

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Recently I bought a multipurpose tool bigger than my little pocket knife. It was an impulse buy, \$2.99 at Half Price books. I have yet to master the thing. It cuts quite nicely what I want it to cut. The problem is that it also cuts fingers quite nicely too and has done so twice. I will have to work on mastering it. I do not like the idea of having something I am afraid to use. In that case the object owns you instead of you owning it, which is the way things are supposed to be.

January 28 marked the anniversary of the Challenger disaster. I paused during the day to remember the Challenger and her crew.

News has just come of the death of Billy Graham. He was 99 years old. He had an incredible life.

— Lisa

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Printed on February 23, 2018

Deadline is April 1, 2018

Reviewer's Notes

I have watched the makers of our field dwindle away and perish. Remembering Bob Tucker's fun at RiverCons and Kubla Khans — and those weren't the only ones — I had a touch of how it must have been in the fifties and before, when it was a proud and lonely thing to be a fan.

But old age crept up on him. He could no longer travel, and though he eagerly participated on the Net, it was no longer the same. And then he was gone.

I have been thinking about this after having *another* hospital visit, though I wasn't admitted. Gall bladder.

Do we want a small but connected community that is poor, and every new publication immensely valued? Or one that is the world, with so many forms of SF that a dozen people in a town can all call themselves fans, and yet not one of them has any likes in common with any of the others?

I've said it before, and people may find it boring, but we are seeing a transition from participants to consumers. The Guest of Honor at LocalCon is increasingly not a writer of some notice, but someone like Nonspeaking Klingon Role #6, who nevertheless has an active Twitter feed and a presence on Snapchat. (Facebook is getting soooo five minutes ago.) And you pay \$30 for the Official Picture and \$30 more for the autograph.

And don't get started on the people who seem to be intentionally disrupting the system, destroying it because they can't run it to their liking, or even at all.

One question. Why review a movie about Winston Churchill? Why not review a movie about the famous alternate history writer, author of "If Lee Had Not Won at Gettysburg"?

— 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.

Open Road Integrated Media is reissuing the works of the late lamented Jo Clayton (1939-1998). For some reason they only brought out about a third of her Diadem series: the first five novels, *Diadem from the Stars* (1977), *Lamarchos* (1978), *Irsud* (1978), *Maeve* (1978), and *Star Hunters* (1980). (I got them all from Amazon, my first purchase via EarlyBirdBooks.com.)

The series nevertheless is an intriguing look into a universe of diverse races, ancient artifacts (such as the Diadem itself), competing powers, and adventure. Moreover there's no single Evil Overlord against whom the Ultimate War has to be waged, so there is a hint at ordinary life.

The story arc follows the methodology of a decent role-playing game adventure, with a Push (the RMoahal [which incidentally is the first subrace of the Fourth Root Race, the Atlanteans, in Theosophy], who made the Diadem and want it back, and don't care of Aleytys the wearer is locked in a vault until she dies) and a Pull (Aleytys, being hated at home, wants to find her mother's people, the Vryhh). Meanwhile there are other problems to handle. For example, in *Irsud* Aleytys gains an intimate insight into the reproductive methodology of the ichneumonoid wasp. At least she doesn't run into the recurring problems of Earl Dumarest.

The story arc does come to a reasonable stop at the end of *Star Hunters*, with Aleytys, the surprised wearer of the Diadem, having a job with the titular organization, and having the consciousnesses of the previous wearers decide to leave her alone. Nevertheless there are a number of unresolved plot threads that are resolved in the subsequent volumes.

The USS *St. Louis* (LCS-19), one of the Freedom class Littoral Combat Ships, is frozen in at port. The port of Montreal.

The ship was built in Wisconsin, because

as John G. Henry puts it, "that shipbuilding program is about trying to spread the government bucks around to many places." In other words, it's like the many NASA space vehicles which were planned, suffered from mission creep because they had to satisfy everyone, were delayed, and then canceled because something newer and cooler had been proposed. That seems reminiscent of Alan E. Nourse's "The Martyr" (*Fantastic Universe*, January 1957), where the great men who have been given extended lives never finish their work, because there's always a further refinement to make.

The LCS evidently could have used some refinement; it has a 57-mm main gun, a short-range anti-aircraft missile system, a hangar for two helicopters, and points for fitting torpedoes and other weapons. Except for the helicopters, this would be sufficient armament for a 95-ton Motor Gun Boat.

There are 50 to 75 crew. (By way of comparison, USS *Bush* (DD-529), Lisa's father's ship, had a crew of 336 and was about two-thirds the displacement (2050 tons against 3000 tons).) The engines break down, too. Former CNO Jonathan Greenert said that the LCS "never intended to venture into the littorals to engage in combat". "Superiority", anyone?

Mike Glycer posted a link to Larque Press's statistics of prozine circulation for January/February 2017 and 2018. Read 'em and weep:

2017	
<i>Analogue</i> :	19,963
<i>Asimov's</i> :	13,978
<i>F&SF</i> :	11,108
2018	
<i>Analogue</i> :	18,957
<i>Asimov's</i> :	13,320
<i>F&SF</i> :	11,429

Jon Krakauer did an update of *Three Cups of Deceit* (2011 (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #6), 2014), the story of how the Central Asia Institute was turned into its founder Greg Mortenson's piggy bank. Naturally Mortenson replied and denied everything; but he has been removed from any position of influence at CAI, and made to repay some of the expenses the group paid for his appearances.

The picture of Mortenson displayed here is of a man who set out to do good, and while not doing it very well, did well. If people are soured on charity nowadays, it's because these days so much of charity consists of paying the administrators and so little in helping.

The revised book is available for Kindle (\$1.40) and paperback (\$11.19).

Mike Hall's *The American World War: The Coming Storm* (2013; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #1) is now available for Kindle for the remarkably economical price of \$1.40. Now you can thrill to the Second Mexican War, the epic gun duel between the *Graf Spee* and USS

Texas, and how the *Titanic* ran down a U-boat, taking revenge for the *Lusitania*. Not to mention the fun names, for example finding a history written by "Pablo Escobar" (now *that's* butterflies) or seeing "M*A*S*H" people in non-medical assignments.

The USCGS *Polar Star* (WAGB-10) is limping back to port after an engine failure followed by a rupture of a shaft seal which flooded an engine room. The *Polar Star* is the Coast Guard's only operational heavy icebreaker. The Coast Guard has been forced to get spare parts not only by cannibalizing the *Polar Sea* (WAGB-11), the sister ship of the *Polar Star*, but also buying parts on eBay.

It has been proposed to build three new heavy icebreakers, to replace the *Polar Star* and *Polar Sea*, and three medium icebreakers, to replace the USCGS *Healy* (WAGB-20), which reached the North Pole in 2015. The estimated cost is \$1 billion (and you know how that goes) so the replacement plan has been passed along from year to year.

David Grann, author of *The Lost City of Z* (2005, 2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #2) has written a moving article about the life and death of Antarctic quester and SAS veteran Henry Worsley. It was published in the *New Yorker* on February 12 and 19, is available on the Net, and I hope will be the beginnings of a book on this driven, remarkable man.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/02/12/the-white-darkness>

MONARCHIST NEWS

We are pleased to announce that **William Shatner**, Kentucky horse breeder (and he was in some TV series, too) has been made an Officer of the Order of Canada for his charitable work and career in the arts. Just think of it, James T. Kirk, O.C.

Then too, on the British New Year Honours List there was **Sir Richard Starkey**, M.B.E. One hopes he won't run into the same problem as the former Sir Maurice Micklewhite. (*SIGH* Ringo Starr and Sir Michael Caine)

Carlos Hugo Roderik Sybren Klynstra has won the right to be Prince Carlos Hugo Roderik Sybren de Bourbon de Parma, under a Dutch law allowing the natural children of royalty to receive titles. The new prince is son of Charles Xavier Bernard, Duke of Parma, pretender to the Italian sovereign duchy and also a Carlist pretender to the Spanish throne. He is the grandson of Princess Irene of the Netherlands, the sister of retired Queen Beatrix.

OBITS

Since the last issue of *Alexiad* the literary flag has flown at half mast three times for

mystery giant **Sue Grafton**, legendary SF author **Ursula LeGuin**, and noted author **Julius Lester**, writer of many good African American books for children. I found copies of their books and put them on display.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There will be **three** solar eclipses in 2018. The first was **February 15**, a partial eclipse visible over most of Antarctica, and in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Falkland Islands. The greatest extent was at 71° S, 0° 36' E, in Dronning Maud Land. The eclipse is part of Saros 150, which began August 24, 1729 and will end September 29, 2991.

The next eclipse will be **July 13**, a partial eclipse visible on the coast of Wilkes Land in Antarctica, in the Australian states of South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania, and the Southland Region of New Zealand. The greatest extent will be at 67° 51' S, 127° 24' E in Wilkes Land. The eclipse is part of Saros 117, which began June 24, 792 and will end August 3, 2054.

Finally, there will be an eclipse on **August 11**, a partial eclipse visible in Newfoundland, Greenland, and Siberia. The greatest extent will be at 70° 24' N, 174° 30' E, off the coast of Russia near Wrangel Island. The eclipse is part of Saros 155, which began June 17, 1928 and will end July 24, 3190.

The next total solar eclipse will be on **June 2, 2019**, visible across the South Pacific and in Chile and Argentina. The longest totality will be 4 minutes 33 seconds, at sea at 17° 24' S, 109° W. The eclipse is part of Saros 127, which began on October 10, 991 and will end on March 21, 2452.

NASA Eclipse website:
<https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

Other useful eclipse websites:
<http://www.hermit.org/Eclipse>
<http://www.eclipse.org.uk/>

BEFORE THEY WERE LOST

Review by Joseph T Major of
VANGUARD:
The Genesis Fleet
by "Jack Campbell" [John G. Hemry]
(2017; Ace;
ISBN 978-1101988343; \$27.00;
Penguin Random House (Kindle); \$12.99)

In *The Lost Fleet* series, Jack Geary and his associates often take pause to commune with the spirits of their ancestors. Thus breaking the skiffy trope that space-traveling humans will be beyond religion (for example, the Pern series).

What were these ancestors like? Hemry is beginning to present the answer to this

question in this series.

Robert Geary, a former naval person, is striking out for the territories. The colony of the planet Glenlyon seems to be devoid of the usual hazards of interplanetary colonies; no destructive animals, no poisonous or hallucinogenic flora, no volcanic eruptions, and so on. But then, the colonists did not arrive by the customary means of having their ship break down en route to somewhere else, having to make a landing on the first available place, whereupon someone destroys the ship with all its equipment and technical data so the colonists can learn by making their own mistakes.

The hazards are of a different degree; as the Glenlyon government learns when they discover that there is another colony on the planet. This is not the usual other colony of people with a profoundly different world-view, say like twentieth-century Californians, who will love-bomb and otherwise defeat the blundering Glenlyonese attempt to impose their strict and tyrannical morality. Not quite. They are unwilling to discuss compromise or legal reconciliation, much less withdrawal from what is, after all, not their place.

Then warships come in. The government turns to Geary and to former Marine Mele Darcy to organize a defense force. The ensuing conflict is for the moment successful. Indeed, it has some elements of desperation and improvisation worthy of the old days, though the technology is futuristic and not just happening to be like it was way back then. Since Geary has only one ship, he can't have his entire armada wiped out except for the flagship, which itself has 90+% casualties and the captain gravely wounded.

Then help comes. And what is the result? "Don't let the airlock door nip you in the backside on the way out." But such attitudes have a way of biting back . . .

Jack Geary would be and was well served by communing with the spirit of this earlier Geary. In a universe where it is assumed that everyone is plotting for power, a commander who believes in civilian rule is likely to be a disbelieved target.

We'll see if this Geary has similar problems when this series is . . . **To Be Continued.**

LATE NIGHT BOOKS

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
I, LIBERTINE
by "Frederick R. Ewing" [Theodore Sturgeon
and Betty Ballantine, from an idea by Jean
Shepherd] (1956)

The means by which this book came to be are an unusual tale in themselves, and a novel recounting such events might be dismissed as being too fantastic. Before there was *Coast to Coast* or *Ground Zero* or *Mark Levin*, before there was *The Long John Nebel Show*, there was *Jean Shepherd*. He is perhaps better known now, to the degree to which he is known at all, for the idea that became *A Christmas Story*

(1983). (He also did the narration as the adult Ralphie.)

But in the fifties, he was a late-night talk show host (and indeed, until 1977). Shepherd had the idea that people who listened to late night radio were of a different community. And to prove that the daytime community was different, he created a hoax.

It was very simple, and possible in those days, too. He wanted his listeners to go to bookstores and ask for a copy of *I, Libertine* by Frederick R. Ewing. He even described some of the plot.

It worked. The demand for *I, Libertine* got to where it had to be made real (or at least Shepherd decided to go ahead and have it done). Somehow he got Theodore Sturgeon to do the main work. Sturgeon wrote it in one session — evidently there was a very short deadline and Betty Ballantine, the publisher, wrote the ending after Sturgeon collapsed for lack of sleep — and it was published by Ballantine Books. The back cover has a picture of Shepherd as "Frederick R. Ewing".

