

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Five years ago when I came up diabetic I weighed 210 pounds. The last time I stepped on my bathroom scales I weighed 169 pounds. It has been a journey, this weight loss. I have gone from couch potato to someone who regularly walks the nearly a mile from house to job. I have gone from size 20 to size 14. It has required that I exercise every day and watch what I put in my mouth. At first I did it out of fear of my diabetes. After some time I found that I was doing it because it felt good to stretch my muscles. Fruit has replaced candy. I have learned that if you do not have much sugar in your system an orange tastes as sweet as any candy bar. Somehow I never expected that I would be a weight loss role model, not I, true fannish couch potato. Yet that is what I have become as a result of this journey I was forced into taking. I was given a choice, lose weight or lose feet. I decided the weight had to go and go it did. I did not realize how much that forty pounds cost in the energy to carry it around until it was gone. The journey became also a bit of a circular thing. The more I lost the more energy I had to get out and move more.

March 29 was the 100th anniversary of the foaling of Man o'War, the greatest Thoroughbred ever foaled on this continent. March 30 was the birthday of Secretariat, whom many would give that honor.

— Lisa

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The 143rd Running of the Kentucky Derby will be **May 6, 2017**.
The 142nd Running of the Preakness Stakes will be **May 20, 2017**.
The 148th Running of the Belmont Stakes will be **June 10, 2017**.

Printed on April 30, 2017

Deadline is **June 10, 2017**

Reviewer's Notes

I am wondering if fanzines-as-we-know-them are gone. In the heyday of Corflu, for example, the attendees enthusiastically reminisced of the days when Publishing Giants ruled, and hundred-page mimeoed zines filled one's mailbox. This would seem to be remembering the best and compressing it into regularity. Such things as the Boondoggle, which set All Fandom At War over whether someone should be banned from a con for something he might do, are lost in time like tears in the rain.

But even then, I remember looking over a membership list of a Corflu and noting how few of them were actually publishing anything. Or the faneds' panel which recommended one fanzine that had not been published in three years, and in that issue the principal article was about how to sponge beers off everyone else at a convention. It looked nice, though; well laid-out, nice borders, striking illos to accompany the articles. What attraction it might have to a newcomer is another matter.

Part of it, though, is that life changes. When I began reviewing, another leading reviewer in the field was Spike. "Spike who?" you say. Spike is long gone. There were a groups of active faneds in Atlanta; I remember well meeting them when I was down there for a professional conference. They found other things to do. The Vegas fandom group, which for all its "faanish" reputation actually discussed SF works at its meetings, doesn't seem very active. And not just in the English-speaking world; when the Soviet bloc disintegrated, the inhabitants of those lands burst out with new and exciting perspectives, reaching out in fanzines to the world. Now they're all quiet, their publishing at an end.

In the end, it all may decline to two guys in nursing homes at opposite ends of the country who are Not Talking To Each Other because of something one said or did to the other back in the heady fannish days of the sixties, but neither remembers what it was. Still, they are Not Talking To Each Other.

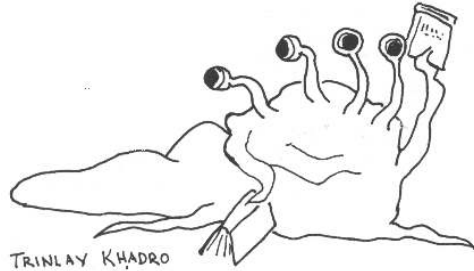
Lisa has been prodding me to get out and walk with her. I sometimes find it hard to get up and go. Once I go out, I admire the view (and the company), I feel better for having stretched my muscles, stimulated my circulation, taken action on my weight, and bettered my condition. Someday I'll figure out why it's so hard to get started in the morning. At least now my income is not less than my outgo.

See you in June.

— 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.

In the spirit of Nansen, the German research icebreaker *Polarstern* will enter the Arctic ice pack in 2019, intending to be frozen in and drift across the Arctic Ocean and North Pole. The previous *Polarstern* made a voyage to the North Pole in 1991, being one of the two first conventionally-powered vessels to reach the pole (the other was the Swedish *Oden*, which was part of the same expedition.) The *Polarstern* is the flagship of the Alfred-Wegener-Institut, Helmholtz-Zentrum für Polar- und Meeresforschung — as in Alfred Wegener of continental drift, and he died on an expedition in Greenland.

The “Rabid Puppies 2017” slate has been released, though by now it’s moot. Because of changes in the nominating process, the slate now recommended only one or two nominees in each category. No one should have been surprised that the recommended Best Novel was published by Castalia House, the Best Fanzine was the Castalia House Blog, and the Best Fanwriters were two writers for the Castalia House Blog; or that the Best Editor Long Form was Vox Day and the best series was by Vox Day.

(It originally also endorsed *File 770*. The next day Mike Glyer said he had been winning too many awards of late and was stepping aside for a year to give others a chance. Decent of him.)

There is a personal injury law firm with a branch here in Louisville. They advertise aggressively, on television, radio, billboards, buses, and so on. I could indeed say they are syndicated. The firm is Morgan & Morgan and their website is:

<https://www.forthethepeople.com/>

If I called and said I was Admiral John Geary and wanted to speak to CEO Artur Drakon, I wonder what they would do? Or what John “Jack Campbell” Hemry would do to me?

The **Middle Tennessee Science Fiction Society** held its last meeting on **March 8, 2017**, ending 45 years of fannish association. The causes seem to be the usual of aging, changed lives, the lack of younger people, and so on. The last meeting had six people attending. This seems to be becoming all too common these days. I remember MTSFS meetings in packed rooms with Khen Moore genially presiding.

The Travel Channel show “Mysteries at the Museum” had an item about the Babbage Difference Engine then at the Computer Science Museum in Mountain View, California. It was narrated by one **Christopher J. Garcia**. (Surely there can’t be two Christopher J. Garcias.) Remember that when the BDP Short Form nominations for San José come up.

For those who thought it was dead, there are two new episodes of The Joker Blogs up:

<http://www.thejokerblogs.com>

The fan-made series of sequels to *The Dark Knight*, painting an even more despairing and chaotic picture of Mr. J, has progressed now into dire and desperate schemes in and around Arkham Asylum, and in these two new episodes the plot has progressed quite bloodily.

Let’s hope it doesn’t take them three *more* years to go on.

MONARCHIST NEWS

On 23 Februar 2017, er February 23, 2017, **Franz Herzog von Bayern**, the Bavarian claimant and Jacobite pretender, was awarded the German *Großes Verdienstkreuz* (Great Cross of Merit) for achievement in the rebuilding of the country.

REQUIEM FOR A SCOTI

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

AN OLD CAPTIVITY (1940)

by “Nevil Shute” [Nevil Shute Norway]

Since I mentioned this book . . . You should remember that *Tarzan of the Apes* began with a “framing story”, the anonymous narrator finding someone who told him about the strange life of someone he chose to call “John Clayton, Lord Greystoke”. Starting a story in such a fashion was both distancing and confirming; it was a real story, but the teller had a certain separation from it.

So it is with this. A psychiatrist named Morgan is going to see a patient in Rome, and is taking the train across France. He notices that another passenger seems to understand what the locals are saying. This man, a pilot named Donald Ross, falls into a conversation with

Morgan. He had been a pilot in Canada, and had learned French there; he is going to Brindisi to bring back an Imperial Airways flying boat. In 1939 Imperial Airways was merged into BOAC [British Overseas Airways Corporation], which was in turn merged into British Airways in 1974. Morgan and Ross would not be going to Italy so casually in 1940.

Ross isn’t so casual anyhow. He asks Morgan if he looks into dreams, and proceeds to tell of a strange one he had.

Ross was orphaned very young, raised by his aunt, and liking flying, joined the Royal Air Force, was trained as a pilot, and left after a short service. He got a job flying in Canada (as established) and when the Depression ran business down, was laid off and went back to his aunt’s. After a brief and very unpleasant job with a dubious air exhibition, he happened to learn of an offer by an Oxford don.

The man wants to go to Greenland. Ross is intrigued by this, since he has been reading about the British Arctic Air Route Expedition of 1930-31 (which, incidentally, used the *Quest*, the ship on which Ernest Shackleton died) and the death of the leader of the BAARE there in 1932 [his name was Henry George Watkins, and he was known as “Gino”; he disappeared hunting for seals]. As you can see, the author knows what was going on; it also dates the expedition of the book in 1937 (and sets the book in the future of its writing, since Ross says it happened “nearly five years ago” and Morgan says the events of the storytelling took place “in the spring of last year”. In 1941, of course, a different set of events were happening.)

Back in the spring of ‘37, Ross goes to Oxford. Mr. Lockwood, the instructor who wants to organize the expedition, turns out to be a bit older than Ross was expecting, nearly sixty. But he shows Ross two aerial photographs and asks him to evaluate them. Ross looks them over and comments that both seem to show the buried ruins of similar buildings. This pleases Lockwood, who explains that one picture was taken in Galway — and the other at Brattalid, in Greenland. (Brattalid, or perhaps technically Brattahlíð [“the steep slope”], was Eric the Red’s estate in the Eastern Settlement of Greenland; the nearest inhabited place now is Narsarsuaq [“great plain”], on the opposite side of Tunulliarfik Fjord [formerly Eiriksfiord].)

Were they aware of the MacMillan Greenland Expedition of 1925, also known as the Byrd Greenland Expedition and the McDonald Greenland Expedition? (There was a little disagreement about who was in charge.) It did aerial surveys of Greenland, though more to the north of Narsarsuaq, indeed at the other end of the island.

Lockwood discusses Celtic and Christian influences in the Norse settlement of Greenland. More relevantly, he wants to do an aerial survey of the Eastern Settlement area, and wants Ross to provide some cost estimates for an airplane. Ross estimates they are

looking at four thousand pounds total cost. Lockwood seems satisfied, and advises Ross to go see his brother. It's so much easier when not having to consider the whims of boards issuing grants.

Lockwood's brother turns out to be a rich man, owner of a substantial steel-tube manufacturer's. In other words, costs on that level are no objection. There's no need to buy a used plane, they can have a custom-built new one. There is however one small problem funding source Sir David Lockwood tells this pilot; Lockwood's daughter Alix wants to go along.

After some struggle Ross reconciles himself to this. She can look after the cameras and tend to other matters, such as relations with the locals.

The next section covers the work on the airplane. Any such vehicle is going to need work, to make it fit for extreme conditions. There is a considerable discussion of technical matters of weight and capacity. A narrative of a real expedition would feature similar discussions. The author's experience in aeronautical design leads him to expound on how much such aircraft were custom-built; the plane is very much a hand-built thing. I suspect the author would understand Stringer, trying to put together a flyable plane from bits of a wreck in *The Flight of the Phoenix* (1964).

There is a considerable time-pressure, since the ice will close in and flights around Greenland in the winter can be very hazardous. Ross has to check out how the plane handles, and this takes a bit of time and effort. There is a difference here from most exploration fictions; there are no melodramatic accidents, inexplicable difficulties, unusual obstacles, sinister competing parties, or the like. Not even having to pay bribes to the Danish or local authorities, which to the latter-day Indiana Jones would be amazing. (The Norwegian claim to a stretch of the eastern Greenland coast, which they called Eirik Raudes Land ["Erik the Red's Land"] had been disallowed in 1933.) The *Ahnenerbe*, Himmler's Aryan Archaeologists, did not get to Greenland, in spite of the undeservedly ignored *Runespear* (1987) by Melinda Snodgrass and Victor Milán.

The locals are welcoming. Ross notes that two of their assistants seem less "native" than most. The implication is old Norse ancestry, but the Danes have been here for a while. However, their photographer, who had gone ahead, has broken his leg. Alix volunteers to take over his duties, and after some concern, her father agrees.

As with most works of the period, the natives are referred to as "Eskimo". This is not a popular designation now. It is probably not an Algonquian term meaning "eaters of raw fish", but it is presumably a degrading reference. The inhabitants of Greenland (now Kalaallit Nunaat) call themselves Inuit. To no

one's surprise, this means "People". The singular is "Inuk", their language is "Inuktitut". However, the similar peoples in Alaska, the Inupiat, Aleut, and Yupik, and the Chukchi of Siberia, are alike and for historical reasons are often referred to collectively as "Eskimo". Their languages are grouped in the Eskimo-Aleut language family.

The Inuit there have some memories of old times, mostly to the effect that the land across the fjord from Narsarsuaq is a less than hospitable place to live. But they set up camp there anyway and begin flying surveys. Alix has a little trouble at first learning how to develop film but she learns, and they begin taking aerial surveys of the area.

Now a new problem emerges. Ross is concerned about the flying boat, partially because there is no proper anchorage. He is having trouble sleeping for other reasons, and begins taking sleeping pills. This in turn gets Alix and her father understandably concerned about his ability to fly.

In spite of the problem, Ross perseveres. The survey is finally ended, and they are going to fly the plane to the States and sell it. But Ross collapses, and spends several days in bed. This is problematic.

When he regains some measure of serviceability, he tells them of a dream he had.

The young man of the Scoti was captured with some others by the Norsemen. They took him to their country, but along the way he and a young woman managed to escape, temporarily, when the boat stopped on an island for the crew to cook. They had no way off, and fortunately the Norsemen did not hold a grudge.

The young man became called "Haki", and the young woman "Hekja". They are taken to the Norse king's town, where they become his runners. They are evidently very good at it, being able to go seventy miles a day.

Then the king gives them to a man who has come there to get funding and colonists for a new settlement he is building, out beyond Iceland. Since no one wants to come to the honestly-described island, and the land to the west of that is even worse, he proposes in an advertising scheme to call it Grønland, "Greenland". This strikes the king as pretty funny and he even puts up his two slave runners for the scheme.

Grønland is a decent enough place. Haki and Hekja are put in charge of cattle. Two years pass and a man named Bjarni comes to the settlement, describing the land he saw even to the west of there. But he didn't land, and the boss man's son thinks he's been a bit timid.

The boss thinks it's a good idea to have scouts, and he does have a couple of good ones. But one woman on a ship is likely to cause problems. (Including more than a few that weren't quite suited for reading consumption at the time.) The solution is to have Haki and Hekja betrothed. (As if that wouldn't keep the crew from cutting his throat, throwing the carcass over the side, and then turning her out.)

The boss falls off his horse going down to see the preparations. He considers that an omen, and sends his son off in Bjarni's ship. They follow his course in reverse, and eventually come to a well-forested land. The commander proceeds to send his two scouts off to do some scouting.

