

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

It is now less than a month to the Derby. Amazon is cheering on a colt named Audible. As the winner of the Florida Derby he is in the top ranks. I still do not understand the point system. I believe the use of earnings to determine who got into the Derby was fairer, even if it did keep out Bernardini, the horse who raced his way into my heart in the Preakness twelve years ago. At least the earnings seemed to me more objective than assigning random points for different races.

— Lisa

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Pascha was **April 8, 2018**.

The 144th Running of the Kentucky Derby will be **May 5, 2018**.
The 143rd Running of the Preakness Stakes will be **May 19, 2018**.
The 149th Running of the Belmont Stakes will be **June 9, 2018**.

Printed on April 12, 2018
Deadline is **June 9, 2018**

Reviewer's Notes

Amazon's critiera for suggesting books the reader may be interested in has some issues. Looking up one JFK conspiracy book got my feed clogged with a monstrous gaggle of them, each more preposterous than the last.

Then, I go looking for interesting new alternate history novels, and I end up being directed towards Highland Romances, Viking Romances, and the like. At least it isn't Dinosaur Romances. (Yes, there is such a thing. Gay Dinosaur Romances, too.)

For various reasons, I keep on encountering conspiracy theorists. It is tiring to hear them trundle over the same debunked issues. And the debunking is difficult, when it takes pages and pages of information about sand to disprove a facile, tossed-off claim of the setting of an alleged earthly filming of lunar exploration journeys.

Yet it has to be done, even though it's a losing struggle. Having the gnostic knowledge of the real way it was is satisfying. It is so much easier to say, "Well, Stanley Kubrick filmed the moon hoax, that's why there aren't any more," than it is to review the problems with expenditure, technology, and public interest.

Beyond that a sinister vista looms. The Holocaust is fading from memory. And Holocaust Denial is now backed by those who are with the zeitgeist. But then, they dismiss all history save their own.

Winter has been slow to release its grip. We had snow on the first day of Spring, and more a few days later. It is not going to last, of course, and by July we will be longing for the month of March again.

It's been amusing, for some values of amusing. First off, a pipe in the downstairs bathroom broke and flooded the cellar, knocking out the hot water heater. Once that was repaired (it was during the coldest days of the winter, and over a weekend too) the furnace had to be replaced. Not to mention the car's water pump dying.

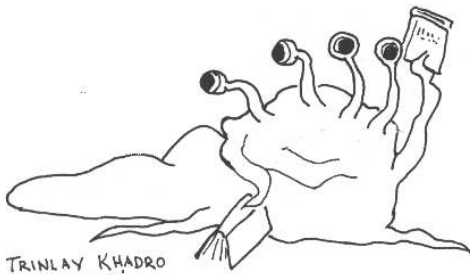
I have concerns about going to future conventions. But the sort of conventions I would go to are getting fewer on the ground.

Thanks to Marc Schirmeister for his art. He has been going through some hard times, and I respect him for his strength and endurance. Best wishes, Schirm.

— 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.

The Law of Superheroes (2013) was an amusing work by a pair of comic-fan lawyers, James Daily and Ryan Davidson, discussing in serious terms the legal realities of, well, superheroes. It lost the Best Related Work Hugo to a childish piece of fangirl gush, but never mind that.

Daily and Davidson also have a blog, "Law and the Multiverse". It has been sadly not over-active of late, but recently pointed a link to an article on how the tax changes recently passed have affected superheroes with the apropos title of "Tax Avengers Assemble: The Impact of Tax Reform on Superheroes."

I wonder if they would discuss if there were a tax deduction for the defective first sphere World Steel sold to Seaton and Crane for the *Skylark of Space*.

Law and the Multiverse:
<http://lawandthemultiverse.com/>

The Master Replicas Group, makers of fine light sabers, has announced that it is bringing out a HAL 9000 virtual assistant home monitor powered by an Amazon Kindle Fire tablet using Alexa. If you say lines from the movie to it, it will respond in HAL's voice, otherwise it will be Alexa. As the one announcement I saw said, "Maybe don't hook up your garage door to it."

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Kate Wilhelm** on **March 8, 2018**. Born **June 8, 1928**, Katie Gertrude Meredith Wilhelm began her career in 1956, and in 1957 published the story "The Mile-Long Spaceship" in *Astounding*. She won two

Hugo Awards, the Best Novel in 1977 for *When Late the Sweet Birds Sang* and the Best Related Work in 2006 for *Storyteller*, and three Nebula Awards, for "The Planners" (1969), "The Girl Who Fell from the Sky" (1987), and "Forever Yours, Anna" (1988). She was married to Damon Knight in 1963, taking part in the development of the influential Clarion writers workshop.

We note tragically the death of **Stephen William Hawking** CH CBE FRS FRSA on **March 14, 2018** (Albert Einstein's 139th Birthday, to make it more painful). Appearing on such diverse shows as *The Simpsons* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, he carved out a stirring career in media. Oh yes, and he did some scientific stuff, too.

We regret to report the death of **Karen Anderson** on **March 17, 2018**. June Millichamp Kruse was born in Erlanger, Kentucky on **September 16, 1932**. She married **Poul William Anderson** [1926-2001] in 1953; there was one child, **Astrid Anderson Bear**. Karen collaborated with her husband on several novels, and wrote several science fictional poems. She was known as the first intentional user of the term "filk music", and the first publisher of a filksong. She was prominent as a costumer, receiving the first lifetime achievement award from costumers in 1988. She was one of the founders of the Society for Creative Anachronism, remaining active in it until past 2010.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There will be a solar eclipse on **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.

The next eclipse will be 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/>

AUGUSTULI

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
THE LITTLE EMPERORS
by Alfred Duggan
(1951)

Philip Toynbee, who had had the dubious honor of getting punched out by a real-life Grima, boldly announced in 1961 that the enthusiasm for *The Lord of the Rings* was passing into "merciful oblivion". In 1955, Edmund Wilson, the scornor of Lovecraft, called Tolkien's work "juvenile trash". In between, the author of this work declared of *LotR*, "This is not a work which many adults will read right through more than once."

And now, of course, they are best known for those errors of judgment. Unlike the others, Duggan had actually written fiction himself, and history as well. He was also the stepson of that most remarkable purzon, the Most Honourable George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, which meant he was Sir Oswald Mosley's sort-of brother-in-law. His full brother Hubert Duggan was one of those M.P.'s ((C) Acton) who voted against Chamberlain in the Norway Debate (see *Winston's War* by Michael Dobbs [Lord Dobbs of Wyllye] (2002; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 16 #5) for more on this).

The Little Emperors is a novel of the end days of Roman rule in Britannia. As it is, it comes at about the same time as the early parts of *Eagle in the Snow* (1970; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #3). The point of view character, Sempronius Felix, is a civil servant of a line of devoted servers of the *res publica*. He might well be taken as an example of the unreliable narrator.

In the last few years before the Britannic administrators were informed that Rome couldn't do anything for them any more, the provinces (by then it was divided into five provinces) managed to spawn no fewer than three usurpers. The story here is of the fall of the three "little emperors"; how each tried for the Purple, won it for a time, and then was overthrown. What Duggan shows is a nation that is failing; unable to sustain itself, and increasingly dependent on regulation enforced by cruelty.

As an example of the latter, Felix several times casually mentions having people burned alive for changing jobs. Diocletian had made professions hereditary and unchangeable, you see, and who was Sempronius Felix to challenge the right order of things?

There are always taxes. Nobody can pay the taxes, so the rates are always raised to make up for the loss, which makes everyone guilty. But the taxes that the government manages to collect always go to paying the army, which nevertheless somehow seems to be ineffective.

In a more personal note, there is also a nasty little bit of hypocrisy presented. Felix relies on his wife, Maria, to give him guidance in the ways of Christians. Yet Maria starts out being as adulterous as the pagans of Atia's day, seducing one "little emperor" to kill him, and goes from there to full-blown torture and murder once her father becomes an unfit Emperor. (He has no military experience, or even a command voice.)

Unpayable taxes, unbearable laws, a rapacious government where power could be easily taken but not be held, would seem to be a model of doom. Which it is.

It's not just the little people who suffer, as Felix notes that most people of authority end up being executed. It rather sounds like O'Brien's comment in 1984 about how he too will eventually be vapourised. Felix isn't vaporized, but he does not end up dying right away, though he may wish he had.

Duggan had an unsparing and un-romantic view of the world. Thus we have *Conscience of the King* (1951) which among other things has the historical Arthur as seen by one of his opponents, Cerdic. Who observes that the band of noble warriors broke up over a woman, which didn't surprise him. (And which may also explain the author's opinion of *LotR*.)

In *Eagle in the Snow* the maimed General Maximus sees the usurper Constantius III march through Trier. Felix had fled to avoid being executed by Constantius. Thus we see the same process from two perspectives, at two points.

The Little Emperors is available for Kindle for the quite reasonable price of \$2.51.

PILGRIM PROJECT

Review by Joseph T Major of

EMPIRE:

A Novel of Possibilities

by David Bernhardt

(2017; David Bernhardt (Kindle); \$0.99)

In *One False Step* (2014) Richard Tongue discusses various possible, but not taken up, space missions; a real-life *Pilgrim Project* (1964; discussed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #2) set, as it were. Such alternatives as the Soviet moon landing, Gemini to the moon, and the like were proposed but never carried through for one reason or another.

One of the most outré was **EMPIRE**. This was a proposal to send men on a flypast of Venus and Mars, using existing Apollo capsules and Saturn V upper stages. This is a story of an **EMPIRE** mission; fictional, but something that could have been done.