The novel itself deserves consideration. The protagonist Captain Lance Courtenay is somewhere between a Flashman and a con man; "Captain" is the name he goes by, not his rank, and he claims a relationship to the ancient [and future] Earls of Devon. On the Flashy side Lance is one of the wild boys of Georgian society. If it were fifty years later he'd be the Bad 'Un in a Regency Romance, the one the Pure Heroine is inexplicably drawn to until her True Love rescues her, renounces his rakehell rip ways, marries her, and they live happily ever after.

Lance has a mentor, a somewhat-retired barrister, who he looks after because the man is bedridden. The lawyer also knows that Lance is a fraud.

He has other frauds to consider. When he was younger and could move around, he forged a marriage registry.

The groom was Lieutenant the Honourable Augustus Hervey, an officer in his Majesty's Royal Navy. In the order of things, Lieutenant Hervey made post and distinguished himself in battle. He was commanding a ship of the line at the Battle of Havana, where the British had the sense not to land at the Bahía de Cochinos.

It was the bride who had . . . issues. Elizabeth Chudleigh was the daughter of an army officer. She was what you might call upwardly mobile, and notorious, too, beyond the usual promiscuity of the upper class. It seemed that she had attended a ball given by the Venetian Ambassador, as Iphengia, about to be sacrificed. At least her skirt was made of transparent fabric. That was all she wore. (The Madonna Ciccone of the eighteenth century.)

And so Lance Courtenay is launched on his career of plotting and ribaldry. He has a most interesting life but then this was a time when all the ruling class went to the same coffee houses, slept with each others' spouses, and strove for office. The noble families had their

ways.

Like Elizabeth, Countess of Bristol, or Duchess of Kingston. And she really preferred the latter, since she didn't like Augustus Hervey (the Earl of Bristol now) and liked Evelyn Pierrepont, Duke of Kingston-upon-Hull. Who, by the way was rich and childless.

When Lance Courtenay falls for Elizabeth's protégé, it turns out there is a very sinister undercurrent to their relationship . . .

For a novel written under demand, and to order, *I, Libertine* is a well-done work, and with such fascinating people to work with, too. And there are a few fannish references. The cover has a sign for a pub, the Fish & Staff, the sign of which has a sturgeon and a shepherd's staff. It's by Kelly Freas, a name which may not be unfamiliar to you. Then, someone is diagnosed with Twonk's Disease. (Look it up in Fancyclopedia!)

VOYAGE TO ENEMIES

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE TWO GATES

by Ken Davenport

(2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)

In Stephen Baxter's *Voyage* (1996), by a bizarre accident Jackie Kennedy is the one shot in the head and killed in Dallas. (Thereby we get such strange alternatives as the Jacqueline B. Kennedy Space Center.) Bryce Zabel's *Surrounded by Enemies* (2013) has a surviving JFK investigating the conspiracy so immense. Throw in a dash of Christic Institute propaganda and we get an idea of this work.

But the motivator here is guilt. Jackie pulled her husband down after he was hit for the first time, and took the third shot in the head. Wounded, widowed, the President is returned to Washington, and there begins to reconsider things.

The principal plot is that of an army officer at the dead end of his career who ends up being sent to Vietnam as the President's personal representative. There he exposes a scheme by the Union Corse, the Mafia, and Vietnamese President Nguyen Khanh to run heroin into the U.S. with the blessing of the CIA. So naturally he gets taken out and murdered by an FBI agent, after the Kennedys allow the Mob to continue their smuggling in return for helping line up votes for the President in 1964. Meanwhile Jack pulls back from the unwinnable war.

The political byplay is interesting, and it's nice that Davenport acknowledges that LHO didn't play well with others and so couldn't have been involved in a conspiracy either as actor or patsy. His going into other conspiracies does make for a grim narrative with a defect in plausibility.

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

Review by Joseph T Major of

FIGHTING HER FATHER'S WAR:

Book 1 of the Fighting Tomcats

by M. L. Maki

[Megan Maki and Sofia Maki]

(2016; Berkley, ISBN 978-1592409006; \$27.00; Penguin Group (Kindle); \$3.99)

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



Back in 2007 at TuckerCon, I went to a panel on alternate history. One of the panelists was disappointed in *The Final Countdown* (1980); why didn't the USS *Nimitz* stay in 1941 and help win the war? The return to the present seemed a bit contrived. I told her that one of the posters on the Alternatethistory.com board, who went by the name "Amerigo Vespucci", had written a story that had done just that, but he dropped it because it was becoming too one-sided.

So here we go again, this time with an entire carrier task group passing through the Vile Vortex into 1941. USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70), USS *Long Beach* (CLGN-160/CGN-160/CG-9), and far too few destroyers are transported into mid-December 1941. After an attack by a lucky but doomed Japanese submarine, the task group proceeds to the Philippines, trying to make up for MacArthur's or Brereton's lapse of judgment on December 8. Having *almost* completely eradicated the attackers, the ships proceed to Pearl Harbor to identify themselves to the new CinCPAC, who doesn't have to be bewildered by a carrier named after himself. He orders an attack against the Japanese homeland.

The attack is less than it might have been, due to the intervention of a wing of F-15s which have been transported back to Japan then, piloted by hurriedly-retrained A6M pilots led by the one pilot who survived the attack by the *Carl Vinson* group. Somehow they prove

effective.

In the running secondary plot, Lieutenant Samantha Hunt, one of the first female navy fighter aviators, is harassed by another pilot who really really doesn't believe that women should fly in combat. His harassment leads to murder . . .

"Amerigo Vespucci" dropped his timeline because it was becoming too one-sided. Other writers have introduced counterbalancing forces similar to the F-15s mentioned above, up to and including the miraculous brain boost given German espionage in John Birmingham's *Axis of Time* series. One wonders if subsequent novels will have a constant stream of reinforcements trickling through the Vile Vortices (Taylor Anderson's *Destroyermen* series) even for both sides (William Forstchen's *Lost Regiment* series).

Will the Makis avoid this pitfall? We'll see when this is . . . **To Be Continued.**

BRITANNISCHEREICHSKRIEGER

Review by Joseph T Major of

UNTIMELY DESIGNS:

Yesterday's War Book 2

by Gerald Hall

(2017; Gerald Hall, ISBN 978-1973551041; \$14.99; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)

The man who called himself Harold Cavill (the previous owner of said identity no longer having any use for it) has prospered, personally and financially, as he worked out his project for saving the world from the disaster he had time-traveled away from. (More in the fashion of "Mike Moscoe" [Mike Shepherd] in the *First Dawn* series than say *Lest Darkness Fall*; at least he wasn't "The Man Who Came Early".)

War has come, and Cavill's enterprises have turned to producing war material for the Commonwealth of Australia, while the entrepreneur himself is busy building up the prospects of the man in Blighty suffering his *Darkest Hour*. (So far nothing about "Have Guy Burgess and his circle of friends assigned to counting penguins in the Falklands," though.)

The war does somewhat better until the Japanese decide, for some odd reason, that it would be better to have the Decisive Battle on familiar territory, so there is no Air Raid Pearl Harbor. This leaves a divided America, and in front of it a Pacific Fleet which sailed out to the beleaguered Philippines and lost the entire Battle Line. Meanwhile, "Cavill" has his own navy, the hull of the battlecruiser HMS *Australia* modified into a modern carrier, not to mention HMS *Tiger* being available in the Atlantic due to advice "Cavill" gave.

Then, the plotters have a little more luck and Hitler bites the big one. The subsequent regime wants to make peace with the West, but there is the problem that Stalin doesn't want to be destroyed, and the West can't make peace alone. At least they stopped the Final Solution

to the Jewish Problem — or changed it to shipping them all to Palestine.

As the story ends his doubts rise. He has become invested in his world, with a wife and children and a devotion to liberalism. (See *A Town Like Alice* (1950) for a hint of the low esteem the Aborigines were held in.) His time-traveling effort is failing. His gains or losses may be resolved when this is. . . **To Be Continued.**

MUSTN'T RUN, MUSTN'T PLAY

Review by Joseph T Major of
TRIUMPH OF A TSAR

by Tamar Anolic

(2018; CreateSpace;

ISBN 978-1981325511; \$13.18;

Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)

Alexei wanted to hear the voice of the common people, as it were. Without the regalia of the court, he was observing, he was barely recognized, and those who did didn't believe it. So he was somewhat surprised when the young woman accosted him. "Your Imperial Majesty," she said, "God and St. Michael have sent me to lend strength to your arm." Alexei was astonished by this, and looked up to see her escort, the explorer Admiral Kolchak. "Majesty, her Voices sent her to me, and us to You," he said. "May I introduce Zhanna Stepanova Dorokina, the Maid of Baikal?"

Alexei was bewildered. Why would Aleksandyr Vasilyevich inflict a case of dementia praecox on him?

— Not from *Triumph of a Tsar* or *Maid of Baikal*

Though the Point of Departure is a little before this. On March 1, 1881 (March 13), Aleksandyr II, Tsar and Autocrat of all the Russias, was going to a military review, when a member of the People's Will (Народная воля, *Narodnaya Volya*) threw a bomb at the Imperial carriage, wounding the driver and one of the escort. Alexander got out to look, over the objections of the surviving security detachment. A second bomber was a little more accurate and more successful.

But what if he hadn't?

In this world, the Tsar goes on to set up a more representative government, with a democratically elected Duma (but still a strong executive Tsar). As a result, repression is less, there is no Nicholas the Bloody, and when the War breaks out, the Russian Army has enough rifles (for example). They don't have Natas, The Terror, and the *Angel of the Revolution* (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 15 #4) to worry about, either.

The still ill but surviving Tsarevich, never anywhere near the House of Special Purpose, much less near the Golenewski family in Nieswicz, Poland (Michael Golenewski, who

was born in 1922, when this novel begins, was one of the more notorious False Alexeis) is worrying about himself and the world.

Alexei is catapulted onto the throne when his father dies. The resulting scenes are perhaps appropriately straight from a Russian novel, with interlocking family issues and complex political ties.

As when the Duma leader of the Russian Social Democratic Party (b), or the Communists, requests an interview with the tyrant, demands he abolish the monarchy, and tries to shoot Alexei. Well, Lenin's brother had had a go at it and why should a desperate Vladimir Ilyich let the family down?

And indeed the other leaders of the Communist Party, Bronshteyn (er Trotsky) and Dzugashvili (ah Stalin) die in suspicious circumstances. As twenty million cheer.

But the dynasty has to be secured. Alexei gets a Tsarina (though I hardly believe *both* the American President *and* the Vice-President would travel to Russia for the wedding), and his sisters get married too. Marie doesn't marry Dicky Mountbatten, but Nicholas Obolensky, and Anastasia doesn't marry Jack Manahan, but Prince Henry of England (i.e. HRH the Duke of Gloucester), much less fall into a canal in Berlin. Whatever happened to Golenewski and Franziska Schanzkowska, anyway?

Alexei has to encourage industrial development. And with good reason; the Bolsheviks may have fallen prey to not very accidental accidents, but the National Socialists are in power in Germany. (There was some criticism of the book on the grounds of "there wouldn't have been Nazis if there weren't Communists" but there was a very strong Communist Party in Germany.)

Then the war begins. Russia is hard-pressed, and Alexei has to consider a desperate method to resolve the problem. A little bit of executive action, delivered by his Tsarevich, that is . . .

Anolic seems a little obsessed with executive leadership, having the leaders do what normally would be done by subordinates. And her realization of the methodology of conflict is often more romantic than realistic.

The sleep of reason produces monsters; the autocracy in Russia set the conditions for even worse revolutionary movements, including the one that succeeded. If the autocracy could ameliorate its authority, the world would be changed; perhaps even for the better.

THE GREAT TERROR

Review by Joseph T Major of
STALIN'S WAGER:

Part One — Inside Straights

"The Fortunes of War #3"

by Steven Newton

(2018; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

If you bought *MacArthur's Luck* (2017; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 16 #3) when it came out, don't go panicking looking for Book 2. Newton split the first book into two volumes.

Germany has surrendered, under conditions, but under a post-Nazi government. Japan meanwhile is holding out.

The little people are going their own ways. Commander Robert A. Heinlein, for example, is trying to get the battered cruiser USS *Rochester* back to the States (Mac wasn't the only one with luck), while Lieutenant Virginia Gerstenfeld is providing devastating intelligence assessments from her ill-assorted staff at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

Other less notorious people are working things out. The used-car dealer who wormed his way into Allen DuMont's company in the previous book(s) is now working on some grand scheme to expand television. Major League Baseball, desperately in need of players, is taking the radical step of desegregating. And meanwhile, the armies face each other along the line of the Oder.

But the Great Leader and Teacher is not going to launch an offensive for Berlin. (Maybe he read Robert Conroy's *Red Inferno: 1945* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #2 & V. 10 #4) or Ronald Clarke's *The Bomb that Failed* (1969), deposited on his desk by Comrade Verkan Vallov.) Instead, he's picking up where he left off after Khalkin-Gol — and moving landing barges to Valdivostok. To cover his rear, he drops out of the United Nations, quite dramatically, but the new presiding officer of the Alliance for Democracy that replaces it in the West is . . . interesting.