They observe the lands, note the fertility thereof, and consider not going back and settling down. That might not be a good idea, and so they return to the ship.

On the way to there, though, one of the crew carved some marks on a ballast-stone, called over Haki, and said that they were his name. To show that it wasn't a fluke, the commander carves some more marks and tells Hekja that they are her name.

Now they decide to leave a mark; they take the stone up to the top of a local hill and leave it, as a sign that they were there.



When Ross finally wakes up, he tells the story to Alix and her father. The boss was, of course, the local landowner Eirik Raude, that is, Erik Thorvaldsson the Red, and the expedition commander was Leifr Eiriksson, Leif Ericson the Lucky. The man who carved Haki's name on a stone was Thorkel. All this is in Eiríks saga rauða [Erik the Red's Saga], Grœnlendinga saga [Greenland Saga], and other works. (It should be noted that these are thirteenth-century works and while oral transmission can be good, it is not absolutely reliable. Most of the information on the Norse settlements, including Brattahlíð, comes from archaeological work.)

Lockwood thinks that Ross read up on the topic and it influenced his dream. Including the description of Hekja. He had described her as looking a lot like Alix.

For now he's recovered and can fly safely. They fly the plane down to Halifax, as a stopover on the way to New York. Ross tells Alix he's in love with her, but she is less sure. They spend the night in Halifax and fly on down to New York.

As they fly down the coast, Ross comments that the view is very familiar. He'd seen it from Leif's ship. Alix tries to dissuade him. Then they come to a place he recognizes, very much. He lands the plane, goes ashore, and goes to the top of a hill, where he starts digging. The stone he shows them is basalt — not a local stone and then Lockwood finds runes cut into it. They pull it up — and the

runes say Haki and Hekja. As Ross described it in his dream.

This breaks Alix's reticence. Ross takes her hand and tells her they were in love before and could be so again. She agrees, and speaks of how Haki and Hekja have been quite forgotten. To which he says, "Not quite. We shall remember them."

That sound you heard, as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror and were suddenly silenced, had to do with a problem of **recording**. The stone should have been photographed before Ross started digging, and the excavation recorded. As it is, the prospect of fraud would be raised. Just as the gravediggers should have been photographed opening the grave of Johannes Sterne in *Eifelheim* (1986, 2006), so that the body would have been seen as it had been buried. Not as that wouldn't stop such accusations, as was the case with the excavated non-fossilized skeletons of *Australopithecus* in Mississippi in Roger Macbride Allen's *Orphan of Creation* (1988). But recording would help.

The stone is found in Massachusetts. The consideration of the Medieval Warm Period, which made the settlement of Greenland possible, and the Little Ice Age, which ended it, was not as widely considered then. This is why when Helge Ingstad (former governor of Eirik Raudes Land) excavated a potential Norse settlement, after due consideration of the different climate at that time he did so at L'Anse aux Meadows, in northern Newfoundland.

After some digging it appears that the runes used in the book to render the names "Haki" and "Hekja" are Dalecarlian runes. That is, a sort used in the Swedish province of Dalarna, and so not a sort used in Norway and its dependencies.

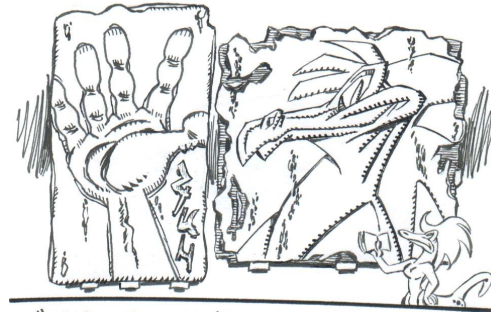
Haki and Hekja are real historical characters, being mentioned in the sagas and doing what they did in this book. The other matters are the author's supposition.

Nevil Shute Norway died in 1960 and so did not live long enough to read another work based on these sagas, *The Technicolor® Time Machine* (Analog, March-May 1967, 1967), by Harry Harrison. Norway's comments on the filming procedures of Climactic Studios might have been interesting.

These people were (nominally at least) Christian. The first bishop there, Arnaldur, was consecrated Bishop of Garðar in 1124. The last serving Bishop of Garðar, Alfur, served from 1368 to 1378. Bishop Edward William Clark, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, has been Titular Bishop of Garðar since 2001.

Narsarsuaq and Brattahlíð are in Kommune Kujalleq ("South"), the province in the southern tip of Greenland. Narsarsuaq also has the Narsarsuaq Airport, formerly the U.S. air base Bluie West One, which operated PBY Catalina flying boats in the forties, fifties, and sixties. Not surprisingly, Cape

Farewell (Nunap Isua; Kap Farvel) is also included in the province. As you know, Bob (or Edgar), that was where the narrator found the Thermos bottle with Bowen Tyler's story of how he got to Caprona in *The Land That Time Forgot* (1918, 1924), which will bring us back to ERB, ERB, ERB, ERB, ERB.



VOYAGERS!

Review by Joseph T Major of
MEMOIRS OF A TIME TRAVELER:
Time Amazon — Book 1 and
CONFESSIONS OF A TIME TRAVELER:
Time Amazon — Book 2
 by Doug Molitor

(2016; Amazon Digital Services; \$0.99;
 and 2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)

NBC didn't want to pay for a call box; so when in 1983 they wanted to do a cheap sci-fi series by having it be time travel, hence historical settings, they reduced the gadget to a pocket watch. Thus we had the show *Voyagers!*, with Jon-Erik Hexum as Phineas Bogg, cocky womanizing time-traveler and corrector, and Meeno Peluce as Jeffrey Jones, a kid who actually paid attention in history class, traveling through time to help correct goofs.

The show lasted only one season. Hexum found out the hard way in his next show that blanks still can kill. Peluce left the acting gig to become a writer, producer, and photographer. The idea persisted.

David Preston thinks he's found the find of a life; a golden statue of the Minotaur, in the volcanic ash of Santorini, once and officially known as Thira. However, there seem to be a few associations.

Somewhere out there is another collector, a guy named Ludlo, who likes to collect things. But he's a bit careless, as when he got Ty Cobb to autograph a baseball in 1908 using a ballpoint pen. Also, Ludlo doesn't seem to care particularly how he mucks up history. (I'm reminded about the story with the nine successive time-travel organizations, each of which was devoted to undoing all the changes made by the previous ones.)

Fortunately, David has a guide, Ludlo's partner who is trying to undo all his errors. Preston might not care much, as said partner Ariyl Moro is remarkably passionate (oh, and

female, some people are just going to be disappointed). David and Ariyl set off trying to undo all the blunders Ludlo has done.

After they manage to succeed — they think — the second book has to deal with a somewhat more blatant problem. It turns out that someone blew up the building where the 1947 Academy Awards were being given out, essentially destroying the filmic profession. The fingers of Ludlo are sticky on this, so David and Ariyl have to undo it. This one isn't quite so successful, as it has too much star action. Also, they never run into Forrest J Ackerman.

KREUZERMÄNNER BILD II

Review by Joseph T Major of
KAISERKRIEGER: DER VERRAT
(The Emperor's Men: Betrayal)
 by Dirk van den Boom
 (2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$5.99)

The second book in the *Kaiserkrieger* series by Dirk van den Boom, *Kaiserkrieger: Der Verrat* (2011) is now available in English. The stories of *SMS Saarbrücken* and her crew and passengers in their influence of the Roman Empire of AD 377 and its enemies, and the strains among them, continue.

There are (still) the problems of spare parts, of making comparative technical advances, and the like. There are strains among the crew. And one junior officer got the "Greetings from your Emperor and neighbors" and is now marching in the well-worn caligaprints of Titus Pullo . . .

Nevertheless, *Korvettenkapitan Rheinberg* perseveres, striving to push forward and advance *das Mittelalter findet nicht statt*, er, *Vorgriff aus die Vergangenheit*. (The two German translations of *Lest Darkness Fall* (1941) have very different titles and neither is literal.) This is a more balanced back-in-time story than most. (And I found out that van den Boom was born on 24. Dezember. 'Allo, join the club.)

THE SEALION HAS LANDED

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE BATTLE FOR ENGLAND
 by Bernard Neeson
 (2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)
 Sequel to *An Invitation to Hitler*
 (2013; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 13 #4)

The roar of those engines had been heard in many places. The civilians in Western Europe heard them go — the Luftwaffe. By the mere threat of its existence it had changed the course of history in peacetime. It was because of the Luftwaffe that the French and Belgians and Dutchmen, who had been free men less than two months ago, were now the helpless slaves of an irresponsible and reckless tyrant whose casual word could condemn them instantly to forced labor, hunger, or

death. The tyrant had only one enemy left in the world; the civilians who heard the passing of the Luftwaffe could have no doubts as to where its blows were due to fall an hour hence. Few among them had any hope; despair was reaching deep into the hearts of all men on the European side of that strip of water.

Perhaps their children's children might win back to freedom; they felt that they themselves would die slaves.

On the far side of that strip of water were men who had never thought of losing hope . . .

—“C. S. Forester”, “Gold from Crete”



The German army, navy, and air force have received the code word: *SEELÖWE*, and are about to make the most daring leap. Their actions have not gone unnoticed on the other side of the Channel.

In the previous volume (*An Invitation to Hitler* (2013; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 13 #4)), Churchill has embarked on a most daring and perilous venture; to invite the Germans to invade England, in order to deal out to them a humiliating defeat, even though it might bring about the defeat of the British.

This is the story of that defeat. The improvised invasion armada makes the crossing, and the land combat begins, beneath the aerial one. But, so the plan goes, the key force is held back.

In the face of what seem to be intolerable defeats to the British army, some of the British leaders waver, wonder if in fact their deception plans can bring about a more favorable capitulation. (We never do find out what happens to the Duke of Windsor [“WANTED: A Deserter, by name Edward Windsor. Middle height, brown hair, slight figure, speaks with an aristocratic air. A reward of four shillings eleven pence is offered for his return. N.B. This reward will not be increased, no one deeming him worth a crown.” — *Bitter Weeds* (2016)], last being seen escorted off of the Bahamas in the custody of the Royal Navy.)

And when the tide turns . . .

Logistics, logistics, logistics. In Martin Marix Evans's *Invasion!: Operation Sealion 1940* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #1) the combat-successful invasion bogs down and

collapses when the Germans run out of supplies. They would need to capture a port, and the ports would be in no condition to be used.

In one of the British Sandhurst wargames of Operation Sealion, the referees awarded the British defenders a substantial handicap; they *completely* omitted the RAF and Navy. The British still won. This indicates the outstanding success Neeson awards the Germans, in the face of a prepared RAF and vigorous RN, is perhaps more for literary drama than an actual extrapolation.

FROMAGE-MANGEANT SINGES DE CAPITULATION

Review by Joseph T Major of
FRENCH BETRAYAL

(*Reich Triumphant Book 1*)

by Vincent Dugan and Douglas Clouatre
(2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

I'm surprised no one has thought of this point of departure before. And yet it is simple enough and horribly plausible. The French have yet another change of government, and end up deciding that Poland is «*Un pays lointain dont nous ne savons rien.*» [“A faraway country of which we know nothing.”]

So, when Germany invades Poland, the French . . . don't declare war. And this changes if not everything, a great many things.

In the Turtledove style, the story follows a number of “little people”; various soldiers in the army and Luftwaffe, a French diplomat who finds himself thrust into power, a British nobleman who is rusticated into the diplomatic service, a Romanian Jewish family watching doom swell nearby, an American engineer working on Soviet tanks, various Russians ground in the mills of the invasion.

Oh yes, the invasion. Without a French campaign to divert efforts (or, apparently, a Norwegian campaign), the Germans strike for Russia a year early. This is both good and bad for them; the Soviet army is still disarrayed from the Purges and the Winter War, but German equipment is still behind on the development curve. One of the subplots is about a tankman on Germany's main battle tank — the Panzer III, equipped with the high-penetration 37-mm cannon. For those who know their armored fighting vehicles, this is not the most powerful of German tanks.

Indeed, Dugan and Clouatre seem almost Clancyesque in describing the technology of tanks and airplanes. Which makes their ineptitude in German awards glare, for those who know them (i.e., the scene where the German soldier who destroyed a KV-1 Soviet heavy tank single-handed is awarded a medal on a ribbon around his neck; that's not just the “Iron Cross” as he is told, but the *Ritterkreuz*, the “Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross”, a pretty significant award, but about what someone doing that then would likely get).

Some omissions seem logical; there is hardly any naval action, and given how constrained the German basing is (neither

Norwegian nor French bases) that seems to make sense. The British and Germans are at arms' length, unable to really damage each other.

The German Army is making a bold strike for Moscow, but the sheer size of the goal may yet overwhelm it when this saga is . . . **To Be Continued.**

CAMELOT CABELL STYLE

Review by Joseph T Major of

ALL THE WAY WITH JFK:

An Alternate History of 1964

by F. C. Schaefer

(2017; ISBN 978-1520920559; \$6.99
2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

Jurgen takes a cynical view of the Arthurian mythos, as Cabell does with everything else. Jurgen seduces Guenevere (after first blowing out the candles, so his shadow can't fink on him to Mother Sereda, and the reader of course) and then sees her drink a cup with Lancelot before going away. And he goes off with Queen Anaitis, which is a more diverting act . . .

Someone called the government from a pay phone in New Orleans on the morning of November 22, 1963, saying that this two-bit ex-Marine was talking about plugging the president for Fidel. As a result, the driver of the Presidential limo hit the accelerator, and after the taillight was shot out, really floored it. Behind him, police stormed the Texas School Book Depository and shot dead an unarmed man who had fired off his last rifle bullet.

All too soon, it turned out that Lee H. Oswald had suspicious connections to Cuban intelligence, like that locker with \$20,000 cash he was evidently planning to go get. This does not help relations with Cuba.

Strains escalate, as the US plans to send in a rather large arrest team, like several divisions of Army and Marines. The Soviets get very antsy about “voluntaryism” and have internal crises of their own.

Meanwhile, patriotic and true Americans rally to take back the country, under the banner of Barry M. Goldwater. There are some very dire deeds that can be laid at the feet of the Kennedy gang, and by God they intend to use them.

And so the world staggers on between war and peace . . .

Schaefer has a notable skill. He can write from different perspectives; the book is told as separate narratives by a variety of people, all with different views of the world and the events. He demonstrated this in his previous book, *Beating Plowshares Into Swords* (2014; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 14 #1) and in this one he does even more.