Navy radio officer Jim Busch, the narrator of this story, was selected, presumably as a mission specialist, in one of the later astronaut selections. His specialty suddenly became useful when the Shuttle program was abruptly canceled, and NASA had to do *something*. The something turned out to be **EMPIRE**, the planetary flyby, and they needed an expert

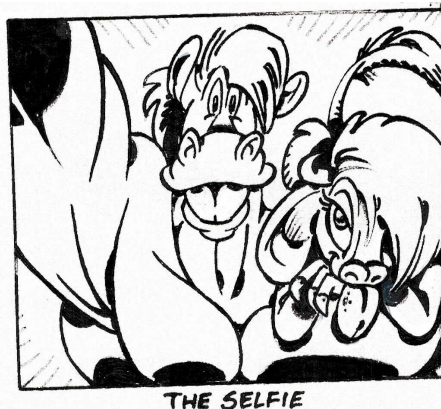
communications officer. Thus Busch got a crew assignment.

And so it goes. The crew of the **EMPIRE** mission ends up better off than Steven Lawrence of *The Pilgrim Project*, not to mention Wendy Pendleton of *Children of Apollo* (2002; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1). The mission is entirely nominal, with no drastic events beyond a meteor strike, which turns out to be repairable.

Well, maybe not. Being cooped up in a can for two years can do things to a man. Science specialist Kevin Lowell decides to come out, and not on an EVA, either. This provokes just a bit of a crisis, with Kevin and the commander, Mike Eggert, having Words.

One of the highlights of the book is that Bernhardt realizes there is an outside world. Busch is always pausing to point out how things have changed in the fifty years since the mission. Other matters impact the narrative, such as conspiracy theories.

In the end, this turns out to be one of John W. Campbell's desires; the ordinary novel of the future. (Perhaps Busch would have heard that; he reads SF and even met his wife that way.)



Sadly, Henry Hunt "Hank" Searls, author of *The Pilgrim Project*, died on February 17, 2017, at the age of 94.

STRAINED

Review by Joseph T Major of

HER BROTHER'S KEEPER

(2015; Baen; ISBN 978-1476780900; \$16.00; Amazon Digital Services; \$6.99) and

SINS OF HER FATHER

(2018; Baen; ISBN 978-1481482837; \$16.00; Amazon Digital Services; \$7.55) by Mike Kupari

Catherine Blackwood has issues. She is saddled with a goof-off younger brother who is nevertheless heir to the family position.

Fortunately, she doesn't have to fall for the bad 'un only to be rescued at the last moment by the swaggering buck whom she marries and

tames. This being the Interstellar Age, she goes to space, and becomes a free-lance transport subcontractor. Don't say "pirate", or even perhaps "privateer".

She has worked her way up to being master (mistress?) and commander of the *Andromeda*, and as our story begins is called home by her father to become **Her Brother's Keeper**. It seems the family is in several binds. Their position is shrinking, and her useless brother Cecil has gone off to make something of himself. Like, it turns out, a hostage. They need someone reliable to deliver the ransom.

Catherine decides to get some extra muscle, so picks up a planetary security agent in need of money. Which gets inconvenient when his daughter is facing a charge of assault for having objected to having her horse fatally poisoned, so she becomes an apprentice.

Cecil, meanwhile, finds he's mired deep in the toils of warlordism, as his boss turns out to have desires to rule more than one planet. Which costs, so he is getting Cecil to oversee the excavation and plundering of valuable archaeological items.

There are a number of stories involved in the rescue and retribution; perhaps too many for one book, and too concentrated for a universe-building exercise. Still, it's well to remember that the underlings also have their own lives and are not disposable mooks.

In the end, the people involved have grown and come to realize themselves better. Yes, there are more than exotic backgrounds to tour, Kupari actually tells a story.

But it's not the end of Catherine's story. Someone out there has to pay for the **Sins of Her Father** and Catherine has to be the cashier. At first it sounds so romantic, overthrown leader coming back to topple tyrannical usurpers. Things don't always go so easily, and there are a lot of complications and costs. Such as the less than stellar reputation the overthrown leader won for himself. Beyond that, planets of exile have their own agendas and laws, too.

Not to mention planets that one is exiled from; which sometimes have their own indigenous people who have their own agendas and laws. In short, there are a number of beings involved with their own plans and ways. Oh, and the replacement planetary government has its own unseemly ways and disadvantages.

And there is a surprise in store . . .

Kupari might need to learn to focus on his main story line. Some of his characters are too close to pulp stock types.

This isn't the Grand Climax of the War Between Humanity and the All-Destroying Aliens, or between the Good Kingdom and the Bad Tyranny. It's about people trying to get along, and occasionally make a difference.

UPRISING

Review by Joseph T Major of

STORMING THE COMPOUND OF A RICH MAN — An American Revolution Story

by Michael Ward
(2012; Michael Ward (Kindle); \$0.99)

This shorter work (in Kindle it is 55 pages, including a book preview) is hard to place, either in type or politically. He refers to it as a short story but of course it's longer.

The political venue, on the other hand, has its own problem. Invoking the American Revolution is generally done by the right. Killing rich people is more of a leftist cause.

The setting is an extreme security state, with a minority ruling class, the Elite, that controls the people through electronic surveillance. If you do something they don't like, you die. (Rather like the setup in Jack Vance's Durdane series [*The Anome* (1973), *The Brave Free Men* (1973), and *The Asutra* (1974)] where the anonymous rulers could blow anyone's head off at any time.) Or other things; one charming regulation permits members of the Elite, the ruling class, to punish insolent shop clerks by having their fingers broken.

However, they have extremely poor security. The group of revolutionaries that figure in this story spoof the electronic defenses, take out the armed guards like the SAS meeting Feldwebel Bilko's supply company in the Bierstube, and take the Elite family they're attacking hostage. Instead of staging a suicidal hostage situation, the revolutionaries simply kill all the family.

Some of Ward's concepts are just a bit conspiratorialist. For example he says that "Most American Presidents came from seven families who were all related to European royalty." I didn't notice that Tewa Lascelles (son of the Hon. James Lascelles, grandson of the Right Hon. George Lascelles, Earl of Harewood, great-grandson of Mary, Princess Royal) was running for President. Seriously, millions of Americans are related to European Royalty. Apparently the de Wessingtons (the ancestors of George Washington) of Northamptonshire are descended from a cadet line of the MacAlpin Kings of Scots, though.

The Elite gained their authority after the Famine of 2018. Looks like somebody read and didn't quite get *The Harvest of Sorrow* (1986) by Robert Conquest (also SF author and editor; he's one of us).

Having conducted the massacre, the raiders return to their ordinary jobs (except for the one whose electronic shielding broke down during the raid, and he died) utterly unconcerned about specific police retaliation, though still concerned about generalized retaliation. The woman in charge goes on vacation in the Caribbean.

Perhaps the origins of Ward's politics can be taken from the work previewed so the reader will want to buy it, *The Banker with a Face Full of Evil* (2012). Granting banks supernatural powers is a legacy of the Populist

movement. This group confuses people who want to make it either left or right; they can't really deal with it, so they go into denial.

This isn't something you read for enjoyment unless you're into revenge fantasies. It is, however, worth reading as a study of political belief. Such books are usually uninteresting except as example.

Review by Joseph T Major of
**THE SECOND WORLD WARS:
How the First Global Conflict Was Fought
and Won**

by Victor Davis Hanson
(2017; Basic Books;
ISBN 978-0465066988; \$40.00;
Hachette Book Group (Kindle); \$22.99)

These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due meed of glory; and withal to put on record what were their grounds of feuds.

— [Herodotos, The Histories], Book I Chapter 1

This is not a regular history of World War II; rather it is a set of essays, touching on the vital processes of the war, which is to say, not only the fighting, but the material, technological, economic, and political underpinnings thereof. Even though this is a long book, such are the ramifications of these matters that the essays can serve but as introductions to these topics.

Yet so many writers seem unaware of these matters. For example, Adam Tooze's *The Wages of Destruction* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #2), with its portrayal of the economic chaos of Nazi Germany puts paid to so many Naziism Triumphant stories. *The Man In the High Castle* would be flat broke and have nothing to eat.

The essays discuss the basic features of the war. Hanson begins by describing the "Ideas", the intellectual concepts that formed the war and drove the participants. From there, he goes to the means, in an invocation of the classical elements, "Air", "Water", "Earth", and "Fire". The first is obvious, a discussion of air power, as is the second, of naval conflict. "Earth" is about the armies itself, while "Fire" is about tanks and artillery.

The next section, "People", begins with discussion of the nations' leaders, followed by the military commanders, then the industrial and agricultural workers, and finally he discusses the human cost of the war.

The last section, "Ends", sums it all up. As the exhausted destroyer commander in Tom Clancy's *Red Storm Rising* (1986) thinks as his ship moors, "What It All Means, Morris

decided, is that it's over." How did the countries achieve or fail to achieve their reasons for fighting? Hanson discusses this in the terms of classic history.

His description of the conflict as "Wars" highlights its the divided and diverse nature. As the Wars of the Roses grew from local disputes, with combatants looking for allies merging into a greater conflict, so did the Second World War, or Wars, stem from different conflicts waged by disparate powers, merging. There was no Grand Unified Axis Plan, and indeed (he argues) not much of a strategy at all. Relevant in this, for example, is the disparity between the German operational success on the battlefield and the lack of a long-term strategic plan.

It might be controversial that he considers the war to be in fact the "first" world war. In response to arguments that the War of the Austrian Succession, the Seven Years War, the French Revolutionary Wars, the Napoleonic Wars, and the First World War all involved worldwide conflict, he argues that these several battles and campaigns were not connected. This may seem to be a trifle hairsplitting.

This book will serve well as an introduction to the history, or a guideline to influential and significant factors in that war. The Herodotos of the Second World War(s) does not and may never exist; but this is a beginning.