All the while, Colonel Clyde C. Manning, (yes) on leave from Congress, works on a solution unsatisfactory out in the New Mexico desert. Which may prove decisive when this is . . . **To Be Continued.**

BARSOOM ON FIVE TANPI A PADAN

Review by Joseph T Major of
A TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO MARS:
Volume I: The Warlord Trilogy

by Laura Livì

(2016; CreateSpace;

ISBN 978-1534766600; \$9.95;

Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

No, this isn't "the most complete handbook ever published on the John Carter saga." That honor belongs to *A Guide to Barsoom* by John Flint Roy (1976, 2012 — the later edition is also available for Kindle, and has an introduction by Mike Resnick (thanks, Bwana)).

The print is hard to read, being in a thin script-like font. Some people should be forbidden, probably by Green Warriors on thotatback, from accessing font websites.

Now that we are through with the problems, let's go to the many pleasures of this book. It is a "Barsoom on Five Tanpi a Padan" — and it explains what the currency is, and the measurements of time. Among other things. How refreshing it would have been for Mark Watney to count down his time on Mars by writing:

LOG ENTRY: PADAN 6

I'm pretty much [REDACTED].

instead of what he had to write, constrained by the desires of unimaginative bureaucrats.

The descriptions of the wondrous cities, the fascinating people who dwell in them, the many cultures that exist on the red planet, are summarized for the reader's introduction. The reader will come to understand why John Carter (late CSA) and Ulysses Paxton (late NA) have found new homes on this diverse, desirable world.

There are also descriptions of the animals of the world. They don't want to kill and eat you (well almost all of them don't but look out for the exceptions); imagine images of Grumpy Sorak being spread across the cities of Barsoom.

A Traveller's Guide to Mars is a modestly-priced, loving introduction to that wonderful other world that sprang from the imagination of a man with a normal bean. Kaor!

THE AMREICAN BLAKC CHMABER

Review by Joseph T Major of
***THE SPY WHO COULDN'T SPELL:
A Dyslexic Traitor, an Unbreakable Code,
and the FBI's Hunt for America's Stolen
Secrets***

by Yudjijit Bhattacharjee
(2016; Berkley, ISBN 978-1592409006;
\$27.00; Penguin Group (Kindle); \$3.99)



Sometimes one suspects that Reino Hayhanen was dispatched to the Main Enemy because the Competent Organs wanted to get rid of him. He was such a drunkard the Russians noticed it, which says something.

What put the steely-eyed G-Men on to him was the discovery of a secret code, hidden in a cleverly contrived hollow nickel. Yet, apparently, Hayhanen spent it without thinking to buy something to drink.

And the National Security Agency, for all its brilliant decyphers, couldn't crack the code until Hayhanen told them how, once he defected. The enciphering and deciphering method is remarkably complex; yet he could remember how to do it.

The FBI probably wasn't thinking about Hayhanen when an informer in the Libyan Embassy gave them a letter from someone claiming to have a substantial amount of confidential information of the U.S.

government available for sale, for a rather high price. But they tracked him down, through the complicated and multi-leveled contact method the letter specified . . . and got to the strangest source imaginable.

Brian Patrick Regan was a dyslexic, a school failure, an overweight slob. Yet by devotion and effort he had managed to work himself into a responsible position in the National Reconnaissance Office. Those are the people who take and analyze the pictures of unfriendly powers, nowadays often from space, and earlier on from U-2 planes.

Therefore, anyone hostile with access to NRO manuals and information could be in a very advantageous position. Which was why Regan's offer was so troublesome.

Regan had a way of being 90% efficient; he buried his "goods" all over northern Virginia, often in state parks, and could provide his sources with GPS coordinates, thus eliminating the problem of personal contact. Yet his letters were filled with spelling errors; a dead giveaway.

As if to contrast with him, the National Security Agency cryptographer assigned to crack his enciphered descriptions of burial sites was a mathematical zero. Literally; he was pleased to eke out a "D" in math classes. But he managed to get through Regan's codes, and the material was recovered.

Bhattacharjee recounts a careful, scientific, multi-layered, cooperative effort to round up a dangerous betrayer. Yet one wonders. The CIA described in lavish detail how a careful analysis of the heights of shadows in a birthday video at Pablo Escobar's home revealed its location, which enabled them to provide information to Columbian enforcement authorities to raid the place and kill Escobar. Then it turned out that his associate Carlos Lehder had ratted him out.

Was Regan trapped by this elaborate super-scientific analysis? Or did someone simply go to the police and reveal him?

UNDER THE SPREADING CHESTNUT TREE

Review by Joseph T Major of
***STALIN'S ENGLISHMAN:
Guy Burgess, the Cold War, and the
Cambridge Spy Ring***
by Andrew Lownie
(2016; St. Martin's Press,
ISBN 978-1250100992; \$29.99;
Macmillan (Kindle); \$14.99)

This is the life of our favourite sottish sodomitic Soviet slob, Guy Francis de Moncy Burgess, Secret Agent MADCHEN, Licensed to Offend. Lownie seems to have been fortunate in that he could get to the last few surviving people in England who dealt with Burgess, and then consult the To Be Preserved Forever records of Burgess's dastardly deeds for the Competent Organs, the Soviet State Security.

One reviewer said that Burgess was born at the wrong time; too late to be automatically accepted into the Navy ("My grandfather is an

admiral, my father is a captain, and my younger brother wears a sailor suit."); too old to be a dashing RAF pilot in the Battle of Britain. Or perhaps not; all that research Lownie did turned up a disgustingly large number of incidents where Burgess was whipping things and people. He might have fit well in the world of "Rum, sodomy, and the lash!"

But none of this was apparent when on April 16, 1911, in the renowned naval town of Devonport, Evelyn Gillman Burgess and Malcolm Kingsford de Moncy Burgess were the proud parents of a new son, Guy.

Guy went through the upbringing of a resolute lad straight out of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, attending Dartmouth, the British naval academy, then disdaining rum, sodomy, and the lash for Eton. One wishes for a Flashman to drop him into a acid vat.

This Guy was brilliant, but uncontrolled; he fluttered between the worlds of literature, broadcasting (one wonders if his path crossed that of Eric Arthur Blair), and government, being diligent, yet always managing to offend. That the State Security recruited him was a wonder. (But read the description of Boris Morros — Agent FROST — in H. Allen Smith's *Low Man on a Totem Pole* (1941) to find out how desperate they were for anyone.)

Burgess passed intelligence to the Soviets throughout the war, unheeded, unsuspected. His personal habits began to catch up with him. Never attribute to malevolence what incompetence can manage; as he got posted to the States after promising not to make a pass at Paul Robeson.

He continued to work well and to offend. Damagingly, he managed to personally offend a FBI counterintelligence officer, which combined with his other habits of poor tradecraft (such as rooming with the Philbys) threatened the entire spy effort, which was already damaged by the revelations of CLEVER GIRL (Elizabeth Bentley) and KARL (Whittaker Chambers).

It's still not clear whether or not it was Burgess or Maclean who was the most important man the State Security wanted to get out of the hands of the Main Enemy's Main Ally's interrogators. Burgess & Maclean became symbols of the penetration of the British elite. But they both escaped to the Soviet Union while the authorities, being handicapped by such things as the rule of law, worked on having them questioned.

Burgess did not *like* being in the Socialist Paradise. He wore his Old Etonian tie, chatted up every British visitor who would talk to him, and continued to prowl for handsome young men. (Lownie quotes someone who noted he had a stainless-steel denture, but doesn't discuss the reason why he needed to resort to Socialist Dentistry. It was reported that he had propositioned a Russian who didn't like golden boys and had given him a punch in the mouth.)

And eventually his life-style caught up with him. Guy Burgess died of liver failure

compounded by hardening of the arteries on August 30, 1963. His ashes were snuck back to England and buried in the family crypt in a private ceremony.

How can one sum up such a man? John Randolph of Roanoke spoke of a political adversary in terms that prefigure Burgess: "He is a man of splendid abilities, but utterly corrupt. He shines and stinks like rotten mackerel by moonlight."

*Under the spreading chestnut tree
I sold you and you sold me:*

There lie they, and here lie we

Under the spreading chestnut tree.

— 1984, "George Orwell" [Eric Arthur Blair]

NOT QUITE THE LIFE OF REILLY

Review by Joseph T Major of

KING OF SPIES:

The Dark Reign of America's Spymaster in Korea

by Blaine Harden

(2017; Viking Press,

ISBN 978-0525429937; \$27.00;

Penguin Group (Kindle); \$13.99)

Sidney, that is.

Donald Nichols was one of many who was drafted for the Second World War, and didn't have enough points to get out at its end. In 1946 he was a master sergeant in the Army Air Force, repairing jeeps on Guam. When he finally retired, he was a Major, and he had managed to pull off the impossible by staying in the same assignment for years.

The Army Counter Intelligence Corps often seemed to be at great effort to justify the literal meaning of its name. Choosing a motor pool sergeant who was a 7th grade dropout to be a crack counterspy would seem to be an example of this.

Nichols quickly made a key connection; he became an associate of Prince Yi Sung-man of the Korean Imperial Family, albeit rather far down in the line of succession. (You get that with rulers with multiple wives, whose children do likewise.)

His Imperial Highness was better known as Syngman Rhee, and he was the President of (South) Korea. Since the other imperial family, the Kims, held the other half of the country, there was a little problem there.

Yet Nichols had a gift. He organized a covert-warfare group, dispatched dozens of line-crossers, and even established a codebreaking bureau. Even if you have the ear of the boss, it takes something to build all this up. At least he wouldn't have to worry about being forbidden to spend funds in Seoul.

But there was a dark underside to it all. During the North Korean invasion, the Rhee government had executed hundreds if not thousands of potential threats. Nichols knew about this. His line-crossers were essentially on suicide missions. He knew about this, too.

Even his successes, such as recovery of

Soviet weapons from the battlefield, were problematic. He claimed to have personally directed these operations on the spot; other participants said otherwise.

(Incidentally, while Harden never mentions *Operation Broken Reed* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #1) given the difficulty Nichols had with single line-crossers, the massive group in that book of 66 men and two T-34 tanks seems to be even more improbable.)

Nevertheless he persisted, becoming commissioned and promoted, irreplaceable and untouchable. But time and transfer come to us all, and he left, retiring to Florida.

Now Nichols was not the most physically fit of men. And he disdained wearing uniform, but that seemed to have been a CIC thing. And did I mention he seemed to have a thing for boys? He composed a memoir of his brilliant service, declined in health, and died broke (what no pension?).

Ambiguity is a hallmark of the second oldest profession, the intelligence trade. Such a life would be more ambiguous than most. This was a man in the right place at the right time, but he seemed to be the wrong man. And so much of the story is self-serving, censored, or outright lying.

There is a hideous paradox in such places and times. To stoop to the enemy's tactics is debasing, to rise above them ineffectual. And yet it was a war that had to be won.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

DARKEST HOUR

Directed by Joe Wright

Written by Anthony McCarten

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4555426/>

(2017)

You saw *Dunkirk* (2017; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 16 #4). You did see *Dunkirk*.

This is the other end of the story, the struggle of Winston Churchill (Gary Oldman) to overcome the opposition of his own government, and Hitler, too.

The framing of scenes strikes the viewer; whether Churchill walking out of Parliament as the Honourable Members cheer, his secretary standing at the bottom of a staircase well, Churchill looking out the car window at the street scene, Brigadier Nicholson looking up through a hole in the roof as German bombers fly over Calais, or . . . The striking imagery reinforces the scene. Joe Wright and his subordinates (particularly Brunol Delbonnel; see below) deserve awards and recognition for this alone.

The conflict of the movie is the struggle between Churchill and Lord Halifax over the marketing of *Plan Nine from Outer Space* . . . over whether to approach Mussolini to be go-between for a cease-fire in the war against Germany. Lord Halifax was Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, not to be confused with Edward Davis "Ed" Wood, who wanted to make movies in the worst way possible and resoundingly

succeeded. Lord Halifax wanted to be Prime Minister in the worst way possible, and had greater difficulties.

Churchill is depicted as having only the support of Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for War, but not any of the other *Troublesome Young Men* (by Lynne Olson (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #4)) such as Brendan Bracken. This does seem to make it a little one-sided.

(And while the sacrifice of the garrison of Calais has a significant role in the story, the film doesn't have the Brigadier's response to the demand for surrender:

THE ANSWER IS NO, AS IT IS THE
BRITISH ARMY'S DUTY TO FIGHT AS
WELL AS IT IS THE GERMAN'S.)

The movie movingly portrays Churchill's self doubt and struggle. Many reviewers point to the scene where he hops a Tube car and gets some first-hand opinion from the voting masses as being an unrealistic intrusion. I would like to think that George VI did come down and offer to back him to the limit.

The screenwriter had some help, only having to steal some of Churchill's best witticisms. "Will you stop interrupting me while I am interrupting you!" probably was not delivered to Lord Halifax as he urged striving for a ceasefire, for example.