One thing Schaefer displays well is JFK at his political nastiest and most cunning. The opposition has a lot of potentially campaign-wrecking material, and in a dramatic scene, Kennedy breaks in on a meeting and offers everyone a deal. There is a lot of bribery, dirty

tricks, scheming, and whatnot going on, so this is only the most dramatic way things are resolved.

The problem with the initial plot is that Lee Harvey Oswald was so disorganized and arrogant that he could not possibly work with anyone on anything. Schaefer has to maintain plausibility for his point of departure, and the evidence that Oswald was the shooter and the only shooter in Dealey Plaza is so thorough that he could not **not** have been involved.

All the Way With JFK gives us a different perspective, a world that will have no Camelot and a different base for the punitive left. It's well done and quite interesting.

NOT IN KANSAS

Review by Joseph T Major of

A BRIEF GUIDE TO OZ

by Paul Simpson

(2013; Constable & Robinson, Running Press; ISBN 978-1-47210-988-0; \$13.95)

This is one book in a series of "Brief Guides" to various works of public note. If it is a representative one, the series is worthwhile.

Simpson gives a thorough overview of Baum's creation, beginning with a short biography of the man. He seems to have either been chronically overtrusting or the business establishment of the era profoundly dishonest, given the number of times he was cleaned out by a partner who then vanished.

Then, there are summaries of the forty "official" books in the canon, the ones by Baum and by the selected continuer, Ruth Plumly Thompson. Thompson evidently did not have the problem of wanting to impose her own attitudes (as opposed to, say, emphasizing her own characters) that continuers often exhibit.

There were quite a number of Oz movies before 1939, some done by Baum himself. He was a pioneer in multimedia, being the presenter of a show in which he introduced movies about his friends in Oz. Yes, he had financial trouble with that too.

As for **the** movie, from the description of the production here it seems impossible to believe that **any** movie resulted from it, much less a fabled classic. Directors were changed, scripts were amassed, and as is well known actors were dismissed. Evidently, the story that Shirley Temple was considered for the part of Dorothy was from early publicity, and never actually considered. However, apparently even more actors were considered for the part of the Wizard than has been generally conceded. Not to mention Buddy Ebsen's allergy problem.

And the shooting had its own problems; drunk Munchkins, near-fatal accidents, continuity errors, and the like. In the latter category there is the "Jitterbug" scene, which was excised as it was considered likely to date too soon.

Then there are the various sequels,

followups, new works, and the like. Including, perhaps not unsurprisingly, animes. (If an Oz anime is anything like the usual run of such, it is rather divergent to the concept.)

And speaking of sequels, the books written not as official Oz works come up. Gregory Maguire's *Wicked* (1995), for example, which apparently was excused as an enquiry into what a person thinks of herself.

The author dislikes Philip José Farmer's general habits, but thinks *A Barnstormer In Oz* (1982) worthwhile. As for *The Number of the Beast* (1979; NHOL G.189) he quotes a number of damning reviews of the book and finds the Oz sequence bland. (I suppose we have John W. Campbell, Kay Tarrant, and Alice Dalgleish to thank for sparing us twenty-five to thirty years of nipples going "Spung!".)

A Brief Guide to Oz is a useful and thorough coverage of its topic, though entire books could easily be (and in some cases have been) written on the topic of each chapter. Yet, I found this copy on a Dollar Tree remainder shelf.

UP IN THE HILLS

Review by Joseph T Major of

MY FATHER, THE PORNOGRAPHER:

A Memoir

by Chris Offutt

(2016; Atria Books; ISBN 978-11501112461; \$26.00; Atria Books (Kindle); \$13.99)

At cons, Andrew J. Offutt was quite the sociable man. He laughed, scolded, partied, and was quite the fun fixture.

For his last few years, he sat alone in a chair in his living room, swollen with cirrhosis of the liver. He spent every waking hour of the day writing pornographic novels, utterly cut off from the world.

Which was the real one? His son seems to incline towards the latter.

Andrew Offutt came from the Kentucky hills. After graduating from the University of Louisville, he became an insurance salesman, and one day decided to become a writer.

After two rather autobiographical science-fiction novels (*Evil Is Live Spelled Backwards* (1970) and *The Castle Keeps* (1972)) he decided that sf was too restrictive and went into fantasy. He did Conan pastiches, Cormac Mac Art pastiches, and original works. He participated in the Thieves' World™ anthology series producing stories in the setting and separate adventure novels.

Chris discusses his father's contribution to *Again, Dangerous Visions* (1972). (It must be fantasy, since in real life the hospital where the father had left his daughter because he refused to pay at discharge wouldn't raise her to adulthood, they'd sue him for nonpayment.) Somehow, afterwards, Offutt believed he had angered Harlan Ellison™. Chris got hold of the man who denied there was anything of the sort, but you do have to remember Harlan's reputation.

Apparently, Andy's prime output, even then, was pornography. He wrote hundreds of novels,

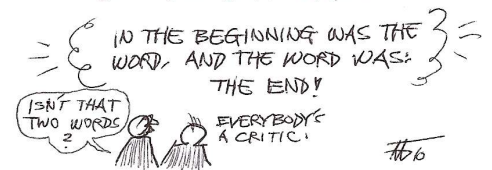
under various pseudonyms. He even wrote SF pornography, the *Spaceways* series (1982-1985).

And as his body failed him, he seemed unable to write nothing but. Indeed, he had a personal illustrated pornographic series, running to 4000 pages. Towards the end of his life he disdained text, having only pictures.

Chris grew up in this injured family. His father became cold, cruel, and distant. (One result of his father's massive output of porno was that Chris believed that women did not want to have sex.)

He wandered in and out of his father's life. When Andy died, he was cremated, and Chris seems to have set out to obliterate him, not leaving a memorial (except some fantasy blades stuck into the ground) and spilling his ashes on the ground.

THE AUTHOR DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE



FROM THE MCAUSLAN PAPERS

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

THE COMPLETE MCAUSLAN

by Dand

... er George MacDonald Fraser, OBE

(2009; Skyhorse Publishing; \$14.55;

Amazon Digital Services; \$9.99)

[Originally published as

The General Danced at Dawn (1970),

McAuslan in the Rough (1974), and

The Sheikh and the Dustbin (1988)]

Before he "edited" the Flashman Papers, George MacDonald Fraser was a lieutenant in the Gordon Highlanders. In this barely-fictionalized set of stories set in the Regiment, he describes the day-to-day life of the usual gang of odds and sods who made up a British infantry section, leading the American reader to wonder if such tales as *F Troop*, *The Phil Silvers Show* (also known as *You'll Never Get Rich* and *Sergeant Bilko*), and "Beetle Bailey" are all that fictional. (Never mind Dan Gallery's novels of Fatso Gionnini.)

The joke, of course, is that the putative narrator is a Lieutenant Dand MacNeill, and the stories were published in the Gordons' regimental magazine under the byline of "By Dand". The regimental motto of the Gordons was "Bydand" ["Steadfast"].

Lieutenant MacNeill seems to have had all the regimental characters in his section, including the thirty-year veteran who always got drunk and into a fight, but had nearly died in the desert trying to save a German prisoner.

The epitome, or nadir, of this lot, though, was Private McAuslan, J., living proof of evolution. He was filthy, ignorant, self-righteous, uncoordinated, illiterate, and those were his good points. Most of the stories are about McAuslan getting into an unsolvable dilemma and MacNeill having to get him out.

In company with these are stories about the regimental life; peace-keeping in Libya, getting stuck in between the two sides in what was then Palestine (nothing ever changes), garrison duty in Scotland, and the like. The officers, if educated and experienced, seem to be as unlikely and eccentric a lot as the Other Ranks are. Except for the one Dand calls "Erroll", a former SOE chap, who is outright dangerous, even to the enemy.

The stories here are of another world, yet one which still survives in bits and pieces, a link between the past and the present. As when the officers discover that Karl Marx's grandmother was a Campbell; a revelation which lowers him even further in their esteem. (So they'd never read *Astounding* . . .)

DON'T STEP ON MY BLUE SUEDE KOTHORNOI

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE SINGER FROM MEMPHIS
by Gary Corby

"An Athenian Mystery"

(2016; Soho Press;

ISBN 978-1-61695-668-4; \$26.95;

Penguin Random House Services (Kindle);
\$14.99)

There has to be a certain impetus to get someone to go into a three-cornered war. Pericles has that impetus, and this is why Nicolaos son of Sophoniscus takes his wife, Diotima, leaves his annoying little brother (someday someone is going to poison that brat), and heads down to Egypt. And he doesn't even check the work of Myron of Miletos, who traveled through the country during the reign of the Xerxes, going to get *The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate* (by L. Sprague de Camp, 1961).

In this, the latest of the historical adventures of the best investigator in Periclean Athens (also the only one, but that's life) Corby places his heroes in the custody or something like that of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, the world's first historian, doing some of his field research. Since at the time, there was an Athenian army in Egypt fighting the Persians, and the Egyptians were having an uprising under the leadership of a Libyan prince who claimed to be the legitimate Pharaoh, the situation was interesting.

Naturally, Nicolaos ends up dealing with everyone, hopefully not fatally. The claimant has an additional task for him, namely finding the crook and flail of the last legitimate Pharaoh, which would give him that additional credibility. This requires dealings with all the familiar features of Egyptian civilization, and

reporting to the center of it all, a musician named Djanet. When they first encounter her, she is singing a song comparing the listener to a small hunting dog. (Was it constantly sobbing?)

Then the chief assassins of the Spartans and the Persian pop up. This does not seem to be conducive to a long life expectancy. Not to mention the Secret Weapon from the Mysterious East, the belly shooter.

A consultation with an oracle is in order, and all dispatch themselves to the temple at Siwa, where the sacred boat of Amun reveals the usual number of cryptic and often not very usable prophecies. Such as the answer to Diotima's question about the rightful Pharaoh, which is "Siwa awaits the Macedonian." Everybody knows that the highlanders of Makedon run around with swords over their heads, cutting off the heads of their opponents while bellowing "There can only be one!!!" and will never amount to anything.

In the end the crook and flail are found . . . but not everyone gains. At least Nico and Diotima get out of the country whole, if you don't count that one time the crocodile wondered how Athenian priestess would taste.

One of the amusing parts of Corby's deft use of history is how he manages to incorporate it into the text, advancing instead of slowing down the story. It helps, for example, that every time in the conversation when Herodotus begins a sentence "Did you know that . . ." what follows is a quote from his history. Saves on writing dialogue too.

Or when they stop at Thera on the way south, and everyone explains that absolutely nothing is going on there. A few years ago (well, a great many, really) though, that definitely wasn't the case. That was the volcano which blew up and destroyed Crete, remember?

And in June, the next thrilling volume in this series, *Death on Delos*, will come out, where Nico and a very pregnant Diotima have to investigate a murder. Oh, and births and deaths were strictly forbidden there then.

YOU'RE SO VAIN by Joe

There was an annular eclipse on **February 26, 2017**, visible in Chile, Argentina, Angola, and Zaire. The maximum eclipse was 44 seconds at 34° 72' S., 31° 12' W. in the mid-Atlantic. The eclipse was part of Saros 140, which began April 16, 1512 and will end June 1, 2774.

The next solar eclipse will be a total eclipse on **August 21, 2017**, visible along a track that runs through Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The maximum totality will be two minutes forty seconds and will be visible from Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The eclipse is part of Saros 145, which began January 4, 1649 and will end April 17, 3009. The previous eclipse in this saros was on August 11, 1999, and was

reported on in *Plokta* #15.

<https://www.plokta.com/plokta/issue15/eclipse.htm>

We can't promise anything as effusive as Alison Scott's effervescent reporting. It should be noted that also going on there in Hopkinsville at that time is Little Green Men Day, celebrating the event where on August 21, 1955 a group of good old boys provoked Interstellar War I — or, shot at a large owl.

CONGLOMERATION 2017

April 7-9, 2017

Con Report by Joe

<http://www.conglomeration.info/>



We showed up at the Ramada Plaza in the middle of the afternoon and picked up our memberships. The Con Suite was going along nicely. **Sue Baugh** was already there, and **Mike** joined us shortly. Sue is almost completely recovered from her injuries, which is good to tell.

Rod Smith came in and took some photos. He was commuting, and in fact this was his only day at the con, since he got a cold Saturday morning. So here's his record:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/116299515@N07/albums/72157682348256546>

We went on down to the dealer's room. Much to our pleasant surprise, Sally Kobbie had taken over the business, and told all and sundry about Larry Smith's last day, and how things were getting sorted out.

A little further down, Steve and Sue Francis were selling old books and magazines, while next to them, **Bob Roehm** and **Joel Zakem** were selling books. We discussed the decline of ourselves and our people.

I would like to apologize to Steve for asking him this again on Sunday, but I was tired. He isn't going to Helsinki and is thinking very carefully about going to NASFiC in Puerto Rico. We all have problems.

We met the dreadfully overworked (he would have nonstop panels on Saturday) Author Guest of Honor **Les Johnson**. He would describe at various times the advance of

space technology (he is doing solar sails; but I remember how boastful Pournelle was about the forthcoming solar sail race in 1992), the pleasure of writing with people like Travis Taylor and Ben Bova, and his con experience. His first con was a RiverCon in 1978.

The lead guest of honor, J. G. Hertzler, turned out to have had an amusing life, having got started working for the federal government in Washington and discovering how it (didn't) work. One hopes the Klingon Empire can be better handled.

Also present was writer Emmy Jackson, who turned out to have quite a variety of interests — yet, oddly enough, had never heard of George MacDonald Fraser, much less Harry Flashman. (We'll spare him an encounter with McAuslan.)

The masquerade was not too long, had good costumes, and a bit of humor. The intermission was heartened by a performance by il Troubadore, who performed some Klingon music.

By Sunday I was pretty tired. Yet we dragged around, said good-bye to people, and generally counted ourselves satisfied. The attendance was 675, which is a good sign. Lisa wondered if we oughtn't to pay more attention to the gaming. They had board games (no the Internet hasn't killed those yet) of quite a variety of interesting and intriguing settings. I even noted one that was cooperative; the players had to work together. (I'm not sure how some gamers I know, or knew, would handle that.)

