ON AND OFF!



The third story is told by a man named George Anders, who seemed to have figured out that the flare was coming. The voices in his head told him. He spent the first day (yes, March 18, 1976) in his special insulated bunker, watching the world burn. When he came out that night he encountered one of the few survivors, a woman named Margaret, who fled rather than speak to him when he started talking about the voices. By the end of the second day, the flare had gone down to merely hundred-degree weather (which is not exceptional for Kentucky in August, but March is a little early for that), and he decided to go out in the morning and look for Margaret.

So far the "Andrew" narrators have been somewhat deluded, but this is the first one who actually shows symptoms of derangement. Anders survived because he was in the United States Bullion Depository at Fort Knox. I don't think Blish had ever been there. Anders would have to get through the fences to get out to where anyone else might be. This was of course written before *Goldfinger* (1959; movie 1964).

The fourth story is the narrative of Andy Virchow, the trans-galactic hero Admiral Universe. Admiral Universe enforces justice in many galaxies, which is why he couldn't rescue the Earth when it burned up. His only girl is Saint Margaret; he has a medal of her he wears over his heart, and his ship is named after her. His mother had shouted at him and sent him to bed too soon, while his late father had been a teacher of Greek, who told him about St. Margaret the patron saint of clocks.

In other words, this is eight-year-old Andy Virchow's escape fantasy. It reads like a cheap Saturday morning cartoon. Oh, and there doesn't seem to be a patron saint of clocks; there is a patron saint of clockmakers, St. Eligus. The "St. Margaret" that Andy's father would most likely be thinking of would be St. Margaret of Antioch, a martyr who is patron of a wide variety of things, from childbirth to the falsely accused, and somewhat more relevantly the dying. Her martyrology included an incident where she was swallowed by a dragon but the dragon was irritated by the cross she was carrying and barfed. Again, I don't know if Blish knew any of this. (He said that Andy Virchow was based on Sam Moskowitz, which shows that some people can really hold a grudge for a long and varied time.)

The fifth story is that of T. V. Andros, a miner who kept on running into trouble with the law. He had a rough upbringing, being in one of those towns where the only escape from the mines was to be drafted. The local morals were not as positive as they were in Homer Hickham's *Coalwood*, West Virginia. Andros drinks, and once when drunk raped a girl named Maggy. He got two years, and almost went straight but then had to find another Maggy. The police beat him up after that. Then, one last time, he went to an apartment to do some maintenance, noticed a woman, and things happened. He notices that it's getting

very hot and the moon is blood red.
The last story is simply:

My name is Man, I will write my
story, if you wish. I was . . .
*Here the ashes blow away. The
voices die.*

The pattern of delusion and degradation increases from story to story. This is a very dark and unsparing narrative, with little hope or positive feeling. If “Andresson-Andrew-Anders-Andy-Andros” is so vicious, unreliable, and deluded, the cleansing of the world by fire may be the least bad thing to happen. For those who wish to paint “sci-fi” (which term, as it happened, was created in 1954) as pulp trash, this story is very much nonexistent.

Blish could write in many voices, as it were. For example, his contribution to *Again, Dangerous Visions* (1972) was a story titled “Getting Along” (his wife, Judith Lawrence, was co-author). “Getting Along” is an epistolary story where a young woman has to find a number of aberrant relatives, widely dispersed over the world. (Ironically following the plot of the Jerry Lewis movie “The Family Jewels” (1965), which essentially proves that Levitch is no Alec Guinness.) To cap this off, each letter is written in a different style, parodying authors from H. P. Lovecraft to Howard Garis as “Victor Appleton”.

SAVE A PLACE WITH THE DEPUTY

Marxism by Joseph T Major

Howard Waldrop is known for outré alternate history, such as “The Ugly Chickens” (*Universe 10*, 1980), about the survival of the dodo (*Raphus cucullatus*) into recent times. Or “Custer’s Last Jump” (*Universe 6*, 1976), about the effects of an earlier invention of powered controlled manned flight. He tends to founder on unforeseen circumstances. For example, one of the other names for the dodo was “walghvogel”, Dutch for “disgusting bird”. The longer it was cooked the worse it tasted. This would make the extinction-event chicken-fry in “The Ugly Chickens” a bit of a bust, even by the less discerning tastes of very hungry good old boys out for a free meal.

His story “Save a Place In the Lifeboat for Me” (*Nickelodeon* #2, 1976) is about a very diverse and odd set of angels setting out to save the life of Buddy Holly and failing. As the “angels” happen to be Harpo and Chico Marx, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, W. C. Fields, and Buster Keaton, going through their comic antics on their unsuccessful way, getting their assignment from “Hackenbush” — i.e., Groucho Marx — it’s like some extreme comedy fan’s dream. Did these people even care (the Marxes, Laurel, Abbott, and Keaton

were all still alive at that time) who Buddy Holly was? It seems like some ultimate Mary Sue dream, or the “Kelvin Throop” letter David Langford once described with some excited fan submitting his story of a combination of all his favorite fantasy and sf heroes working together, with the blithe assurance that the publisher could easily resolve the rights issue. (Which in turn drags us through the dreary depths of Heinlein’s “World as Myth” and Farmer’s “Wold Newton” mashups all the way down to the pits of Vincent McHugh’s *Caleb Catlum’s America* (1936).)

One wonders if Waldrop even knew about the project “Deputy Seraph”.

In his final years, Chico Marx was in a very poor financial condition; even a mathematical whiz can’t beat the odds gambling, though he is even more likely to think he could. Thus, for example, the other brothers participated, perhaps not very willingly, in the movie *Love Happy* (1948). In his autobiography *Groucho and Me* (1959) Groucho utterly omitted any mention of this film, which given the “Mangy Lover” reputation he sought to perpetuate somewhat out of keeping, considering that he got to hug Marilyn Monroe in it.

In the late fifties, Marx Brothers fan Philip Rapp managed to sell an idea. Harpo and Chico would be two candidate angels, trying to earn their wings. Nothing as simple as getting George Bailey to pull them out of the river, either; they would possess people in various states of emotional distress and lead them out of their problems. (We’re talking *Highway to Heaven* and *Touched by an Angel* here.) This would enable the show to use their names while only having them have to perform for a few minutes in the opening sequence of each episode. Admittedly a common plot element in their movies was where the brothers tried to fix up a relationship between two people with difficulties, so this isn’t that far out of line.

Their superior, the titular “deputy seraph”, would be Groucho, who would appear less frequently. This is the relationship which Waldrop echoes.

The show never got past the pre-pilot stage, due in part to Chico’s extremely bad health. He suffered from arteriosclerosis and could not get insurance. If he died, it would be hard to replace him. This isn’t a Shemp Howard, Joe Besser, or Curly Joe DeRita (the three successive replacements for Curly Howard after his stroke) moment. Somehow a “Deputy Seraph” with Harpo and Zeppo wouldn’t quite have the same image. A similar problem terminated Billy Wilder’s proposed *A Day at the United Nations*, which he wrote up in November of 1960, after Harpo’s first heart attack and just before Chico’s death.

The fifteen minutes or so of test footage shot in 1959 still exist and can be seen on YouTube. The special effects make *Flesh Gordon* (which, understand, was intentionally meant to look cheap and cheesy) look like an Industrial Light and Magic product. The “clouds” the angels are bouncing on are mattresses with cotton stitched

around them. There is a distinct cut in the scene where “Deputy Seraph” Groucho asks for a telephone, between his request and when it appears in his hand. Harpo and Chico are visibly aged and tired, and neither looks well. Much of the bouncing on “clouds” is done by stunt doubles, which makes the show on a level with the grand chase in *The Big Store* (1941), also done by stunt doubles.

It’s probably just as well this never got, er, off the ground. The brothers did not deserve their version of *Atoll K* (1951; Laurel & Hardy’s unfortunate last movie) as the coda to their careers.

Deputy Seraph

Part One:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5u6q4xpI9A>

Part Two:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YQc4pIVXtI>

IN SEARCH OF PERL T. BARNHOUSE

Comment by Joseph T Major



Every reviewer finds an odd book that he likes or at least finds interesting. Damon Knight, for example, did a review of a space opera adventure: *My Journeys with Astargo* (1952) by Perl T. Barnhouse.

From his summary, *My Journeys with Astargo* is a Gernsbackesque tinkerer story; two guys develop a means of spaceflight, build it (and a lot of the book is devoted to the effort needed to collect the resources to build their ship) with the help of a friend, and then with some more crew they set out to explore first the solar system, then other stars.

The means isn’t faster than light, apparently, as it took them nine years to get to Sirius, which is 8.6 light-years from Sol. At Sirius, they find a planet which is undergoing their equivalent of the Cold War, and that’s the first of their voyages.

Knight says, “When [Barnhouse is] writing about cattle-ranching, mining, or structural engineering, he’s clearly on familiar ground, and expresses himself well and concisely” [*In Search of Wonder*, Chapter 23 “Curiosa”]. He was curious as to why the book was never submitted to a regular publisher (it’s self-

published), as it was better than a lot of works of that period that were.

The book doesn't seem to be a lost work; copies are available through the Advanced Book Exchange for twenty to thirty dollars (including postage). But the author? Knight didn't and perhaps couldn't enquire about him.

However, there are ways to find out.

Perl Travis Barnhouse was born in Hocking County, Ohio to Mary F. Albin Barnhouse and Ira Morgan Barnhouse on May 31, 1877. The family moved to Nebraska in 1887 where he became a ranch hand and cattle herder on the family holdings. In 1914 he joined the Colorado National Guard and eventually reached the rank of Sergeant. (*My Journeys with Astargo* was printed by a firm in Denver.)

He was married and had five children, of which two survived him, and a large number of descendants. He died in Akron, where he and his wife had gone after his retirement from ranching, on August 26, 1964.

The obituary says nothing of his venture into fiction. Barnhouse doesn't seem to have known of fandom, though if that isn't the case it would be interesting to know.

Thanks to Ancestry.com, findagrave.com, and their contributors for this information.

FROM THE ASHES

Review by Joseph T Major of

OCEAN OF STORMS

by Christopher Mari and Jeremy K. Brown
(2016; 47 North;

ISBN 978-1503938779; \$4.99)

<http://www.apub.com>

David Weber's *Mutineers' Moon* (1991) suffers from the problem described in James A. Michener's *Space* (1982); the author seems to be at two with the concept of democracy, and prefers the rule of a strong man. When astronaut Colin Macintyre finds a lost spaceship on the Moon, or rather that a lost spaceship *is* the Moon, and it makes him its human spokesperson, he promptly proceeds to install an absolute government on Earth, as everyone cheers. As Al Capp would say, **Right!!!**

The authors here manage not to fall into this trap, though their lost spaceship on the Moon does start out announcing its discovery a bit obnoxiously with a radio pulse that shuts down electronic communications all over Earth, to the inconvenience of many and the demise of a few.

Archaeologist Alan Donovan might figure he is second banana in an Indiana Jones movie, working for Dr. Elias Zell, a digger who goes for the spectacular worldwide. But Zell is independently wealthy and thoroughly curious. Donovan also has a grudge against NASA, as his father was one of those scientist astronauts not selected for a Moon mission.

When it suddenly becomes very important

for archaeologists to go to the moon, the space administration, having to choose between training pilots in a little archaeology and training archaeologists in space survival go for the latter, somehow Donovan and Zell get picked, in spite of their problems (*Armageddon* (1998), anyone?). Then things start going really wrong.

One of the preliminary missions is sabotaged, spectacularly. The main mission is abruptly changed to merge with a Chinese one, even though at the same time the U.S. and China are on the point of armed conflict. Once the mission gets into Lunar orbit, accidents occur which indicate that the mission may be one-way. And you thought that Wendy Pendleton from Mark Whittington's *Children of Apollo* (2002; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1) had problems.

In spite of everything the landing module lands near the crevasse the lost spaceship opened up, and Donovan and Zell go in to investigate. The spaceship had some additional features, like also being a timeship, sent back by a humanity that had become entirely cloned and managed to lose even more genetic diversity along the way, thus becoming susceptible to a new ailment. They wanted to switch the past back onto a different track in order to bring about some exciting new mistakes instead of the same old ones.