Interrupt your dull care of life to go see this.

ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS

Best Picture

Best Actor: Gary Oldman

Best Cinematography: Brunol Delbonnel

Best Production Design: Sarah Greenwood and Katie Spencer

Best Costume Design: Jacqueline Durran

Best Makeup and Hairstyling: Kazuhiro

Tsuji, David Malinowski, and Lucy Sibbick

GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS

Best Actor: Gary Oldman

DARKNESS IN THE LIGHT

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

STAR WARS EPISODE VIII:

THE LAST JEDI

Directed and Written by Rian Johnson

Based on characters created

by George Lucas

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2527336/>

(2017)

I have a picture. The top half is the scene from *The Empire Strikes Back*, showing Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) in the swamps of Dagobah, with Yoda (voice of Frank Oz) telling him as he rides on Luke's back, "Pass on what you have learned." The bottom half shows Daisy Ridley [Rey] carrying Hamill on her back in fulfillment of this command.

This film has provoked some controversy,

with people blaming it for having new stuff and not having new stuff — at the same time. And other things, such as the disgustingly usual torrent of racist and sexist abuse aimed at Kelly Marie Tran [Rose Tico].

But the movie is “pass on what you have learned,” with Rey having to learn the ways of the force, try to rehabilitate Kylo Ren (Adam Driver, USMC (ret.)), and stay alive in front of Supreme Commander Snoke (Andy Serkis plus CGI). Does she? It depends.

Some comments: If Kylo Ren is Supreme Commander, I doubt the First Order will be very effective. He has anger management issues. But given what is left of the Resistance, they just might have no problems.

A DARK KNIGHT

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
BATMAN: GOTHAM BY GASLIGHT

Directed by Sam Liu

Written by Jim Krieg

Based on *Gotham by Gaslight*
by Brian Augustyn and Mike Mignola
(2015)

Based on characters created
by Bill Finger and Bob Kane
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt7167630/>
(2018)

You have to realize that this has earned an “R” rating when you see Pamela Isley, Ivy the hootchy-cooch dancer, clad in some leaves, but not as many as her modern alternate wears. And lacking the protection the contemporary Poison Ivy has, too.

DC has brought out a line of “Elseworlds” graphic novels, placing their characters in, well, alternative realities. *Gotham by Gaslight* for example has Bruce Wayne and so on in a late nineteenth-century Gotham.

Which begins with the afforesaid Ivy the dancer, or Pamela Isley, going home alone, and having a fatal encounter. Her slicer and dicer (another reason for the “R” rating) is down on whores and won’t stop until they’re all ripped. Yes, Jack has crossed the Atlantic, and it’s a pity that Robert Bloch didn’t live to see this.

Also out on the streets, there are three boys working for a bigger crook who start trying to extract tolls from a well-to-do couple. Then a very familiar figure shows up. The Boss also turns up, and a fight ensues, leaving the Boss bloody and unconscious. The Batman encourages the three boys to go home to Mother, and when it turns out they haven’t any, to Sister Leslie. There’s a great *Dad’s Army* moment where the head boy is addressed as “Dickie” and he replies, “Names, Jason.” And the third one is named Timmy. Bill the Boss calls them his “cock-robins”; which means we can give their full names: Richard John “Dick” Greyson, Jason Todd, and Timothy Jackson “Tim” Drake.

But this is the nineteenth century, and Gotham will soon host a World’s Fair, made possible by the generous grants of Bruce

Wayne, Gotham’s noblest scion. The fair will show the highlights of advancing technology, including a majestic searchlight to light up the night and a giant Ferris wheel, all overseen by a Gotham City Police Department blimp. The mayor (fortunately **not** Oswald Cobblepot) is effusively praising the fair when one of the guests interrupts, complaining about the depressed status of women. But Selena Kyle is only an actress, and you know how catty those people are. Bruce then shows up, receives the mayor’s thanks, and takes his protectress Sister Leslie — she was so mothering after his parents were murdered — back to her establishment.

Going from the sacred to the profane, that night Selena performs at the theater, singing before her chorus line, a song about “Can You Tame Wild Women?” Bruce Wayne is in a box, along with his oldest friend Harvey Dent, the Gotham District Attorney. (Not Tommy Elliott? No, he wouldn’t fit.) They play stage-door Johnny and go out for a drink (I said this was rated “R”). Later on things get close up, personal, and interesting (yes it *definitely* is “R”).

And so on . . . with the familiar characters being carefully reinvented and inserted into this older setting. And other things, as when the desperate, wounded Selina fleeing the Ripper at the World’s Fair site smears her blood on the great searchlight, blinds her pursuer, then flashes the Bat-Signal on the clouds above. (She had lashed out at him with a whip, but he had a face-mask and heavy coat.)

Or when the Ripper kills Sister Leslie. Her last words, which are entirely in keeping and utterly fail to influence him, are “I forgive you.” (And what he does to Hugo Strange . . . let’s just say sometimes karma bites back.)

As well as other tie-ins. When Bruce is imprisoned for the Ripper murders (Harvey’s angry denunciation of Bruce in court shows how two-faced the man is), Selina comes to visit him in prison. They discuss the case and he says, “As one of my mentors said, ‘Whenever you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, is the truth.’” Then, to rub it in, he bribes a guard to send Alfred a message — in the Dancing Men cipher! He sure wasn’t just wasting his time with Talia al-Ghul then (look, if you have Dick, Jason, and Tim, you have to have Damian, too).

It all builds to the shocking revelation of who the Ripper really is . . . which will horrify you, both by his words and who he is.

HISTORY ON TV

by Lisa Major

It is one of life’s oddities that the Travel Channel has as much history as the History Channel. The Travel Channel has great history programs like *Expedition Unknown* and *Mysteries at the Museum*, even a food program which talks about the history of different foods.

AMAZON AUDIBLE

Commentary by Lisa Major

I have a membership in Amazon Audible books and have been listening to audiobooks. It is an interesting new world of reading. I have just finished Cherryh’s *Cyteen*. Now I am listening to *Carrying the Fire*, by astronaut Michael Collins. I very much like the fact that I can read while typing up notes for *Alexiad*. I probably would not want to try actually working on ideas while listening to audiobooks but it is great when I am doing things where I don’t have to worry about being distracted.

The big problem with audiobooks is that it takes longer to get through them than a physical book. *Cyteen* was more than thirty-five hours long. *Carrying the Fire* is about twenty hours long. It takes days to get through them if you only listen a few minutes

ROLY POLY NEWS

by Lisa

The roly-polies have increased in number to the point where it is necessary to return some to the wild and bring in new ones. If this is not done we will have genetic problems popping up. Librarian K has prepared their transport for when spring comes. Phil the Groundhog has proclaimed six more weeks of winter. Given the recent warmth I am not sure how much faith to put in Phil. Plus, I believe this year’s groundhog was not the same one I saw the last time I watched the Punxsutawney proceedings. That groundhog resisted being handled and gave a good demonstration of why the handlers needed their thick gloves. I couldn’t really blame the grouchy creature. How would you like to be hauled out of bed and made the focus of a media circus? This one seemed to enjoy being handled. Of course, here I cannot be sure winter is gone until Derby Day. Librarian K will probably change the roly-polies before then.

GETTING STONED

by Lisa

Of late I find myself returning to an early interest of mine, rocks. The Dollar Tree offers some and last payday I stopped resisting temptation and bought two packages of interesting rocks. Walmart also offers rocks and I have bought some from them. It is a silly thing to do, I know, but I have done it anyway. Now I will have to take them to Librarian K and see if she can help me identify them. Perhaps if I am lucky some will have fossils in them. They do not look like the fossil rocks I used to find in the Mellens’ driveway but they have interesting colors. Perhaps someday I will display them in a transparent box.

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

Being the occasionally interesting ramblings of a major-league technophile.



Relative Motion

When someone asks “Which way is the Earth moving?” the proper response is “Relative to what?” Our planet (if you’re not from Earth, please just pretend you are for a moment) goes around the Sun. Only it’s not that simple. The Earth-Moon *system* goes around the Sun, while those two bodies orbit each other around a balance point, or barycenter. The Earth is massive enough in comparison to the Moon that the shared gravitational center is actually on average about 3700 (1060 mi) below the surface of our planet. This produces a distinct wobble in the Earth’s path around the Sun. On a larger scale, our solar system — Sun, Earth and Moon included — is moving through the Milky Way galaxy in an even more complicated manner.

Unfortunately, tracking the movement of our solar system back in time and space becomes more and more difficult the further you go. Beyond a few hundred thousand years ago we can only say where we were in general. Very general. Most of the information we currently have which allows for such modeling comes not only from bigger and better optical telescopes, but from bigger and better radio telescopes on Earth and infrared telescopes in space. Dust clouds tend to block optical wavelengths, but may let IR and/or radio through.

The Milky Way galaxy moves as a fluid. Imagine a large bowl filled with water in which neutrally-bouyant particles are randomly distributed. Now, stir around the center until the whole mess is moving at a good clip. You’ll see clumping and empty areas as the fluid carries the particles in a way which is mathematically chaotic. This will be especially accurate as a model if the particles slightly attract each other. In an actual galaxy or other large cluster of stars this movement is complicated by the presence of dark matter, which has gravity but otherwise rarely interacts with “normal” matter.

Our solar system is hurtling through space while angled nearly perpendicular to the direction of its movement through the Milky Way. That is, the solar plane of the ecliptic — the flat disc the planets rotate around the Sun in — is at a steep angle with respect to the plane of the average orbits of the stars in the Milky Way. To gain a bit of perspective, our

galaxy is a substantial body. In fact, the more we have learned about our home galaxy in recent decades the more our understanding of its size has increased. (Our visualization of the Cosmic All.) Astronomers now estimate its diameter to be over a hundred thousand light years across, making it roughly the same size as the Andromeda galaxy.

The Solar System currently takes about 230 million years to make one circuit around the galaxy. However, it also moves in and out from the center. It even bobs up and down through the galactic disc, completing a cycle roughly every 65 million years. During that last movement our solar system strays some 200 light years above or below that imaginary plane. This is a substantial fraction of the approximately 1000 light year thickness of the galaxy at our current location in it. We are currently very close to the galactic plane and moving towards it, but won’t cross it for another few hundred thousand years.

This sort of three-dimensional movement seems to be typical for stars in galaxies, though — of course — our own star’s specific path is unique. It also isn’t set, but changes through each close encounter with another star or cluster of stars or passage through one of the spiral arms. The spirals, by the way, are byproducts of pressure waves sweeping around the Milky Way. They are analogous to those demonstrations where pith balls are sprinkled on a horizontal speaker and form patterns dependant on the frequency. Like waves on the ocean, the arms can “pick up” stars or clusters and sweep them together, leaving behind volumes of low stellar population. Once the wave moves on most of the stars will resume their random motions. However, sometimes stars will actually be carried along for a while, like a bit of Styrofoam on the surf is carried towards shore if a wave catches it in the right way.

One candidate for the cause behind the spirals is the Andromeda galaxy. Some astronomers now believe that about ten billion years ago Andromeda and the Milky Way had a close encounter, which drew spirals out in both. (Doc Smith actually mentioned that in the Lensman series, attributing the large number of habitable planets in both galaxies to the close encounter causing bursts of star formation.) That pass was close enough that the two bodies are now gravitationally bound. (That may have actually happened before that pass, with it being just the latest in a series.) The two galaxies have passed maximum separation and are headed back towards each other. They should begin colliding in about four billion years. This won’t be as cataclysmic as it sounds. In fact, the bodies will pass through each other, their shapes disrupted by the gravity of the event. Then they will move apart before repeating the process, until they finally merge in to an elliptical galaxy, about six billion years in the future. Eventually, their core black holes will combine. However, the individual stars in each agglomeration are so far apart that even when

the two galaxies finally merge there will be few additional collisions between stars because of that. Though the gravitational interactions will cause a huge burst of star formations as clouds of gas and dust collapse in the aftermath.

Note that these dates are very general. In large part because galaxies (despite a key point in the second pilot of O-Trek) don’t have distinct boundaries, but simply fade away at their borders.

Stars which form together don’t always stay together. The Sun’s metallicity is actually higher than that of the average for the stars currently around us. Some astronomers think our solar system was formed much closer to the galactic core, where such metallicity is typical. We most likely were moved to our current neighborhood over millions of years by gravitational interactions, separately from our neighbors then or now. Our system’s motion with respect to the galaxy as a whole also does not match that of any of the stars around us. Of course, except for multi-star systems, few of those stars are moving the same way as any of the other stars near them.