THE CRUEL SEA

Review by Joseph T Major of
**SEIZING THE ENIGMA:
The Race to Break the German U-Boat
Codes, 1933-1945**

by David Kahn
(1999, 2012; Frontline;
ISBN 978-1848326361; \$48.19;
Amazon Digital Services; \$7.55)

Commander Ericson of HMS *Compass Rose* and then HMS *Saltash* was directed by an unseen power. This is the story of how the anonymous, Most Secret men and women of the Government Code & Cipher School, their masters at the Secret Intelligence Service, and their allies from the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence strove to find the means to direct Ericson and his many real-life equivalents (including his creator, Lieutenant-Commander Nicholas Monsarrat, RNVR) in their war.

Kahn begins by describing the development of the Enigma machine, its adoption by the German military, and the efforts by Germany's foes to determine the means by which this device was used.

From there he goes on to recount the many incidents which gave the opposing sides the advantage, first one and then the other. The British were forced to devote their efforts to this, and the many exotic devices which were used to unriddle this riddle were harbingers of modern computing technology.

In turn, once America was in the war, Americans were joined to this effort. Looking at the descriptions of the people involved, it

seems that the middle-American, small-town types who made up the NSA (see Stephen Budiansky's *Code Warriors* (2016; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 15 #5) for more on this) had come from the Navy. As opposed to the British, who merited Churchill's comment to C (Sir Stewart Graham Menzies, the Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service) "I know I told you to leave no stone unturned to find the necessary staff, but I didn't mean you to take me so literally!" For example, Dillwyn Knox, one of the famous Knox Brothers, a veteran of the last war come back to do it some more.

Kahn describes the workings of the various models of the naval Enigma, the many means by which a key was generated and used. It should be noted that the *Kriegsmarine* was more secure in their employment of the machine, avoiding the all too common errors of setup, repeated messages, and the like (one of the more notorious being the Afrika Korps observation post in the Qattara Depression that reported in *every day* with "Nothing to report", thus providing a simple plaintext for breaking the day's Army Enigma settings.)

As a result, the Allies had to capture actual Naval Enigma machines, setup sheets, and the like. This often required quite extensive efforts. The two most notorious captures of U-boats contributed to this. The taking of Julius Lemp's U-110 provided the first haul of documents, and nearer the end of the war, Dan Gallery's boarding of the U-505 made available a valuable map key. (Oddly enough, Kahn doesn't bother mentioning that Lemp died during the evacuation of the boat.)

This significant addition to the history of the battle has been revised, and in addition is available for Kindle. It should be in the library of every serious reader about the war. (And, incidentally, it helps make some passages in "The Living Daylights" and *From Russia, With Love* more comprehensible.)

VISION PROBLEMS

by Joe

Our eye exams were overdue, so Lisa and I went to Visionworld. Lisa got new glasses, and as for me . . .

The doctor had some less than heartening news. I had cataracts, bad enough to cause vision problems. And after seeing how blurred the vision in my left eye was, I had to agree.

They made an appointment with eye specialists. My first appointment is at seven in the morning. They close early, too, as we went by there later that day.

Cataract surgery has become less stressful for the patient. In the Classic era (yes, ancient Rome) healers would press on the eye until the lens popped out. Ouch. In modern times, recovery from a cataract operation used to involve several days in bed with the patient's head immobilized by sandbags.

This has changed. Nowadays, the

paperwork seems to take about as much time as the operation, though the recovery is a little longer. It is now outpatient surgery.

I have been receiving messages of reassurance, including my younger brother, who also has had cataract surgery. As opposed to our late great-aunt, who was blind with cataracts that were considered inoperable (to be fair, this was over forty years ago).

I will try to be more careful than the relative who had cataract surgery (he was 90), was told not to work, worked and injured the eye, and had to have more surgery. Then he crossed the road to get his mail, and between his vision and the sun setting directly down the road didn't see anything. The man driving the truck *almost* managed to stop in time.

We had a very good time at ConGlomeration, even though it seemed to be mostly chatting up **Rod Smith** (sorry you were ailing, Stickmaker), **Bob Roehm**, and Steve Francis. There was a dearth of parties, again. The Masquerade was very good.

Apparently **B. J. Willinger** showed up, but didn't join. He was reported to be in bad health. There's a lot of that going around. **Joel Zakem** had Pesach, with his family in Cincinnati.

ConGlomeration 2019 will be **April 19-21** at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Louisville. The guest of honor will be **Timothy Zahn**.

READING MATTERS

by Lisa Major

It disturbs me that there is a divide between electronic reading and physical reading. Reading is reading. There are advantages and disadvantages to both kinds of reading. Ebooks take up much less space than physical books and are much easier to carry around. I remember telling one of my aunts I was taking 800 books on vacation with me and her questioning how I could get that many books in the car. My response was that they fit in my purse. The 800 books were electronic ones.

You can take a favorite book in electronic format on trips and not risk losing a cherished physical copy. Many books by great Sf authors long out of print are back in digital format. The disadvantages of ebooks are that you cannot flip back forth very easily. The devices you read them on must be kept charged or they are only inert pieces of plastic or metal.

The cost of the devices is not as much an issue today as it was when the devices first appeared. A Kindle 7 tablet sells for fifty dollars except on Cyber Monday when it drops to around thirty dollars. The Kindle app can be gotten for free.

I enjoy my Kindle books. It is possible now to carry an entire classic library in a backpack for very little money. I hope never to be without physical copies of my favorite horse books but I can now take them with me without worrying about losing cherished books. Unfortunately, not all my favorite books are digital yet. If Joe wins the lottery, perhaps I will track down who

holds the rights to the works of Rutherford Montgomery and Dana Faralla, buy the rights and start my own digital publishing company.

HISTORICAL ISSUES

by Lisa



The History Channel is airing a program about people seeking Confederate gold somewhere in Michigan. I find it hard to believe that diehard Confederates would send treasure into Yankeeland. They would have been much more likely to have hidden that gold with their kin or very close friends. I suppose it is possible that they could have done so but Michigan would not be the first place I would look for Confederate gold. I would look instead for descendants or descendants of kin of those who had the gold. Of course, it is also quite likely that said descendants would not talk of the matter unless they knew you very well. I would not rule out, either, the possibility that the gold ended up in Confederate colonies in South America.

Capricon 38

Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel,
Wheeling, IL

February 15 to 18, 2018

Report by Sue Burke

In an interview with the Capricon newsletter, *Goat Droppings*, Dave McCarthy, the fan guest of honor, spoke of Capricon as a family reunion. Well, yes, if your family has about a thousand members of different ages and interests, all of them, like Dave, intent on having a good time – which as far as I can tell, we all did.

This year's convention theme, "Expanding Universes," referred to the way written works, television shows, movies, games, and new media form a creative loop with each other: hence the eight-like loopy logo for Capricon 38. Guests of honor, besides McCarty, were Timothy Zahn, author; Sarah Wilkinson, artist;

Monica Valentinelli, gaming; and Matt McElroy, special guest.

Although I am tunnel-vision devoted to print, I could have spent my weekend exploring any of those other creative avenues. Plenty was on offer: panels, an always-busy gaming room, a starship bridge simulator, anime, crafts, cosplay, children's programming, an art show, a dealer's room, music, filk, and two floors of evening parties.

In a world growing crowded with commercially organized genre events, Capricon remains a volunteer-run "literary" (book-focused rather than media-focused) science fiction convention. Everything seemed to flow smoothly, and even the weather cooperated with no cold snaps or major snowstorms, just heavy flurries on Saturday.

I missed Thursday evening's activities, which included panels on topics as varied as brewing alcohol, military science fiction, and a critique of *Blade Runner 2049*, along with an ice cream social and opening ceremonies.

Friday, February 16

Because mass transit doesn't quite reach the Westin Hotel, my husband dropped me off on the way to work at 7:30 a.m. I consigned my suitcase, got some coffee, wandered around, met friendly people in the Green Room, got my badge, and began the busy task of attending panels and having fun.

"Working Toward Social Equity in Speculative Fiction" considered demographic changes in the US and how that is being reflected in literature: slowly and with bumps in the road, according to the panelists.

I couldn't stay long, though, because I had to moderate a "Rapid Reading" with four other authors. The audience never outnumbered the panel, alas, but we had a fine time getting to know each other and forging friendships.

The panel "Imaginary Races Doesn't Erase Racism," considered what an author can or should be trying to accomplish in their writing, and panelists suggested that over-reactions and an erroneous sense of scarcity in science fiction affect the way works are received. Next I was on the panel for "Exobiology for Dummies," moderated by the voluble Bill Higgins; I discussed how as an author I invent the biological aliens that serve my story.

I attended "Diversity Backlash," where Dave McCarthy spoke a lot, and for good reason. He had been a Hugo administrator for several years, including 2015 when "No Award" prevailed in an unprecedented five categories. He summarized the history and said he hoped that the attempts to "game the system" and "hijack the award for political purposes" was the dying gasp of a small minority.

McCarthy moderated the next panel, "Someone Is Wrong on the Internet," a playful look at good topics to debate, good tactics,

and the art of the rant. I was on the panel and suggested a few rantable topics, such as the Oxford comma or evaluating history.

By then it was late afternoon. I took some time to check into the hotel, cruise through the Art Show and Dealer's Room, and buy a small gift for my husband. I spent the rest of the evening at a gathering called "Writers and Donuts," hosted by Richard Chwedyk, where we noshed on donuts and discussed writing. Then I attended various parties until midnight. The festivities were still going strong, but I was tired.