Now all Donovan and Zell and their fellow crew have to do is rebuild their ship, return to Earth, find the other ship (which crashed on Earth), outwit the guys who found it first and are busy sabotaging the mission, and avert the war. And then on the second day . . .

The authors touch on a broad spectrum of science fictional themes, managing to present their version in an original fashion. Yet, somehow, it never quite seems to take hold of the reader.



IRONMAN ONE

Review by Joseph T Major of

ZERO PHASE: APOLLO 13 ON THE MOON

(Book One of *Altered Space*)

and

PUBLIC LONELINESS: YURI GAGARIN'S CIRCULUNAR FLIGHT

(Book Two of *Altered Space*)

by Gerald Brennan

(2013; Tortoise Books; \$6.99;

Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99; and
2014; Tortoise Books; \$7.99;
Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

There are potential alternate histories of the space program(s) that are not as dramatic as *Children of Apollo* (2001, 2012; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1), much less *The Pilgrim Project* (1964; discussed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #2) or even *Marooned* (1964; 1968). These books use this sort of point of departure.

Zero Phase has a high-level decision being made regarding backup crew LM Pilot Charlie Duke's exposure to rubella. Instead of replacing Ken Mattingly (who had not had it) with Jack Swigert, the bosses decided to wait a month and see if Ken got sick. When he didn't, the mission went on.

As a result, the explosion in Tank 2 occurs not when the mission is on the way to the moon, but when LM *Aquarius* is on the lunar surface. This gives Lovell and Haise a very hard choice of whether to take the black capsule there, or take off and risk dying in space for a chance to get home again.

The book is a monologue told from Lovell's point of view, which means a description of the mission first hand. At the same time it assumes a certain familiarity with the mission, as Lovell refers to Haise as both "Freddo" and "Fred".

Public Loneliness has a surviving Yuri Gagarin getting sent on a round-the-moon trip in a Zond capsule, to beat the Yanks. Again, it's a monologue.

Brennan discusses the strains on Gagarin. (He has read *Starman* (1998, 2010, 2011; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 11 #1), the biography of Gagarin, even though he is critical of it.) Aside from this it's a piece of Spam in a can, wondering if he's going to make it back.

It's October 1967 and here is Cedar ([Kedr]) on top of a rocket. One had exploded the previous month. (There was a Proton launch then, and another that was equally unsuccessful in November.) This one doesn't go off with a bang, and so Yuriy Aleksevich is sent off to go round the moon. Since he hadn't requalified for flight status at this point, the decision seems a little extreme. There are some other changes; for example Soyuz-1 was put off, which means that Vladimir Komarov is still alive.

It should be noted that Brennan is translating things, so we have "East" and not Vostok [], "Sunrise" and not Voskhod [], and "Union" and not Soyuz [], though Gagarin refers to his capsule as "7K-L1", the sub-designation. The full designation of those capsules was Soyuz 7K-L1.

It should be noted that "Blondie", the chief capsule communicator, is Alexei Leonov. As I said, using translations and such, while in keeping with the characterization, may be confusing to the reader not fully acquainted with all these people and things.

The 7K-L1 is launched in secret, a deviation from normal Soviet procedure of

announcing launches after the capsule had achieved orbit. (So much for "Lost Cosmonauts".) The idea is that they will announce the mission once the 7K-L1 makes its loop around the Moon and is coming back. Even though, as Gagarin acknowledges, the Main Enemy is listening in.

Not surprisingly, things go wrong. As in *Zero Phase*, the book ends on a cliffhanger.

It's interesting to see what other missions could have been launched. This is a less extreme version of *The Pilgrim Project*; it has real equipment used in a realistic fashion.

The ambiguity of the endings has its own appeal, or problem. Perhaps it's a tribute to the spirit of "We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best to the last."

ZERSTÖRERMÄNNER

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE EMPEROR'S MEN: ARRIVAL (Kaiserkrieger I: Die Ankunft)

by Dirk van den Boom

(2016; Atlantis Verlag Guido Latz;
ISBN 978-3864023729; \$12.00;
Amazon Digital Services; \$5.99)
<http://www.atlantis-verlag.de>

"I've thought about it, now and then," Tortha Karf said, in mild understatement. "This fellow Morrison, Lord Kalvan, Great King Kalvan, is one in a million. That was the best thing that could possibly have happened to him, and he'd be the first to say so, if he dared talk about it. But for the rest, the ones the conveyer operators ray down with their needlers are the lucky ones..."

— H. Beam Piper, *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*

The most likely result of a displacement in time, or in paratime, would be that the person displaced would soon die, alone, without useful skills, unable to speak a local language. Consider the sad fate of the time-traveling soldier in Poul Anderson's "The Man Who Came Early" (*F&SF*, June 1956). But a story should have a protagonist who accomplishes something, and therefore so often it has to have the right man in the right place.

Korvettenkapitan Jan Rheinberg, *Kaiserliche Marine*, was more interested in the history of the ancient empire his ancestors had struggled against and for. When assigned to be executive officer of the elderly cruiser SMS *Saarbrücken*, he thoughtfully brought along a select few books of Roman history, to peruse and review when the snobbery of certain *Adelmänner* became too much.

The *Saarbrücken* was being used as a transport ship, carrying a company of infantry being sent out to Kamerun, 25,000 Goldmarks to pay them and others, and various other

cargo including for some reason a truck. Thus burdened, this elderly component of the *Hochseeflotte* set out for the colonies, against the background of a looming war.

Only they got into a different war. When the crew woke up, they found out that they had got extremely lost; they weren't off the coast of Portugal in 1914, they were in the Mediterranean, during the late Roman Empire. And the natives weren't at first friendly; at least as the captain found out before he took two arrows to the chest and died, leaving Rheinberg in command to defeat the trireme that was trying to sink this threat to Rome.

Nevertheless things improved. It's commendable that van den Boom has avoided so many of the negative clichés of the field. A resentful petty officer does not stage a mutiny and sail the *Saarbrücken* off to set up his own empire. A concerned petty officer does not massacre prisoners to spare them a degrading fate. The ship does not observe a great disastrous smashing battle and then return to the present (1914, anyway). They do not have vital information fall into the hands of a Gothic informer who takes it straight to the Huns, who proceed to start building these wonder weapons. They do not have Romans nodding their heads (except the eastern ones, who wag them) and saying, "You are so far advanced that we will absolutely do whatever you say."

Rheinberg has to face the sort of problems that such a ship would have. There is the matter of getting not only fuel (coal) but lubricating oil. Making ammunition for the weapons is beyond them and there aren't any convenient English ships to be destroyed and used as raw materials. Fortunately, some of the German officers are cultured men and read Latin, and others are realistic and wish to learn, that or Greek. At least they have specie; Roman merchants wouldn't take Euros.

The only problem is with that aristocratic officer who just can't bear being under the command of a commoner. But that's life in Imperial Germany.

As opposed to life in Imperial Rome, where family crises, financial shortages, and the decline of society are all weighing hard on the locals. Such a miraculous event (this is post-Constantine, so they are some kind of Christian, and not as bad as the flaming fanatic heresy hunt of the last century) is a divine omen. Provided the Church agrees.

Oh, and then there's the little matter of a Gothic army at this place called Adrianople.

(The *Saarbrücken* is a fictional ship, but of a real class of German cruisers, the Bremen class. These ships had a top speed of 22 knots from two triple-expansion engines. The displacement was 3797 metric tons. The crew was fourteen officers and 274 enlisted men. The original armament was 10 single-mount 10.5 cm guns, 10 single mount 3.7 cm automatic cannon [the English 1-pounder pom-pom], and two 45 cm torpedo tubes; in this story, the *Saarbrücken* has been refitted with two 15.0 cm guns and six 10.5 cm guns.)

This is the first volume of a seven-book series, and it seems to have got off to a good start. We'll find out more as this story is . . .
Fortsetzung folgt.

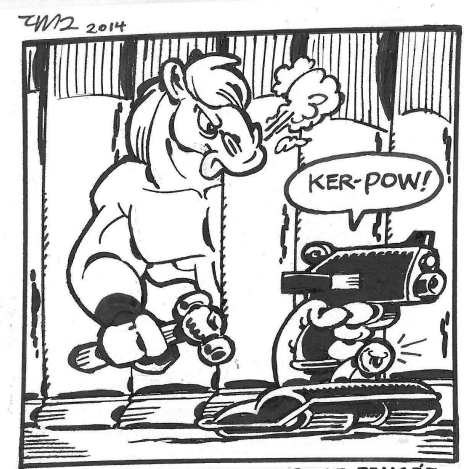
IT'S A BITCH

Review by Joseph T Major of

PAYBACK

by Michael FitzGerald

(2016; Moonshine Cove Publishing;
ISBN 978-1945181009; \$13.99;
Kindle; \$5.99)



DEUX ESPRITS AVEC UNE SEULE PENSÉE

"... Like they shoulda have stopped Hitler at Munich, they should never let him get away with that, they were just asking for big trouble when they let him get away with that."

Michael had heard his father say this same thing before, only in 1939 before the war actually started. If the Families had been running the State Department there would never have been World War II, he thought with a grin.

— Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*

Vito Corleone's proposal gets a tryout in this alternate-history thriller. It begins with a grotesque confrontation between Frank Costello and the FBI. They are asking for his help in a rubout. The story segues to some Jewish activists taking on the German-American Bund. Since said activists are led by Meyer Lansky and Bugsy Segal, the confrontation is somewhat more active than would normally be the case. Both these incidents are directed at the same target.

In our time-line, the CIA, devoid of a Special Tasks capability, outsourced it to some wiseguys. Perhaps it could have been predicted that the "professional Mafia hitmen" were the sort that Richard Pryor spoke of, the man who tried to whack his victim with an icepick and it broke off in the man's body. (And he found it hysterically funny.)

In this time-line, the decision comes a little earlier. The German army has marched into Austria to the wild enthusiasm of everybody (except, it seems, a family of musical performers). There will be a general war in Europe and some people don't want a repeat of 1917 with the US dragged into the fray. But it has to be plausibly deniable.

And Hitler has to get into their sights, as it were. If, for example, he were to visit the leader he admired . . .

The bulk of the book is the setup for the hit; the problems of relations with the locals, the enquiries by the police as they decide that something is wrong, and so on. Costello and Siegel have to be patient, a quality in which wiseguys are often lacking.

Then, the Chef der Großergeneralstab takes the opportunity now opened up to resolve certain issues he had with the government. It seems it a bit of a stretch that Beck would do everything himself, though.

But in the end, if it isn't one thing it's another . . .

THE SCENT OF TREASURE

Review by Joseph T Major of

PIRATE HUNTERS:

Treasure, Obsession, and the Search for a Legendary Pirate Ship

by Robert Kurson

(2015; Random House;

ISBN 978-1-4000-6336-9; \$28.00;

Random House (Kindle); \$12.99)

Joseph Bannister is the most famous pirate you've never heard of. He operated for about three or four years, beginning in 1684. That was too late for the Golden Age of Piracy, but he managed to make a name for himself at the time. He had been a reputable merchant captain and then one day just decided to become a pirate.

He got caught early but escaped trial by the somewhat outrageous tactic of bribing the witnesses against him. Then, rather than be retried, he managed to steal his ship, the *Golden Fleece*, and sneak out of Port Royal harbor. Mind you, he'd already stolen the *Golden Fleece* once before, to get started. They call that barratry (as opposed to ambulance chasing and suing for profit, which is also called barratry).

Then, the Royal Navy caught up with him. In May of 1686 the *Golden Fleece* was careened for repairs at Hispanola when the frigates HMS *Falcon* and HMS *Drake* came in. In a hard battle, the *Golden Fleece* was set afire and sank, though Bannister got away. Though, in a few months, he was finally caught, and given his reputation, couldn't be brought to trial, so was hanged at the yardarm once the ship transporting him got to Jamaica.