Because of all this movement — it’s not just us, remember, but all the stars around us as well — accurately tracking the solar system’s path back for more than a few million years is impossible. (Well, unless there’s some ancient culture out there which is mapping stars just to keep track of them. If so I wish they’d let us know.) For the same reason, beyond the next few million years we can only make general predictions about where we are going. While there are unlikely to be significant changes to any of the general motions described above, a close encounter with a compact globular cluster of a few thousand stars could change all of that. That won’t happen any time soon, since we’re nowhere near any such clusters. However, there could be a quiet black hole or neutron star we don’t currently see, lurking just a few thousand years in our future which could change our course. Keep your plans flexible. ©

There are other changes which occur besides movement. Stars age and evolve with time, and some of them eventually explode. White dwarves with close companions can actually explode repeatedly, as material from the other star piles up until it reaches a critical point and creates what’s known as a Type Ia Supernova. Our solar system has been within a hundred light years of a supernova of some type within the past few million years, as testified by the amount of short-lived Iron-60 here. This is verified by returned lunar samples: Cosmic rays from a supernovae plough into the Moon’s unprotected surface, leaving trails of damage in surface minerals that are visible under a microscope. These fast moving particles also impact atoms there and in our upper atmosphere to create exotic isotopes such as Krypton-83 and Xenon-126. There are multiple suggestions for missions to sample lunar lava flows of various ages, to see how they have absorbed different contaminants through time.

Remember that bobbing up and down, described above? Once our solar system gets well above or below the galactic plane it is exposed to much higher levels of radiation from outside the galaxy. The periodicity of this has been suggested as one cause of periodic extinctions on Earth. Also, as our motion around the Milky Way brings us toward the leading edge — where the galaxy's motion through space causes energetic interactions between its gas and dust shell and the intergalactic medium — ambient radiation will increase. Both effects are pretty minor compared to other — and generally shorter term — variations in the radiation which enters our solar system.

So we see that, as is usually the case, the universe is a complicated place. Our science and technology are constantly improving and thereby improving our understanding of what lies around us, even on the scale of decades. Which gives us a lot to look forward to in the near term.

LOSCON 44

Con Report by Robert S. Kennedy

On Thanksgiving afternoon (2017), as usual, I drove down to the LAX Marriott. It's about 50 miles and took a bit over an hour. I do this to avoid possible Friday traffic and so that I can sleep in on Friday. After checking in I went to my room and unpacked. I read a little bit, then went down to the lobby and just sat around watching people.

At 5:00 I went to their restaurant and had Thanksgiving Dinner. At my age and divorced having dinner or any activity alone is no big deal and if I did not do many things alone I would not do much of anything. The meal was huge and to finish it all was virtually impossible. The Pumpkin Pie dessert was boxed and kept until later to eat in my room. After finishing dinner it was down stairs to obtain my badge, the magazine, and the daily schedule. But, they were not available and would not be until the next day. So, it was back to my room to read, eventually eat the dessert, then to bed.

Friday after sleeping late it was back to the restaurant for breakfast. Then it was get my badge. That's all that was available. No daily schedule to carry with one. The schedule was huge print-outs pasted on the walls. They just listed the dates and times. No indication of who the panelists might be. Later it was possible to obtain individual schedules. But still no panelists listed. The first session of any interest to me was at 1:00 pm and was "Roving On Mars" presented by Kim Stedman who is a Spacecraft System Engineer at JPL. As advertised she spent one hour and fifteen minutes covering the activities of various rovers on Mars. It was an excellent program. At 4:00 pm it was "Libraries and Librarians in Fantasy" with two of the panelists being actual librarians. Given that my mother had been a librarian and that my house could be a

library if books were organized, this was actually quite interesting. After that it was back to the same restaurant for dinner and then to my room to rest a bit. At 7:00 pm it was to my favorite activity, the **Ice Cream Social**. While pigging out on chocolate chip ice cream I was sitting in a chair against a wall. Suddenly, some hotel employees began moving the "wall" and a whole new room was opened. Wonder of wonders, we were going to have entertainment. It was LUX RADIO THEATER presenting their "The Adventures of Luke Skywalker". If memory serves me this was the same production they presented at ConJosé in 2002. (Martin Morse Wooster might remember.) After the very enjoyable program it was back to my room to read and then to sleep.

Saturday, the first session of interest was at 11:30 am and was "Martian Eye in the Sky" presented by Bridget Landry who is Deputy Uplink Systems Engineer at JPL. Spying on Mars and seeing various features was, as I am sure you will agree, quite interesting. She also covered scheduled future Eyes in the Sky. I then had an excellent Reuben sandwich in the restaurant. At 2:30 pm there was a session titled "Classics of SF: *Citizen of the Galaxy*" with, as usual, no panelist indicated. However, it had the feel of John Hertz to it so I went and, yes, it was he. I introduced myself to John because we previously had a brief (friendly) exchange in *ALEXIAD*. Most of the session was spent on Robert A. Heinlein and not the actual novel. I would have preferred more time spent on the novel itself. Having no memory of having read the book, on returning home I went to the Children section of the library and checked it out. I enjoyed the book and am a bit baffled as to why it is considered a children's book. Maybe my brain has regressed. I very much wish that there was a sequel. But, apparently no such thing exists. Next up at 4:00 pm was "Making of *Star Wars*" which was interesting. Then, at 5:30 pm it was to "Here There Be Dragons" which turned out not to be of interest to me so I left. After that it was back to the restaurant for dinner. Then to my room to read and sleep. Again this year I skipped the Masquerade.

Sunday: At 10:00 am it was "Our Little Corner of the Galaxy" presented by Chris Butler. This was a most interesting trip through our galaxy. At 11:30 I went to "Writing Evil: Creepy Serial-killers and Nasty Bad Guys" where there were various panelists including Harry Turtledove. Sadly, it turned out not to be of much interest to me so I left.

I apologize for not being more expansive concerning the various sessions. I don't take notes and have to depend on my age related fading memory.

During breaks in sessions I checked out the Dealers Room and the Art Show. I bid on, and won, one item from the Art Show. It is an oven glove with the photos of the various characters from the Hugo winning movie *GalaxyQuest*. It may sound weird, but it is an excellent glove and will probably never be actually used. The

person who created it had numerous oven gloves and obviously put a lot of work into creating them. Sadly, I failed to take her card. Anyway, the one I won was the only one that really interested me. Oh, and for the second year the T-shirt man was not there.

My one complaint is not having a list of the panelists for each session and their biography. I have paid to attend Loscon 45.

About 1:30 pm I drove home. The trip took a bit over an hour.

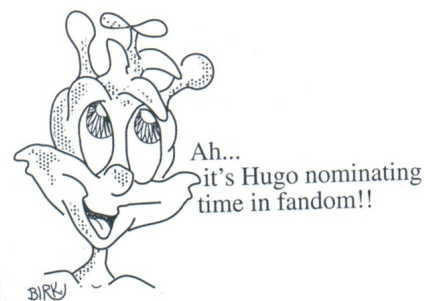
Instead of my usual swordfish dinner at Lure Fish House I had a Double-Double Animal Style and large diet coke at IN-N-OUT BURGER.

WORLDCON BIDS

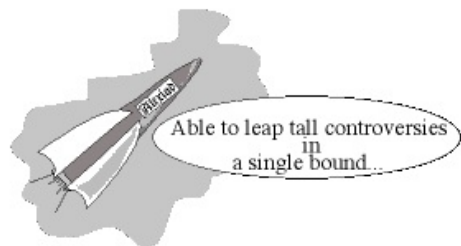
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Letters, we get letters



From: **Chris Garcia** December 18, 2017
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OK, I'm not done reading yet, but before I get sucked back into wee small child's and the way they tend to eat up all available time, as well as chicken nuggets, I thought I should write a few words.

Within Reviewer Notes there are several things dangling for me — *Niekas* was the zine that got me interested in fanzines again, having been given a copy at Norwescon in 2003, I think. It was the SF sports issue and it was awsum!!!!!!!!!!!! I still think it is one of my all-time faves, right up there with *Granfalloon* and *eI*.

Earl Kemp will be pleased to read that.

Can't argue 'gainst *SF Commentary* being freakin' rad! Gotta love Bruce!

Funny thing about *A Logic Named Joe*, completely tangential as usual, but I did a blog post on it about 4 years ago and it's still the museum's most read post (though the ones which release source code put it to shame!)

Sadly, after this year's WorldCon, I have no idea when my next will be. Money and kids, man. It ain't easy. Maybe I started the whole family thing a little late. I still find them incredibly welcoming, but maybe that's because it's almost as nearly my family as those two mid-calf-biters I got at home.

Oddly, I think Tweets will long survive most paper zines in existence. Once something is digital, it can live forever. We've read disk drives from the 50s, tapes from the 40s, magnetic from as early as 1936, and yeah there's material we can't read, but every class of digital data we've managed to get off of its original form has been able to be progressed to another form. There are bits now stored off-planet (NASA does this a fair bit, apparently) and it's likely to make up a significant portion of the cloud. How long will these last? It is a question of centuries, I think. Of course, *Journey Planet* is still chugging along, and I've managed a couple of *Claims Departments* and an *Exhibition Hall*.

I love Twitter, too. It's designed for people like me, the rabid want to know now and more

time than brains. There's a train crash, and I know, instantly, and can forward that info to all three people on my friends list who care. Things like Vine and SnapChat, the digital dust in the internet's wind, are perfect for what they're designed for: teens who want to not be snooped on by their parents, wrestlers who want to do short promos. It is the way of the world.

Finding the item you wanted to read is somewhat more complex.

I'm glad you came through your recent health scare. I was bitin' my nails a bit out here California way. It's been a rough year, losing Randy and Milt, and the oldest living person I ever knew in Harry Huskey at 101, so I'm glad you made it through to the other side.

On the Barometer problem — Sell barometer. Ply the building super with drink you purchase with the money. Slyly add "hey, how tall's the building?" into the conversation.

Possibility 2 — Yell at the building. Focus all energies into toppling the building to your will, crumbing it into smaller and smaller pieces until it is exactly 1 barometer high.

That last one's kinda hard. Might be better off droppin' it from the top.

Mysteries at the Museum: The First Super Computer is eligible for Best Dramatic Presentation — Short Form at San José. Hint Hint Hint

— JTM

From: **Grant C. McCormick** Dec. 18, 2017
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Just got *Alexiad* #96 right after lunch, and I've finished my first reading. Very interesting as usual!

I was particularly interested in the Windycon Con reviews, since this one was held in the the part of the metro area that I'm familiar with. While the Westin came after my time, in the mid 1990's, ASAP Automation had a major project in Addison, and I frequently stayed at the Comfort Suites Addison/Lombard.

These are western or south-western suburbs, not northern!

The Indiana State government recently kicked up the gas tax significantly, which I think is a major stupidity! I know that when I drove from Louisville, I usually found the lowest prices away from the urban areas.

On our last Chicago trip, I had to nurse the car along very carefully to get out of Illinois and into Indiana, where gas prices were reasonable.

— JTM

From: **Nic Farey** December 21, 2017
fareynic@gmail.com

Thanks as always Joe, and another

RAEBNC, more or less, though I'll note that your remark about "the age of fanzines dwindling into the mist" may be belied by the observation that in this week in which I received *Alexiad* 96, I also got Graham James' *Rubber Crab* 8, Chuck Connors' *Enter At Your Own Risk* 6 and the Fishlifters' *Banana Wings* 68.

GHL3's *Zine Dump* lists many titles, and additions at efanzines.com continue apace. My own listzine, *The Incomplete Register* (voters' guide for the FAAn awards)m notes 51 titles for 2017. The prediction of the demise of the fanzine hobby is a perennial one, and yet, we persist.

Nevertheless we persisted. But where are the new faneds?

— JTM

On a separate note, I'll email out the "annual" version of *TIR* in a few weeks, which contains the FAAn awards voting procedure, ballot pro forma and all that kind of stuff, which I hope you'll be able to note, link to & that in your nextish, which I expect would be out smack-dab in the middle of the voting period (ending 3/15/18).

From: **Joy V. Smith** December 21, 2017
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Blessed are the Peacemakers sounds like an interesting alternate history. I rarely read them, but this is a truly intriguing premise. Also intriguing is the discovery of that early mechanism (*A Portable Cosmos* review). I enjoyed Sue Burke's Windycon report. I'm sorry that Leigh Kimmel's wasn't as much fun, to say the least.

Re: My hurricane cleanup; it should be finished by the end of January. I know that Puerto Rico's will continue for much longer . . . And I saw on tonight's news that some of the Keys are still in ruins. Many residents have left and others are living in FEMA trailers.

The science quiz was challenging. Measuring the barometer's cord or asking the builder — or tracking down the official plans would be the simplest way. (I recently googled the county appraiser's website to find the legal description of a property.)

Good round-up of reports in the LOCs; I always enjoy revisiting the last issue via the responses to it.

I once looked over some of Ms. One Thousand Fifty's copies of Niekas. The previous issue always seemed more interesting, going by the LOCs.

— JTM

From: **Tom Feller** January 6, 2018
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Thanks for e-mailing the zine.

Anita and I have adopted the practice of not answering the phone and letting the machine pick-up. If we are home and want to talk to the caller, we can pick up while they leave a message.

No, we did not have so much fun during last year's eclipse that we would make a special trip to see one. Once was enough.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** January 7, 2018
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I guess I'm improving. I am answering *Alexiad* December 2017 in January 2018. I probably should write faster without as many changes and thought. However, it would make my writing seem undressed; and I am one who needs dressed up writing.