WORLDCONS

2017
Worldcon 75
Helsinki, Finland
<http://www.worldcon.fi/>
August 9-13, 2017

2017 NASFiC
NorthAmeriCon '17
San Juan, Puerto Rico
<http://www.northamericon17.com/>
July 6-9, 2017

2018
Worldcon 76
San José, California
<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
<http://fencon.org/texasf/>

2022
Chicago
Doha, Qatar

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

New Orleans

2024
District of Columbia
<http://dcin2024.org/>

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

2025
Pacific Northwest
Perth, Australia



NEBULA AWARD NOMINEES

Novel

All the Birds in the Sky, Charlie Jane Anders (Tor; Titan)
Borderline, Mishell Baker (Saga)
The Obelisk Gate, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit US; Orbit UK)
Ninefox Gambit, Yoon Ha Lee (Solaris US; Solaris UK)
Everfair, Nisi Shawl (Tor)

Novella

Runtime, S.B. Divya (Tor.com Publishing)
The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe, Kij Johnson (Tor.com Publishing)
The Ballad of Black Tom, Victor LaValle (Tor.com Publishing)
Every Heart a Doorway, Seanan McGuire (Tor.com Publishing)
"The Liar", John P. Murphy (F&SF)
A Taste of Honey, Kai Ashante Wilson (Tor.com Publishing)

Novelette

"The Long Fall Up", William Ledbetter (F&SF)
"Sooner or Later Everything Falls Into the Sea", Sarah Pinsker (*Lightspeed*)
"Blood Grains Speak Through Memories", Jason Sanford (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*)
"The Orangery", Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*)
The Jewel and Her Lapidary, Fran Wilde (Tor.com Publishing)
"You'll Surely Drown Here If You Stay", Alyssa Wong (*Uncanny*)

Short Story

"Our Talons Can Crush Galaxies", Brooke Bolander (*Uncanny*)
"Seasons of Glass and Iron", Amal El-Mohtar (*The Starlit Wood*)
"Sabbath Wine", Barbara Krasnoff (*Clockwork Phoenix 5*)
"Things With Beards", Sam J. Miller (*Clarkesworld*)
"This Is Not a Wardrobe Door", A. Merc Rustad (*Fireside Magazine*)
"A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers", Alyssa Wong (Tor.com)
"Welcome to the Medical Clinic at the Interplanetary Relay Station — Hours Since the Last Patient Death: 0", Caroline M. Yoachim (*Lightspeed*)

Bradbury

Arrival, Directed by Denis Villeneuve, Screenplay by Eric Heisserer, 21 Laps Entertainment/FilmNation Entertainment /Lava Bear Films/Xenolinguistics
Doctor Strange, Directed by Scott Derrickson, Screenplay by Scott Derrickson & C. Robert Cargill, Marvel Studios/Walt Disney Studio Motion Pictures
Kubo and the Two Strings, Directed by Travis Knight, Screenplay by Mark Haimés & Chris Butler; Laika Entertainment
Rogue One: A Star Wars Story, Directed by Gareth Edwards, Written by Chris Weitz & Tony Gilroy; Lucasfilm/ Walt Disney Studio Motion Pictures
Westworld: "The Bicameral Mind", Directed by Jonathan Nolan, Written by Lisa Joy & Jonathan Nolan; HBO
Zootopia, Directed by Byron Howard, Rich Moore, & Jared Bush, Screenplay by Jared Bush & Phil Johnston; Walt Disney Pictures/Walt Disney Animation Studios

Norton

The Girl Who Drank the Moon, Kelly

Barnhill (Algonquin Young Readers)
The Star-Touched Queen, Roshani
 Chokshi (St. Martin's)
The Lie Tree, Frances Hardinge
 (Macmillan UK; Abrams)
Arabella of Mars, David D. Levine (Tor)
Railhead, Philip Reeve (Oxford
 University Press; Switch)
Rocks Fall, Everyone Dies, Lindsay Ribar
 (Kathy Dawson Books)
The Evil Wizard Smallbone, Delia
 Sherman (Candlewick)

MOSTLY GOOD

Review by Sue Burke

2016 NEBULA SHORT FICTION NOMINEES

As a member of Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, I have the honor and duty to vote for the 51st annual Nebula Awards. I'm impressed with the variety this year in both the subject matter and manner of telling. Some stories take risks, and I'm glad to see that. A few apparently appealed to tastes that are not my own. Overall, they seem to be a good snapshot of what's out there. But which is the best story? That's a matter of opinion, and here's mine (feel free to tell me why I'm wrong):

SHORT STORIES

"Seasons of Glass and Iron", by Amal El-Mohtar (*The Starlit World*)

A wife who must wear down iron shoes meets a princess who must sit motionless on a throne on a glass mountain. This story combines two fairy tales and attempts to make right the traditional violence against women often contained in them. Although well told, for me it tries just a little too hard to set things right. Still, I appreciate the attempt.

"Sabath Wine", by Barbara Krasnoff (*Clockwork Phoenix* 5)

A boy and girl become friends, and their fathers love them despite everything. To say more would give away the plot. Krasnoff conjures up a strong setting for the story, New York a century ago, and he populates it with characters effectively drawn with spare strokes. I wanted the story to go on for a couple of more paragraphs even though it reaches an effective and satisfying conclusion. While it's a worthy contender, it's not quite my favorite, but I'll be fine if it wins a Nebula.

"Welcome to the Medical Clinic at the Interplanetary Relay Station | Hours Since the Last Patient Death: 0", by Caroline M. Yoachim (*Lightspeed*)

In this choose-your-own-adventure story, you contract an illness and try to get it treated. None of the choices work, and you die. The story is a long joke, and to my tastes, only some of the punch lines work. The rest were predictable, although I thought the

continuation of one of the early choices could have led to something profound about the nature of fictional narrative. For me, this was one of the weaker stories, a lost opportunity.

"A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers", by Alyssa Wong (*Tor*)

This breathtaking metaphorical tale of grief, guilt, and anger deserves an award. But I don't think it's speculative fiction, so I don't think it deserves a Nebula. Sorry.

"Things With Beards", by Sam J. Miller (*Clarksworld*)

A man with a beard begins to realize he's not what he thinks he is, and he might not be the only one. This is a horror story, and a creepy one at that. Definitely a worthy contender, but not quite my favorite.

"This Is Not a Wardrobe Door", by A. Merc Rustad (*Fireside Magazine*)

This is a story about children in fairyland (or some realm like it) attempting to reunite with children in the "real" world. It might be suitable for children, but I think it's a bit simplistic and predictable for adults.

"Our Talons Can Crush Galaxies", by Brook Bolander (*Uncanny*)

A man rapes and kills a woman who is actually a goddess. This is the woman/goddess's story, an angry story: a revenge story – with bullet points. Although skillfully written, it might resuscitate debate over whether it deserves nomination, not because it isn't speculative fiction, since it is, but because it has little of a traditional story arc, and perhaps also for its content. The story reminds me of an early ancient Greek play, the kind told by choruses and actors in masks that are too weird for our time but which were praised in their day as a catharsis. This story will be a catharsis for some readers. I think awards like the Nebula ought to expand the genre by offering some "politically incorrect" stories (incorrect to traditionalists, who seem to be sensitive types). But is it the best of the nominees? For me, that's the only question, and I think this story's raw emotion pushes it a little higher than a couple of others I also liked. It gets my vote.

NOVELETTE

"The Long Fall Up", by William Ledbetter (*Fantasy & Science Fiction*)

A straight-up, old-fashioned story about spaceships and orbits and technology – with a baby! What's not to like? Great pacing, too. I didn't want to put my Kindle down until I reached The End. If you don't like this, you just don't like science fiction.

"You'll Surely Drown Here If You Stay", by Alyssa Wong (*Uncanny*)

A chilling story – a ghost story, sort of – set in a dying western town. Superbly told, although pretty soon it becomes predictable. The suffering, troubled kid is going to save the day.

"The Jewel and Her Lapidary", by Fran Wilde (*Tor*)

A lapidary protects their Jewel. A lapidary

who betrays their Jewel will be shattered. A lapidary obeys her Jewel. These rules and others like it are stated again and again (way too many times) until it becomes clear in this repetitive, slow-moving story that lapidaries are willing, toiling slaves to their Jewels, who are exploitive aristocrats, or, in U.S. State Department terms, MREs: morally repugnant elites. Soon I also began to believe this story takes place in what the Turkey City Lexicon calls a Second Order Idiot Plot, "A plot involving an entire invented SF society which functions only because every single person in it is necessarily an idiot. (Attributed to Damon Knight.)" Although the mythology of the Jewels is carefully worked out, it amounts to a shabby justification for an idiotic, repugnant society that deserves to be destroyed, although that poor slave woman (the lapidary in the title) has to suffer unconscionably for her owners' sins. As you can guess, I didn't like this one for a couple of reasons.

"Sooner or Later Everything Falls Into the Sea", by Sarah Pinsker (*Lightspeed*)

Deep personal loss is explored in this snapshot at the edge of dystopia. I found the switches in point of view and pseudo-flashbacks a bit confusing, but in the end the story rings true. A contender.

"The Orangery", by Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*)

A woman guards a walled garden/forest from intruders, including Greek gods, but of course they break in, and the trees aren't what they seem. In this pseudo-mythological and inhumane milieu, the conflict amounts to jousting between stereotypes and leads to a moment of conventional illumination. The story-telling was competent, but did this story need to be told?

"Blood Grains Speak Through Memories", by Jason Sanford (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*)

This story does what science fiction does best: it takes an idea and runs with it to its most distant but still plausible consequences. What would happen if technology to protect the environment turned against humanity? It wouldn't be pretty, and humanity would try to fight back as best it could. I'm impressed by the complexity of the ideas in this one, so it gets my vote, but I'll be just as satisfied if the story by Sarah Pinsker or William Ledbetter wins.

NOVELLA

It seems worth noting that all but one of the nominated novellas were published by Tor, and two were inspired by H.P. Lovecraft.

"The Liar", by John P. Murphy (*Fantasy & Science Fiction*)

A man in a small New England town with a supernatural gift for lying discovers a series of deaths that can't be coincidental, and he must prevent the next one. A simple story, it rises to remarkable by the telling: the

matter-of-fact humility and humor of the narrator. The magazine's introduction describes it as Garrison Keillor writing a Stephen King story. Yes, it's that good – and worthy of a Nebula.

"Runtime", by S. B. Divya (*Tor*)

A woman hopes to win a race and use the prize money to improve the lives of herself and her family. But the race involves high-tech, body-enhancing equipment, and what she has is second-hand and second-rate. Will her determination help her win? Will ethics get in the way? This is a traditional, well-told science fiction adventure story. Also worthy of a win.

"The Ballad of Black Tom", by Victor LaValle (*Tor*)

Charles Thomas Tester, a young man in Harlem in 1924, is a small-time hustler who finds himself invited to participate in a much larger and much less licit venture. The result is a traditional, well-told (can I say that again?) horror story. I guessed fairly early on what this larger venture entailed, and I was right, which only added to the suspense because I knew how badly things were likely to go for Tommy and a lot of other people. Yet another story worthy of a win.

"Every Heart a Doorway", by Seanan McGuire (*Tor*)

What happens to children who travel through a magical door, mirror, or painting and spend time – maybe years – in a fairyland, underworld, or another other-worldly world? When they return, they often adjust to this world poorly, and their parents understand nothing and want their old child back. But there is hope: Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children. However, things don't go well. This nominee, with its constant clash between ordinary and outlandish, deserves to win, too.

"A Taste of Honey", by Kai Ashante Wilson (*Tor*)

This is a love story with no real happy ending, despite having more than one ending. The writing is lush and sensual, although the scenes jump from storyline to storyline in a way that sometimes left me confused. This is not quite my favorite because I'm not fond of fantasies where the pieces fit together too well: to me they seem to show the author's hand. That said, the quality of the work, writing, and imagination behind it can't be denied, and this could also deserve a vote.

"The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe", by Kij Johnson (*Tor*)

Vellitt Boe, a university professor, must travel from the dream lands to the waking world to find a missing student. The trip is long and slow and fascinating at every step due both to the strange, awe-instilling landscape, and to the amazing personality of Vellitt Boe, who infuses the trip with meaning and longing for her youth and for adventure. This is a quest story, and can I say "well-told" one more time?

I love every one of the novellas. Since I

can only vote for one, I'm going with "Dream Quest" because of its deep characterization of Vellitt Boe, but I'll cheer for the winning novella, whichever one it is. They're all good.



Ah . . .
It's Hugo
voting time
in Fandom!

HUGO AWARD NOMINEES

Best Novel

2078 ballots cast for 652 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 156 to 480.

All the Birds in the Sky, by Charlie Jane Anders (*Tor Books / Titan Books*)

A Closed and Common Orbit, by Becky Chambers (*Hodder & Stoughton / Harper Voyager US*)

Death's End, by Cixin Liu, translated by Ken Liu (*Tor Books / Head of Zeus*)

Ninefox Gambit, by Yoon Ha Lee (*Solaris Books*)

The Obelisk Gate, by N. K. Jemisin (*Orbit Books*)

Too Like the Lightning, by Ada Palmer (*Tor Books*)

Best Novella

1410 ballots cast for 187 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 167 to 511.

The Ballad of Black Tom, by Victor LaValle (*Tor.com publishing*)

The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe, by Kij Johnson (*Tor.com publishing*)

Every Heart a Doorway, by Seanan McGuire (*Tor.com publishing*)

Penric and the Shaman, by Lois McMaster Bujold (*Spectrum Literary Agency*)

A Taste of Honey, by Kai Ashante Wilson (*Tor.com publishing*)

This Census-Taker, by China Miéville (*Del Rey / Picador*)

Best Novelette

1097 ballots cast for 295 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 74 to 268.

"Alien Stripper Boned From Behind By The T-Rex", by Stix Hiscock (self-published)

"The Art of Space Travel", by Nina Allan (*Tor.com, July 2016*)

"The Jewel and Her Lapidary", by Fran Wilde (*Tor.com, May 2016*)

"The Tomato Thief", by Ursula Vernon (*Apex Magazine, January 2016*)

"Touring with the Alien", by Carolyn Ives Gilman (*Clarkesworld Magazine, April 2016*)

"You'll Surely Drown Here If You Stay", by Alyssa Wong (*Uncanny Magazine, May 2016*)

Best Short Story

1275 ballots cast for 830 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 87 to 182.

"The City Born Great", by N. K. Jemisin (*Tor.com, September 2016*)

"A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers", by Alyssa Wong (*Tor.com, March 2016*)

"Our Talons Can Crush Galaxies", by Brooke Bolander (*Uncanny Magazine, November 2016*)

"Seasons of Glass and Iron", by Amal El-Mohtar (*The Starlit Wood: New Fairy Tales, Saga Press*)

"That Game We Played During the War", by Carrie Vaughn (*Tor.com, March 2016*)

"An Unimaginable Light", by John C. Wright (*God, Robot, Castalia House*)

Best Related Work

1122 ballots cast for 344 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 88 to 424.