And so ends the story. But the story never ends, and two divers of somewhat insane backgrounds and desperate knowledge, John Chatterton and John Materra, got on the case. Chatterton had a mania for diving on deep

down (hence dangerous) wrecks, and became noteworthy for identifying the U-869 off the coast of New Jersey in 230 feet of water (i.e. don't even think of trying it yourself). Materra had had a somewhat risky life himself, going from a close association with the Gambino family to the Westhampton Beach police force, followed by a career as a security officer.

The book begins with their meeting with an older diver, Tracy Bowden, who had a line on an undiscovered historic wreck. Chatterton and Materra got the opinion Bowden really wasn't in it for the money when they went into his bathroom and saw he had about five million dollars worth of pieces of eight in plastic baggies in the bathtub. And you thought Clarke's and Wilson's hoard of Moghul rupees was huge (see *The Treasure of the Great Reef* (1964) by Arthur C. Clarke for that story).

From there it was a grueling slog of covering probable sites along the coast of the Dominican Republic, using a magnetometer and then diving on any likely spots. Which meant long expensive frustration. One reviewer slagged the book for not mentioning the many bribes they must have paid to locals (think Connie Willis's *Uncharted Territory* (1994) where the guide fines the explorers every time they do anything and then blows the money on the Galactic Shopping Channel, written back when the Female Person from Colorado didn't have to pad pad pad . . .) but one of the divers was dating the daughter of a high-ranking Dominican admiral, which should have solved that problem.

And eventually they found it. In *The Treasure of the Great Reef* Clarke notes how their professional underwater archaeologist Peter Throckmorton went to considerable lengths to salvage ordinary items from the Great Basses Reef wreck. But those could help identify her, or at least help describe how the crew lived. Without several tons of silver coins to salvage, the artifacts from the *Golden Fleece* were even more necessary.

Oh. There are no pirate treasures. Pirates split up the loot as soon as they got it and went to places like Port Royal to spend it. Port Royal, Jamaica, was where the pirate gave a tavern girl 500 pieces of eight to show herself naked to him. Think about that the next time you throw a dollar bill on the stage at a strip joint. Then there were the pirates who would buy a keg of wine and demand that everyone who passed by have a drink. They probably didn't have any trouble with people refusing. There was a tavern for every ten inhabitants. If Charles II had been able to collect sales tax on the sale of booze he would never have needed to call a Parliament and could have afforded all of Barbara Palmer's millinery bills, and an army and navy, too. Even the parrots drank wine. There was no RSPCA then to complain. It sounds like the sort of place with the motto:

RUM

Make Jamaica Great Again!

At the end of this narrative, the artifacts are in storage while Bowden, Chatterton, and Materra are in a legal dispute. Indiana Jones was lucky the Nazis' faces melted off.

TARANTULAS

Observation by Lisa

At my library we had tarantulas visit for Halloween. They were impressive creatures. The biggest was as long as my forearm. Now that was a spider! There were several children who all had to handle the more docile of the spiders.

One child did not care for the feel of its feet. I got the spider detached from her and the spider attached itself to me. I carefully sat down and watched it sun itself on the warmth of my arm. These big creatures hardly look to be the same kind as the small creatures I see around me but then I don't look much like an elephant, after all.

I would not mind owning one of these giants. They would be fascinating pets but I cannot see myself actually buying one. I do not want to pay money for an animal taken from its home and subjected to the pet trade. I am also not sure of my ability to care for such an animal. Perhaps someday one will come into my hands as a stray. If so, then I would have to do some hard, fast studying.

Millstone Hazelnut Coffee

Review by Lisa Major

A coworker gets two bags of this as a gift but cannot drink it. Another coworker and I get the task of drinking this for her. It is a dirty job but somebody has to do it, right? Might as well be us two. This is good stuff. Brewing, it fills the air with a deep rich smell promising all manner of goodness. It does not disappoint when you take your first sip. This will not be the last of this coffee I drink.

Commentary by Lisa Major

Often I get assigned to find missing library books because I have a little talent for tracking them down. Once I got assigned to track down a missing copy of Zamyatin's *We*. That is the failure that most sticks in my mind. At the time it was written you could not legally read it in its homeland, the Soviet Union. I searched everywhere I could think of but the book was gone. It hurt when I ran out of options and had to admit defeat. The patron would have to get their copy from another branch. Grr!!!! I hate it when historic books vanish.

CONFESSIONS OF QUEEN CINDERELLA

by Anton Hur

Kindle edition \$1.99

Review by Lisa Major

"The dress falls about me. There is a thing, about a woman and a dress. A dress changes a woman. I look in the mirror and see a queen. I see a woman who has nothing to do with me. Her beauty and her ugliness has nothing to do with me. Her history is not my history. Her words are not my words."

This is a jewel of a book. It is a look at what happens in Cinderella's life after she marries the Prince. It is not a happy ever after book but it held my interest and kept me wanting to know what was going to happen next. I thought it well worth the quite reasonable price. Not everything for sale at that price is but this was.

MidAmericon II Con Report by Leigh Kimmel



MidAmericon II was the 2016 World Science Fiction Convention, held over August 17-21, 2016 at the convention center in Kansas City, Missouri. We had already committed to going to it before the whole blow-up about the Hugo Awards at Sasquan the previous year, and we figured we'd stay in the dealers' room most of the time anyway and avoid the majority of the fannish politics.

Because it was held so soon after Tampa Bay Comic Con, I had only a few days to prepare the merchandise for it. Since we were also visiting my parents on the way, I could do my cooking there instead of having to squeeze it into the time before we left.

However, as we were driving out of Indianapolis on Sunday, I noticed that our van was handling a lot rougher, especially on bad pavement. For a moment we considered turning back around and having it looked at, but figured there wouldn't really be time. Given it was probably a problem with the suspension, we figured we could just hang on until we got home and have it fixed.

We got to my folks' place in good time, and I decided to rearrange some of the merchandise to improve the weight distribution. Then I got my cooking done and looked through some chapters of a novel I had set aside as needing too much work to get ready for indie publishing in a restricted time

period. However, it didn't take long to determine that my earlier assessment wasn't just despair — it really needed serious rethinking, not just a little polish.

The next morning we carried our belongings back out to the van and hit the road. At first it didn't seem too bad, and I figured we could continue to ride it out. But just west of St. Louis we hit a stretch of pavement that set up a resonance which set the whole van to shaking like the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. It was a very long and scary moment while I tried to find a speed where it would stop.

At that point we could both tell this wasn't something we could put off for a more convenient time. My husband got on the iPad Pro and looked for a Goodyear store on the way. We finally found one in Kansas City, but when I called from the next rest stop, they said they couldn't fit us in before they closed, but we could bring it by the next day after we got the merchandise unloaded.

Thinking I had things organized, we continued to Kansas City. We initially missed the turn to our hotel, and ended up on a lengthy detour while trying to find our way back. But once we got back, we were able to check in with relatively little trouble. I was happy to see that yes, they did have bell carts for us to haul in our stuff.

Once we got in, I tried to get some work done on my novel. However, after having struggled to drive the van with the intense vibrations, I had trouble with my hands wanting to shake. At least it subsided after a little, and I also made some notes on yet another new story idea before turning in for the night.

On Tuesday we got up and had the hotel's complimentary breakfast. Then we spent some time sitting in the lobby because it was too early to load in, but we didn't want to risk our room getting missed by Housekeeping. Then we headed over to the convention center, and discovered we could've started loading in earlier.

We got things out and loaded onto pallets as rapidly as we could so I could get up to Goodyear. However, just as we had everything out but still had several pallets sitting behind our van, the union guys who were running the forklifts left to take their lunch break. I was annoyed, since they knew we'd be loading in during this period. Why couldn't they have arranged to get their lunch break done beforehand so we didn't get left high and dry?

But once they came back on the job, they got the last two pallets out of they way. I headed off, noticing that the van wasn't handling so badly now that it was unloaded. I was able to find the Goodyear store with relatively little trouble, but once I got there, I made an unhappy discovery — the casual affirmative on the phone the previous day did not constitute an appointment, so they weren't going to even get me in that day.

I begged and pleaded, but they wouldn't budge. So I finally had to make an appointment for first thing the next day, then head back to the

hotel and park the van. Defeated and annoyed they hadn't mentioned the need for a formal appointment when it would've done some good, I trudged back to the convention center to get as much setup done as I could after the lost time.

When the dealers' room people finally scooted us out for the night, we headed over to Main Street to catch the free streetcar. It worked pretty well for us, since the platform was high enough that I could pull the cart right on and off. On the other hand, the station where we got off was a lot farther away from the hotel, making for a long and miserable walk. By the time we finally got back, I was thoroughly worn out. However, I still made sure to get in a little work on my novel before turning in for the night.

On Wednesday morning we got up and had breakfast. Then I took my husband over to the convention center to finish setup and start selling. On the way out I saw one of our wholesalers, who took a look at our tires, thinking we might be at risk for a tread separation. However, he agreed that everything looked sound, and wished me luck.

At least this time I was able to get the van in and looked at, although it took a good chunk of the morning. They put new shocks on front and rear, and warned that there was now uneven wear on the tires which would continue to cause vibration. However, with our finances being tight, I figured it would be best to pay off the shocks before replacing the tires.

So I headed back to the hotel, and while I could feel some vibration, it felt like something we could live with for a few months. I parked the van, then headed over to the convention center. As I was walking toward Main Street and the streetcar station, I heard a whole bunch of sirens north of the river.

As I approached Grand Street, I saw a whole swarm of cop cars come roaring across the bridge. They were chasing a car, and finally forced it to a stop just north of me. There was smoke coming out of the car, but it looked more like it was coming out of the passenger compartment rather than the engine. The cops were hauling someone out of the car, but weren't interested in me, so I hurried on.

When I arrived at the streetcar station, I tried to find out anything on the Internet. However, none of the local news outlets were reporting anything, so I tried not to worry too much about it as I rode up to the convention center.

Once I got to our booth, we had fairly steady sales, if not spectacular. I missed a couple of autographing sessions I would've liked to make, but given that the van had become a safety issue, it was time well lost.

When the dealers' room closed for the night, we headed over to the con suite. Instead of being in a big suite at one of the hotels, it was just a curtained-off area right there in the convention hall. Apparently the hotels were being real stinkers about corkage issues, so this was their makeshift workaround.

After last year's nightly con suite feasts at Sasquan, the fare seemed rather paltry. But it was still an opportunity to rest and do a little munching while we waited for the bid parties to open.

We went to both the New Orleans and San Jose bid parties, and talked to both of them about arrangements for dealers. We finally agreed that the pluses and minuses of each pretty well balanced out, so it was going to be hard to decide.

Then we headed back to the hotel. Because my husband was so tired, I took him over to the Marriott to sit while I took the streetcar back and hiked to the hotel. Then I retrieved him in the van, since the Marriott had a good area to pull in and pick him up.

Back at the Comfort Inn, we had supper and I did some writing. Then we turned in and tried to catch up on sleep.

Thursday morning we got up and had breakfast. I took my husband over to the Marriott and dropped him off to walk over to the convention center, then took the van back to park until evening. At least the streetcar line did shorten my walk, if not a lot.

I spent a good bit of the day standing in various autographing lines, trying to get as many books signed as humanly possible. However, I also spent a good bit of the day trying to make much-needed sales.

I also discovered how to find the location of Puppy Central, headquarters of the Sad Puppies group. Since it was being hosted by friends, I wanted to at least drop in and say hi once. After the dealers' room closed for the night, we put in a brief visit at the hospitality suite, then headed over to the Marriott and Puppy Central. The Marriott has a really strange elevator system, such that you request a floor on central station and then are assigned an elevator. Perhaps it's more efficient for regular guests, but for going to a party it was a real hassle.

Then we headed back to the hotel to have our real supper. I got a little writing in before turning in for the night.

On Friday we followed our usual procedure for getting both of us over to the convention center. Then I went through several more rounds of autographing sessions. It was a little annoying when they scheduled Larry Niven and Bob Silverberg against each other, but there wasn't a lot we could do about it. I just had to make my best guess at whose signature was more likely to get books to sell.