It makes me alive as opposed to the age of Age of Paper Fanzines, which, you say, is dying. Of course, I've gotten plenty of e-mail zines, like yours; and, to me, yours is a brilliant fanzine. Also, I don't believe that the Age of All Fanzines is dying because the brilliant fanzine you mentioned was followed by a not so brilliant fanzine. That sounds like the luck of the draw.

Of course, the Age of Fanzines will eventually come to an end. All part of the natural: of things because everything has to die off at some time. People like Violet Mosse Brown and Tajima Nabi may survive 117 years; but they will die off eventually. Even if Christian Drakenberg lived to 146 years through the 17th and 18th Centuries, he died off eventually.

One day I'm going to die off too.

So much for the possibility of living forever. How about the possibility of a steamship made of bronze like in Dirk van den Boom's *Kaiserkrieger: Der Aufbruch*? You say the idea of a bronze steamship is nerve racking, even without the boiler. How about ceramics for the boiler, which were known in the days of the Ancient Romans – or forget them too?

Better tell van den Boom. He said that the engine and boiler were bronze.

—JTM

Sue Burke at Windycon 44 reports that, on Saturday, November 11, there was a panel on VillainCon. The joke was that, at VillainCon, the writers of dystopias would be submitting their plans for world domination to peer review. The panel didn't actually believe this, though. Sue says that the panel decided the attraction of dystopias was the satisfaction of seeing them overthrown.

I think I would add that, currently, we are ambiguous about the future. We believe that it could go both downhill or up. I think people fear the world is going to hell in a handbasket

as well as basking in a future of endless progress.\

So much for the heaven and hell on Earth. So much also for the book reviews and other articles. Now we get to the letters. You comment to me about what Rodney Leighton was going to do because he was depressed. Rodney often contemplated suicide, no doubt about it.

Still, as often as he contemplated suicide, he never followed through. I never could figure out what was causing that. When he finally died, it wasn't on purpose. His heart was giving him problems.. Although he had to be urged to get medical attention, he finally did so voluntarily.

Humans are odd. Like Rodney. Because of that, I think Sue Burke is right that robots would have to do foolish things too. And, for the same reasons as humans. I know we feel that robots have to be quintessentially rational. However, Sue points out that they are controlled by humans and dedicated to fulfilling our desires. While they will complete their jobs in a logical manner, their jobs will be chosen by human beings. Who knows, maybe there will even be mind connections between robots and humans?

While Sue deals with robots, Al du Pisani deals with human beings. In particular, the South African government or lack thereof. Which raises a question. What can you do about corruption? You can reform, but unless the reformers are better humans than those that they replaced, they will also be corrupt.

With that little bit about corruption, I end this letter. That topic exhausts all the topics I wish to embrace. To make order out of the chaos of our memories, I think it's a good thing to recapitulate the topics discussed: fanzines and the internet, death, dystopias, the late Rodney Leighton and robots.

From: **Lloyd Daub** January 21, 2018
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At the time I wrote last, I was pessimistic about the future of the NFL. Then the commissioner received a contract extension. Now I am even more pessimistic [grin]. "Combat football" would be difficult in today's legal and victimization culture. I prefer college football, but some of the players may end up in Green Bay, and I would like to still watch the Packers. As with so many things, I hope it all works out.

@Sue Burke, I am enjoying retirement. I have no such worrisome list of internal problems as JTM tells us of, perhaps because I do not go to hospitals to find out. Thank you for more information on Sue Blom's writing. I recall nothing but the first book and some research material. I know it was meant to be the first of a series. Alas that the series remains unfinished. She told me she bought the book back from the publisher to have the freedom to reissue it in time, with the rest of the story. I hunted in vain just now for my copies of *Scarlet*

Fringe, although I did re-discover one box of materials from my *MSFire Magazine* days. Naturally, not the box I'm looking for.

It all has to be around here, somewhere. [Her book and the other *MSFire* boxes.] Among other potential plot points, she told me she was doing research on the Imperial Japan of that time — perhaps to seek out an anti-Spanish alliance — and was studying geographical maps of South America to see about Spanish riverine expeditions. She was considering making this a global war, apparently. In any event, she was doing alternative history the right way.

Does this mean a return to faded status for you? Or if nothing else, articles? Our issue files are open and available.

@Lisa, I can understand the challenge of writing 50K in a month. Writing for my own pleasure enough work. My first novel is some 68K, and the second is 66K and counting. But both took months, each. I use MS Word, which last word took me 4 tries to type correctly by touch [grin]. Unlike you, I have abandoned composition by hand, even though I can spell better that way. The problem has become re-reading and editing what I wrote. Paper, ink, pencil lead and my manual letter formation are not what they were in my youth. Backups are easier, too. As I rewrite, I email my drafts to two accounts, and Save As on both a flash drive and a portable hard drive in case I need to run from zombies. I will never have a Christopher Tolkien publishing every scrap I have jotted down, but there is a history of composition nonetheless.

I returned to writing by hand because a notebook was easier to carry around than even a netbook and did not require charging. Unfortunately I have learned your point about backups being easier with machines. There seems to be no such thing as a perfect solution.

— Lisa

@Richard Dengrove and others, should you wish to know more atomic bomb development in the real world versus alternative history, I highly recommend Jim Baggott's *The First War of Physics*, Pegasus, 2010, 978-1-60598-084-3. Not only are the physics and chemistry explained clearly, but the efforts of the various contenders for the prize are made clear chronologically. The German civilian physicists thought they were far ahead while the Allied agents interviewing them or listening in on them realized they had worried for no reason. And so among other non-events, Moe Berg did not bother to assassinate Werner Heisenberg. But the German military effort at least blew up a reactor vessel, if no more than that. Later on, we learn that the leaders of Japan were unimpressed with Hiroshima. [We

know that from Richard Frank's *Downfall*, as well.] They were told enough about the difficulty of making fission bombs from their own scientists to know America could not have many, and expected public outrage to stop further bombing. [That might work nowadays.] And so they ignored that event, just as they ignored the Potsdam Declaration. [For those keeping score, that means the leadership would have been just as unimpressed by a demonstration in a waste area, as so many critics have insisted to the contrary.] The book continues into the post-war era of SAC and the Soviet bomb.

@Joe, you mention correctly in Reviewer's Notes that fanzines are dwindling. As your own switch to .PDF shows, technology is not merely marching on, but out-running us all. And the audience may be larger than ever, but divided into smaller niches than ever. Excluding each other on ideological grounds doesn't help.

@Monarchist News — I've always enjoyed your write-ups dynastical. But they remind me of the alleged story of King Henry VII and the Earl of Lincoln. Henry wanted Lincoln's allegiance after Bosworth. Lincoln told him he was loyal to the Crown, and that if Parliament put that crown on a stick of wood, Lincoln vowed to fight for that stick. Henry took the hint and drummed up a Parliament to crown himself. What all these dynasts need is the consent of the governed.

I thought it was the Earl of Surrey (ancestor of the current Duke of Norfolk) who did that.

@Review of *A Portable Cosmos*, you point out that the Antikythera mechanism must represent an entire unrecorded history of technology. So true — these things don't come from nowhere — except in science fiction, of course. The metallurgy alone needed to make one is due to centuries of development, most known only in, um, bits and pieces. Crafting the parts of the mechanism, making the nuts and bolts to hold it all together, and then there are the tools to cut the markings on the edge. All the middle of a long period of technological development that kept on going. This device was a snapshot in a motion picture of change. The markings on the device to track the stars represent the same many centuries of learning.

Who was it who said his own discoveries were due to standing on the shoulders of giants? Some English wag, no doubt. I always tried to impress my students with the idea that the technology they were studying to use on the job was no more than a temporary stop in a river of development, and they had better be prepared to go with the flow and learn the next thing coming along. Some each semester took the warning to heart.

The Honourable Sir Isaac Newton, M.P. (Cambridge

University, Cross-Bench).

— JTM

@JTM "Mike Resnick once said, as I recall, that the problem of colonialism was that it eliminated existing social structures and prevented the learning of new ones."

I know someone who agreed with that sentiment. U.S. Grant. I finally got around to reading his Civil War memoirs, and that was one of points he made about the failures of various governments in Mexico: that the Spanish had not taught civics to their colonists and the local population. Their more recent leaders knew about power, but not how to rule by law. For all the upset stomachs in the 1770s, the colonists here had at least learned to govern themselves in a somewhat orderly fashion. So many of our current problems stem from a failure of the local political class to teach that. Quite the opposite, in fact.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** January 21, 2018
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When Vol. 16 No. 6 was received it was realized that I did not seem to have received No. 5. Checking my records appeared to indicate that was the case. I contacted Joe and he emailed a copy of No. 5 which, with further checking, proved that I had not previously received it. What happened is known only to the gods of the Internet. This caused my record of having had a letter in every issue of *ALEXIAD* to be broken

So, first, comments that should have resulted from No. 5.

I was previously aware of Milt Stevens having died. It is a great loss.

I made a donation to HELP ROSY and she still needs help. So, if you can furnish some help go to <https://www.gofundme.com/save-rosys-inheritance>.

Joe: Thanks for your commentary about solar eclipses.

Rodford Edmiston: Excellent — The Joy of High Tech.

Richard A. Dengrove: I'm sure that you noticed the error General Kimmel when it should be Admiral Kimmel. As for the genealogical comment. My point was that if one is not prepared for surprises concerning an ancestor or ancestors, then one should not get involved in genealogy and DNA related to genealogy. One should be ready to accept the bad as well as the good and the indifferent. So, yes, the person should have been told that an ancestor ran a whorehouse. As for me, I would not brag about it; but I would not try to hide it. Actually, I might laugh.

Lloyd Daub: It's great to see you resurrected and may you have a long and enjoyable retirement.

Now, for No. 6.

Joe: You comment about the death of Violet Mosse Brown and that the oldest living person

now being Tajima Nabi who was born on August 4, 1900. You indicate that she is the last surviving person born in the 19th century. It is really great that you are probably one of the few people who realize that the 20th century began with 1901, not 1900. It's 1901 because there is not a year zero in the Christian calendar. Our 21st century, obviously, began with 2001 (sound familiar?).

In your review of *True Believer* (page 5) you refer to the House Committee on Un-American Activities as it is the correct name of the committee and not the House Un-American Activities Committee as so many wish to call it. But, then, if you refer to it by its correct name one can't say HUAC.

John G. Henry: You say that the Helsinki fire marshals stopped the Worldcon attendance at 6,000. That's excellent attendance and would indicate that the Worldcon was a success.

I would like to see someone give a complete Helsinki Worldcon report.

It looks like they don't like to talk about it. I remember asking people about HeiCon '70 and they wouldn't say anything about it.

— JTM

Lloyd Daub: I don't know about 70 being the new 60. I'm 84 going on 95. ☺

The DVD of *THE CIRCLE* starring Emma Watson and Tom Hanks (2017) was obtained from the library. It's not a great movie; but it's truly terrifying. Through an experiment that becomes reality, and could be worldwide, all privacy and individual freedom will be eliminated. Everyone will know everything about everyone else. It should, perhaps, be called a horror movie. I recommend the movie.

The other night there was nothing much that I had recorded that I really felt like watching. So, I got my DVD of *THE TRUMAN SHOW* starring Jim Carrey (1998). It is one of my favorite movies and I have watched it several times over the years. It is one of only three movies where I have gone back to watch a second time in the movie theater. I doubt that Jim Carrey, or probably anyone involved in its production, really understood the movie. It's about individualism and freedom. In my opinion this is Jim Carrey's finest movie.

While at Loscon 44 the San Jose Worldcon hotels opened up. After getting home and straightened out I tried to reserve a room. But, there were no rooms available for the time period I wanted. Apparently the hotels filled up immediately. So, sadly, I will not be going to Worldcon. And it is sad because it would have been my last Worldcon.

No doubt most of you know about the massive fires here in California. About a week ago we had a good day of rain. At least good for some of us. Now, north of here around Santa Barbara there have been massive mud slides resulting in the death of at least 20

people. Also, the 101 freeway is closed just south of Santa Barbara. So, apparently you can't get there from here unless you take a hastily prepared ferry boat or the train. I know some people who have done one or the other. As for me, I do not have any need to go to Santa Barbara.

I am enjoying the new TV show *The Orville*. That might even include the anti-religious season finale. Hollywood just can't help itself. Reports were that it was not doing all that well. But, it has been renewed for a second season. I do wonder if there is a sister starship out there somewhere named *The Wilbur*.

From: **Lloyd Penney** January 23, 2018
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I have probably done this before, and will probably do it again...I have the part-time work I mentioned in my previous letter, and it has eaten up so much of my time. I missed responding to *Alexiad* 95, and the deadline for responding to issue 96 is coming up, so here is a letter of comment on both issues.

95...Some of the graphics found online make us laugh, like those of having enough adulating for one day, and retreating to my pillow fort to do some colouring. With the pressures of everyday life, perhaps going back to the colouring book and coloured pencils is the way to resolve stress. Not so much funny, and as I see with the odd trip to Michaels, adult colouring books are a booming industry.