The Geek Feminist Revolution, by Kameron Hurley (*Tor Books*)

The Princess Diarist, by Carrie Fisher (*Blue Rider Press*)

Traveler of Worlds: Conversations with Robert Silverberg, by Robert Silverberg and Alvaro Zinos-Amaro (*Fairwood*)

The View From the Cheap Seats, by Neil Gaiman (*William Morrow / Harper Collins*)

The Women of Harry Potter posts, by Sarah Gailey (*Tor.com*)

Words Are My Matter: Writings About Life and Books, 2000-2016, by Ursula K. Le Guin (*Small Beer*)

Best Graphic Story

842 ballots cast for 441 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 71 to 221.

Black Panther, Volume 1: A Nation Under Our Feet, written by Ta-Nehisi Coates, illustrated by Brian Stelfreeze (*Marvel*)

Monstress, Volume 1: Awakening, written by Marjorie Liu, illustrated by Sana Takeda (*Image*)

Ms. Marvel, Volume 5: Super Famous, written by G. Willow Wilson, illustrated by Takeshi Miyazawa (*Marvel*)

Paper Girls, Volume 1, written by Brian K. Vaughan, illustrated by Cliff Chiang, colored by Matthew Wilson, lettered by Jared Fletcher (Image)

Saga, Volume 6, illustrated by Fiona Staples, written by Brian K. Vaughan, lettered by Fonografiks (Image)

The Vision, Volume 1: Little Worse Than A Man, written by Tom King, illustrated by Gabriel Hernandez Walta (Marvel)

Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form)

1733 ballots cast for 206 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 240 to 1030.

Arrival, screenplay by Eric Heisserer based on a short story by Ted Chiang, directed by Denis Villeneuve

Deadpool, screenplay by Rhett Reese & Paul Wernick, directed by Tim Miller

Ghostbusters, screenplay by Katie Dippold & Paul Feig, directed by Paul Feig

Hidden Figures, screenplay by Allison Schroeder and Theodore Melfi, directed by Theodore Melfi

Rogue One, screenplay by Chris Weitz and Tony Gilroy, directed by Gareth Edwards

Stranger Things, Season One, created by the Duffer Brothers

Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form)

1159 ballots cast for 569 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 91 to 193.

Black Mirror: "San Junipero", written by Charlie Brooker, directed by Owen Harris

Doctor Who: "The Return of Doctor Mysterio", written by Steven Moffat, directed by Ed Bazalgette

The Expanse: "Leviathan Wakes", written by Mark Fergus and Hawk Ostby, directed by Terry McDonough

Game of Thrones: "Battle of the Bastards", written by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, directed by Miguel Sapochnik

Game of Thrones: "The Door", written by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, directed by Jack Bender

Splendor & Misery [album], by Clipping (Daveed Diggs, William Hutson, Jonathan Snipes)

Best Editor Short Form

951 ballots cast for 191 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 149 to 229.

John Joseph Adams

Neil Clarke

Ellen Datlow

Jonathan Strahan

Lynne M. Thomas & Michael Damian Thomas

Sheila Williams

Best Editor Long Form

752 ballots cast for 148 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 83 to 201.

Vox Day

Sheila E. Gilbert

Liz Gorinsky

Devi Pillai

Miriam Weinberg

Navah Wolfe

Best Professional Artist

817 ballots cast for 387 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 53 to 143.

Galen Dara

Julie Dillon

Chris McGrath

Victo Ngai

John Picacio

Sana Takeda

Best Semiprozine

857 ballots cast for 103 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 80 to 434.

Beneath Ceaseless Skies, editor-in-chief and publisher Scott H. Andrews

Cirsova Heroic Fantasy and Science Fiction Magazine, edited by P. Alexander

GigaNotoSaurus, edited by Rashida J. Smith

Strange Horizons, edited by Niall Harrison, Catherine Krahe, Vajra Chandrasekera, Vanessa Rose Phin, Li Chua, Aishwarya Subramanian, Tim Moore, Anaea Lay, and the Strange Horizons staff

Uncanny Magazine, edited by Lynne M. Thomas & Michael Damian Thomas, Michi Trota, Julia Rios, and podcast produced by Erika Ensign & Steven Schapansky

The Book Smugglers, edited by Ana Grilo and Thea James

Best Fanzine

610 ballots cast for 152 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 53 to 159.

Castalia House Blog, edited by Jeffro Johnson

Journey Planet, edited by James Bacon, Chris Garcia, Esther MacCallum-Stewart, Helena Nash, Errick Nunnally, Pádraig Ó Méalóid, Chuck Serface, and Erin Underwood

Lady Business, edited by Clare, Ira, Jodie, KJ, Renay, and Susan

nerds of a feather, flock together, edited by The G, Vance Kotrla, and Joe Sherry

Rocket Stack Rank, edited by Greg Hullender and Eric Wong

SF Bluestocking, edited by Bridget McKinney

Best Fancast

690 ballots cast for 253 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 76 to 109.

The Coode Street Podcast, presented by Gary K. Wolfe and Jonathan Strahan

Ditch Diggers, presented by Mur Lafferty and Matt Wallace

Fangirl Happy Hour, presented by Ana Grilo and Renay Williams

Galactic Suburbia, presented by Alisa Krasnostein, Alexandra Pierce and Tansy Rayner Roberts, produced by Andrew Finch

The Rageaholic, presented by Raz Fist

Tea and Jeopardy, presented by Emma Newman with Peter Newman

Best Fan Writer

802 ballots cast for 275 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 80 to 152.

Mike Glycer

Jeffro Johnson

Natalie Luhrs

Foz Meadows

Abigail Nussbaum

Chuck Tingle

Best Fan Artist

528 ballots cast for 242 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 39 to 121.

Ninni Aalto

Vesa Lehtimäki

Likhain (M. Sereno)

Spring Schoenhuth

Steve Stiles

Mansik Yang

Best Series

1393 votes for 290 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 129 to 325.

The Craft Sequence, by Max Gladstone (Tor Books)

The Expanse, by James S.A. Corey (Orbit US / Orbit UK)

The October Daye Books, by Seanan McGuire (DAW / Corsair)

The Peter Grant / Rivers of London series, by Ben Aaronovitch (Gollancz / Del Rey / DAW / Subterranean)

The Temeraire series, by Naomi Novik (Del Rey / Harper Voyager UK)

The Vorkosigan Saga, by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen)

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer

933 votes for 260 nominees.

Votes for finalists ranged from 88 to 255.

Sarah Gailey (1st year of eligibility)

J. Mulrooney (1st year of eligibility)

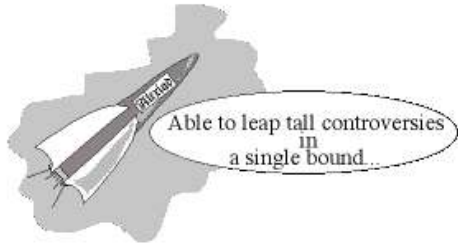
Malka Older (2nd year of eligibility)

Ada Palmer (1st year of eligibility)

Laurie Penny (2nd year of eligibility)

Kelly Robson (2nd year of eligibility)

Letters, we get letters



From: **Darrell Schweitzer** Feb. 14, 2017
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This time almost none of the cartoons reproduced. Curiously the one on page 5, which appears to be a half-tone, did. The Gilliland line drawings failed completely. I guess I shall have to get into the habit of looking at the cartoons in the electronic version before printing out the magazine to actually read.

I question the claim (p. 1) that John W. Campbell was ordered to buy anything L Ron Hubbard submitted in order to boost the circulation of *Astounding*. I know this is part of the legendry of our field, but it also sounds like the usual narcissistic Hubbardian bullshit. Some critical thinking may be required. Is this really true? Can it be verified from any non-Hubbardian source, such as, say, John Campbell's letters? Consider that the circulation of *Astounding* in 1937, when Campbell became editor, was already by far the best in the field. Its main rivals had been blown out of the water. The Sloane *Amazing* was in what looked like terminal decline, and *Wonder Stories* (Gernsback) had failed the previous year and been sold and revamped as *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, aimed at a somewhat more juvenile audience than that of *Astounding*. So, why should a successful magazine, the leader in its field, resort to such measures? Remember too that the former editor, F. Orlin Tremaine, was not fired or accused of any sort of failure. He was promoted upstairs and put in charge of all the Street & Smith pulps. His vigorous editorship of 1933-37 had made the magazine the success it was.

Was Hubbard all that important in 1937? Yes, he was selling to a lot of top and middle-grade pulps. He was a regular at *Argosy*, but only had been so for about a year. Was he more special than, say, Arthur J. Burks? (*Astounding* published Burks too, but had been doing so since the Clayton days.) Hubbard was a successful pulpster but there were lots of successful pulpsters around. He wasn't exactly Edgar Rice Burroughs or H. Bedford-Jones. So it is indeed worth asking if

any part of this claim is true, particularly considering the number of false statements Hubbard is known to have made about himself.

To answer Taras Wolansky's question: if the Retro-Hugos get back as far as 1932 and fail to recognize *Brave New World* in favor of some pulp serial, it will indeed be an embarrassment, almost as big an embarrassment as the patronizing review the Huxley book got in *Amazing* when it was first published. (The review said, in effect, this is not as good as real SF, but at least it may serve to lead the benighted public to the real stuff, which you find in *Amazing*.) Actually I think the Retro-Hugos are a bad idea, because they require far more expertise than most fans have for the vote to be at all balanced or discerning.

I would have preferred the nominations (at least) to be juried, selected by people who knew what was going on at the time. I have several anthologies of "works eligible for the 1941 Retro-Hugo" of forgettable and forgotten pulp fiction that happened to be in the public domain.

As for the matter of whether T.H. White was a fantasy writer or not, I can only say that he was when he was writing fantasy. If you look at his bibliography, you will see he wrote a great deal else, but it is his fantasy which is remembered. Besides, the award is not for a body of work but for a specific work. Aldous Huxley was a science fiction writer when he wrote science fiction: *Brave New World*, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, *Ape and Essence*, and *Island*. But not when he wrote *Chrome Yellow*. The majority of books by H.G. Wells are not science fiction either, but he is another case where we mostly remember the science fiction. (It is hard to think of an example where the reverse is true. The one that comes to mind is Robert Graves, world-famous for *I, Claudius*. His *Watch the North Wind Rise* used to be considered a classic of science fiction, but it dropped out of the canon about 1970. Now it may be the least-known of his novels.)

Not all of Wells's fantastic stuff, either. *The Autocracy of Mr Parham* (1930) is pretty much forgotten. However, it is available for Kindle (Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99).

Let me suggest that maybe the reason that Edgar Rice Burroughs could not sell *Under the Red Flag* to his usual markets is the same reason he could not sell *I Am a Barbarian* in his lifetime. Burroughs was simply not good enough to sell as mainstream fiction. *I Am a Barbarian* was intended for the general market, to be published alongside *I Claudius* and other novels of that sort, and Burroughs was not up to that standard. *I Am a Barbarian* begins well,

but then fails halfway through, as Burroughs proves quite incapable of dealing in an adult manner with the reign of Caligula, and so glosses over entirely too much and rushes to a conclusion. (The book is about a British slave who is the property of the young Gaius. The opening chapters are some of ERB's best writing, and very witty, but when Gaius grows up, and the book needs to grow up, the author is unable to meet the needs of the narrative.)

True; but some of the antics of the adult Gaius would seem to be rather beyond the audience's grasp. Would they put up with, say, the relationship of Gaius and his sisters?

— JTM

Besides, ERB was typecast in the marketplace. A serious historical novel was not what the public wanted or expected from him. Likewise, a political novel about the horrors of Soviet Communism was not what people wanted or expected from him. I would imagine that the *Under the Red Flag* version was not very good. Burroughs tended to be at his weakest when attempting realism, as in *The Girl from Hollywood*, and at his best at otherworldly escapism, as in the Tarzan or John Carter books. So editors no doubt looked at *Under the Red Flag* and asked, "Will this appeal to the Tarzan and John Carter audience?" The answer was no. There would have been genuine concern that a failed realist/propaganda novel like that would have diluted the appeal of the Burroughs brand. One wonders what might have happened if he'd offered it under a pseudonym. I suspect it would have been rejected, and even then, I think it would have been a commercial decision, not a political one.

From: **Robert Lichtman** February 14, 2017
robertlichtman@yahoo.com

"Leafing" through the latest *Alexiad*, I was surprised to encounter Taral's lengthy review of the Crumb letters book. I had noticed it when first published in 1998 and decided not to buy it because, although I found some interesting bits as I paged through it at a bookstore, I thought that the chances of my actually reading it were remote. When it later appeared on remainder tables I briefly reconsidered, but even at the reduced price I couldn't bring myself to add it to my ample store of unread (or only partially read) books. Taral's commentary confirms my view of Crumb as a perpetual adolescent who in his work plays and replays the same theme — even currently in the January 2017 issue of *Harper's*.

In the middle of his review, Taral writes: "Another facet of Crumb's collected letters that I found intriguing was that he clearly thought of himself as belonging to fandom at the time, and his earliest comics were 'fanzines' to him. ... There is no mention at all of science fiction fandom, or any fanzines that we would be

familiar with. Crumb was in an entirely different world from ours, despite the similarities and overlaps." One of those overlaps would be Jay Kinney's late '60s fanzine/letter substitute, *Nope*, with which Crumb would have been familiar because he was a contributor. He did the covers for *Nope* #6 and #7 (scans attached) and had some spot cartoons in a few other issues. So he would have read in its pages the names of such fans as John Boardman, Redd Boggs, Buck Coulson, Gary Deindorfer, Calvin Demmon, Richard Geis, Steve Stiles and many others, including me, though of course he would have known nothing about them.

The Knox brothers of Catholic apologetics and code breaking produced a fanzine, but it was for limited distribution (like for them alone). Alas for a beginning for fandom!

— JTM

I met Crumb a few times back in the day through Paul Williams (of *Crawdaddy!* etc.) and he was almost a neighbor. One of those times I encountered him he and his wife Aline were apartment-hunting. I was living in a house on Bernal Heights in San Francisco (then a low-rent district, now very pricey) and the downstairs apartment had just become vacant. I told them about it, they came and had a look, but decided against it.

From: **Trinlay Khadro** February 15, 2017
trinlayk@gmail.com

I will hopefully send you a proper LOC, but regarding *The Lion in the Livingroom* Local friends in an older, economically depressed, part of town recall a time when all the strays were taken out of the neighborhood... and the rodent problems went up exponentially. It was replaced with a Trap and release program of "Community Cats" and the rodent issues went back down.