After the dealers' room closed for the evening, we went over to the hospitality suite and had some munchies. However, with thunderstorms in the offing, we didn't want to stay too late. I had the big umbrella with me, but I didn't relish having to deal with it in high winds and pouring rains.

As it turned out, it stayed heat lightning until we got back to the Comfort Inn. Shortly after we got inside, it really cut loose and poured. I was very glad we were inside, and did my best to make good use of the time

writing.

Saturday morning the temperature had dropped markedly, and the air was damp to the point of being uncomfortable. However, once I got back to the convention center, I was ready to work. Things seemed slower, and I stood through a lot of lines for signings. I did find out that San Jose had won the 2018 Worldcon bid, so I texted my brother and let him know to save the dates.

After the dealers' room closed, we hung out in the hospitality suite to munch for a while. Then I headed back to the Comfort Inn to retrieve the van. It felt weird to take that last streetcar ride, since I'd become quite fond of that sophisticated system.

On Sunday we gathered up our possessions and got them out to the van. Then we checked out, although it took all our cash to cover the cost of the room. It was a definite sign that sales were down.

This time we parked in the lot right beside the convention center. Apparently we could've parked there all week, since the con had paid for dealers to have access to it. However, in doing so we could've lost the handicap space at the hotel, which made it really easy for my husband to go back and forth.

This time I had plenty of time to walk around the dealers' room and visit with various dealers, including a lot of indie and small press authors. I'm hoping to be able to add a lot of them to the promotional posts on my blog.

Then the doors opened and it was time to start selling. I stood in several autographing lines, including Kate Elliott's. She was handing out bookmarks announcing the digital reissue of her Jaran books, which had become almost impossible to find even second-hand (unless you were willing to pay collectors' prices for used books that were closer to reading copies).

Then it was time to tackle the process of packing up loading out. We were still getting sales, so we really hated to have to start packing and drive off customers. But we needed to get loaded out reasonably quickly if we were going to get to our hotel for the night at a reasonable time. At least this year we had only twenty miles to drive rather than two hundred, but we wanted to get there before it got too dark.

As I packed, I discovered we'd emptied a number of boxes, especially of ceramics. We might not have done that great financially, but we had definitely reduced the volume of merchandise we were dealing with.

Even so, we had a lot of loading to do. And the pallet system meant that sometimes things came in the wrong order, so that I'd be trying to keep things happening while waiting for the thing I really needed to load in next. Several times I moved boxes to one side just to free up a pallet so someone else could use it. In the process of moving some t-shirt boxes, I dropped one and the side seam burst open. I had to scramble to find tape and get it closed up before shirts started spilling out.

Even with help, we were still one of the last dealers to leave. As we drove out, we

discovered that the vibration from the tires got a lot worse now that the van was carrying a load. As we went down the ramp to I-70, the whole van started shaking again, and I had to find a speed that broke the resonance so I could drive again.

We made it to our hotel in Blue Springs safely, but I was very glad to be there before dark. We hauled our possessions inside and had supper. Then we went over to soak in the hot tub, which was a welcome relief for our aches and pains. However, our relaxation was spoiled by two unsupervised and unruly children, apparently the offspring of the manager.

When we got tired of their antics, we retreated to our room and relaxed. I worked on my novel and then we turned in for the night.

On Monday morning we carried our stuff back out and checked out. Then we headed back across Missouri and Illinois to my parents' place. Keeping the vibration down to a manageable level was a major challenge, and by the time we arrived, I was tired and ready for a break.

As a result, we decided not to even set an alarm that night. We figured we needed our sleep more than we needed to get back home by any particular time.

As a result, Tuesday morning was a welcome relief from the relentless time pressure we'd endured for over a week. We could take some time to get things ready for the final part of the journey.

And it was a good thing, because the final leg of the journey home was the hardest. The vibration was getting steadily worse, to the point that I had trouble with resonance factors as I was driving straight on US 136 to I-74. I was very glad to get home, but we both knew that we had to get new tires before our next trip.

Archon 40 Con Report by Leigh Kimmel



Archon is the St. Louis area's annual science fiction convention. This year it was held over the weekend of September 30-October 2, 2016 at the Gateway Center and the Doubletree hotel.

Because load-in starts at 9AM on Friday, we wanted to be there Thursday evening. We

could have gone straight from Indianapolis and made it in one day, but I wanted to visit my folks. They're both getting elderly and in increasingly frail health, and I've gotten altogether too aware of how short the time can be.

So we headed over on Wednesday, and were able to make a stop at Vitamin World on the way. We arrived just in time for supper, and just as the Heyworth High School homecoming parade was forming up. We sort of talked about going and seeing it, but with the rainy weather in the air, we weren't really eager to go out and stand in the chill, damp air to watch. And quite honestly, it probably wouldn't have been a good thing for my folks to be out in that weather..

So I did some laundry and some cooking. I was going to work on a book review, but I was tired enough that it was hard to focus on it. We decided to get to bed early in hopes of catching back up on our sleep.

On Thursday morning we got up and had breakfast. Then we carried our stuff out to the van and hit the road south. At least the van was handling a lot better than it had been the last time we went down I-55, but new shock absorbers and new tires make a big difference.

Traffic went pretty smoothly until we reached Lincoln. They were working on I-155, the spur up to Peoria, and it spilled down onto the interchange. But once we got past that, it was smooth sailing the rest of the way. We got to the hotel early enough that it might have been a problem to check in, but they had a room available, so we got right in.

As soon as we got our stuff in, we set up our computers to get on the Internet. However, my computer and the hotel's WiFi wouldn't connect properly, so I got out our hotspot and set it up. I wrote to my dad to let him know we'd arrived safely. Then I caught up on various websites and finished a book review so I could put the book back in our stock.

As the afternoon gave way to evening, we went over to the convention center to pick up our badges. While we were waiting, I pulled out my Treo and started working on a con review. Then a friend of ours showed up and we caught up on our various adventures and misadventures.

Afterward we headed back to the hotel and I got to work on another book review. I had added two paragraphs to it the previous night and was pretty sure I'd saved. But when I opened it, all that text was gone, and I wasn't able to find any other version saved somewhere else. So there was nothing for me to do but reconstruct the text as best I could.

Because we were still tired from the previous weekend's event, we decided to turn in early. However, I didn't get as much sleep as I hoped because I woke up in the middle of the night and couldn't fall back asleep until it was almost time to get up.

The hotel's complimentary breakfast turned out to be better than we'd expected. I needed that good start to the day because we

wanted to be over at the convention center as early as possible to get into position for load-in. I used some of the waiting time to work on my con report, but ended up dozing off.

Load-in was complicated by a drizzly rain just heavy enough to be aggravating. We had to tarp all our merchandise, and we were getting just enough wind to make it difficult to keep the tarps in place.

At least the rain stopped before we got to the books. I've had to load and unload books in rain, and it's never easy, and never without risk of damage that will devalue them.

Once we got everything inside, we started building our structures and arranging our merchandise. I'd cut us way back from what we'd take to an anime con, but we still had a lot of merchandise we couldn't get out. At least we were able to get set up before the doors opened. We even sold something to a fellow dealer, which we took as a good omen for the weekend.

Although a substantial crowd poured in when the doors opened, sales were slow. A lot of people were looking around, scoping out the merchandise they wanted to acquire and planning their purchases.

When the artists' reception opened a little before the dealers' room closed, we took turns going over and getting some goodies. After we closed for the night, we both went over together, but by that point we were both tired enough that we didn't feel like looking at the art. I hadn't put anything on the art show because I hadn't had time to do anything new, and with funds tight, I really didn't want to drop money on hanging fees that would probably be a guaranteed loss.

Then we went back over to the hotel and took it easy until time to turn in for the night. I did some more work on the book review and a little fiction writing.

On Saturday we headed back over to the convention center to get our tables open. This time I even had a little time to look around before the doors opened.

Sales did pick up, but they were in spurts. The effect was to give me just enough time to get bored and start disengaging mentally when a bunch of people would all show up at once. Then there'd be so many people that no matter who I went to help, I got pointed at someone else.

Then I had this little incident with some people who were taking their cosplay altogether too seriously, and had swallowed altogether too much Political Correctness. There is a difference between playing a fictional race in a Secondary World, however beloved, and one's actual Primary World racial and ethnic identity.

On the other hand, I did have a bright moment in the afternoon when I got to Ellen Datlow's signing. We didn't need to have any books in stock that needed signed, but I did have three of her anthologies in my personal library, so I brought them to be signed and personalized. We chatted briefly and she commented that my copies looked well-loved.

After the dealers' room closed for the night,

we headed back to our hotel room. Although there are parties at Archon, they tend to be too centered around drinking for us to enjoy when we need to be ready to do business on the morrow. Also, going back to the room gave me an opportunity to make more progress on my book review.

Sunday morning we had some unwelcome anxiety when we discovered that the third person who'd been sharing our room had never returned for the night — but her stuff was still there. Given the reputation of Archon's parties for wild drinking, we started worrying about all the ugly possibilities. However, we needed to get checked out in time to open our tables, and we weren't going to abandon her possessions to be disposed of by Housekeeping. So we packed everything up and put it in the van, and even put the perishables into our cooler with our remaining food.

Because every ice machine in that hotel was broken, I had to make an unexpected trip up to WalMart to acquire ice for the cooler. Even with that trip, I made it back in time to do a little looking around before the doors opened. During that period, we heard that one of the parties got so far out of hand that the police busted it, giving us further reason for anxiety about our friend.

Once the doors opened, we had to just concentrate on selling. Sales were slow at first, but soon picked up markedly. By the time we started packing the figurines, people were buying stacks of books, and I had no time to do anything but mark them down and try to get second copies up. We just had to leave the gaps open, so we ended up with a bunch of loose boxes.

And our friend finally showed up. She'd been partying, but at a private party which didn't get out of hand. However, she hadn't felt she could get back to our hotel safely, so she'd stayed there. Glad she'd had a safe place to stay for the night, we got her stuff back to her.

Then the dealers' room closed and it was time to carry stuff out. With a whole bunch of people working, we were able to get everything out quickly, and left the convention center while it was still light.

The trip back went pretty smoothly. When we stopped to get gas, I put together our supper and we ate on the road. We still got back to my folks' place in time to visit and do some stuff on the computer before we turned in for the night.

On Monday we had an early lunch with my folks before heading back to Indianapolis. We made the drive in good time and even stopped at Brownsburg to make a deposit of decent size at the bank branch. Much as I enjoy the conventions and getting to travel, it's always good to be home.

Windycon 43

November 11 to 13 in Lombard, Illinois
Westin Lombard Yorktown Center Hotel
Reported by Sue Burke

Friday, November 11 Chicago to Lombard

More than a thousand people came to Windycon 43, November 11 to 13 in Lombard, IL. It was fun, fun, fun – and I danced with the King of the Nerds.

For the first time in a long time, I came in my own car to the convention, which might have been a scenic drive if I could have taken my eyes off the tail lights of the car ahead. A 45-minute, 31-mile trip took twice that long due to stop-and-go crosstown traffic. (My husband, by the way, stayed home to do his graduate school homework.)

Check-in to the hotel and the convention went fast and efficient.

Early on Friday evening I moderated a panel on international science fiction, and I gave away two books I'd translated – *Prodigies* by Angélica Gorodischer and *Twilight of the Normidons* by Sergio Llanes – and my copy of *A Planet For Rent* by Yoss. Then I attended a presentation on sign language basics, and I learned that signing did not agree with the arthritis in my hands. I also spoke on a panel about writing believable unpleasant characters. My advice: work to give them the same kind of motivation as you do for any other kind of character.

That evening there were parties, and free beer and hard cider in the con suite, which was a party in itself. I stayed up as late as I could and had one glass too many.

And throughout the weekend, the con suite offered excellent food and constant fun. It was a great place to meet people and make new friends.

Saturday, November 12 Westin Lombard Yorktown Center

The next day was more or less the same, with an interesting panel on whether a language (Klingon) could be owned; it delved into sometimes entertaining specifics of copyright, trademark, and other intellectual property law. I was on a panel about creating believable fight scenes and spoke of what I learned translating the medieval book of chivalry *Amadis of Gaul* and my brief time learning judo. Later I moderated a panel on crowdfunding, but my other panelists didn't show, so I gave the talk on that subject I'd prepared for another venue. I convinced at least one person not to try, so I think I earned my time.