Our numbers are indeed dwindling. The idea of fandom is fading as quickly. I suspect we will be doing this until we either grow bored, or have had enough, or there's no one left to appreciate what we do. That day is sooner than we think, so let's keep going in our self-entertainment until we are done. In the wider SFnal world, we have lost so many...Brian Aldiss, Jerry Pournelle, Randy Byers, Milt Stevens, so many more. We are all poorer for their departure.

And just the day this came in,
Ursula K. Le Guin.

With the review of *Winston's War* by Michael Dobbs, I might ask if you have seen the movie *Darkest Hour*, about the rise of Winston Churchill to the prime minister's office at the beginning of World War II. Gary Oldman is an amazing Churchill, and while it doesn't cover much of a span of British and WWII history, it is an interesting interpretation of Churchill as the cranky old man with a spotty past rising to the biggest occasion. We chose that movie over the latest Star Wars movie; we've yet to see Episode VIII.

As you can see, we saw both.

The idea of a convention in Puerto Rico was daunting, the idea of a NASFiC there moreso, but the more I read about the PR NASFiC, the more I am glad I did not go. It may have been one of the last events to take place there before the hurricanes came to utterly ruin the island.

96...I am happy with any zines that come my way. I quite understand that life's necessities get in the way of what you'd rather be doing. Our own Worldcon days were done with Reno; I doubt there will ever be another Worldcon even remotely near to Toronto. Just as well we didn't go to Puerto Rico, we don't have Twitter feeds.

Rich Dengrove's loc...I did get the impression that Rod Leighton didn't like me because I live in Toronto. I have lived elsewhere in Canada, and that's how we all learn that the three national sports of Canada are hockey, lacrosse and hating Toronto. I did respond to anything Rodney sent to me, as best as I could.

Earl Kemp is quite right, keep it up. You care enough to compose and design and sent it out, and that is becoming rarer. Still, we have the traditions, and a core group who will continue to Pub their Ishes. You keep it up, and so will I. I don't say it often enough, but kudos to Paul Gadzikowski for carrying on, and finding a unique way to deal with his loss.

2018 should be a better year for us...Yvonne is now happily retired, and is getting used to the idea of not going to work. Our apartment should look much better soon, as she takes on the task of cleaning out our apartment, and tossing out at least some of the accumulated detritus of fannish activities going back to the 90s or so. We have already weeded out our book collection, and that may have to be done again within a year or so. Last month saw me mark 40 years of fannish involvement, going back to the Star Trek club I helped to found in Victoria, British Columbia in December of 1977. And this coming May, Yvonne and I will celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary. We have a lot to keep ourselves busy.

Take care, and keep fighting for work and health. Put out these fanzines as often as you like; you will have my support and response. See you with the next issue.

From: **George W. Price** January 25, 2018
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December *Alexiad*:

Joe's review of Preston Fleming's *Blessed Are the Peacemakers* mentions John Cabell Breckinridge, Confederate Secretary of War. The U.S. Army's Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky, named for him, was where I took basic training in 1951, in the 101st Airborne Division. (Despite the name, it was regular infantry training, not airborne.) The 101st was later reactivated as a combat unit, moved to Fort Campbell in 1956, and helped enforce school integration in Little Rock in 1957. Camp Breckinridge was converted to civilian uses.

Several U.S. Army posts have been named for Confederate big shots, notably Fort Lee in Virginia and Fort Bragg in North Carolina. I presume this was in hopes of healing the wounds from the Civil War (or War of Southern Independence, if you prefer).

Tim Lane once said that Fort Bragg was so named in honor of the general's contribution to the Union's victory.

Richard Dengrove notes me as believing that "Werner Heisenberg couldn't make much headway on the atomic bomb because he was an advocate of German science." Mr. Dengrove says that Heisenberg "was considered an enemy of the school of thought called 'German Science,' which scorned relativity and quantum mechanics."

This is a misunderstanding. By "German science" I meant only the regular German scientific establishment. I had completely forgotten that there was a gang of crackpots and charlatans pushing nonsense called "German Science." Heisenberg had nothing to do with that. I meant that he believed that since his team, the cream of German physicists and engineers, was having a hard time on the atomic project, the British and American scientists must be having an even harder time. And so the overconfident Germans didn't try as hard as they might have.

Sue Burke discusses the penchant of geese for attacking people who get too close to them. Is this the origin of "goosing" to mean poking a person in the anus? A goose's head is about the right height for that, and it pecks you in the backside rather than the front because if you have good sense you'll be moving away from it.

Taras Wolansky discusses the new movie *Blade Runner 2049*. The *Blade Runner* movies, neither of which have I seen, impressed me for one reason: They are based on a story by one author — Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* — but take the title from a book by another author — *The Bladerunner*, by Alan E. Nourse (1974), which I did read. In the Nourse book a "bladerunner" is a smuggler supplying surgical instruments to healers who are outlawed by a repressive government. Is there anything in the movies which justifies the title change?

Ridley Scott. There was a screenplay for the Nourse book, written by of all people William S. Burroughs. Scott read that, and

liked the title but that was all, so he bought the rights to the title and used it on Hampton Fancher's screenplay for *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

The sexual depredations of Harvey Weinstein and others of that ilk are appalling, disgusting — and not the least bit surprising.

An insight from evolutionary psychology that I find persuasive rests on the assumption that every organism has an instinctive drive to reproduce its own genes, because without such a drive its line would die out quickly. So what are the best strategies for the human animal?

For a male, it is to spread his seed far and wide: to have as many women as possible as often as possible, in order to produce a vast number of children. That maximizes the chance that at least some of those many children will survive to reproduce his genes.

For a female, it is quite different. Since she will at best bear no more than about twenty children, of whom perhaps three or four will survive to reproductive age, her best strategy is to persuade a man to stick around and help support and raise those few children.

This difference between the sexes is summarized as: "Men want to get laid; women want to get married." There are plenty of exceptions to the rule, but that's the way to bet.

Our ideal of family life is thus much closer to the female primal instinct than to the male. Since men must make a much greater change from their instinctive behavior, the task of socializing them in adolescence is much harder than for women. So it is not surprising that socialization fails more often for men.

Small children have to be trained to respect the persons and property of other people — the "play nice" rules. When that socialization fails, we get bullies and thieves. In the same way, adolescents have to be socialized to respect the sexual rules. My father called this "learning to behave like a gentleman." When that socialization of boys fails, as it often does, we get Weinsteins.

It is critical to understand that the Weinsteins are not freaky monsters. They are natural men who did not get socialized to internalize the sexual ideals of our society. They are males in the raw, so to speak, and there are a lot of them.

I have no brilliant suggestions on how to make socialization succeed more often. Discouraging single motherhood might help — boys apparently really do need a father, and not just for monetary support. (A host of doctoral dissertations could be written on the role of street gangs as surrogate fathers.)

Given that a certain number of men will be sexual predators, we need to change some social rules to make predation more difficult. We might even learn from our uptight

repressed Victorian ancestors — maybe they actually knew something about keeping male sexuality under control.

For obvious example, we can bring back chaperones. Just imagine a Weinstein's face when he meets an aspiring actress at a party, suggests that she come up to his hotel room, and she smiles brightly and says, "Why, that sounds great! Give me a moment to get my Aunt Susie — that's her over there — and we'll be right with you!"

A few months ago the sophisticated elites were mocking Vice President Mike Pence for his policy of never being alone with women outside his family. Doesn't seem so funny now, does it?

We might also recognize that equality of the sexes does not mean identity. The rules for women and men may well need to be different, even if that outrages some feminists.

For example, the physical differences between the sexes make it easy for men to rape women, but almost impossible for women to rape men. This has serious implications in regard to letting a man get a woman alone. For an obvious case, maybe we should go back to single-sex college dormitories. And maybe in businesses, the private offices should have glass partitions so that everyone can see what the boss is doing in there with the woman he has called in for a "conference."

(Since we are science fiction fans, we might speculate on what our society would be like if women were just as big and muscular as men.)

However, we should not go overboard in separating the sexes. I note that Muslims, under Sharia law, take for granted that men cannot be expected to control their sexual impulses, and therefore the sexes must be rigorously segregated — rape is usually deemed the woman's fault because she allowed the man to be alone with her. I think we can do better than that.

And there need to be four witnesses to prove rape. Yet those who deplore the "rape culture" say that we must tolerate Sharia.

— JTM

I will close with an old story that seems apropos:

An office manager wanted to make out with his secretary (even though he was married with children). He never touched her, but he frequently dropped broad hints — which she completely ignored. In fact, she acted as if she had never even noticed that he was hinting. He found that very frustrating.

Then one day at the close of business she said, "Today is your birthday. Let's go to my place for a surprise party." Well now, he thought, that's more like it! And off they went. When they got into her living room, she said, "Excuse me a moment, I'll be right back," and she disappeared through a door. He thought, she's going to change into a negligee. And then he thought, why waste time? I'll start getting

ready. And he began stripping.

He had everything off but his socks and his glasses when the door opened and the secretary came back in. She was fully dressed and carrying a big birthday cake with lighted candles. And right behind her were this guy's wife and children singing "Happy Birthday!"

From: **Sue Burke** January 31, 2018
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First, my sympathies to Joe and Lisa for their contretemps involving cars, frozen pipes, and a furnace, from what I've seen at Facebook. My sympathies also to anyone else here who has had troubles these last couple of months. Myself, I took part in the national flu epidemic. Perhaps because I got the vaccine or perhaps out of dumb luck, I didn't get very sick. Mostly I took naps and coughed, a cough that has lingered. A week later, my husband got sick, too.

The new year began with pot becoming legal for recreational uses in California. This can only mean one thing: pot parties at Worldcon 76 in San José — although because the hotels and convention center are no doubt smoke-free, they might have to be held out in the parking lots. I'm going to Worldcon. I'll report back.

Here in Cook County, Illinois, which includes the city of Chicago, the March 20 primary ballot will ask: "Shall the state of Illinois legalize the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, testing, and sale of marijuana and marijuana products for recreational use by adults 21 and older subject to state regulation, taxation and local ordinance?" The referendum is purely advisory, but it will show what 40 percent of the state's population is thinking.

My state representative and state senator have already introduced legislation to legalize pot throughout Illinois. If it passes, maybe my neighbors would stop smoking stinky illicit skunkweed and be able to buy something decent. I don't care whether they smoke marijuana or not; I'd just appreciate something more aromatic.

Meanwhile, I've been busy preparing for the launch of my novel, *Semiosis*, on February 6. Tor has been finding a lot for me to do. I am required by my contract, among other things, to "cooperate with the Publisher in promoting the Work ... in tours and other promotional activities (such as, for example, Author blogs, podcasts and online chats) and will prepare and deliver to the Publisher such additional material as the Publisher may reasonably request ..." I'm fine with that, and I'm having fun, but I'm busy.

By the way, I'll be at Capricorn 38 in Wheeling, IL, in mid-February. Watch for a con report.

Today, before sunrise, I saw a shadow sliding over the Super Blue Blood Moon as its shrinking crescent sank to the western horizon – a superb way to start the day.

As for the barometer challenge, I propose placing the barometer on the ground floor of the building, then filling the building with water and reading the pressure measurement from the barometer to get the weight of a column of water the same height as the building. This technique will require costly indemnities and, perhaps, a municipal permit or declaration of insanity.

I can't remember the title of that pulp SF story about the skyscraper built of some super material. After it was finished, but before people moved in, a pipe broke on one of the upper floors. The building was impermeable, so it flooded top to bottom – and then, of course, burst.

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** January 31, 2018
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At work, the new year started quietly. In part it is because we are moving into a new building, and a lot of focus are on finishing the move. I am part of the last lot to move, and it had been interesting seeing the office getting emptier as time passed.

The new building looks fine and may be better than our current one. I am just worried since we are also moving into a new data centre. The track record on companies who have died when building a new head office, a new data centre or both are worrisome.

My end of year holidays was decent, and I managed to see almost all of my closest relatives, and to rest. Both of which I needed.

I have been thinking a bit about SF and old stories, and may have a new angle on at least one of them. The old story is that Heinlein got too big to be edited. My angle is that he stopped trusting editors to do their job, and refused to let them loose unsupervised on his writing. Same effect, different perspective.

I read the second volume of Patterson's Heinlein biography, and Heinlein's interaction with his agents was one of the things that struck me when I read it – That Heinlein trusted both of his longtime agents, and had decades long relationships with them. And that he got rid of most of the agents who were not doing a good job very quickly. (His Hollywood agent is probably the only exception, and there the problem was that the agent was not marketing Heinlein aggressively, but he was making sure that Heinlein got the money he should get.)

But the relationship between Heinlein and

an editor was never direct, with continuing employment dependent on performance. Editors were employed by publishers, and keeping the publisher happy was more important than treating the author well. For example, the edit to *The Puppet Masters* which was solely driven by the fact that the publisher would make the most profit if the novel was 75000 words long.

And one agent, apparently self-appointed, he didn't like — 4SJ
Ackermann.