Saturday, February 17



After a light breakfast in the Con Suite, I began Saturday by attending a panel on "Care and Feeding of a Debut Novelist," since I am one, and learned I can expect my life to get much busier. "Characters That Don't Suck" considered craft and techniques for stock, static, and dynamic characters. Then I went to an author reading. Ada Palmer told how the 18th-century novel *Jacques the Fatalist* by Denis Diderot affected her story-telling choices in her Terra Ignota series; the first novel, *Too Like the Lightning*, won a 2017 Hugo.

After lunch with a new friend, I attended the fun-sounding panel "How to Piss Off Dave McCarthy." Any question related to Hugo voting software provoked a bitter, heartfelt, entertaining rant. At "Who's the Boss?" a panel about working on joint projects, Eric Flint offered a cold-hearted analysis of Hollywood and its sometimes sophomoric behavior. That made co-panelist Monica Valentinelli, who has had her own adventures in that realm, exclaim, "I love you so much right now!" The next panel, "Science Fiction Cover Art: A History to Modern Day," covered a lot of ground despite loose organization, and panelists anguished over how little value was paid to art in the early years of the genre.

By then I'd been serious for too long, so I attended a concert by the a capella group Sassafra with its tight harmonies, heard some of Kingon Pop Warrior's music and her powerful voice, and then laughed a lot at SpaceTime Theatre Troope's improv comedy, led by Bill Roper.

After that, I wandered from party to party until 1 a.m. Again, celebrations continued after I was snug in bed.

The Best Overall Party Award, voted on by attendees and presented at Closing Ceremonies, went to Bar Fleet, hosted by the U.B.S. Abandon crew. I can attest that it lived up to Bar Fleet standards for libations and dance music, although it faced stiff competition for the title of "best."

Sunday, February 18

I was among the five people at the start (more stumbled in over the next hour) of a 10 a.m. panel on "The Critical Eye" about how to write a review, "a creative response to a creative work." The next panel, "The Singularity: Mechs or Shapers?" suggested that we will only identify whatever the singularity is – a disruption or AI breakthrough of some sort – after it happens.

"The Expanding Universe of Fandom" compared large commercial cons like Dragon*Con, which draws 80,000 people, comic cons, and media cons to smaller fan-run literary cons like Capricon: huge versus up close and personal. Eric Flint observed that, like fan-run cons, some of the big commercial cons had their uses for professional authors, including reaching readers. The commercial cons' success, he said, reflected the growing popularity of genre among the general public, although some fans bemoan them: "There's a strain in fandom that resists and almost resents the fact that it's won."

The Closing Ceremonies followed, but they had just begun when my husband called from the parking lot. He'd come to pick me up, and my weekend of fun with a thousand-member fan family was over. It was time to go home and rest, full of enthusiasm to read and write a lot more.

Capricon 39, held February 14 to 17, 2019, again at the Westin North Shore, will have the theme of "Strange Beasts Arise."

A FURRY NOTION

Review by Taral Wayne of

FURRY NATION:

The True Story of America's Most Misunderstood Subculture

by Joe Strike

(2017; Cleis Press;

ISBN 978-1627782326; \$17.10;

Simon & Schuster Digital Sales; \$10.99)

In a way, this is not the book I meant to review. The book I wanted to review was one about the history of the anthropomorphic fandom that grew up around comics in the early 1980s. Most of the people involved comprised a relatively small number of fans whose interests — from comics, gaming, animation and science fiction — were interconnected, and who were closely involved in the creation of alternative comics. Unlike traditional "funny animal" comics for kids, featuring characters such as Bugs Bunny or Mickey Mouse, the comics created by anthropomorphic told unabashedly adult

stories. Whether depicting humour, sex, politics or adventure, funny animal stories offered a completely new perspective that was unlike anything in serious science fiction, action-oriented superhero comics or children's cartoons, and was uniquely its own. If that had been the book that had been written about anthropomorphic fandom, it would have been the book that I wanted to review.

Instead, *Furry Nation* was the book that Joe Strike wrote about furry fandom, from the point of view of furry fandom as it had become more than 30 years later.

It was, also, not really the book I wanted it to be at all.

A little background music, Maestro.

I've known Joe for almost as many years as I knew furry fandom. If he was not in it at the very beginning, he was very close to it, and knew as much as anyone about how the fandom developed, and continued to evolve. A while ago, Joe let it be known that he had begun to write a book about the fandom. There had been a little written on the subject — in particular a series of well-researched articles about the early comics. There was also Fred Patten's early history of the fandom and a few other odds and ends. (Ahem.)

Fred's history was well-done as far as it went, but inevitably his take on fandom was very much Fred's opinion of it. I was excited by the possibility of seeing the subject covered from a different point of view.

When Joe originally finished his book, he proposed a cover idea that he and I discussed in late 2016. I produced a rough sketch according to Joe's directions — but that was when things came unstuck for me. To begin with, I had the rotten luck to have a stroke right at the end of January, which threw into doubt my ability to recover soon enough to complete the work ahead of publication. The second serious setback was the publisher's insistence on replacing cover with one of his own. I don't shouldn't be too surprising that I was dead set against this, if only because of the time and effort I had expended. However, in the end, Joe came around to the publisher's point of view, thinking the new cover art would be a better draw for the intended readers who, for better or worse, were mainly interested in fursuiting, and would immediately know that this was a book that would interest fursuiters. It was hard not to agree with that logic — but in my disappointment, it was also hard not to suspect that the new cover's real purpose was to please the publisher's girlfriend. And to sell more copies, of course.

Putting those suspicions aside, I ordered the book from Amazon when I had a few bucks to spare.

It has to be said that *Furry Nation* is a well-made book, with no signs of amateurishness. Nor can the author be faulted — Joe has been a professional publicist or copywriter for The Sci-Fi Channel. Judging from other reviews I've read, the book quickly

became popular among furries. To create the book, Joe interviewed a large number of people, allowing them to speak in their own words as they described how they had discovered furry fandom. Their stories comprise the largest part of the book, relating the various personal discoveries that highlighted the various ways in which they were turned on to furry fandom.

Reinforcing the basic message about furry fandom as a creative lifestyle, Joe included a number of chapters about other facets of furry fandom — such as role-playing, art shows, and of course the alternate comics that got it all started.

For the most part, Joe has done this book exactly as he should have.

It's just not the book I had wanted to read. I imagine Joe will be surprised that I found *Furry Nation* a terribly unsatisfying account of conventions, role-playing and fursuiting. I began to skim over later chapters, becoming increasingly uninterested in people's similar stories of similar discoveries of fandom, and of people making similar new friends.

I can't fault Joe for my having the wrong expectations. *Furry Nation* was not written by accident, but with skill and purpose, using techniques that journalists go to school to learn. Perhaps some courses are even titled "Human Interest 101," teaching you to interview your subjects in such a way as to draw out their stories, much the same way that survivors would be interviewed after a fire.

The problem I had was with all this was that I would have preferred much fewer syrupy appreciations of fandom, and much more understanding about where this fandom came from, why it appeared when and how it did, how it evolved over time, and what any of this means if anything. The entire *raison d'être* of furry fandom — the artists and the publishers who began it all — were more or less sidelined in a single chapter or two!

At this point, I want to dismiss any suggestion that my review is motivated in any way by the taste of sour grapes. As a matter of fact, Joe treated me quite generously in *Furry Nation*, citing an anecdote of mine, and finding a reason to add an example of my artwork. For this, perhaps, I should be grateful.

And while I may be dissatisfied with the book, there is no question that *Furry Nation* has been a big hit with furry fandom. This is not terribly surprising, really. It has been quite a long while since the original cast of misfits created anthropomorphic fandom, almost forgotten in the mists of a bygone era. Since then, the people who comprise the great majority of present-day fans have become totally enthusiastic about those very facets of fandom that I think of as "fringe." This was their book as much as Joe's — and, by inference, it is I who is now on the fringe. It is entirely likely that *Furry Nation* may become one of the publisher's best selling books. Good for Joe.

It's too bad, though. I really wanted to read that other book — the one that was never written!

SEMIOSIS: Sentience Takes Many Forms

by Sue Burke

Reviewed by Lloyd G. Daub

(2018; Tor Books;

ISBN 978-0765391353; \$25.99;

Macmillan (Kindle); \$13.99)



Johnny Carson used to say of comedy that if the audience bought the premise, they bought the joke. (I think I remember the exact quote, but this is good enough.)

That is, Abraham Lincoln is a funny name, and he was funny looking, and being human he got into a lot of funny situations. He was and is a natural topic for comedy. But for a comedian, joking about his death is murder.

(My example, not Carson's.)

SF authors like Sue Burke have a similar problem. The science-y background of her story has to be acceptable enough to the reader that they can let any objections go while enjoying the plot. In Horror, it's called "the suspension of disbelief." Just let go of your objection to the idea that even a man who says his prayers by night will become a wolf — suspend your disbelief — and enjoy the ride. Sue battles my disbelief in this book.

She wins, when even some of the most celebrated authors in SF fail me. I was perfectly willing to suspend all sorts of disbelief to enjoy the ride in this book. She makes me all the more willing to encourage humans to leave this planet for another, and all the less willing to go myself. (Thanks for the cure, Sue.) The fun ride is that we have a bunch of human characters we can relate to, and not merely a bunch of aliens and maybe some alien technology. We get some of that, but human readers want a story about humans. We get one. Glassmakers will have to write their own about their own.

After a mercifully brief sermon on global warming (so short it almost seemed like those Soviet books of Stalinist days where Ioseb Besarionis had to quoted somehow and was jammed in almost randomly), we get our intrepid illegal immigrants (she spared us that one) off Earth and into trouble. That's where the cure I mentioned earlier comes in. This is not the life for me, and so far as anyone on Earth knows, they're all dead anyway. And vice versa. No galactic empires here. No Star Fleets. No FTL or letters from home. It's fifty years to go for the time when Earth even hears

they arrived.