In the evening, after a session organized by Richard Chwedyk for writers – he gave us donuts – I haunted the parties, which were competitively entertaining, and the con suite. Windycon had organized an election King and Queen of the Nerds as a dollar-a-vote fundraiser for Save-A-Vet, a charity that helps military and police dogs. The winners were announced at midnight at the dance, and as part of her (the post was non-gendered) duties, King Kerry Kuhn, who was also vice-chair of

the con, happily danced with everyone on the floor.



Sunday, November 13 Lombard to Chicago

Sunday was more of the same. The closing ceremony announced many prizes, including best overall party, which went to the Royal Manticoran Navy, the official Honor Harrington Fan Association, which had organized highly theatrical drinking rituals (with and without alcohol) as part of its entertainment for party-goers.

Throughout the weekend, there had been music, filking, gaming, a masquerade, kids programming, an art show, a dealer's room, and other fun. I realize now I forgot to say hi to The Starship Cat. I'm very sorry for that.

Everyone was friendly – a weekend of love, the convention chair, gundo (sic), said during the closing ceremonies. We had all tried to avoid talking about the election in all but the most gentle terms. It was hard.

My only complaint: the hotel's air conditioning was set at Arctic Wasteland. It's a very common American thing. And this was a quintessential American convention.

The theme is *dystopia* for Windycon 44, November 10 to 12, 2017, again in Lombard, IL.

WORLDCONS

2017 NASFiC

San Juan, Puerto Rico
<http://www.northamericon17.com/>
July 6-9, 2017

2018

San José
<http://worldcon76.org/>
August 16-20, 2018

WORLDCON BIDS

2019

Dublin
<http://dublin2019.com/>

2020

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

Boston 2020 Christmas Worldcon

2021

Boston
Dallas/Fort Worth

2022

Chicago
Doha, Qatar

2023

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

2024

District of Columbia
<http://dcin2024.org/>

United Kingdom
<http://www.ukin2024.org/>

2025

Perth, Australia

JOHN H. GLENN

John Herschel Glenn, Jr., First American in Orbit, Senior Man in Space, last surviving Mercury astronaut, died **December 7, 2016** at the James Cancer Hospital at Ohio State University.,

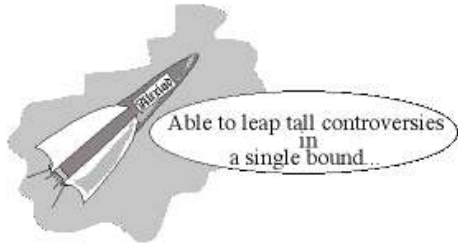
He was born **July 18, 1921** in Cambridge, Ohio. He earned his pilot's licence in 1941, went into Naval Aviator training and was commissioned in the U.S. Marines. During his combat tours in WWII and the Korean War, he accumulated three kills (MiGs), six Distinguished Flying Crosses, and the nickname of "Magnet Ass" for his high attraction to anti-aircraft fire.

In the fifties he developed an interest in spaceflight and was selected for the first astronaut group, the Mercury Seven, becoming the first American in orbit on **February 20, 1962**. He retired from the program and the Marines and pursued a political career, becoming Senator from Ohio (1971-1997). In 1997 he had his second spaceflight on the shuttle *Discovery* (STS-95).

He was the last of the Mercury Seven. He is survived by his wife, Annie, their two children, and two grandchildren.

An era has ended.

 Letters, we get letters



From: **Tom Feller** October 13, 2016
TomFeller@aol.com

Thanks for sending the zine. My application for social security was accepted, and I am supposed to receive my first payment on November 23.

You're about three months up on me. Fandom is getting old.

— JTM

I read Blish's *Cities in Flight* series when I was in college when they were collected into one large paperback.

My first choices for the Hugos won the Novella, Short Story, Best Dramatic Presentation-Long Form, Best Editor-Short Form, Best Fanzine, Best Fan Writer, and Best Fan Artist. I had read 4 of the 5 Novel nominees before the voting deadline, so of course the one I did NOT read was the winner. As for the retro-Hugos, I can't disagree with any of the winners. As for the Dragon Awards, only my choices for Movie and TV series won.

From: **Dale Speirs** October 13, 2016
 Calgary, Alberta, CANADA
opuntia57@hotmail.com

I enjoyed your review of James Blish's series *Cities in Flight*, which I consider one of the best series in SF. I reviewed it in my zine *Opuntia* #279 (available as a free .pdf at efanzines.com or fanac.org) from a different point of view. I used quotes from Shakespeare for my chapter headings instead of Dylan Thomas.

The books would make a good television series, but hopefully never movies, which aren't suitable for novels. Too much would have to be left out. Hollywood likes to do that, and the end result always suffers.

I like the idea. There might be a problem with blending in *They Shall Have Stars*, which is very much fifties in mindset (e.g. MacHinery = McCarthy). And you can bet the Vegan orbital fort would provoke cries of "Star

Wars ripoff". But it's like Game of Thrones: Everybody dies.

I can only think of one movie that was better than the book, the James Bond film *Goldfinger*. The reason was that the movie fixed a major plot hole in Ian Fleming's book, that of a few men attempting to carry away the Fort Knox gold in a raid. It would take weeks to lift that heavy weight. The Army base surrounding the gold depository would quickly recover from the initial surprise and put a stop to the raid.

The movie had a better idea, contaminating the gold with a nuclear bomb and making it useless to settle international debts because of radioactivity. Today it is a moot point, because Nixon killed the gold standard on August 15, 1971. Now all currencies are fiat, worth their weight in paper. Nations no longer settle debts with gold; they repudiate them with bail-ins and sovereign bonds that will never be paid off.

Goldfinger is now an obsolete period piece, like all those movies whose characters used payphones away from home, or spent hours researching in a library to find a vital clue. The Nazis did their dastardly deeds with index cards and filing cabinets. I'm sure the occasional Millennial has wondered why they didn't just put it all in the Cloud.

I know. In my books I have had to take into account the speed of communications back then.

— JTM

There are, however, many weird alternative histories coming out of Hollywood. Computer keyboards, for example, audibly click and clatter like a manual typewriter, unlike any other place in the world. When a character runs a Google search, the desired result is always at the top of the first page. Someone searching for a Mary Smith of New York City will easily get the one wanted, not the other 20,000 Mary Smiths past and present.

From: **George Phillis** October 13, 2016
phillies@4liberty.net

Many thanks for your zine. I will forward it to our zine reviewers. Shall I forward it to our members? I think we corresponded about this, but I have so many things going on, not to mention a major hard drive attack by Microsoft, that I have lost track of your preferences (after three weeks, I will soon have the files back).

I read the *Destroyerman* volume. It appeared to me that the author was getting a bit stale. *The Gray Tide* was excellently thought out. There is a second volume in the sequence. If you like those you might or might not like Colin Gee's third world war alternative history, in which the Russian spies in 1945 uncover the British War Plans for an early war with the USSR (Churchill though it unlikely but better to be prepared), and the Russians think this is what the British are planning to do.

There were two: *High Tide* and *Rip Tide*. What I liked was that Heller found a point of departure which had been pointed out not long after, and followed its consequences.

— JTM

From: **Nic Farey** October 14, 2016
fareynic@gmail.com

Thanks as always Joe.

I typically enjoy your extended analyses, especially when I'm familiar with the topic, and *Cities in Flight* was no exception; I did idly wonder about a comparison between John Amalfi and Artur Blord; what might happen in a head-to-head matchup? Amalfi is flawed, and you correctly point out some of his inexplicable errors of judgement, but is adept enough to get the result. Blord is an archetypal Van Vogtian super-competent, most likely with some Teela Brown gene, who knows?

Maybe you've discovered the real reason the universe came to an end.

— JTM

From: **Patrick McCray** October 14, 2016
Patrick_McCray@webbschool.org

If interested, check out my daily column, The Dark Shadows Daybook, at the Rondo-winning:

<http://CollinsportHistoricalSociety.com>

From: **Milt Stevens** October 18, 2016
 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA
 93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* #89, Joseph thinks the Hugo category for best series may be controversial. The worldcon business meeting has approved the category with a sundown clause, so it's reasonable to give the idea a trial run. I do think some aspects of the wording will be controversial.

I'm not a particularly a fan of series. I make it a policy to avoid series unless I hear some favorable comments from people I trust or it gets nominated for a Hugo. I did read the first volume of the *Wheel of Time* by Robert Jordan. Usually, the first volume of a series is the best. I found this first novel to be utterly routine. I couldn't see any reason why I would want to read a second volume.

I managed to struggle through three of them. I remember a review which thought that was the end of the series. Hopless optimism?

However, I do like some series. File 770 carried a list of 140 series that were eligible for

this year. (Over 100,000 words in at least three volumes with the latest volume in the current year) If I had to nominate five items at the moment, my nominations would be;

Miles Vorkosigan by Bujold
The Expanse by Corey
The Three Body Problem by Liu
Poseidon's Children by Reynolds
The Laundry Files by Stross

I think the Miles Vorkosigan series is the clear winner. It has both volume and quality. The problem comes in the second and subsequent years. If all five of my nominees were on the ballot, the four that didn't win would be ineligible until they had produced two more volumes totaling at least 240,000 words. I think the list of ineligible series will keep getting longer. Of the 140 series that are eligible for 2016, over a hundred are boilerplate fantasy. Maybe the people who framed the requirements for this category really want to descend into the vast pool of potboilers. Personally, I don't think excluding runners-up is a good idea.

I think you've hit on something with that comment about "boilerplate fantasy". *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* has a very real (if fantastic) basis.

I'm glad to hear that Schirm made it as far as your place. I haven't seen him since worldcon, and usually he drops by LASFS at least every couple of weeks. He didn't say how long he planned on staying in Virginia.

In regard to: Darrell Schweitzer's comments in the letter column, I said I thought *The Ill Made Knight* was the best novel on the Retro Hugo ballot and that T. H. White was the best writer. However, I think the Hugo Awards are for science fiction and fantasy genre fiction. I do not believe the work in question was genre fiction. I have heard all sorts of things should be considered science fiction or fantasy. I've heard arguments that games were science fiction and that all movie musicals were fantasy because most of them have surreal scenes in them. If we accept these lines of argument, we face death by evaporation. The field becomes so large that it becomes meaningless.

There may be consequences from accepting T. H. White as a genre writer. What happens when people demand that Sponge Bob be admitted to our field. Sponge Bob is far more fantastic than anything T. H. White ever wrote about. Nobody could argue that a talking sponge who wears pants is realism. In regard to quality, Sponge Bob is quite good for what he is, but he does not appear in genre fiction, and he isn't part of our field.

It's the way. "I like this, so it's part of our field." The example is Sinclair Lewis's

Winnemac novels, which feature a completely fictional U.S. state. He created a number of cities, a history, and a specific location (it was bordered by Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois) all so he wouldn't offend anybody from a real city. Does this make *Babbitt* and *Elmer Gantry*, which are set there, SF novels? (Did Winnemac go for Berzelius Windrip in 1936?)

—JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** October 19, 2016
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

Happy Birthday to Lisa!

Thorough collection of related reviews; and the review of *Code Warriors* was interesting.

I was happy to see that Mike Glycer won a Hugo for Best Fanzine for *File 770*; I wasn't aware that he was still publishing. I liked the 1941 Retro Hugos winners; and I like the new idea of the Best Series Hugo.

He publishes a physical issue every year but nowadays he's mainly on the File 770 website:

<http://file770.com/>

Thanks for all the awards listings and thanks to all the LOCers for so much more interesting intel. I enjoy Sue Burke's accounts of readjusting to life here in the States. And thanks for A Report to the Lord High Admiral of England. It made me snicker.

I thought that the sort of time-displacement events in the story I was thinking of were more likely to end like that.

—JTM



From: **John Hertz** October 22, 2016
 236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Thanks for *Alexiad* 89 as ever. Here are a few more or less recent issues of poor

Vanamonde.