(I've also lived in wooded areas, and putting out food for birds, and for outdoor cats, also had skunks living under the back steps... and the skunks were never actually an issue, even though we came and went through that back door and up and down those stairs regularly. We did NOT have a mouse or rat problem, and I'm pretty sure the farm cats from the area and the skunks were part of that.)

"I got a cute new cat, but his farts are something else." (But these days Pepé le Pew is a stalker.)

Also, "Trainable cats" is partly finding out what the cats are amenable too. You've seen the photos of Seimei rocking costumes, (Megumi will sometimes tolerate them, but Seimei enjoys them...) When I sing out

"Time to feed the kitties" (remember the "Time to make the Doughnuts" ad?) they come running.... and wait somewhat patiently for their dishes to be prepared. (Seimei tends to sit politely, but randomly yells out what I think is "What's taking you so long?")

I'm also recognizing ways that the cats have trained me. Doing a "command" sound to cue me to a behavior, or doing a behavior (tapping my arm to get petting if I'm distracted by knitting, tv show, book, computer stuff etc.)

And they ponder such questions as "What if the human slaves are really capable of independent thought?"

— JTM

Of note in personal news, I've discovered audio books, which are great since I'm having intermittent vision problems which limit my text reading time. (I've got about 10 minutes to read and relax and then double vision sets in.)

A friend, (and a note from my Dr.) has gotten me set up with the National Library Service talking books. I've just got the cassette reader and I'm waiting for the first cassettes loaned out to me to arrive. I'm looking forward to some historical first person narratives, in particular *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said* as I've heard bits of his story (as a literate person enslaved and transported) previously, but had been unaware that he'd actually written an autobiography in the early 1800s. There's also a great many audio books (as well as text) available for my laptop or e-reader (I have a kindle fire tablet currently) via the Overdrive App which lets you check out and download books from your local library without leaving home. (14 days is usually more than enough for me to finish an audio book.)

From: **Dale Speirs** February 16, 2017
Calgary, Alberta, CANADA

I don't follow sports but Lisa's report on the Super Bowl reminded me of the wild game last November that was the 104th Grey Cup. The Calgary Stampeders were heavily favoured against the Ottawa Redblacks but choked early in the game. They were so far behind that by the fourth quarter some of the audience were out in the parking lot. Then they tied the game with seconds to go. Alas, they blew it all in overtime, and Ottawa won the 2016 CFL championship.

Re: the Star Wars reviews, I gave up on them after seeing the Jar Jar movie. What I've read indicates that the same plot is being recycled with new characters. What bothered me more than Jar Jar is the economics of building Death Stars. Unlike Star Trek, they don't have matter transmitters to synthesize hull plates, so I question how the Empire could afford to build them. They also never learn from experience and keep doing the same stupid things repeatedly. The British and U.S.

Navys, as obtuse as their high commands may have been, learned this lesson with battleships in WW2 and quit building them.

I like Robot Chicken's "The Emperor's Phone Call", where he says about the Death Star, "That thing wasn't even fully paid off yet! Do you have . . . do you have any idea what this is going to do to my credit!?"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F1d3QWsyk0>

— JTM

George Price wrote that the USA is: "a federal republic comprising states which are sovereign political entities, not just administrative subdivisions of the national government. That's why we call them states rather than provinces." The Civil War settled the question of sovereignty by force and made it clear that states are not sovereign political entities.

Contrast that with Canada, which is a confederation of provinces. Many of the provinces were self-governing independent countries prior to joining Confederation between 1867 and 1873. The provinces are indeed sovereign and have exclusive jurisdictions that Ottawa cannot intrude upon. The provinces are not administrative subdivisions. They also have the right to separate on condition of a popular vote, as Quebec has tried to do but failed in their referendums.

Canada is celebrating its 150th birthday this year. Among other things, all the national parks will have free admission this year. Campgrounds and other regular fees still apply. This offer is open to outlanders as well, so any Americans who want a free vehicle pass can get one by mail from www.parkscanada.ca. That site also has other details about the celebrations.

From: **Joy V. Smith** February 18, 2017
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<http://www.joyvsmith.com/>

Thanks for the book and movie reviews. I enjoyed the background on the Moon Men. I haven't seen *Rogue One*, and it's not on my list of movies to see. (*Hidden Figures* is.) Thanks to Robert Kennedy for his con report.

I enjoyed your Tom Swift story. (I've always loved those Swiftly comments!) And that is a funny and accurate cartoon: "But what'll I draw ABOUT?"

P.S. We finally sold our house and found a new one and must get ready for the move.

From: **Milt Stevens** February 19, 2017
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA 93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* you ask two loosely related questions, what do we think will be on the Hugo ballot? And what are we nominating? As far as the first question is concerned, the answer is simple. Ghu only knows. An electorate that is capable of nominating a Mira Grant novel is capable of nominating anything. As far as what I am nominating, I have a few ideas.

The Nightmare Stacks by Charles Stross is my favorite novel from 2016. I like Charles Stross. He's screwy. This is the seventh volume in the Laundry Files series. In this volume, the world is being invaded by the Host of Air and Darkness. Our hero, Alex, is a little worried about that. He is more worried that his parents will find out he has lost his job at the bank and become a vampire. He is also a little worried that his parents will realize that his new girlfriend is an agent of the invading forces. British bureaucracy muddles on in the face of supernatural invasion.

Alistair Reynolds and Stephen Baxter have become two of my favorite SF writers. This year, the two of them did one novel together, *The Medusa Chronicles*. It's quite good. I'm about to read *Revenger* by Reynolds and *The Long Cosmos* by Stephen Baxter and Terry Pratchett. I've read the first three volumes of the Long Earth series and enjoyed them quite a bit. I've also enjoyed *Babylon's Ashes* which is the sixth volume in the Expanse series by James S. A. Corey.

In dramatic presentation—long form, "Arrival" is a really superior movie. It's also excellent science fiction. I realized the aliens in "Arrival" might have come from an SF novel, but it would be a spoiler to tell you which one. I also thought "Pride and Prejudice, and Zombies" was a lot of fun. It's really quite well done but not on the scale of "Arrival."

In dramatic presentation—short form, *Dr. Who* had a wretched season. However there was no shortage of very good series. *The Game of Thrones* is possibly the best thing ever done on television. It's a hard act to beat. HBO did better with *WestWorld* than I would have thought possible. The SyFy Channel produced two excellent series with *The Expanse* and *Magicians*. *Humans* is another series I would rate as superior. There are also several other series I found watchable but not as good as these five.

February 25, 2017

Yes, I'm aware I've already written an LoC on *Alexiad* #91. However, I've thought some more about Robert Kennedy's con report on Loscon 43. In particular, his comment on the flier for the People of Color Dinner drew my attention. I didn't attend this Loscon, but I saw similar fliers at the last Westercon I attended. These dinners aren't organized by the concons in either case. I don't know who is organizing them or what they are trying to accomplish. One would

suppose the objective is to get people from various non-white groups to become part of the convention milieu. I don't see how apartheid events are supposed to help.

I don't like the term People of Color. The intention seems to be to give the impression that all the world's people are one big happy family united by their dislike of whites of European ancestry. The people who use this term also try to co-opt some Caucasian groups such as Arabs, Turks, and East Indians. They get really hissy if you point out that people of color must be colored people.

LASFS and Loscons have drifted into a strange relationship. In theory, Loscons are the property of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society and are operated as a fund raiser for the club. In practice, the people who work on Loscons are mostly people who do not attend LASFS meetings. At times, it seems like the people who work on Loscons don't even want LASFS attendees to be at the convention. The people who attend LASFS meetings on Thursday nights are generally older, and the Loscon committees seem to think older people are bad for business.

Some LASFS members were surprised to discover that Loscon was no longer a science fiction convention. This last Loscon was billed as a pop culture convention. Some people have felt that potential attendees might be scared off by any use of the term "literary." It appears that there is some concern that potential attendees might be scared off by the term "science fiction." Yes, I'm aware that money does not stink. However, fund raising may have gone too far when it negates your original reason for existing.

Note above the item about MTSFS disbanding. And ConGlomeration here in Louisville is positioning itself as a convention of cosplay and animé. There seems to be a decline in organized literary fandom.

— JTM

From: **Rod E. Smith** February 20, 2017
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA
stickmaker@usa.net

I was very surprised to hear about the death of Larry Smith, a few weeks before I got your zine. I hadn't known of any health problems for him. My sympathies go out to Sally.

I was not so surprised to hear about his fellow dealer Kerry Gilley, who died October 21. He had been ill for a very long time and missed several cons last year.

Nevil Shute Norway is a character in one of my favorite books: *Secret Weapons of WW2*, by Gerald Pawle. (Different editions had different titles.) Pawle and Norway were part of the Department of Miscellaneous Weapon Development (affectionately known as the Wheezers and Dodgers) at the British

Admiralty. The Forward is actually by Nevil Shute. This was the group which developed or attempted to develop weapons for the Allies and defenses against those from the Axis. One of their more notorious contraptions was the Great Panjandrum. That was largely Norway's idea.

I had heard that it was a deception; it was supposed to be seen by "neutral" diplomats, who would report to people who would report to the Germans that the British were wasting their time playing the game of catch-as-catch-can till the gunpowder ran out at the heels of their boots.

I am actually glad both WorldCon and NASFiC are off the continent this year. If my plane tickets hadn't been nonrefundable I'd've skipped WorldCon last year. For most of 2016 I was sick with multiple low-grade bugs. It was also my year for replacing or repairing multiple expensive items. :-)

Responding to a LOC Taras Wolansky wrote, another movie better than the book was *Colossus: The Forbin Project*. I read the novel, and thought so little of it I didn't read the second book in the trilogy. (Though I did leaf through the third book.) I do not have any of the trilogy in my library. However, I have the movie on DVD. Now, there are some problems with the movie version. My favorite is that the last thing the last man does before leaving the installation, which is then permanently sealed, is TURN ON ALL THE LIGHTS! I've joked with friends who are also fans of that movie that this was for the optical paper tape readers. (Not that the tech shown in the movie was quite that primitive.)

Supposedly it was sheer coincidence that D. F. Jones, Commander, RN (ret.) wrote about a super-computer named Colossus, same name as the GC&CS codebreaking computer at Bletchley Park. Whatever you say. (In one of my novels I had the Chief of the Secret Service looking at the Colossus there and wondering how the head of Bomber Command would feel about one of those directing his bombers.)

— JTM

I want to write a short story which opens with a similar scenario, where the last man out of a nuclear waste repository deep under the Appalachians ceremonially turns off the lights. :-)

I have ideas for a couple of Joy of High Tech columns, but when I have had the energy to write it has been for stuff which might sell professionally. One idea is on the theme of "Getting Better All the Time." How long has it been since anyone reading this has had a tire sidewall blowout, for example? How long has it

been since your video recorder missed a program and it wasn't wrongly programmed or there was an unexpected program change? How long since a minor storm made your power go off? Yeah, it seems like such things as Windows and OS X are actually getting worse. However, the Graphical User interface is far from a mature technology, so hopefully they will improve. Eventually.

Anyway, here's hoping 2017 will be healthier.

From: **Tom Feller** February 28, 2017
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Thanks for e-mailing the zine.

I'm afraid I regressed last year and only read two novels that were published in 2016 that could be broadly considered science fiction or fantasy. They were *Dark Matter* by Blake Crouch, which is a multiple universe story, and *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead. Although it is not marketed as such, the latter could be considered a steampunk fantasy, because the story's premise is that there literally was an underground railroad prior to the American Civil War. I nominated both for the Hugo and Dragon awards. I did not read any short fiction published last year.

I did read *The View from the Cheap Seats* by Neil Gaiman, a collection of his essays and reviews, and nominated it in the Best Related Work category.

Anita and I see a lot of movies, so I felt I was on firmer ground in the Best Dramatic Presentation-Long Form category for which I nominated *Passengers*, *Hidden Figures*, *Arrival*, *Midnight Special*, and *The Witch*. *Hidden Figures*, of course, was historical rather than SF or fantasy, but I cite the precedent of the nomination for *Apollo 13*.

On the other hand, we don't watch a lot of SF or fantasy on television, but I did nominate the *Doctor Who* Christmas special and four episodes of *Game of Thrones*, of which my favorite was "The Battle of the Bastards".

By the way, I nominated you for Best Fan Writer.

Thank you.

— JTM

From: **Timothy Lane** March 4, 2017
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It may have taken IngSoc 30 years to devastate the economy of Oceania, but a chap named Maduro has shown that it can happen a last faster, and worse, by wrecking Venezuela. There the people face starvation, and a typical socialist ruler who cares only for his personal power.

The indirect link of George R. Stewart's *Storm* to a blizzard in your Conroy review is rather appropriate. One of Stewart's earliest books was *Ordeal by Hunger*, his history of the snowbound (and starving) Donner Party.

Robert Kennedy's Loscon report reminds me of a bit of family lore. While we were traveling to my father's next duty station (Galveston, Texas), my mother wanted a drink of water at a stop. This was the South in the late 1950s, and there were fountains for "white" and "colored" people. As her quiet protest against Jim Crow, she went to the "colored" fountain — after all, her skin was indeed colored (i.e., pinkish).

Taras Wolansky has a good point about modern progressivism being a cult; in fact, Dennis Prager considers it the world's most vibrant religion today. Michael Crichton made similar observations many years ago about the global warming aka climate change cult in particular.

Richard Dengrove's letter inspires a couple of thoughts. His discussion of SF vs. fantasy reminds me of a point by (I think) Anthony Boucher: There's more evidence for the existence of werewolves than for the existence of time travel, but the former is called fantasy and the latter science fiction.

As for the Electoral College, I used to agree with him, partly from a comment by the long-time Socialist Norman Thomas: no one would come up with it if we were designing our electoral system today. But the Florida recount of 2000 disabused me of that notion. Imagine doing all that in every precinct in every county of every state.

Further along, I see George W. Price had very similar objections to getting rid of the Electoral College, as well as arguments based on political theory. His comment that most of those calling for a change would have no objection if the results had been reversed was shown to be true with the reaction to the 2004 election results in Ohio.