No, none of your ‘humans take over the universe and only then struggle’ plotting. Just a lot of hard work for survival. And aliens. And that science-y bit I have to suspend disbelief on. And no dogs. I don’t know why they didn’t bring dogs. Leaving cats behind is fine with me.

I will spare you all the plot, because you should buy this book yourself and put money in Sue’s pocket (she wears jeans like we all do) where it belongs. I only want to say that our colonists (another loaded term) are the people of Pax. So they call themselves Pacifists. That was a nice joke, Sue. Much appreciated here.

“Gift Center.” That was an even better one.

The reader of SF has to be able to help move the story using their own imagination (I dislike the ‘singular they,’ but there it is.). Since I have that, there is fun in guessing the plot and what the characters will do and where do we all go from here? Sue gives me — us — plenty of scope for that.

And then we turn the page and it’s a new chapter and a new generation. And we are — bereft? forlorn? abandoned? — left to our own imaginations about the rest of the life story of some very interesting people — human, alien and other, too—that we only just got to know a little. (Very clever, Sue. We can all put the book down long enough to do some serious fantasizing, and then eagerly go back for more.) To move the plot along by getting me to meet all new people really worked for this reader.

There is a lot of hard science research embedded in this. A lot to be exposed to us about plant chemistry, animal chemistry, animal behavior, plant communication and other things. And almost always in the background, where it belongs. Almost always, this book is about people, and that means human behavior, and that’s what we humans like to read about. Sue does not disappoint.

Thanks, Sue Burke. I had a good time. So did my imagination. (I know, it’s silly, and it goes along willy-nilly. But, there it is.) I look forward to buying a ticket on the next ride you offer.

NEBULA AWARD NOMINEES

Novel

Amberlough, Lara Elena Donnelly (Tor)
The Strange Case of the Alchemist’s Daughter, Theodora Goss (Saga)
Spoonbenders, Daryl Gregory (Knopf; riverrun)
The Stone Sky, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit US; Orbit UK)
Six Wakes, Mur Lafferty (Orbit US)
Jade City, Fonda Lee (Orbit US; Orbit UK)
Autonomous, Annalee Newitz (Tor; Orbit

UK 2018)

Novella

River of Teeth, Sarah Gailey (Tor.com Publishing)
Passing Strange, Ellen Klages (Tor.com Publishing)
“And Then There Were (N-One)”, Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny* 3-4/17)
Barry’s Deal, Lawrence M. Schoen (NobleFusion Press)
All Systems Red, Martha Wells (Tor.com Publishing)
The Black Tides of Heaven, JY Yang (Tor.com Publishing)

Novelette

“Dirty Old Town”, Richard Bowes (*F&SF* 5-6/17)
“Weaponized Math”, Jonathan P. Brazee (*The Expanding Universe*, Vol. 3)
“Wind Will Roar”, Sarah Pinsker (*Asimov’s* 9-10/17)
“A Series of Steaks”, Vina Jie-Min Prasad (*Clarkesworld* 1/17)
“A Human Stain”, Kelly Robson (Tor.com 1/4/17)
“Small Changes Over Long Periods of Time”, K.M. Szpara (*Uncanny* 5-6/17)

Short Story

“Fandom for Robots”, Vina Jie-Min Prasad (*Uncanny* 9-10/17)
“Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™”, Rebecca Roanhorse (*Apex* 8/17)
“Utopia, LOL?”, Jamie Wahls (*Strange Horizons* 6/5/17)
“Clearly Lettered in a Mostly Steady Hand”, Fran Wilde (*Uncanny* 9-10/17)
“The Last Novelist (or A Dead Lizard in the Yard)”, Matthew Kressel (Tor.com 3/15/17)
“Carnival Nine”, Caroline M. Yoachim (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies* 5/11/17)

The Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation

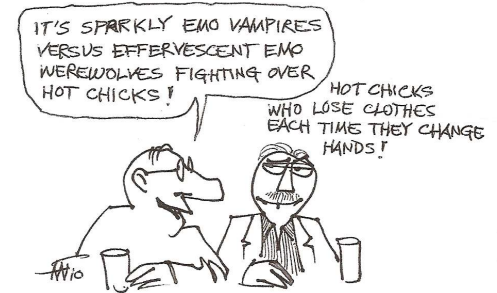
Get Out (Written by Jordan Peele)
The Good Place: “Michael’s Gambit” (Written by Michael Schur)
Logan (Screenplay by Scott Frank, James Mangold, and Michael Green)
The Shape of Water (Screenplay by Guillermo del Toro & Vanessa Taylor)
Star Wars: The Last Jedi (Written by Rian Johnson)
Wonder Woman (Screenplay by Allan Heinberg)

The Andre Norton Award for Outstanding Young Adult Science Fiction or Fantasy Book

Exo, Fonda Lee (Scholastic Press)

Weave a Circle Round, Kari Maaren (Tor)
The Art of Starving, Sam J. Miller (HarperTeen)
Want, Cindy Pon (Simon Pulse)

Nebula Awards 2017: My thoughts on the short fiction by Sue Burke



As a member of Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA), I get to vote on the Nebula Awards. They’ll be presented May 19. You can see a full list of the nominees on the SFWA website.

I’ve read the short fiction nominees, and here are my thoughts. Let me add that last year, none of my choices in the three short fiction categories won, and the year before that I was one for three. That shows what I know. Or it shows how high the quality is.

Novella

River of Teeth, Sarah Gailey (Tor.com Publishing) *The Wild, Wild West* with hippos. A man of few scruples and a thirst for revenge assembles a crew with even fewer scruples and a variety of essential skills to clear the fierce, feral hippos out of a Louisiana swamp. (The prologue explains how they got there.) Repeatedly, the man denies that his plan is a caper, but it is: a predictable story right down to the many reversals, much like a matinee movie except that this story has a lot of savage murders. Despite the bloodshed, this is a fun farce of an old-fashioned Western — with hippos! — but I was hoping for something more solid and original.

Passing Strange, Ellen Klages (Tor.com Publishing) In San Francisco in 1940, the lives of several women in its lesbian subculture become entwined. When one couple faces a disaster, they pull together and solve it by — well, no spoilers. The story starts and finishes tense, and while it has some sharp moments, in other parts it spends more time exploring the city and the subculture. I enjoyed the chance to see that slice of history, but I think the story could have been shortened a lot without much loss.

“And Then There Were (N-One),” Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny* 3-4/17) Sarah Pinsker (not the author) gets an invitation to a Sarah Pinsker convention being organized by Sarah Pinsker,

the quantologist, who has found a way to connect alternate realities. More than two hundred Sarahs come from a wide variety of divergence points, some very similar to other Sarahs, a few quite different, and from similar or different Earths. In one, for example, Seattle has been destroyed by an earthquake. Then a Sarah Pinsker is murdered. Which one? By which one? Why? Sarah (the author) does a good job of showing the weirdness of being surrounded by people almost just like yourself.

Barry's Deal, Lawrence M. Schoen (NobleFusion Press) The Amazing Conroy is back! This is the fourth caper of the galaxy-traveling stage hypnotist and his super-cute alien companion animal, a truly omnivorous buffalo dog. He comes to a hotel-casino that is planning an illegal auction, runs into some people he knows, and discovers a sinister criminal scheme. In the end, Conroy outsmarts the bad guy. What the story may lack in depth it makes up for in fun.

All Systems Red, Martha Wells (Tor.com Publishing) I was among those who nominated this, a straight-up science fiction adventure. The narrator's mordant attitude makes the story outstanding: a robot who has killed in the past, who is sure everyone hates it because of that, and who hates itself, too. It's possibly clinically depressed and spends its time trying to lose itself in a video series, secretly dreaming of not being a slave to a brutal, profiteering corporation. But it does its job to protect people on a dangerous mission, even risking its own life, which those people didn't expect.

The Black Tides of Heaven, JY Yang (Tor.com Publishing) In a Asian-like culture with two moons and fluid genders, twins are driven apart by their tyrannical mother, also the land's dictator, who rules with a bloodstained iron hand. Technology is managed by those gifted with the control of a sort of elements-based magic, and the tyrant and her family are among those gifted. But a rebellion against her, using mechanical technology, brings the twins, now adults, back together. At times, the writing seemed a little cliché and approached purple prose, and some characters, including the evil mother, get little development. The story doesn't quite end, either, instead setting up a sequel.

I'll vote for *All Systems Red*, but "And Then There Were (N-One)" is a close second, and *Passing Strange* third. I'm basing my decision on originality and execution, but reasonable people can come to different choices.

Novellette

"Dirty Old Town," Richard Bowes (Fantasy & Science Fiction 5-6/17) Boys who were rivals in grade school become close in adulthood and retain a magical bond. That's it — not much plot to this rambling story. Yet it remains captivating to the end as the two

men continue to struggle with mutual antagonism and affection while their bonds deepen.

"Weaponized Math," Jonathan P. Brazee (The Expanding Universe, Vol. 3) This is military SF, a noble subgenre. A sniper is on assignment, protecting a meeting in a war zone, and an attack comes. The site of the fighting and the reasons behind it aren't clear, but the professional determination of the United Federation Marines shines through. The story's tension never flags. Outside of some highly technological weapons, however, there's not much science fiction, but this is from a larger series that I know provides more SFnal context.