Hurrah for Marion Marauder, 9th horse to win the Trotting Triple Crown! There's no capital c in "Worldcon". It's a registered service mark, even.

Forry Ackerman started the Big Heart Award, and administered it until the millennium, when Dave Kyle succeeded him; now Steve Francis. The electronic may see my article about the Big Heart at <sfawardswatch.com/?page_id=615>. The Fancyclopedia III article (also electronic-only) mistakenly limits the Award to fans.

Thanks for reviewing the *Blish Cities in Flight* at substantial length. It well deserves our attention.

I'm told there is a sharp distinction between .a hobo and a bindlestiff.

Heinlein made a distinction in *The Day After Tomorrow* (G.022; 1941, 1949) but his wasn't quite the same.

The Left (speaking for myself) too often say Eisenhower had no brains worth mentioning. This is, as you say on another point, a little unobservant. His bringing and maintaining unprecedented cooperation among the Allies in World War II could not have been accomplished by a dolt. We need not depreciate him to disagree with him.

I took the final Cities novel *The Triumph of Time* as one of the "Wonders of 1958" set of SF Classics discussed at Denvention III, the 66th Worldcon, a golden fifty years later. When asked "Why not *A Case of Conscience*?" I joined them in one book talk, which I have not done before or since, and suggested Time was superior to Conscience.

Did you end the argument with a clash of cymbals?

—JTM

You find a lot of fault with these four books but I see little looking to their merits. You do say at the end that the description of the end is evocative and moving.

About encipherers erring I recommend L. Marks, *Between Silk and Cyanide* (1998).

John Purcell is right to consider D. Jones, *The Court Martial of George Armstrong Custer* (1976). There is a 2006 paperback.

Our SF conventions are unlike the mass-media fests as our fandom is unlike theirs. The difference is not numbers nor, Roscoe help us, that a big tent is bad. The difference is in the participation.

Respectfully I decry finding one's friends as a main fannish motive for attending. I do find them — sometimes — but this, if made too much of, smacks of "We don't want nobody nobody sent". And is the road to doom.

The great thing about a big con (you should pardon the expression — and do be quiet, Ghost of Nabokov) is meeting people one didn't know one wanted to meet. I argued this to Rick

Sneary and (being one of the editors) put it in *Button-Tack*.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** November 7, 2016
6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA
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I was much too busy with the World Fantasy Convention's programming over the past month to get to your latest issue in a timely manner. The program came off without a hitch, as far as I can tell. There were some pleasant surprises, as when one of the participants (Rick Lieder) on a panel about Bruno Scholz that I was moderating actually brought along a slide show of Scholz's artwork, which made the panel a spectacular success, even though many people in the audience had never heard of its subject when we started. It is reassuring that we can still do that kind of scholarly panel and have it appreciated.



Anyway, on a similar note of peering into the past, I will add to your remark about Gernsback's ghettoization that there is a little more to it than merely that Gernsback put SF, as a labelled product, into a magazine and so identified it to the public for the first time. Then SF became identified in the public mind as something only to be found in newspaper comic strips and in pulp magazines, which meant that one came to a SF magazine with the same literary expectations one might have for, say, *Spicy Detective* or *Operator 5*. Nostalgic as collectors are about them, most pulps really were crap, and deserved their subliterate reputation. Gernsback certainly did not help matters by paying so badly (and so reluctantly) that his magazines were written by amateurs, many of whom could not write even as well as the contributors to more routine pulps. When Grosset & Dunlap started a small SF line in the late '40s (they published Kuttner's *Fury*, Williamson's *The Humanoids*, van Vogt's *The World of Null-A* and a couple others) this was a real breakthrough. It meant that a commercial publisher – not a

particularly high class one either – acknowledged that SF could be as reprintable as a routine pulp western or mystery. Claims to being Literature were still far in the future. SF had emerged from the sub-basement of the pulp field and had achieved parity with other types of pulp fiction. Before that, Grosset & Dunlap and other such publishers were perfectly happy to reprint as books novels which had been serialized in the general pulps like *Argosy* or *Blue Book*, even SF novels (by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ray Cummings, and others), but never from the SF pulps. John Taine could sell to the book market, but the novel he had serialized in *Astounding* was never done as a book.

The difference in Britain was that the gap between pulps and general fiction publishing was even larger. The SF magazines were not firmly established. British pulp is even trashier than the American variety, and shades downward into ephemeral "boys papers." The result was that no one would confuse a science fiction novel for adults (like Collier's *Tom's A-cold*) with pulp. Such SF for adults as appeared in Britain in the '20s or '30s appeared as general fiction.

But the British view seems to have been that the "scientific romance" had died out sometime around the First World War. I have an edition of Doyle's Professor Challenger stories from about 1950 with an introduction by John Dickson Carr, who expresses regret that nobody seems to have written any scientifically-based fiction since the heyday of Wells.

I wonder how Carr handled *The Land of Mist*. G.E.C. seems to have gone into spiritualism the way he went into serious science, angry that anyone would dare disagree with him and violent. I imagine him throwing Houdini around after a debunking.

As for the awards this year, the corruption seems to still be there, coming from all sides. If Taras Wolansky is right that there are voters who will only vote for women (or if there are voters that will only vote for men, or LGBT writers, or writers of color, or only for works of a certain political stripe) then the awards are rendered meaningless. The public will begin to notice. Certainly the Dragon Awards are no improvement over the Hugos. With a heavy Puppy/Vox Day endorsement, they are discredited from the start. We can only hope that eventually an influx of voters who don't even know about the controversies will shift the voting back to the works themselves, not who wrote them. I certainly find myself asking about certain award nominees or even winners, "Is it of professional quality?" and even "Is it readable?" I can no longer take that for granted. It is a product of the internet age that campaigning and ballot-stuffing are just too easy.

It is reassuring in a way that gain this year the Philadelphia Science Fiction's Society's Hugo Predictions panel gave out a lot of No Awards. The people on it are not necessarily active fans beyond the local level. They do not know about the politics and controversies behind the awards. They just react to the sheer awfulness of the material and respond accordingly. I am hopeful that the Finnish voters next year will have no patience at all for this sort of nonsense.

Worldcon seems to be getting into a "world-traveler" mode. Finland, Dublin, New Zealand . . . it's all very well to say "well it is a World con", but increasingly most of the Fans I know can't or don't go. The con hotel is priced for business travelers, the cheap hotels are far out. And then there's the competition, the comic con with thousands upon thousands of members.

— JTM



From: **Dale Nelson** November 10, 2016
extollager@gmail.com

P. J. Farmer was working on a biography of Allan Quatermain (p. 12)? That's interesting to an old Haggard fan like me. Has what he wrote been published anywhere? Old Quatermain would be a good choice for a lively biography, with so many extravagant adventures and several chaste romances too. If you read the books he becomes part of the furniture of your mind in a way that suggests the similar presence of Sherlock Holmes.

The source didn't say. It seems to have been just notes. And it was a "Wold Newton" episode, which meant that Hunter Quatermain would become related to, for example, Peter Parker, among all the other pulp and pulpish figures Farmer liked.

—JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 17, 2016
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA
93010-2451 USA
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for *Alexiad* Vol. 15, No. 4 (October 2016), Whole Number 89.

You indicate your ancestry as reported by testing with Family Tree DNA. I have tested with several DNA companies. Many years ago I first tested with Bryan Sykes in England and my direct Male ancestry was 100% Celtic (Irish). I have misplaced the file and can't access any other information. 23 and Me has my Paternal Haplogroup as R1b1b2a1a2f2 and Maternal Haplogroup as H11. They also report that I have 2.8% Neanderthal DNA. Virtually everyone with European ancestry has some percentage of Neanderthal DNA. Here's what I got from Ancestry: Ireland/Wales/Scotland (52%), Scandinavia (28%), Italy/Greece (10%), and Other (10%). I've never seen Italy/Greece from any of the other testing companies and have no idea what "Other" signifies. I've also tested with the two National Geographic Projects and several tests with Family Tree DNA. But, I think that the above is enough information. I consider myself to be a DNA Junkie.

My Paternal Haplogroup is R1b1a1a2.

Well, maybe a bit more. The December 2016 issue of *Discover* has an interesting article on the Denisovans, a more recently discovered relative of we *Homo sapiens*. *Homo sapiens*, Neanderthals, and Denisovans interbred and, as a friend of mine said, they didn't produce any mules. So there are humans not only with Neanderthal DNA, but also humans with Denisovan DNA. Who knows? Maybe one of these days other unknown humans may be discovered.

Denisovans have been typed from a finger bone (phalanx) and two molars discovered in Russia. Somehow this makes me think of the description of "Desi" in *Science Made Stupid*, made from a tiny chip of skull:

Scientists can learn much from a relatively small fragment of skeleton. From this fossil, it was deduced that Desi stood about four feet seven inches tall, walked with a slight limp, disliked zucchini, and was a registered Democrat.

— JTM

The same issue of *Discover* also has an article on "The Origins of Dogs" that is quite interesting. Now, if they would just do the same for household cats.

George W. Price suggests a new Presidential election voting system which you indicate could cause a problem with the possibility of having to hold another Presidential election on short notice. Here are three suggestions of mine. But, first let me say that I do not have any problem with the Electoral College. It is there for a reason. We

are a nation of states, not political subdivisions.

- 1) The state of Maine and one or two other states do the following. The candidate with the most votes receives two Electoral College votes. Then the candidate who receives the most votes in a given Congressional District receives one vote. No Winner Takes All.
- 2) In a recent newspaper column by the Dean of the UC Irvine School of Law suggested (if I understand him correctly) that Presidential Candidates receive Electoral College votes in relationship to their percentage of the vote. That would be for each state. An example would be California with 55 electors. I see a problem if a minor party candidate received say 5% of the vote in California they would be entitled to 2 or 3 Electoral votes. If they received 10% of the vote they would be entitled to 5 or 6 Electoral votes. Actually, this system might result in more minor party votes.
- 3) How about doing it like the voting for the Hugo. Except that No Award would be replaced by None of the Above. If None of the Above ends up being in first place then that state would not cast any Electoral votes.

It is my understanding that #1 has never affected the outcome of a Presidential Election.

#2 and #3 I could see ending up with no candidate receiving a majority of the Electoral College votes. That would no doubt result in screams of Constitutional Crisis. But, that would be a bunch of crap. Actually, it would invoke Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution. That's why it's in the Constitution.



From: **George W. Price** Nov. 27, 2016
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October Alexiad:

I am sorry to learn of the death of Dave Kyle. I first met him at the Fantasy Veterans convention in New York in 1953. The attendees were primarily servicemen on active

duty. It was put on by Ray Van Houten and James Taurasi, the founders of Fanvets, which helped fans in the military get magazines and books. Dave and I were in a photo appearing in the New York *Daily News*, May 3, 1953. They chose us for the picture because we were among the few at the con who were in uniform. Dave was a captain in the Air Force; I was an Army private.

Joe's extended commentary on James Blish's *Cities in Flight* series mentions "Robert Helmuth" as the viewpoint character in "Bridge." I wondered at the time if Blish named him after Helmuth of Kalonia (who spoke for Boskone), the principal villain in Doc Smith's *Galactic Patrol*, which Blish almost certainly must have read. However, "Helmuth" is also a real Germanic surname, so probably it was just a coincidence, and Blish didn't remember — or didn't care — that Doc had used it.

Joe also refers to "Samuel Dickstein, ardent pursuer of fascist and nativist movements in the U.S. in his leadership of the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities." I've read that the HCUA (more often called HUAC) was founded in the 1930s to investigate the Ku Klux Klan, the German-American Bund (Americans sympathetic to the Nazis), and similar outfits. The left liberals of the time found nothing wrong with the committee's aims and methods when directed against fascists and nativists. It was only after the Cold War started and the committee began using the very same methods against suspected communists that the Left realized how wicked those methods were.

By the way, Wikipedia cites reports that Dickstein was apparently a Soviet agent, paid by the NKVD, which might explain his preference for pursuing fascists but not communists.