I was naturally very interested in Robert Kennedy's comments on Pearl Harbor and the dire fates of Husband Kimmel and Walter Short. I don't know about the Army officers, but naval officers such as Halsey and Nimitz opposed their scapegoating. Even Samuel Eliot Morison, who at least implicitly blamed their errors (Kimmel prepared for a submarine attack rather than an air attack, and Short was mainly concerned with possible sabotage by Japanese residents), nevertheless thought they both deserved another chance. One should note, regarding conspiracy theories about Pearl Harbor, that the *Lanikai* incident strongly indicates that FDR was still unsure that Japan would attack America at the beginning of December 1941.

One can wonder if Short had read Hector C. Bywater's *The Great Pacific War* (1925), which has a Japanese uprising on Oahu.

— JTM

Elizabeth and I have moved out of our quad-level house as too much for us to handle anymore due to our physical limitations (not to mention the bedbug infestation). She spent

over 2 months in a nursing home, and when she was about ready to leave I moved into an extended-stay hotel shortly before Christmas. Neither one of us has set foot in the house since, though we may have to if we want to keep any of our old furniture and such. I did bring a few boxes of books with me, including a pair from Advent, *Heinlein's Children* and *PITFCS*. *George W. Price had recently sent me the latter — and my thanks for that. It proved to be a very interesting read.)

From: **Lloyd Penney** March 6, 2017
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Thank you for *Alexiad* 91, and finally, it looks like we both have some good news on the work front. I have a job interview tomorrow, some voicework coming up, and work for a trade show the weekend after next. Things are finally looking up. Good to see your income is rising, and best of all, life may be coming back to normal Real Soon Now. And, not a moment too soon.

I've never been on Twitter...I feel it's good for selling a product you offer, so it's good for your e-books. For me, Facebook, and LinkedIn for the job search, and LiveJournal for my loc archive. That is enough social media for me for the moment, and might be a little too much once I am working again.

A shame about the deaths of John Glenn and Eugene Cernan. The question is continually asked...if we can put a man on the moon, why can't we put a man on the moon today? Some leaders are too busy accusing and deriding others, and rampaging on Twitter, which means they have no such lofty goals to share with us. Perhaps your President should read *One False Step* by Richard Tongue. Bimonthly digests may go quarterly at some point, and after that...well, I hate to think about it.

Loscon 43...can't believe Loscon 39, and our own fun weekend, was four years ago. I think we have promised ourselves to return one fine year, and perhaps recreate the fun times, and see people we haven't seen in the meantime. That would be great. But then, we've also promised ourselves that we will return to England, and we are saving for that, too. When we go to LA, I hope it is at a time when it is safe to cross the border. Right now, I am not sure.

With the current crop of predicted elements proven, I am not sure there's any more room on the periodic table. Should there be more, they will have half-lives in nanoseconds, and be more curiosities on the tail end of the table. (Wonder where the Element of Surprise is on the table?)

They will just pack the new elements in. The Element of Surprise is somewhere up there around with Kryptonite.

— JTM

My loc...conventions coming up are the rotational CostumeCon, which lands in Mississauga, Ontario, just west of Toronto, and we have a table there. The big annual anime convention, Anime North, is coming up the month afterwards, and we are trying our best to get a table there. There are so many restrictions to what we can or can't sell, it had truly become difficult to know what is allowed. After those two huge cons, we have smaller events with fewer restrictions, and fingers crossed, we will have some decent sales this year.

Many thanks for all this...I think I write these letters for much the same reason you produce this fanzine. For me, the letters keep me in, in spite of some thinking they're pointless, and not important in a zine of any kind. I am almost 40 years in fandom, and I admit my interest in SF has faded, being a grand field of literature I can't keep up with, and do not have time to read any more. Steampunk has given me a new field of friends who will be around in our dotage, so we will not be old and alone, I hope. Thank you, good night, wish me good luck on tomorrow's interview, and see you nextish.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Mar. 15, 2017
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This is in response to the February *Alexiad*. I notice fewer and fewer politics here since your anti-politics edict for *Alexiad*. In fact, not even my letter is adding to it.

This doesn't mean that some of my topics don't dance around politics. But they don't fall in. Not even with this next comment. It doesn't concern my taking the side of Native Americans but various science fiction writers doing so.

You know who also took the side of Native Americans beside Hubbard? Shaver. At least, Palmer rewrote one of his stories to do so. Of course, sympathy for Native Americans wasn't a totally absent view, even in the days when people loved Cowboy and 'Indian' shoot ups. Just that the Native Americans were more often the villains in that less pluralistic era.

In addition, I remember reading a story from a 1940 *Spicy Adventure* where the only ethnic prejudice was against Australian aborigines. I got the feeling that the rise of the Nazis in 1939 and 1940 made editors tiptoe around their ethnic prejudices. In the case of the aborigines, I imagine they believed there were too few aborigines in the US to complain.

You don't have to go back and decrease ethnic prejudices in the '40s. They were already waning. However, authors have gone back and, nonetheless, changed that and other things in time travel stories.

The main problem here is that, in most science fiction novels where the past is

changed, the future the time traveler came from has to be changed too. Thus, the future which caused the time travelers to travel no longer exists.

This leads to a logical problem any logician could point out, time paradoxes. Is time travel possible in the new future? Would someone in the new future wish to change the past another way?

I suspect there are time paradoxes in every atom. However, marrying your mother gives a good example of a time paradox. You would not have originally been born from a marriage of yourself and your mother. Which is a good thing because it would mean you the father were never born.

Niven's Law.

What would eliminate the paradox is if the coupling produced an alternate future while the original continues to exist. Maybe, to have time always branching out into a number of futures. One future where the Union won the Civil War and another where the Confederacy did.

Of course, using an alternate universe reeks hell out of a novel's or story's suspense. The ultimate in suspense, the one universe changing completely, occurs only if there is one past and one future. The stakes become less if there is even one other alternate future. Forget an infinite number of other futures. That is why authors ignore the possibility of alternate futures: they lack suspense, and they don't sell, except for James Hogan's *The Proteus Operation* (1985). He used it as a surprise ending.

Thus, their possibility is not much of a problem with novel or short story writers. They can easily ignore the logicians, and, like Heinlein, get on with people marrying their grandmothers.

Let us go from earthshattering activities, like changing the future to the fate of a single individual. One I have to admit caused a great stir in his time; so he is more than just any single individual. However, less than an entirely changed future.

I am talking about Robert Crumb, known as R. Crumb. After reading his letters 1958 to 1977, Taral Wayne takes him to task for having no other ideas than the ones purveyed by J.D. Salinger in *Catcher in the Rye*.

I think this is unfair to R. Crumb. He was known as an artist and cartoonist, whose pictures, by necessity, were aimed at specifics. He aimed at expressing his ideas on the sketch board, not in a tome. As for the abstract, he may not have cared a centime about that.

Now we go on to the letters from the articles. As with the articles, all the usual suspects here, although maybe I'll comment on some who aren't the usual suspect.

Certainly Taras Wolansky is a usual suspect. When I talked about a free bus system, he paraphrased Heinlein that there ain't no such thing. Yes, indeed. Someone pays for it. In this case, however, I specified who pays for it:

namely, the funds for it come from the funds that would go to a subway. As far as I am concerned, it is a luxury the cities cannot afford.

Having dealt with Taras Wolansky's complaint, I will deal with your complaint, Joe. However, in your case, I agree with you 100 percent: you can't go to NASFIC this year since it's in Puerto Rico.

One would think that a Puerto Rican NASFIC goes against the idea of NASFIC. Wasn't it to have a convention in the lower forty-eight, where poorer fans can afford it, when WorldCon goes gallivanting around the world, including in Japan and Finland? Obviously, that is not the case if NASFIC can take place in Puerto Rico. Maybe we need a sub-NASFIC closer to home.

You must never have heard of the proposed Deep South Con/Westercon in El Paso, Texas — which would have fulfilled the site requirements for both cons.

Now, we go from world spanning, which conventions do, to time spanning, and genealogy. Robert Kennedy says that, with genealogies, you have to look out for ancestors who were naughty. Who became a horse thief, bank robber, train robber, etc. As an example, he mentions one fellow who found out through DNA testing that the man he had always called father was not his biological father.

I have a second example. A fan, Larry Montgomery, does genealogies. In fact, he does them well enough he gets commissions. A while ago, he found an ancestor, who, though not a horse thief et al, might raise hackles in a family.

To boot, the ancestor was very well known in her time and place for running a whore house. Larry decided he wasn't going to spring that on his client.

The people in my home town know about my notorious relative (who is buried there) and his familial connections.

— JTM

I agree with Larry on that. I also agree with Chicago, that Monitor and Merrimac Avenue should never meet. According to George Price, they do not, in fact, meet. It's like the old Red Skeleton joke: never wear a Confederate uniform and, under it, a union suit. They would clash.

With my comment on the Civil War — sort of — I end my letter of comment. While I confess to approaching politics, even in the last comment, I argue my letter has only a very limited amount of that forbidden fruit. I can wiggle out of owning up to politics by giving others' political views, even though, on the subject of subways, the other was myself. Contrariwise, on the subject of the Civil War, I have an even better alibi: did that bad pun look anything like politics?

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 21, 2017
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Thank you for *Alexiad* Vol. 16, No. 1 (February 2017), Whole Number 91.

Since my last letter we have had even more massive rain. This in a year when we were not supposed to receive much rain. But, The-Powers-That-Be say that we are still in a minor draught after some five years of not much rain. No damage here. But, some serious damage in Los Angeles. Oh, and it's raining again today and we are supposed to have a couple of more days of rain this week. We need every drop.

I watched the first two episodes of *Emerald City* and fell asleep during both. So much for *Emerald City* and I quit watching it.

I had hopes for *Riverdale* and am still watching it. But, apparently it is not receiving very good ratings so who knows what will happen to it?

Some comments on the new show *Time After Time* about H. G. Wells, his Time Machine, and Jack the Ripper. First episode—The one prostitute killed by Jack the Ripper is young, pretty, and dressed well. None of the prostitutes killed by the Ripper looked like that. Why would the Ripper keep a bloody knife and bloody cloth in his doctor's bag and also not have blood on his clothes? The Ripper flees to present day New York City using the time machine and Wells follows him. The comment is made that one can just go off the street into a store and purchase a gun. That's false. It's New York City where only criminals, police, and politically connected persons can have guns. At one point a female character says that she is the great something of H. G. Wells. Then after an incredibly fast DNA test she says that they are related but she's not sure how. Despite these and other complaints on my part I watched the Second Episode. The female character makes the same statement concerning the DNA test. However, things appear to be getting more interesting so I'll continue to watch at least for now. By the way, there is good evidence that a mentally ill person named James Kelly was actually Jack the Ripper.

By Frank Wells, George "Gip" Wells, Anna Wells Kennard, or Anthony West?

Joe: I enjoyed your review of *The Fall of Night* by Christopher Nuttall. I've read his ARK ROYAL series (six books) and his VANGUARD series (three books) and enjoyed both series. Nuttall has such a voluminous output that I have to wonder if he is really just one person.

He did some stuff on the alternate history groups, too.

I was disappointed in your review of *The Lion in the Living Room* and sorry that you did not seem to like it very much. Over all I enjoyed it. And the title is magnificent!

In my comment about the genealogy book I apparently left a letter out of the title. It should be *The Stranger* (not *Strange*) in *My Genes – a memoir* by Bill Griffith.

I too have a relative who will not take a DNA test. The test might or might not prove our decent from the Mayflower. The Mayflower Society says that the genealogy we have from the Bonham book is not proven.

"Mysteries at the Museum" had an item about Nan Britton. DNA testing has indicated that her grandchildren were indeed descended from Warren G. Harding. So I bought a copy of *The President's Daughter* (Kindle; \$1.99).

— JTM

Taras Wolansky: You are correct that "Progressivism is the dominant religion in the U.S. today." However, I do not think that there is anything progressive about Progressivism. I rather like the term "Illiberal Left" mentioned in a negative review of a book that appears in the *New Republic* (January/February 2017).

Richard A. Dengrove: The Electoral College is not outmoded. It worked exactly as it is supposed to work. By the way, we are not a Democracy. As Benjamin Franklin said, we are a Republic if we can keep it. We are a nation of states, not political subdivisions.

George W. Price: I agree completely (obviously) with your comments about the Electoral College.

From: **George W. Price** March 27, 2017
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February *Alexiad*:

Reviewing Abigail Tucker's *The Lion in the Living Room: How House Cats Tamed Us and Took Over the World*, Joe says: "Some of her points don't quite seem to align, as when she scorns cats for not even being mousers, much less tackling rats, and then describes how feral cats have been responsible for the extinction of — species of rats!"

When I was a small child we had the first-floor-rear apartment of an old slum building. Rats would come out of cracks in the basement wall under the back porch and head out through the yard to feast on garbage dumped in the alley. (This was before garbage was required to be kept in closed containers. The garbagemen shoveled it into open-bed trucks.)

We had a big black tomcat who would spend nights crouched on the railing of the back porch to ambush those rats as they came out from underneath. He would spring down on

them from above and behind. One bite at the back of the neck and that rat was dead meat. But he never ate them. Instead he would carry them by the nape and lay them out on the kitchen doorsill. In the morning my mother would inspect the display and then pet the cat and feed him on table scraps. (No special catfood in those days.)

I'm not sure how my parents disposed of each night's catch, but probably my father tossed them into the firebox of the building's coal-burning furnace. Couldn't do that with a modern gas-fired furnace.

As to cats' attitude toward people, I've heard it said that dogs look upon their humans as "members of the pack," while cats see their humans as "staff."

Taras Wolansky mentions John Norman's series of "Gor" novels. When I read the first few of them I was naïve enough to think that he was setting up that woman-degrading society to be eventually overthrown. When I realized that he really meant it, I dropped them.

Once I was at a party given by a young woman in Chicago fandom whom I knew only slightly. She was attractive, but because I was considerably older, I hadn't seriously considered her as a possible girlfriend. I noticed a Gor book on her to-be-read shelf, so I told her that she probably wouldn't like it, because Norman thought women were turned on by sexual enslavement. And she said, "Yes, I know. That's what I like about them." I said nothing more, but in my mind her possibility as a girlfriend instantly changed from "unlikely" to "no way in hell!"

There are people in BDSM called "kajiras"; women who want to be Gorean slave girls. Whether they go so far as to be branded, I don't know.

Taras also relates his "Sudden Insight: Progressivism is the dominant religion in the U.S. today." Yes indeed. Making a religion of politics is quite common on the Left, with the communists as the supreme historical example. Max Eastman said that communism, far from being atheistic, was a religion that, under the guise of atheism, permitted its followers to indulge in atrocities that no honestly-acknowledged religion would dare excuse.