And this is not only a problem in the dark past – quite a number of authors have in recent years been able to go public with horror stories of editors and ways in which they have butchered books – all of which were then blamed on the authors.

Combine that with the fact that the title of editor can cover five different jobs functions, and that you do not know what your publisher means when using the word edit with regards to your book, resulting in an atmosphere of mistrust and grievance. Coupled with publishers dropping a lot of editing functions, requiring the author to get that done at own expense, and you can see why a lot of authors have run away from traditional publishers, and towards becoming independently published.

As to Heinlein and his two most famous editors – John W Campbell seems to have eventually alienated every author he worked with, given enough time. There is not just Campbell and Heinlein where their working relation broke down, but also Campbell and Asimov, Van Vogt, Kuttner, Moore and many others. Some authors died early, but after working with Campbell for a while, it appears that most authors that remained in SF moved on.

With Alice Dalgleish, the breakdown only came after she asked for additional changes, to changes done on her request. Here I think Heinlein felt that his and his editor's views was becoming so divergent, that no further collaboration was going to be possible.

This to some extent ended badly for Heinlein, in that he did not have an editor he trusted to bring some of his problematic novels to their rightful places.

For instance, *Glory Road*. I read it years ago and was underwhelmed. I reread it recently, found it had improved a lot and was struck by how broken his heroes were. Not that the book is not still problematic, where a sympathetic editor may have assisted him in bringing out his ideas with more clarity.

Because with *Podkayne of Mars*, this lack of an editor to assist him to bring his vision into focus, nearly kills the book. Because so many of the initial people reading the book reacted so badly to Heinlein's original ending, it should have told him that he have missed something in his writing – that he had not built his story solidly enough, or had not foreshadowed the ending. So instead of coming across as the inevitable result of what had come before, it burst on the first readers as an unpleasant

surprise. I have the perception that nobody talked this through with Heinlein, just told him that the book needed a different ending, and that he did the bare minimum to comply with this request.

I thought that Heinlein wrote better when he had to defend his ideas to an editor. He had to work out how things went.

— JTM

In local news, we had the mighty ANC leadership conference, and the right guy got in. Not that it happened without a lot of shenanigans, with court cases regarding delegates to the conference until the evening before the conference started, and at least one National Executive Committee official elected during the conference under dubious circumstances.

It also did not help that the new ANC leader got saddled with a national executive that is precisely split between the major factions, Jacob Zuma announcing free University education for all poor students, and the conference electing to do away with private property.

The free University education announcement was a bombshell, with no plan in place for how it will be paid for, no plan how it will work in practice, just letting the Universities know that they should expect more students than previously planned for. Given how many students fail to complete their studies, I wonder how much money, time and effort will be wasted in this process.

The doing away with private property is supposedly aimed at land redistribution, and will be done in a way that does not lead to poverty and economic disaster. I hope the latter is code for "We cannot do this, and hope that by referring it to a committee to study to death, we can kick the can down the road." Because as far as I am aware, no country which has tried to abolish private property has not emerged poor and starving out of the deal.

In the mean time, the economy has reacted well to the news that Cyril Ramaphosa will lead the ANC, hopefully soon doing something about Jacob Zuma. The Rand has strengthened to the best level in five years, and I suspect a lot of people are importing stuff now while things are a little bit cheaper.

For someone under level 1 water restrictions (may not water your garden with a hosepipe during daylight hours, may not wash your car, may not hose down paved areas), I am surprisingly optimistic that we will still get enough rain to bail out the country so that we will survive this Winter.

I hope that each of you will always find something to read.

To the question of what is the next big wave in SF, I do not have a definite answer, but think that the following three movements are going to influence whatever it will be called.

These movements are in some ways related,

in some ways in competition with each other, and in others engaged in a conversation with each other.

They are Pulp Revival (pulprev), Superversive and Human Wave.

Pulp Revival believes that SF went on the wrong track with John W Campbell, and needs to engage with it's pulp roots. Writers to emulate are ERB, Robert Howard, and Lovecraft, with shout outs to A. Merritt and H Rider Haggard. Also believes that there is no line between SF and Fantasy, and like the *Weird Tales* sub-genre.

Superversive is looking for works that are supportive of Western Civilization and/or Christian Morality. This can be done in surprising ways – I read a critique of *Breaking Bad* as a superversive story, where the author claims the story would have fallen apart if it was not embedded in the Christian moral framework, where actions have consequences to the main, supporting and incidental characters.

Human Wave celebrates humanity, and would like the humans in the story to look, act and behave like humans, in all of the glory and misery that humanity is capable of.

From: **John Hertz** January 33, 2018
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Thanks for reminding me you'd reviewed Benford's *Berlin Project* in A93. You even waved at Mynheer Van der Lubbe, re-reading which remembered the timeless cry "Long live the Marinus van der Lubbe International Firebombing Society!" Anyway I liked the book.

Thanks for noting the Regimental Battle Honours Day of the 36th Sikh Regiment, British Indian Army (succeeded by the Sikh Regiment of the Indian Army), September 12th, commemorating the Battle of Saragarhi in 1897.

I've just read E. H. Carr's three-volume history *The Bolshevik Revolution* (1953) so the names of Kolchak, Semenov, and Ungern-Sternberg, whom you mention in reviewing Fleming's *Maid of Baikal*, are relatively fresh in mind. Shakespeare is of course very harsh on the historical Joan of Arc; you probably know Shaw's *Saint Joan*; I think Twain's *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* is worth attention. I'm glad to hear Fleming takes account of logistics and materiel. I keep saying we need more s-f about quartermasters.

There's always Eric Frank Russell's "Allamagoosa" (*Astounding*, May 1955; 1955 Best Short Story Hugo).

Thanks to G. Price for noting Clarence Mulford's Hopalong Cassidy stories. I'm too ignorant to hold an opinion comparing them to William Boyd's, but the number of each

indicates that each managed to reach people.

I miss Rodney Leighton. He was a faithful *Vanamonde* correspondent. As Robert Silverberg said of Avram Davidson, we're all one-of-a-kind here, but some are more one-of-a-kind than others.

We could improve at letting people who might like us and whom we might like know we exist and what we're doing — clubs, cons, fanzines. In bookshops, libraries, for example, I often find no sign (literally, as a gasoline company here says) of us. Fanziners could improve at helping with clubs and cons.

"Let's get young people" is about two steps from ageism and I can't recommend it; besides, one of our joys has long been twelve-year-olds and ninety-year-olds conversing happily. "Let's get players from that rival game over there," I can't recommend either.

What I liked when I started doing the family's genealogy was that those who were my father's contemporaries treated me as an equal. (Or others, including the son of my notorious relative.) Now they're gone... and while everyone appreciates me, no one seems ready to follow me.

— JTM

Are fanzines dwindling in the mist, you ask. I've talked about this. *Vanamonde* 1255 has a drawing by Ray Nelson with the happy thought:

"All the fools
Have moved
Away
To cyberspace
Just yesterday
Leaving all reality
Abandoned here,
For you and me."

From: **John Purcell** January 41, 2018
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Hey, Joe! This is definitely past the deadline for the next issue, but I might as well get this done anyway.

I have been so busy working on my 2017 TAFF Trip Report that my loc-writing has fallen off dramatically. Well, what can I say? It is what it is, so by the time this letter sees print a couple more segments of my trip report may be out. In the meantime, onward to a couple comments on this particular issue of *Alexiad*.

When you wrote about Colonel Travis' letter "To the People of Texas and All Americans in the World" that certainly hit home in a way not many of my fan friends know. Believe it or not, I have only been to the Alamo once, despite living in Texas for over 16 years now. Granted, College Station is a mere three hour drive from San Antonio, but that's not what I'm talking about here. The interesting thing about Col.

Travis' letter is that my wife was an educational assistant at the Star of the Republic Museum in Washington-on-the-Brazos, TX for a couple years. Valerie gave tours and designed some of their displays there, which maintains a living history farm as well, showing what life in Texas in the 1830s was like. In fact, this museum is set on the site where the Texas Constitution was being drawn up at the same time Travis was holed up in the Alamo mission approximately 150 miles away. They might as well have been on the other side of the universe, as far as Travis and his men were concerned. Even so, this letter is revered in Texas practically on a par with the Holy Bible. I thought you and your readers would be interested in the connection between what you wrote and my darling wife.

The two Windycon 44 reports by Leigh Kimmel and Sue Burke certainly display how that convention has changed over the decades. When I was very active in Minneapolis fandom from 1973 to 1988, I drove down to Chicago a few times to attend early editions of Windycon. Heck, I think the first one was in 1975 (WindyCon II), and after that pretty much settled into an every other year attendance pattern: I know I went to four of them. My last WindyCon, I believe was in 1983, the tenth. Those were definitely fun years. One of these days I'd like to get back up there.

My cousin Dana was so blown away by the ChiCon art show (she's an artist) that I wanted to recommend WindyCon to her.

— JTM

Ah, me. That's about all I have right now. I need to get back to working on other projects. The trip report and my fanzine require attention.

WAHF:

Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.

Rod Smith who got it.

Earl Kemp, who said "Still up, I see. Keep it that way." Thank you, Earl.

Chris Barkley, Ginjer Buchanan, Frank Bynum, Johnny Carruthers, Jeff Daiell, Steve Fahnstalk, Moshe Feder, Paul Gadzikowski, Bruce Richard Gillespie, Mike Glycer, Tammi Harris, John G. Hemry, Debra Hussey, Robert Kennedy, Eric Lindsay, Guy & Rosy Lillian, Chuck Lipsig, Howie Modell, Andrew C. Murdoch, John Purcell, Jim Rittenhouse, Steven Silver, Joy V. Smith, Garth Spencer, R-Lorriane Tutihasi, Christopher Weuve, Joel Zakem with birthday greetings.

THE LAST HOUR

The Sunderland seaplane set down, aiming to land next to the mysterious island off the coast of Ireland. In his chair, the Prime Minister growled. "What again is this extraordinary offer?"

The young RNVR officer who sat at his side said, "The island . . . just appeared. The inhabitants are very strange. The messenger who informed us of its presence said that he had most important information for your ears alone . . . and then he vanished."

"Vanished. A most peculiar settlement, the observers have said. Is the gangplank secure? I will not entrust myself to one of those inflatable boats, which I am told are most prone to abrupt and undesired deflation."

But some of the crew did have to go ashore in inflatable boats, to moor the seaplane and set up the gangplank that the Prime Minister would cross. He watched, trying to keep calm, as the sailors went about their assigned missions.

"All secure, sir. Good luck."

The strange messenger had said he would have to interview this man alone. Churchill grumbled as he went down the shaky metal bridge, then across the green lands of the stony island. Peculiar birds fluttered away from him as he headed towards the path to the top of the island.

The wind fluttered through the rocks, making a wailing sound. Then, he reached the top and —

Was the man imitating that scoundrel Gandhi? No, he had more sense than that, he was wearing a robe but was oddly, if fully, clothed beneath. At the sound of the feet approaching he turned and looked. His greying hair and beard were disarrayed, and he seemed to be looking beyond, at some other world.

"Good morning," Churchill said.

"Um . . ." the other man said, and he seemed to be struggling with some inner turmoil. After long moments, he said, "What is the matter?"

"We are desperately on the verge of losing. It may be needful to compromise with Hitler, with our enemy, who is triumphant and on the verge of invasion."

"Every word of what you just said was wrong."

There was another moment of silence. Then Churchill said, "I see."

"You can win too," he said. "The force is with you." Then the man . . . vanished. His robes collapsed, empty. The Prime Minister was bewildered. Something rolled over and hit his shoe. He picked up the strange tube and looked at it, then thrust it into his pocket.

As he picked his way down the winding path carved into the face of the rocky island he looked down at the Sunderland. This was a strange place, and he was somehow not surprised to see the ghostly little green man talking avidly to Seaman Guinness . . .

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

This is issue **Whole Number Ninety-Seven (97)**.

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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ALEXIAD

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major

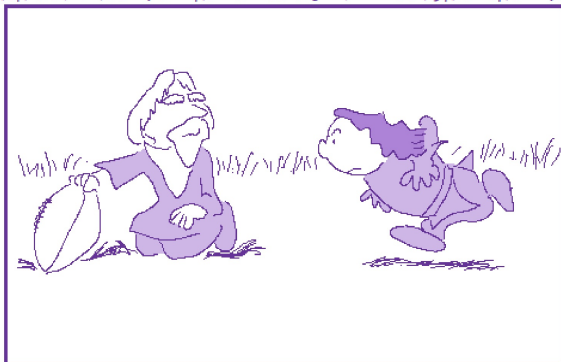
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AT THE NEW YEAR I DECIDED I WANT TO MAKE MORE REPLIES TO POSTS AT TUMBLR WITH CARTOONS INSTEAD OF (OR IN ADDITION TO) TEXT. HERE'S AN EXAMPLE FROM THIS WEEK, WHEN @prokopetz POSTED AN OBSERVATION THAT LUKE'S STRATEGY AGAINST KYLO REN WAS IN ESSENCE THE FOOTBALL GAG FROM PEANUTS.



<http://arturkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

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