See *The Haunted Wood* by Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev (1999) for the story of their Agent CROOK, which was his observant code name. The NKVD dropped him because he only provided old McCormick-Dickstein Committee material and demanded more money.

In Joe's review of Budansky's *Code Warriors*, he cites the case of Herman Oberth, who came to the U.S. to work on space flight, but soon gave up and returned to Germany because he "could not get clearance (being a German from Romania) and so was in the grotesque position of writing material that was too secret for him to read." I have a story like that.

When I was a soldier-technician in the Army Chemical Corps Research and Engineering Command in 1952-1953, I was told that there

had been another technician who, like most of us at that post, was cleared for "Secret" but not "Top Secret." (Clearance for "Top Secret" required a full FBI field investigation.) He wrote a report on one aspect of a certain subject. The report was classified "Secret," of course. Then he studied a different aspect of that subject and wrote a report on that. In all, he wrote a half-dozen or so reports — each classified "Secret" — on various aspects of that one subject. When he was done, the higher-ups realized that these reports taken together formed such a comprehensive and revealing picture that they had to be reclassified as "Top Secret." And thereafter that technician, being cleared only for "Secret," was not allowed to read the series of reports that he himself had written. I do not know if that story was true. But it sounded like the Army.

Joy V. Smith mentions women serving in the Army, and the editor asks if she has heard "the story about the issue of boots to WACs in WWII." I haven't heard it either (so tell it to us already!), but I did hear another one. It seems that soon after women were first taken into the Army early in WWII, one recruit was caught prostituting herself. And the brass were chagrined to discover that the regulations, having been designed for men, did not forbid prostitution. Well! They couldn't just let her get away with it. So they brought her up on a charge of "unauthorized sale of government property." Believe that if you want to.

All right . . . when the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (as it was then) was formed, they were issued boots based on the sales of women's shoes. As a result they had too many boots too small to wear. Army boots have to fit.

My cousin Dussie is a WAC veteran of WWI and celebrated her twenty-fourth birthday this year. The cousins who did the family newsletter then were proud of her for her service.

Darrell Schweitzer comments on the existence of mainstream science fiction and fantasy outside the genre pulps in the Thirties and Forties. The editor says, "Some people think that Gernsback's 'ghettoization' of scientifiction, by publishing a magazine meant solely for it, contributed to the low esteem it was held in."

This is dubious. There were numerous pulps for just about every category of fiction — romance, western, detective, Great War air combat, sports, general adventure, and on and on — and that did not hinder the acceptance

into the mainstream of the better stories of those types.

No, I think the ghettoization of sf was simply because most of the "literati" didn't understand, and therefore disliked, "that crazy Buck Rogers stuff." Doc Smith could have been the finest stylist in the world, and that would not have gotten *Galactic Patrol* published in the mainstream.

Consider, for example, James Branch Cabell. *Jurgen* (1919) became notorious because it was banned. The rest of Cabell's extensive body of fantasy writings were pretty much ignored.

— JTM

My own letter proposed a scheme of voting in which each candidate would get either a "yes" or a "no" vote, the noes would be subtracted from the yeses, and the winner would be whoever had the highest net total.

I suggested that if all the candidates got negative totals — more noes than yeses — we might hold a new election with new candidates. To which the editor replied, "Imagine the problems of holding a new Presidential election on such short notice." Quite right; I hadn't thought of that.

All right, let's apply the scheme only to the primaries. The primary season is long enough that a state could repeat its primary at least once, maybe even twice. The rule would be that no candidate could advance to the party convention unless he (or she, or it) had been thus shown to be actually liked by the party voters, not just tolerated as the lesser evil. Under such a system, this year's elections might have turned out very differently for both parties.

Taras Wolansky says, "A feminist I read on line said that . . . in the early years of the Hugo Award, women won less than 50% of the statuettes," which she saw as "historical injustice." That embodies a grave error of statistics and logic. Women should be expected to win as frequently as men only if women had as much wordage published as men did. Which they manifestly did not.

Now, perhaps women were indeed writing as much and as well as men did, but prejudiced male editors were unfairly rejecting most of it. This might possibly be checked by comparing male-to-female wordage ratios in issues of magazines edited by women (there have been a few) as against those edited by men. Without some such objective comparison, the feminists are just blowing smoke.

Taras also considers the controversy over why, if intelligent aliens exist, they have not yet contacted us. He cites a Wikipedia calculation that even at sublight speeds it shouldn't take more than about 50 million years to colonize the entire galaxy. So why haven't they found us?

Well, science fiction has long had an answer to that: They have indeed found us, but will not openly contact us until we reach a higher level of technology — and maybe also a higher level of morality. They don't want us to be treated the way Europeans treated American Indians. When our first starship reaches Alpha Centauri, we may be welcomed into a Galactic Union which already occupies every other solar system in this region of the galaxy. But don't bet on it.

DYING IS EASY,
COMEDY IS HARD!

AND WHEN I SAID:
"BUT SERIOUSLY, FOLKS,"
THERE WAS THIS MAD
DASH FOR THE EXITS!



From: **AL du Pisani** November 30, 2016
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I am still OK. More so because I am ignoring most of the news of the day. I am managing to know very little about our local or international celebrities. It does cause interesting comments when people I talk to realize that I do not care about the outrage of the minute.

Fibre is coming to my suburb, and I should have better Internet connectivity early in the new year. The fibre company had to break my suburb into five areas, and I fall into one of the

first two areas, which are being rolled out concurrently. They have already dug up the area and installed their plastic conduits.

At first I thought that the initial digging and placing of cables was the fire installation, but then I saw that the cable consists of empty tubes. Up to seven tubes per cable. So the conduits gets installed and linked to the outside of the properties. At a later stage the physical fibre gets placed into the conduits, and linked from wall box to local exchange.

They have completed the conduit installation, and are currently busy with restitution of landscape to previous state. Fibre installation will be done before the end of the year, and I can get a connection from the wall box to into my house in the new year. Pending my own personal issues, which might delay this for a bit.

Over that last couple of decades I have been keeping files of pithy, witty or insightful quotes from the Internet. The following comes from a person with the non de comment of Thucydides, and explain why British colonies tended to be better off than places colonized by anybody else:

"If anyone wants to do nation building, it is possible if you dig in and do the job for 100+ years, including raising the children in your culture, not theirs, and training the locals in your customs and techniques up to middle management level at least. That is the secret of the "Anglosphere", where British soldiers and civil servants left behind far more functional colonies than any of their European rivals."

I can barely recall the context of the following, but it was about why South Africa and Senegal were the two African countries that have the most stable outlook for broad based democracy: That in these two countries, the colonial powers (Britain and France, respectively), granted limited autonomous self-rule, with a restricted franchise. And that the people who were disenfranchised and grew up under the system, desired to take part in the system, rather than replace it with something else. So that when these two countries became independent, and later increased the franchise, already had a basis and a custom for self-governance, which a lot of the other colonies in Africa never had.

Each of these ideas have the concept of time as a needed part of the result – that both Western acculturation and self-governance took time to embed into countries' cultures. Which is why so many places had so much trouble with schemes that wanted results immediately.

I have mentioned here before about some local schemes that good people tried to implement, that was going to take time, but which expected good results. Where somebody that wanted immediate results overrode them, and put into place a process which nobody liked, did not give people time to get used to the ideas, caused great bitterness, and ended up at just about

entrenching the initial state. And left behind a feeling that things will never change.

Some of the results from local elections appear to be based on this knowledge that things are wrong and not getting better, and a desperate choice for something, anything different. I get the idea that election results worldwide is showing a lot of this feeling too.

People who have lost hope tend to get destructive. Unfortunately, that is quite often when things gets worse. On the other hand, revolutions usually occur when things have been bad but are getting better. I get the idea that we may be screwed.

I am reading more than I have done in a long time. Unfortunately, the only time I really have for reading during the week is just before I go to sleep, so this is impacting the time I have available for sleep. But if I do not read, I find that life is not that great.

I am starting to discover a fondness for Human Wave SF, with it's celebration of being human. As a result, I have a lot less time for the current crop of SF authors which are presently being nominated for awards. For some of them I have gone from buying, through borrow and read, to cannot be bothered to pirate their work.

Which authors do you like?
We're always on the lookout for something new and readable.

— JTM

A lot of this seems to be the results of trends that started forty years ago, but which only interfaced with other, newer trends recently, resulting in a lot of unhappiness, chaos and creation. And I cannot predict where it all will end.

I am planning to visit my family over December, and hope to rest and be refreshed for the coming year.

I wish good luck and good books to you all.

From: **Sue Burke** November 30, 2016
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Happy birthday, Lisa. Happy 20th anniversary, Joe and Lisa. Happy holidays, everyone.

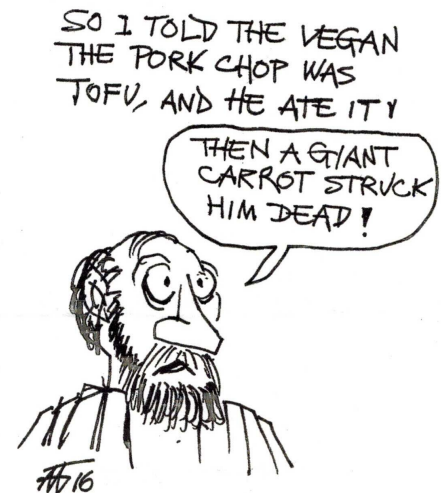
After an exceptionally warm autumn here, winter has come. Chicagoans express pride at the hardship of their winters. Rightly so, as I am being reminded, although the weather was agreeable on the drive from Chicago to Milwaukee for Thanksgiving dinner with in-laws.

Dana told us how the sidewalks would crack in winter. She loved the Worldcon Art Show, too.

Yes, **George W. Price**, I live right across the alley from the Red and Purple elevated train

lines. In fact, I'm so conveniently close to the Bryn Mawr station that I can look out of my windows and recognize people on the platform. It's a bit noisy, especially the Purple express trains as they barrel through, but on the other hand the sound reminds me that people are getting on with their lives despite everything. Neighbors tell me the area is on the rebound after some years in decline. I can notice the influence from the Loyola University campus, and in fact an upstairs neighbor is a student. Your current neighborhood isn't too far away from me to the west. How are things there?

And how about those Cubs?



My shipment from Spain arrived on October 4 as scheduled, and we put almost everything away quickly. We're still trying to figure out where to hang pictures. Our apartment is small – two modest bedrooms (one is my office), a small combined living room-kitchen, a tiny bathroom, and a hall closet – so we sent the minimum. Since we paid \$70 per box, we had an extra incentive to pack selectively and avoid clutter from the beginning. We'll see how long that lasts.

I finished this year's Hugo-winning novel, *The Fifth Season*, by N. K. Jemisin, a superbly written story about a world where geology periodically goes mad in "fifth seasons" that devastate civilizations. Some people have the ability to control stone, even bedrock, and they're feared and enslaved. Four story strands get skillfully woven into one.

But ... it ends with a cliffhanger, not a conclusion. The book also reminds me why I tend not to love fantasy quite as much as science fiction. All the parts fit together too neatly. This isn't Jemisin's fault. She's clearly an outstanding writer. Fantasy lacks the constraints of reality – and I know for some people this is a feature, not a bug. Fantasy permits a fine variety of storytelling that can soar to fully imagined allegory. For me, though, the worldbuilding can be manipulated too conveniently for authorial

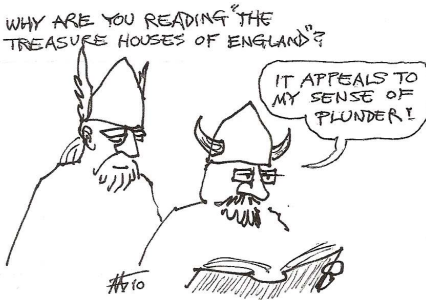
ends. Still, this world has been built by a master.

Yes, **Taras Wolansky**, I did notice that women won a lot of awards this year. That could be coincidence, or it could be that most readers of any kind of fiction these days are female. Women are also more inclined to read female authors than men are, and the Hugos are voted on by readers. These readers might be finding what reviewers miss.