"Wind Will Rove," Sarah Pinsker (Asimov's 9-10/17) On a multi-generational ship, the older generations cling to what they recall from Earth or have learned about it. For the narrator, this means music. Younger generations grow rebellious, eager to create their own music and arts or to forget Earth's culture and history altogether. These children know they will grow up in a static society on a voyage that seemed romantic to their elders but is confining to them. Despite the skill in storytelling, the focus seemed a bit off to me. I learned a lot about the narrator's family and music, especially one particular song, but not as much about what is going on in the ship. The need to change and adapt became symbolized by that song, but the story got stuck on the symbol rather than a resolution of the on-board problems.

"A Series of Steaks," Vina Jie-Min Prasad (Clarkesworld 1/17) This was one of five finalists for *Clarkesworld* magazine's 2017 Reader's Poll. My story "Who Won the Battle of Arsia Mons?" was also a finalist. As soon as I read "A Series of Steaks," I knew I was likely to lose. A woman in China agrees to make counterfeit beefsteaks for a client, then the deal starts to go sour. Three things impressed me: the quiet desperation of the main character, the philosophical musings about the art of forgeries, and the thoroughly satisfying ending.

"A Human Stain," Kelly Robson (Tor.com 1/4/17) A woman takes a job as a governess of sorts at an isolated old manor house/castle, where the staff is strange, her young charge is stranger, and the man who employed her flees from the place on a business errand as fast as he can. I don't want to give you any spoilers, but you can easily guess that there's a horrible secret, and things are going to end badly. I felt like I'd read this horror story before.

"Small Changes Over Long Periods of Time," K.M. Szpara (Uncanny 5-6/17) A man in the process of transitioning from female to male gets turned into a vampire. The difficulties of his human-to-vampire transition become more complex due to his gender transition, and he struggles. There are hot sex scenes. Beyond the transitional complication, though, there's not much of a new take on vampirism in this story.

Every story here is expertly written and worth reading, and each one got on the ballot

for good reason. Still, as you can tell from my comments, I think some have flaws in their development or originality. For that reason, I'm voting for "A Series of Steaks" because I think it pushes the genre into the newest territory. Second on my list is "Dirty Old Town" for its deep characterization. After that, I'm neutral — but to reiterate, if any of these stories appeals to you for some reason, don't hesitate to read it.

Short Story

"Fandom for Robots," Vina Jie-Min Prasad (Uncanny 9-10/17) A sentient robot discovers an anime series about another sentient robot, *Hyperwarp*, and becomes a "hyper-big fan." Then it discovers fanfiction and makes friends. This is as funny as it sounds but also touching as the robot, which has no emotions, responds in a pseudo-emotional way and becomes accepted as a human on the internet. (On the internet, nobody knows you're a dog.) Both fandom and technology are efficiently dissected with a loving, razor-sharp knife.

"Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™," Rebecca Roanhorse (Apex 8/17) An Indian guide for cyberspace tourists offers Native American "Vision Quests" that are as authentically Indian as the Lucky Charms leprechaun is authentically Irish, but white people seem fine with that. Then a customer wants too much. Unrelenting cynicism about commercialization and stereotypes underlies this story's quiet fury. It's already won an *Apex* Reader's Choice Award and a *Locus* recommendation.

"Utopia, LOL?" Jamie Wahls (Strange Horizons 6/5/17) A human is revived in a post-singularity age when most people spend their time in computer-generated simulations. He's welcomed by an energetic and enthusiastic Tour Guide to the Future, the story's narrator. They slowly come to trust each other, and then there's a twist (no spoilers). As a result, a fun, almost frivolous story takes on a sudden, satisfying solidity.

"Clearly Lettered in a Mostly Steady Hand," Fran Wilde (Uncanny 9-10/17) A visitor is led through an exhibition of what might have once cruelly been called a freak show. Beautifully written, the story effectively evokes the bitter anger of those on display, and perhaps it's meant as horror reflecting the way society treats those who are different, but I don't think it quite fulfills the noble goals of horror. Horror stories are modern tragedies, and a tragedy requires the protagonist to suffer for some fault within him or herself. The visitor is tortured apparently to avenge the general cruelty of society, but his or her participation in this cruelty is never established. As Aristotle argued in *Poetics*, unmerited misfortune merely shocks us: it isn't tragedy. I see this story as torture for torture's sake, and there's no merit in sadism.

"The Last Novelist (or A Dead Lizard in

the Yard)," Matthew Kressel (Tor.com 3/15/17) An author travels to a distant planet to finish his final book, and meets a child who becomes his muse and student. The story's genuine sweetness — in the best, most beautiful sense of sweet — can't make up for what I think are two flaws: 1. The science fiction amounts to mere scenery, and the story, right down to the girl's creole-like accent, could take place in the present on a Caribbean island. 2. Its narrator insists on the supposedly dying art of writing with pen and paper and printing actual dead-tree books. This also sounds just like the present, like bitter Baby Boomers complaining about Millennials and their supposed over-reliance on their cell phones. That kind of grumpy, defeatist rant makes me ashamed of my age cohort. I don't know what the future will be like, but it won't be like the present, and this story is the present pretending to be the future.

"Carnival Nine," Caroline M. Yoachim (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies* 5/11/17) A wind-up toy robot mother makes great sacrifices to care for her robot son who has mechanical problems. The tale is obviously a analogy to what happens in real life to families with children with disabilities — a bit too obvious an analogy, perhaps, almost a parable, and the story never explains who does the winding up or why some toys live in a closet. Heart-strings are tugged, but logic is stretched, and that weakened the overall effect for me.

Verdict: I'm voting for "Fandom for Robots" because I was charmed by Computron the robot, but I'll be just as glad if "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™" or "Utopia LOL" wins.

HUGO AWARD NOMINEES



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

Best Novel

The Collapsing Empire, by John Scalzi (Tor)
New York 2140, by Kim Stanley Robinson (Orbit)
Provenance, by Ann Leckie (Orbit)
Raven Stratagem, by Yoon Ha Lee (Solaris)
Six Wakes, by Mur Lafferty (Orbit)
The Stone Sky, by N.K. Jemisin (Orbit)

Best Novella

All Systems Red, by Martha Wells (Tor.com Publishing)
"And Then There Were (N-One)," by Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny*, March/April 2017)
Binti: Home, by Nnedi Okorafor (Tor.com Publishing)
The Black Tides of Heaven, by JY Yang (Tor.com Publishing)
Down Among the Sticks and Bones, by Seanan McGuire (Tor.com Publishing)
River of Teeth, by Sarah Gailey (Tor.com Publishing)

Best Novelette

"Children of Thorns, Children of Water," by Aliette de Bodard (*Uncanny*, July-August 2017)
"Extracurricular Activities," by Yoon Ha Lee (Tor.com, February 15, 2017)
"The Secret Life of Bots," by Suzanne Palmer (*Clarkesworld*, September 2017)
"A Series of Steaks," by Vina Jie-Min Prasad (*Clarkesworld*, January 2017)
"Small Changes Over Long Periods of Time," by K.M. Szpara (*Uncanny*, May/June 2017)
"Wind Will Rove," by Sarah Pinsker (*Asimov's*, September/October 2017)

Best Short Story

"Carnival Nine," by Caroline M. Yoachim (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, May 2017)
"Clearly Lettered in a Mostly Steady Hand," by Fran Wilde (*Uncanny*, September 2017)
"Fandom for Robots," by Vina Jie-Min Prasad (*Uncanny*, September/October 2017)
"The Martian Obelisk," by Linda Nagata (Tor.com, July 19, 2017)
"Sun, Moon, Dust" by Ursula Vernon, (*Uncanny*, May/June 2017)
"Welcome to your Authentic Indian Experience™," by Rebecca Roanhorse (*Apex*, August 2017)

Best Related Work

Crash Override: How Gamergate (Nearly) Destroyed My Life, and How We Can Win the Fight Against Online Hate, by Zoe Quinn (PublicAffairs)
Iain M. Banks (Modern Masters of Science Fiction), by Paul Kincaid (University of Illinois Press)
A Lit Fuse: The Provocative Life of Harlan Ellison, by Nat Segaloff (NESFA Press)
Luminescent Threads: Connections to Octavia E. Butler, edited by Alexandra Pierce and Mimi Mondal (Twelfth Planet Press)
No Time to Spare: Thinking About What

Matters, by Ursula K. Le Guin (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Sleeping with Monsters: Readings and Reactions in Science Fiction and Fantasy, by Liz Bourke (Aqueduct Press)

Best Graphic Story

Black Bolt, Volume 1: Hard Time, written by Saladin Ahmed, illustrated by Christian Ward, lettered by Clayton Cowles (Marvel)
Bitch Planet, Volume 2: President Bitch, written by Kelly Sue DeConnick, illustrated by Valentine De Landro and Taki Soma, colored by Kelly Fitzpatrick, lettered by Clayton Cowles (Image Comics)
Monstress, Volume 2: The Blood, written by Marjorie M. Liu, illustrated by Sana Takeda (Image Comics)
My Favorite Thing is Monsters, written and illustrated by Emil Ferris (Fantagraphics)
Paper Girls, Volume 3, written by Brian K. Vaughan, illustrated by Cliff Chiang, colored by Matthew Wilson, lettered by Jared Fletcher (Image Comics)
Saga, Volume 7, written by Brian K. Vaughan, illustrated by Fiona Staples (Image Comics)

Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form)

Blade Runner 2049, written by Hampton Fancher and Michael Green, directed by Denis Villeneuve (Alcon Entertainment / Bud Yorkin Productions / Torridon Films / Columbia Pictures)
Get Out, written and directed by Jordan Peele (Blumhouse Productions / Monkeypaw Productions / QC Entertainment)
The Shape of Water, written by Guillermo del Toro and Vanessa Taylor, directed by Guillermo del Toro (TSG Entertainment / Double Dare You / Fox Searchlight Pictures)
Star Wars: The Last Jedi, written and directed by Rian Johnson (Lucasfilm, Ltd.)
Thor: Ragnarok, written by Eric Pearson, Craig Kyle, and Christopher Yost; directed by Taika Waititi (Marvel Studios)
Wonder Woman, screenplay by Allan Heinberg, story by Zack Snyder & Allan Heinberg and Jason Fuchs, directed by Patty Jenkins (DC Films / Warner Brothers)

Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form)

Black Mirror: "USS Callister", written by William Bridges and Charlie Brooker, directed by Toby Haynes (House of Tomorrow)

"The Deep" [song], by Clipping (Daveed Diggs, William Hutson, Jonathan Snipes)

Doctor Who: "Twice Upon a Time," written by Steven Moffat, directed by Rachel Talalay (BBC Cymru Wales)

The Good Place: "Michael's Gambit," written and directed by Michael Schur (Fremulon / 3 Arts Entertainment / Universal Television)

The Good Place: "The Trolley Problem," written by Josh Siegal and Dylan Morgan, directed by Dean Holland (Fremulon / 3 Arts Entertainment / Universal Television)

Star Trek: Discovery: "Magic to Make the Sanest Man Go Mad," written by Aron Eli Coleite & Jesse Alexander, directed by David M. Barrett (CBS Television Studios)

Best Editor Short Form

John Joseph Adams
Neil Clarke
Lee Harris
Jonathan Strahan
Lynne M. Thomas & Michael Damian Thomas
Sheila Williams

Best Editor Long Form

Sheila E. Gilbert
Joe Monti
Diana M. Pho
Devi Pillai
Miriam Weinberg
Navah Wolfe

Best Professional Artist

Galen Dara
Kathleen Jennings
Bastien Lecouffe Deharme
Victo Ngai
John Picacio
Sana Takeda

Best Semiprozine

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

The Book Smugglers, edited by Ana Grilo and Thea James

Escape Pod, edited by Mur Lafferty, S.B. Divya, and Norm Sherman, with assistant editor Benjamin C. Kinney

Fireside Magazine, edited by Brian White and Julia Rios; managing editor Elsa Sjunneson-Henry; special feature editor Mikki Kendall; publisher & art director Pablo Defendini

Strange Horizons, edited by Kate Dollarhyde, Gautam Bhatia, A.J. Odasso, Lila Garrott, Heather McDougal, Ciro Faienza, Tahlia Day, Vanessa Rose Phin, and the Strange

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

Best Fanzine

File 770, edited by Mike Glycer
Galactic Journey, edited by Gideon Marcus
Journey Planet, edited by Team Journey Planet

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

Rocket Stack Rank, edited by Greg Hullender and Eric Wong

SF Bluestocking, edited by Bridget McKinney

Best Fancast

The Coode Street Podcast, presented by Jonathan Strahan and Gary K. Wolfe
Ditch Diggers, presented by Mur Lafferty and Matt Wallace

Fangirl Happy Hour, presented by Ana Grilo and Renay Williams

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

Sword and Laser, presented by Veronica Belmont and Tom Merritt

Verity!, presented by Deborah Stanish, Erika Ensign, Katrina Griffiths, L.M. Myles, Lynne M. Thomas, and Tansy Rayner Roberts

Best Fan Writer

Camestros Felapton
Sarah Gailey
Mike Glycer
Foz Meadows
Charles Payseur
Bogi Takács

Best Fan Artist

Geneva Benton
Grace P. Fong
Maya Hahto
Likhain (M. Sereno)
Spring Schoenhuth
Steve Stiles

Best Series

The Books of the Raksura, by Martha Wells (Night Shade)

The Divine Cities, by Robert Jackson Bennett (Broadway)

InCryptid, by Seanan McGuire (DAW)

The Memoirs of Lady Trent, by Marie Brennan (Tor US / Titan UK)

The Stormlight Archive, by Brandon Sanderson (Tor US / Gollancz UK)

World of the Five Gods, by Lois McMaster Bujold (Harper Voyager / Spectrum Literary Agency)

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer

Katherine Arden
Sarah Kuhn
Jeannette Ng
Vina Jie-Min Prasad
Rebecca Roanhorse
Rivers Solomon

The World Science Fiction Society (WSFS) Award for Best Young Adult Book

Akata Warrior, by Nnedi Okorafor (Viking)

The Art of Starving, by Sam J. Miller (HarperTeen)

The Book of Dust: La Belle Sauvage, by Philip Pullman (Knopf)

In Other Lands, by Sarah Rees Brennan (Big Mouth House)

A Skinful of Shadows, by Frances Hardinge (Macmillan UK / Harry N. Abrams US)

Summer in Orcus, written by T. Kingfisher (Ursula Vernon), illustrated by Lauren Henderson (Sofawolf Press)

RETRO-HUGO AWARD NOMINEES

Best Novel

Beyond This Horizon, by Anson MacDonald (Robert A. Heinlein) (*Astounding Science Fiction*, April & May 1942)

Darkness and the Light, by Olaf Stapledon (Methuen / S.J.R. Saunders)

Donovan's Brain, by Curt Siodmak (*Black Mask*, September-November 1942)

Islandia, by Austin Tappan Wright (Farrar & Rinehart)

Second Stage Lensmen, by E. E. "Doc" Smith (*Astounding Science Fiction*, November 1941 to February 1942)

The Uninvited, by Dorothy Macardle (Doubleday, Doran / S.J.R. Saunders)

Best Novella

"Asylum," by A.E. van Vogt (*Astounding Science Fiction*, May 1942)

"The Compleat Werewolf," by Anthony Boucher (*Unknown Worlds*, April 1942)

"Hell is Forever," by Alfred Bester (*Unknown Worlds*, August 1942)

"Nerves," by Lester del Rey (*Astounding Science Fiction*, September 1942)

"The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag," by John Riverside (Robert A. Heinlein) (*Unknown Worlds*, October 1942)

"Waldo," by Anson MacDonald (Robert

A. Heinlein) (*Astounding Science Fiction*, August 1942)

Best Novelette

“**Bridle and Saddle**,” by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding Science Fiction*, June 1942)

“**Foundation**,” by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding Science Fiction*, May 1942)

“**Goldfish Bowl**,” by Anson MacDonald (Robert A. Heinlein) (*Astounding Science Fiction*, March 1942)

“**The Star Mouse**,” by Fredric Brown (*Planet Stories*, Spring 1942)

“**There Shall Be Darkness**,” by C.L. Moore (*Astounding Science Fiction*, February 1942)

“**The Weapon Shop**,” by A.E. van Vogt (*Astounding Science Fiction*, December 1942)

Best Short Story

“**Etaoin Shrdlu**,” by Fredric Brown (*Unknown Worlds*, February 1942)

“**Mimic**,” by Martin Pearson (Donald A. Wollheim) (*Astonishing Stories*, December 1942)

“**Proof**,” by Hal Clement (*Astounding Science Fiction*, June 1942)

“**Runaround**,” by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding Science Fiction*, March 1942)

“**The Sunken Land**,” by Fritz Leiber (*Unknown Worlds*, February 1942)

“**The Twonky**,” by C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner (*Astounding Science Fiction*, September 1942)

Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form)

Bambi, written by Perce Pearce, Larry Morey, et al., directed by David D. Hand et al. (Walt Disney Productions)

Cat People, written by DeWitt Bodeen, directed by Jacques Tourneur (RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.)

The Ghost of Frankenstein, written by W. Scott Darling, directed by Erle C. Kerton (Universal Pictures)

I Married a Witch, written by Robert Pirosh and Marc Connelly, directed by René Clair (Cinema Guild Productions / Paramount Pictures)

Invisible Agent, written by Curtis Siodmak, directed by Edwin L. Marin (Frank Lloyd Productions / Universal Pictures)

Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book, written by Laurence Stallings, directed by Zoltan Korda (Alexander Korda Films, Inc. / United Artists)

Best Editor Short Form

John W. Campbell

Oscar J. Friend
Dorothy McIlwraith
Raymond A. Palmer
Malcolm Reiss
Donald A. Wollheim

Best Professional Artist

Hannes Bok
Margaret Brundage
Edd Cartier
Virgil Finlay
Harold W. McCauley
Hubert Rogers

Best Fanzine

Futurian War Digest, edited by J. Michael Rosenblum

Inspiration, edited by Lynn Bridges

The Phantagraph, edited by Donald A. Wollheim

Spaceways, edited by Harry Warner, Jr.

Voice of the Imagi-Nation, edited by Forrest J Ackerman and Morajo

Le Zombie, edited by Arthur Wilson “Bob” Tucker

Best Fan Writer

Forrest J Ackerman
Jack Speer
Arthur Wilson “Bob” Tucker
Harry Warner, Jr.
Art Widner
Donald A. Wollheim

Campbell edited most of the nominated short fiction. He has won all of the other Retro-Hugo Best Editor Short Form Awards, so he has an advantage.

Simone Simon played Irena Dubrovna in *Cat People*, when she wasn't being Dusko Popov's latest girlfriend. And Selena Kyle has sometimes used the pseudonym “Irena Dubrovna”.

I Married a Witch is the basis of *Bewitched*, for what it's worth.

However, this is not so much as what was best-liked then as what is remembered. Having the “nominations” be selected by a jury, and only then voted on, might be a more realistic way. There aren't as many clanging anachronisms (H. P. Lovecraft as best fan writer? Would Leeman Kessler have to accept?) as there had been last time.

But then, Whittaker Chambers is a nominee. Or at least connected to one. (He translated *Bambi*.)