A primary mark of a political religion is that the believers treat dissent as heresy. Perhaps the best current example is the church of climate change, in which the science is "all settled." (No real science is ever all settled.) Those who disagree are not countered with evidence and reasoned arguments; they are shouted down and treated as pariahs.

New York State's attorney general is going after Exxon for publishing research casting

doubt on some aspects of climate change. The charge is not just that Exxon's research is faulty. No, the charge is "fraud" — the Exxon honchos must really know that climate change science is all settled and they are only pretending to have doubts, presumably in the service of corporate greed. Yep, that sounds like inquisitors going after the heretics, who are not just wrong, but wicked.

Robert S. Kennedy mentions getting — but not yet reading — a book that apparently exonerates Admiral Kimmel and General Short in regard to the attack on Pearl Harbor. It appears to "pin the tragedy . . . on incompetence and other factors rather than purposeful action by persons in high places."

My own conclusion, based on what I've read over the years (but not any systematic research), is that President Roosevelt knew that the Japanese were about to declare war, but almost surely had no idea that they would mount a massive attack to cripple the Pacific Fleet.

Roosevelt quite rightly believed that Hitler and the Nazis had to be stopped, but was unable to persuade the American people to enter the war. Polls showed about 80% of us opposed war, largely because of disenchantment with the results of the First World War. Roosevelt then sought war "by the back door." He deliberately provoked the Japanese by interfering with their conquest of China, using such measures as embargoing oil sales to Japan. Since Germany and Japan were allied, war with Japan would automatically mean war with Germany. And so it turned out.

Since this analysis depends on deducing Roosevelt's thoughts, it can never be proven. It does seem well established that we had broken the Japanese diplomatic code, so that Roosevelt and Marshall knew that Japan was about to declare war. But I've never seen any reason for thinking that they ever dreamed of how bad it would be. Presumably they either did not realize the declaration of war would be accompanied by an attack, or they thought any attack would be relatively minor — that's why they sent out a sabotage alert but not a full warning of imminent all-out war.

I can't fault Roosevelt for wanting desperately to take down the Nazis, but I do wish he could have found a less sneaky way of getting us into the war.

The Japanese had refused to consider any reasonable deal. There was no reason to believe the Germans would consider their mutual-defense pact a reason to make war on Japan's enemies. There had been an increasing number of incidents in the Atlantic between US Navy escorts and U-Boats; remember the *Reuben James*? By the end

of November there was little hope for continued peace. The Navy had sent out a telegram to the Pacific fleet which had the line "This is a war warning." Admiral Halsey, running planes to Wake, had given orders to attack any threat.

— JTM

As I think I've said before, what if Hitler had not honored his treaty with Japan and had refused to declare war on the U.S.? Then Roosevelt would have had a hellish war with Japan, which he didn't really want except as a means to get at Hitler — and would still not have the war against the Nazis that he really did want. Now that would be a nightmare! What might Harry Turtledove do with that scenario?

From: **Sue Burke** March 30, 2017
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I managed to write a beautiful LOC for the last issue, format it perfectly, and forget to send it to Joe. So this is a double-issue letter.

Winter was unusually mild here, besides a couple of cold snaps and one small snowstorm — which I appreciate. Although I spent my first 40 years in Wisconsin, when I was in Spain I'd forgotten most of my cold-coping strategies and lost my winter wardrobe. Now I think I'm finally prepared for a normal winter, if we get one next time.

I've also carefully measured our apartment: a mere 700 square feet, counting the hallway. This makes housework manageable and keeps down expenses, since we don't have space for things we might buy that we don't really need. It also keeps away unwelcome house guests: some of my in-laws have a tendency to move in unbidden.

My recent translation work has included a hand-written decree signed by Spain's King Fernando and Queen Isabel in Barcelona on May 14, 1491. A California auction house thought that if people knew what the document said, it might sell better. I spent a few weeks staring at the elaborate but irregular (and sloppy) handwriting and archaic spelling of the King's secretary, Juan de la Parra. I determined that it was instructions for an official in Seville to allow a former foot soldier, Juan García Guerrero, to keep a plot of land even though he had no formal title to it because of extenuating circumstances, beginning with the theft of his grandfather's and father's horses and armor during the recent war with Portugal.

The official receiving the instructions was Juan Alonso Serrano, who's not well known outside of Spanish scholarly circles but was important in his day as the King and Queen sought to impose their rule on lands they had acquired during their conquests of the last

Moorish kingdom in southern Spain. Serrano was their investigator and judge. As was the custom, the decree was signed "Yo el rey" (I the King) and "Yo la reyna" (I the queen), no names necessary.

The one-page parchment document, which is in pretty good shape, sold for \$10,068 (the asking price was \$6,000) and is now in the hands of a private collector. I received about \$1.50 per word for my work, and threw in a report on its historical context for free — since I had to research the history anyway to understand what it was referring to. But I had watched all 39 episodes of the hit Spanish TV show about the queen, *Isabel*, so I had a head start.

I've just finished watching a new Spanish TV miniseries, *El final del camino* (The End of the Road [the St. James pilgrimage road]), set around 1100 A.D. in the times of King Alfonso VI of Castilla-León. There was more drama than fact, sadly. Alfonso was actually a reasonable and humble man as kings go, not an enraged brute. And Bishop Diego Paláez of Compostela never bludgeoned anyone to death with a mace during a meeting with his counts and in the presence of a daughter of William the Conqueror; in fact, I'm pretty sure the bishop and princess never met. To say nothing of the costumes. O tempora o mores! (Our own, that we believe such nonsense. The Middle Ages wasn't like *Game of Thrones*.)

I also attended a production of Shakespeare's *Henry V* in a little theater a block away (the neighborhood is rife with little theaters), presented by Babes With Blades Theater Company. It's an all-woman company that specializes in stage violence. The play had lots of jokes, swords, and motivational speeches. ("Once more unto the breach, dear friends..." "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers...") But is it a good idea to have an all-woman production in which the King is played by a black woman? It was easy to accept after the Bard's opening chorus asked, "Can this cockpit hold The vasty fields of France? or may we cram Within this wooden O the very casques That did affright the air at Agincourt? ... Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts ... Think when we talk of horses, that you see them Printing their proud hoofs I' the receiving earth; For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings." The woman played the King majestically.

Meanwhile, I've read *The Specific Gravity of Grief* by Jay Lake, which is about a fictional writer, also named Jay Lake, as he also dies of colon cancer. With lush and wry prose, he describes how the disease slowly steals everything he ever had, from family to funds, but gives him the philosophy to accept it.

I've also read *Spin* by Robert Charles Wilson. It won a Hugo in 2005 for obvious quality. I got it from Tor, which gives away an ebook novel every month if you're on their mailing list. They're not new releases, but they were best-sellers. And free is a great price.

I've also read the short works for this year's

Nebula Awards, and if I remember to hit "send" and our venerable editor approves, my comments should appear in this issue.

With the help of Meetup, I've discovered an excellent writer's group that meets twice a month at a coffee shop a block from my house. I've also joined a church, Second Unitarian of Chicago; I've been a Unitarian Universalist for a long time, and I had to decide which of the three congregations to join on this side of town.

I would have loved to attend Capricorn in February, but our finances are still a bit too tight – for the hotel expense, really – so I went just for one day, Friday, March 17. It was held in Chicago's northwestern suburb of Wheeling, a 45-minute drive from my home. I met some old friends, new friends, and especially enjoyed two panels. One on "Practical Armor for Writers and Artists" featured men who had actually made their own historically accurate armor, used it, and could share authoritative information. Another was "The Cultural Importance of Genre Fiction," and I took away the memorable quote: "These stories answer more questions than literary fiction can take upon itself." (I also agree with Joe when he said in the last issue that science fiction's changes result in a lasting difference to the world in the story, making them more realistic.) I walked out of a panel on editing when one of the panelists incorrectly identified passive voice and no other panelist corrected him.

Joe reviewed a book about Cold War spies in the last issue. I've met two CIA spies (that I know of). Both were retired, which is how I knew about them. Both had such charming personalities that I would have told them anything given enough time. That's probably why they were hired as spies.

Taras Wolansky says the Cuban writer Yoss "sounds like a regime toady, allowed to come and go from Cuba because he toes the party line." Taras must not have read Yoss's book *A Planet for Rent*, which savages the colonized government as much as it does the colonizer. He also didn't read Yoss's interview at WorldLiteratureToday.org in March 2017, where Yoss explains that while he was writing that book, he was hunting alley cats to feed himself and his mother; Cuba was suffering its "Special Period" of economic collapse in the early 1990s. That real-life dystopia affected that story, which is also a dystopia, he says, even though "for years it was almost forbidden for the island's science fiction to speak of dystopias."

Meanwhile, "each year it's more evident that the public's good faith has been betrayed in ways large and small," he says. The government presents itself as the best of all possible worlds, a face of hope. "Anyone who believes that hasn't lived long enough in Cuba. It isn't a hell ... but, without doubt, it is pretty far from being the best of all possible worlds. A dystopia of deception, perhaps, where life isn't so bad ... but there's not much

notion of truth. Something that, nonetheless, still seems pretty nightmarish to me."

So why does he get to travel and say things like that? I asked one of his editors, who explained that if Yoss and other equally critical Cuban SF writers were suppressed, the commotion might make the world notice them more. The Cuban government hopes they remain overlooked, so it deliberately ignores them.

Finally, thank you to George W. Price for his history lesson about my new home. The city promises that the "L" trains will be even quieter when the tracks and Bryn Mawr station behind my house are replaced, perhaps in 2018. I already know I won't enjoy heavy construction that close to home, although the work is clearly needed.

Meanwhile, my husband and I will attend WisCon in May, where I expect to be on some panels and at the Broad Universe reading. I plan to read a short essay about how much money Miguel de Cervantes made from *Don Quixote* (not much, sadly). And the day after WisCon ends is our silver wedding anniversary.

In *Van Loon's Lives* (1942), Hendrik Willem van Loon had Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Molière as guests at one of his dinners for visitors from heaven. They all complained about being stifled by publishers.

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** March 30, 2017
236 S. Coronado St., No. 409 Los Angeles, CA 90057 USA

Thanks as ever for *Alexiad* 91. Here are a few recent issues of *Vanamonde*.

Satirizing "The universe is all there is" may be a case of terminological inexactitude. Strictly speaking the universe is all there is; that's what "universe" means. Maybe we began speaking of multiple universes in protest against someone's being oppressive about what couldn't exist in his universe. Once I asked a Greek friend for the plural of cosmos. He said "There isn't any."

There was the exam question:
"Define the universe. Give three examples."

—JTM

I liked Rick O'Shay. Haven't seen *The Price of Fame* (later material in book form?).

Brother Kennedy kindly mentions the Classics of S-F book discussion I led at Loscon XLIII on *Starship Troopers*, but without comment. Was it good for you, brother? He doesn't say, and I don't know if he understood, that I called the set of three (*Troopers*, *The Sirens of Titan*, *Andromeda Nebula*) the Lanthanide Series on account of their being from '59. The con kept the name but didn't explain. We also had a big display of the

Rotsler Award winners in the hallway and a display of the 2016 winner Ditmar in the Art Show. And there was the Prime Time Party (1 a.m. Sunday until dawn).

Among the pleasures of having no television set I've never heard the Barney theme. Two weeks ago I was aware of a blarney theme.

Empires that wade through oceans of blood only endure as long as their bad ecology takes to run down. Even though the word means "command", that's not what gains or sustains them. Thucydides has Alcibiades say "All empires have been won by coming vigorously to the help of all who ask for it, irrespective of distinctions" (*History of the Peloponnesian War* bk. 6; Warner tr. 1954, p. 379), and Alcibiades was no toad. When an empire through complacency or whatnot forgets — shall I say it, or will you? I will say it — service, it starts to slide. As for fiction making more sense than real life — well, since I'm not sure what that could mean, I can't tell whether I agree.

Still haven't seen the movie *Hidden Figures*, although Bridget Landry liked it and perhaps she should know. I liked the book. For me the novel of the year was *Medusa's Web*.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Martin Morse Wooster, the same.

Christopher Carson, Nic Farey, Bruce Richard Gillespie, Earl Kemp, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Pat McCray, James Nicoll, Lloyd Penney, Rod Smith, who got it.



**Egoboo is the currency of fandom ...
be a Bhig Spender!**

McAuslan In the Nick

I had thought I would never encounter McAuslan again after our demobilisation and having to save him from being arrested for having a magazine of .303 rounds. Then I began reporting on the police beat.

The cells in the police station were unprepossing, gloomy, and bleak. I was walking along the cell block when I heard an all too familiar voice crying, "Darkie! Mr MacNeill!"

He was even filthier than he had been when he was in the ranks, and desperate. I was unwilling, but I had no choice in the matter. I said to him, "McAuslan, what have you done now?"

He wiped his nose on the sleeve of his filthy jacket. "Fightin' wi' a Yank. We wis in ra pub, we wis, talkin' about the fitba'. This Yank, sittin' in a corner he wis, he says, 'It's a game for sissy kids! In America we play *real* football!'

"That bluidy game whaur they put on half a ton of armor and throw a ba' aboot! So we have wurds with him, one thing leads tae anither, and soon ra fists were flyin'.

"Ra coppers coom and tak' us awa', an' here Ah am."

I agreed to do something and went to talk to the officers in charge.

"We're holding the American, too," the chief constable said. "He had identification in two different names, and he was carrying a sword in that bag of his."

"A sword?" I said, puzzled.

The chief constable called for it and let me have a look-over. Now by local standards this was no sword. I'd seen one like it when an officer from the U.S. Navy made a call on the colonel, back when we were in Libya. The officers were very eager to share our whisky. (As for that fat petty officer who ran the gambling casino in a compartment of the ship, the less said the better.)

There was a Latin inscription on the blade — I guess it was Latin, but I don't know enough to say. It wasn't a dress sword, either. There were ground out nicks, flat places on the ornamentation, and other signs that this had been used, and recently at that. How and where I couldn't imagine.

After I was finished with his weapon, they took me to see the American. He was a intimidating man, large, muscular, and scarred. His face had been laid open somewhere along the way; it must have been when he was a boy, to be so thoroughly healed.

I introduced myself. "I'm Dand MacNeill. I'm a reporter. And you are?"

"Gordon's the name," he said, very closed-off and curt.

I recalled the identification papers had the same last name, but different Christian names. Still, I thought I had an entry. "That's interesting. I served in the Gordons, after the war . . ."

— Not by Dand

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

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

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