I also read *A Planet for Rent* by Yoss, a Cuban writer. I picked it up when he passed through Chicago in October on a book tour. It had been published in Spain back in 2002 to great praise, but I missed reading it then, and now it's been ably translated into English. In the book, Earth has been colonized by aliens who use it as a vacation spot and keep it underdeveloped. Each chapter shows how a different character has been corrupted by colonization, but the corruption tells us as much about Earth's present as its future. And for all their brutality, the stories often enough manage to be funny.

Was it as bad as in Gordon Dickson's *Way of the Pilgrim* (1987) where the aliens were invulnerable to our weapons and would kill humans for any reason or none? (And they got defeated by graffiti artists, which assumes the surveillance camera has never been invented.)

— JTM



I was at Windycon from November 11 to 13 (see report), and from November 26 to 29 was at the International Book Fair in Guadalajara, Mexico. I was invited to speak on Sunday afternoon about crowdfunding for translations at the St. Jerome International Translation and Interpretation Conference, which was held as part of the fair. And the fair was huge, with 1,900 publishers from 44 countries and two weeks of activities.

I never saw it all and didn't stay for the whole thing. Mostly I was at the conference listening to talks on topics such as deficiencies in specialized and non-specialized mono- and bi-lingual dictionaries, or computer tools for the analysis of ancient Sanskrit manuscripts. People thought my talk was well organized. I gave out a lot of business cards. I have yet to

see if I managed to attract any business, which would be nice. I also enjoyed a brief time immersed in Mexican culture, which is not at all like Spain's despite having a more-or-less shared language. Among other differences, the breakfast buffet included frijoles, nopales (cactus), menudo soup, chicken in chili sauce, and tropical fruit juices.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Dec. 1, 2016
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Another late LOC? Your zine says October and this is November. On the other hand, your *Alexiads* seem to be coming out fast and furious.

Not only do I wish you good luck on your zine. I wish you good luck in getting Social Security. I hope it's not disability you're applying for, Joe. I hear that it is an adversary relationship. They're always questioning whether you should be entitled to anything.

I went downtown to the office in the old post office building, they called me to the clerk, and the clerk said, "You get \$\$\$\$ a month starting one month after your birthday. What's your bank account number, never mind, we got it. Have a nice day."

Let us go to a pleasanter topic, where people aren't fighting over an entitlement. In fact, since we are in the fantasy world in that topic, they usually fight for more meaningful things

Specifically, I am talking about science fiction. I was amused by your account of James Blish's *Cities in Flight* series. Reaching back to the Depression, he remembers the Okies. They left Oklahoma because it was a dustbowl and traveled all around looking for work.

He imagines an analogy with the Okies: 'Okie' cities traveling from solar system to solar system looking for work. This was made possible by a whole new technology, discovered in 2013, which defies gravity and travels faster than light, the Spindizzy.

We have talked about future history up above. How about alternate history? We go from a future with Okie cities to an alternate history where the US Navy fights the British Navy during the Civil War, and wins.

I have heard that one reason the Brits did not attack us then was because they feared they might lose, even though they had a reputation for having the most powerful Navy. I guess they didn't want to find out whether our ironclads built for the Civil War made us more powerful?... Anyway, that's what I heard.

A thread I am following on the Alternatetheory.com board on a hypothetical Trent War discusses the comparisons between Federal

monitors and Royal Navy ironclads. The former do not come off at all well, and some other Anglo-American war stories came in for much criticism for their writers' poor research on naval weaponry.

We were strong during the Civil War; have we grown weak? That we have grown progressively weaker has been the conservative cry throughout history. Martin van Creveld, quoting Cyril Kornbluth, blames a more politicized army as one reason for the American army's drift toward softness.

No. I quoted Kornbluth because he had discussed the situation van Creveld explained.

Actually, I gather generals were more political during the Civil War. General McClellan, being a good Democrat, didn't want the North to win, I suspect. I gather the prospects for the North improved when Grant and Sherman took over.

I don't know how much another weakness is ballyhooed as a recent trend, repetition of code. In your review of *The Code Warriors*, repetition, Herbert O. Yardley points out, has been the fall of many codes. On the other hand, because the Russians have avoided repetition in their code, we have failed to decipher it. On the other hand still, I wonder whether we have avoided repetition and the Russian have failed to decipher our code.

Repetition was what made the VENONA Project breakthrough possible. The overburdened NKVD cipher office prepared duplicates of one-time cipher pads.

— JTM

Back to science fiction from history, your comment to me, Joe, was whether I had read George Griffith's *Olga Romanoff: The Siren of the Skies*, (1894). A sequel to his *Angel of the Revolution* (1893), which we had been discussing.

I have to answer No. I just never came across it. Plus the review in Amazon wouldn't encourage me to read it in the future. I think the review consisted of five or six epithets panning the novel.

Now that we have gotten back to science fiction, albeit early science fiction, how about us getting back to fans. It is a hop skip and a jump. Unfortunately, fandom, unlike science fiction, looks too much like regular reality – even if the science fiction had not been written by George Griffith in the 1890s.

What you Joe and Lloyd Penney talk about is that participants, i.e., fans, are being replaced by consumers, i.e., mundanes. Yes and no. No question about it, mundane fans of science fiction, like other mundane fans, are consumers, spending money on Hollywood type affairs and not applying brains or muscle to their interests.

However, I have met a number of younger fans who participate as much as the fans of yore. In fact, I wouldn't doubt there are more of them than in the fandoms of yore. The problem is separating them from the fans who only go to cons to see big stars and movie previews.

Let us go from mundane fans to something absolute brainless in and of themselves, words. George Price asks what words, phrases or sentences that spell different words backwards are called.

According to The Week site, Martin Gardner once dubbed a word both backwards and forwards a Semordnilap.

<http://tinyurl.com/h2hrs84>.

It is also known as a backronym, volvogram, heteropalindrome, semi-palindrome, half-palindrome, reversagram, mynoretch, recurrent palindrome, reversible anagram, word reversal, and anadrome. As to whether any of this applies to a sentence spelling a different sentence backwards, I don't know.

We go from pedantic interests to he-man interests, conquering the galaxy. Also from statements of elusive fact to no facts at all. Is Fermi right that if extraterrestrials had existed for a decent amount of time, they would have conquered the galaxy, and we would have met them on Earth?

I claimed that it assumed that they would be traveling faster than light. However, Taras Wolansky doubts that would be needed. He believes that if that extraterrestrial race doubled the new planets they colonized every thousand years, they would be here.

Of course, that depends on how great the distance is between the ambitious extraterrestrials and us. Limited by the speed of light, a planet a million light years from us will take at the least a million years to colonize us, no matter how many planets have been colonized by those hypothetical extraterrestrials in the meantime.

Going from outerspace to Chicago, I answer Sue Burke's comment that Chicago is lively place. It may not be as lively as a planet on Betelgeuse, but, in my short stay there thirty-six years ago, it was certainly lively. A friend took me around the town.

In the end, I am shy, but not chi, of a conclusion. Of course, no single conclusion is possible with all the subjects I have embraced: Social Security, James Blish, an alternate Civil War, codes, early science fiction by George Griffith, fandom, words spelled backwards, the Fermi Paradox and Chicago. What more could you want? What more could I want?

So I say adieu.

From: **John Purcell** December 3, 2016
3744 Marielene Circle, College
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askance73@gmail.com

I realize that this quick little letter of

comment is two days past your stated due date for material contributed to the next issue of your fine fanzine, but I figured you might be able to squeeze this tidbit of information into the upcoming edition.

At present, the official final ballot for the 2017 TAFF (Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund) Race has not been issued yet — probably will long before your next ish hits the streets — all interested and involved parties have been given the green light to make their intentions known. Yes, I am one of the three candidates for this race; the other two are Sarah Gulde and Alyssa McKersie. When the final ballot is released you will get a brief introduction to those two young ladies, but of them, you might remember Alyssa's name from the masthead of *Journey Planet*; she has been an occasional coeditor of that fanzine, and in fact was on the stage at Sasquan when it won the Best Fanzine Award that year.

So there you have the quick and easy listing of this year's TAFF race to send a North American fan to the Helsinki World SF Convention next August. Let's have fun with the race, shall we? Yes, let's.

After looking at friends running — Hi, Guy — I wondered if the costs of publicity and fund-raising weren't as much as it would take to buy tickets and go. Then there were the Samanta b Jude and Abi Frost incidents . . .

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** December 7, 2016
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I am a little past the deadline, but I hope there's still the time to get a letter on *Alexiad* 89 into *Alexiad* 90. I have so much to do to catch up, and this is the next step.

I did not see the newest Trek movie, and I have no intentions of seeing *Rogue One*. Neither has really interested me. I have some hope for the new Trek series being shot in Toronto, and I would look forward to Episode VIII, but there is little available today that catches my eye. Belated good wishes to Lisa on her birthday, and to both of you on your anniversary. Yes, I am also at the age where I automatically get the seniors' discount, even though I am 57. Perhaps I am not aging well.

Your dismissal was indeed unfair. I am STILL looking, but I have an interview with Nasdaq Canada tomorrow, and hopes for a job that may be available at a printing firm. It shouldn't take this long to get a job.

So many friends are dying now. . . Joyce Katz and Dave Kyle are just the latest, in addition to Donna Balkan, an Ottawa fan I knew well. Then, I look at the RIP section in *Ansible*. . . it does get depressing, seeing your heart's interest disintegrating, one name after another.

Thanks to John Purcell! Something's coming soon employment-wise, but why did it have to take more than a year? We are slowly getting used to the idea of inexpensive and nearby entertainment. We really want to return to England, but it may be some time before that happens, if ever.

I wish there was more here, but sorry, there isn't. Thank you for this issue, and there is always the intent to respond in a more complete fashion. Maybe the next time?

We are all becoming more burdened with the minutiae of mundania, other interests, and advancing age. I remember SF club meetings that had thirty people. And that was written SF, not media. All those moments are lost in time, like tears in rain. And I'm afraid Roy Batty's next comment may become true. He'll be one year old on January 8.

— JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Martin Morse Wooster, the same.

Steve Fahenenstalk, Earl Kemp, Cathy Palmer-Lister, James D. Nicoll, Robin Usher, who got it.

Alexis A. Gilliland with thanks and art.

Best wishes for the new year. It's got to be better than the past few.

RYAN FOR PRESIDENT

... "What do I have to mention here?"

Arnie had it all written down. He had served Ryan's two predecessors as Chief of Staff and knew all the tricks of managing a campaign. He said, "Disaster relief. They sent several disaster crews to Washington to help clean up the ruins of the Capitol. And crime, but be careful. Gotham has a big crime problem; the previous mayor was corrupt and there are some big questions about Cobblepot. His predecessor had him committed but he managed to get out and won on a platform of fighting crime."

A President was so cut off. Here he was in a big car, armored and isolated, surrounded by Secret Service men and women, all to keep him from being killed, but keeping him from all other contact with the voters. The motorcade drove into the center of town, over the bridges, to the big square downtown. There were patriotic banners, big RYAN FOR PRESIDENT signs, and a large and appreciative crowd. And the Mayor.

He had been injured, and walked with a peculiar hobble. Even though there wasn't a cloud in the sky, he carried an umbrella. He was very stylishly dressed, but his hair was rumpled. That beaky nose along with the waddle made him look birdlike, but that was one of the things Arnie had warned him not to mention.

"Welcome to Gotham, Mr. President!" Mayor Cobblepot said when Ryan got out of the limousine and, surrounded by a ring of Secret Service men, stepped up on the platform.

"Thank you, your honor."

"We are so proud to meet you . . ." then he hobbled to the podium and said, "Citizens of Gotham! I'm not the reason you're here, so I'll just simply say it's a personal honor, and a credit to our great city, to present to you the President of the United States, Jack Ryan!"

Ryan began to give his standard speech. It had become so easy to give that he had time to remember that he was going to dinner with the CEO of Wayne Enterprises. The man had taken over, at least nominally, after the distressing murder of his parents, and there was something Arnie had told him . . .

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

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