WORLDCON BIDS

2020

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

2021

Washington, D.C.
<http://dcin2021.org/>

2022

Chicago

2023

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

New Orleans

2024

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

2025

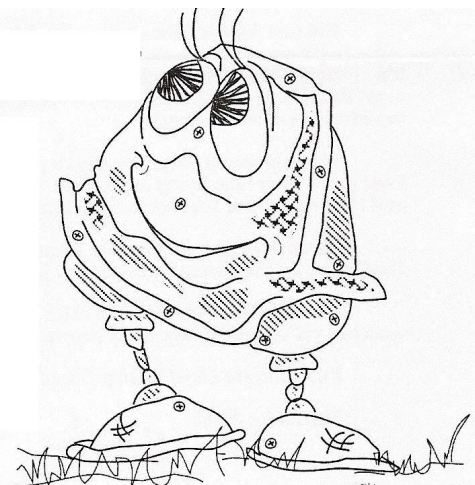
Pacific Northwest
Perth, Australia

NASFiC BIDS

2019

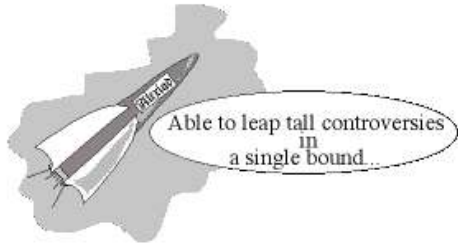
Utah
<http://www.utahfor2019.com/>

I had a conversation with Steve Francis at ConGlomeration where he expressed some concern about the facilities at Dublin and the potential staff in New Zealand. He had visited both on the way to other Worldcons. The Dublin main facility could only accommodate about 2500 people. The New Zealand national con usually had about 100 people, so there would have to be a lot of overseas volunteers.



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

Letters, we get letters



From: **Patrick McCray** February 23, 2018
Patrick_McCray@webbschool.org

There is a write in campaign for me to get best writer in the Rondo awards. Feel free to vote or spread the word. You can vote simply by indicating your preference at Taraco@aol.com. Thank you!

From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** Feb. 23, 2018
cathypl@sympatico.ca

As former con-runner and current club president, Oh, yes, sigh, I really can relate to this. ☺

Sadly, it is not only fandom affected by this attitude of watching rather than doing. Other groups I belong to are also running into trouble drawing in new members. Two local stained glass groups have closed up shop. The one to which I belonged ran out of volunteers to run it, and then there was a schism between the few remaining because two tried to run classes on their own and screwed up. My dance school is cutting back and might have to move to smaller locale. I fear I am headed for a boring old age.

There was an article by, as I remember, Taral, which told the story of a model railroad club that was taken over by people who were into "connected" topics — building dioramas, researching railroad history, and so on — and were uninterested in model railroads, but had been brought in by friends who liked model railroads as well as the connected topic. The club became uninterested in model railroading. Which is the process through which the conrunners had to quit having DisClave.

— JTM

From: **Nic Farey** February 24, 2018
fareynic@gmail.com

Thanks as always, Joe, for the usual solid read.

I'm often mildly surprised (in some kind

of mental disconnect) to see a loc from myself. Officially Not The World's Finest Loccer, although last year I did manage to get seven of them printed. This is a major (ahem) uptick from my fanzine fanac of the 1980s-2000s, when I was subscribing to the Lilian Edwards tenet of saving precious wordage for my own zine(s) rather than setting such adrift in the perilous waters of others' loccols.

I'm grateful for the inclusion, however, and it will be interesting to see how many of your more reliable correspondents might have voted in the FAAn awards by the time this minor epistle sees print (or WAHF).

My first thought on your comment "where are the new faneds?" was a nod of acknowledgement to that observation, but then second, third and subsequent thoughts modified that nod considerably to the point of becoming a shake, and a reach for more Advil (and alcohol). "New faneds", I might now argue, are out there, but possibly operating in forms and methods essentially invisible to those of us rooted in what we might consider as "traditional" forms (or, as I define it for FAAn award purposes, "fanzine-as-artifact").

As a small aside, I noted with interest that there was a local "fanzine workshop" (essentially 'Fanzine Production 101') by something called the 'LV Zine Library' which I probably ought to get involved with on some level, which seems firmly grounded in the "fanzine-as-artifact" ethos. I'm beginning to suspect that the yoof are realizing that the firehose of social media is less than useful when you're looking for a particular drop of water, and that they'll be looking at less ephemeral ways to channel creative energy. No doubt this will hark back to the halcyon days of the late 70s, *Sniffing Glue*, footy fanzines & such cranked out by people unaware of the fanzine's noble history, and convinced that they'd invented the form.

It's all the fault of *Factsheet Five*, which began as a fanzine listing but expanded to list any sort of amateur publication.

I first thought to describe the separation of fanzine community subsets as "tribal" in the sense that there are distinctly discrete groups with their own focal point ishes. My somewhat privileged (ahem, again) position as FAAn awards administrator makes this clear, as there are those clearly showing allegiance and loyalty to their own perceived "tribe", and having little connection to other subsets.

I've generally considered *Alexiad* to be "tribal" in this sense, since my perception is that your reliably regular correspondents are seldom represented in a broader range of publications. I judge this by the loccer logs I maintained for *The Incomplete Register* (which, by the way, will be ongoing), wherein it's clear that the people who generally locced, say, *Vibrator* or *Banana Wings* are a different "tribe" from those who respond to *Alexiad*, or any of John Thiel's

zines. Notable exceptions to this tribalism are the prolific Lloyd Penney, John Purcell and the late (and sadly missed) Milt Stevens.

This seems a good spot to interject that I don't see anything fundamentally wrong with this per se. I attempted to make clear in *TIR* that it's silly (and elitist) to suggest that FAAn award voters ought to be widely cognizant of all fanzine output, although the listing itself is intended as a guidepost to publications people might like to check out. If a potential voter only sees one or two zines, there's no inherent or implied prohibition in voting for them as favorites, in the intent and spirit of the awards as to spread the 'boo widely. </interject>

I subsequently revised my thinking of the use of the term "tribal" to suggest a definition of the Balkanization of fanzine fandom as being more like parallel universes, since it does seem as though, absent special abilities (Penney, Purcell etc.) they seem as invisible to each other as the theoretical "new faneds" may seem to us.

Alexiad, a long-running zine of consistent quality, is an excellent place to engage in this conversation.

Thank you for the compliment.

— JTM

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** Feb. 24, 2018
 6900 Cote St-Luc Road #708 Montreal,
 QC CANADA H4V 2Y9
croft@bigfoot.com

This is Jeff from "Just get on with it already!"...

Many of you won't remember me, as I haven't written a LOC in years. I have to thank Joe, Laurraine, and Cathy for keeping me in the loop... also to Chris for getting me back to writing for zines. Now, it's time for me to get back more!

July 13, 2015 was the day that messed me up for a long time: near 4:30 AM that day I pushed my panic button; I felt like I was baking.

In the hospital, it was diagnosed as sepsis. My Latin is almost non-existent, but as I understand it, it was a septic shock. Even my blood system was infected. The main guy I knew of who had it — and died — was Frank Goodish, the wrestler called Bruiser Brody. He died in the early 1980s. Fortunately, medicine has improved since then.

Obviously, I've survived, but I had a 2-week hospital bedrest, with fluids and minerals pumped into me, followed by 3 more weeks of home rest.

By comparison, my hospitalization (for a blood infection) is nothing.

— JTM

That brush with mortality shook me up so much that I stalled on all my other projects... my LOC-ing, my own zine (I'm still working

on it), my novel (4 years so far). I'm trying to rebuild to them now

I had good news to start 2018, at least: my youngest sister had my next nephew Jan. 4th. Luke Guillaume Laflamme joined my family, making an even 50-50 split for me between nephews and nieces. Also, my newest cousin (Georgie-Rose Solomon) was born in Massachusetts on Feb. 14. So I have new reasons for life.

Now, to get to this zine...

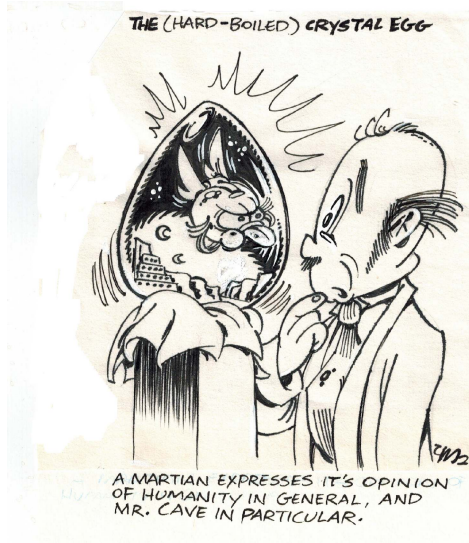
From: **Robert Lichtman** February 26, 2018
robertlichtman@yahoo.com

It was a surprise, though not an unwelcome one, to find your "commentary" on *I, Libertine* in the latest *Alexiad*. Considering that the book was originally published in 1956 and the most recent edition was the 1959 Panther paperback in England, I would guess that quite a few readers weren't even born at the time. I was, although it was years later that I learned the story of its creation that you detail here, obtained a copy, read it, and enjoyed it considerably. I have a different copy these days, but haven't reread it and doubt I would enjoy it as much as I did in the '60s.

Looking at the copies that turn up in a book search and their prices, it would seem prime for a POD reprint.

As you see, it is available on Kindle. It wouldn't be that hard to make a POD version.

— JTM



From: **Timothy Lane** February 27, 2018
timothylane51@gmail.com

Reading the steampunk Gotham version, I wondered when it was set, given that the Ferris Wheel first appeared in the 1892

Chicago equivalent of a world's fair (the one enlivened by the activities of one H. H. Holmes). So this would have to be set at least a little later.

Between then and 1901. Harvey Dent says, "This is the nineteenth century" in a conversation about marriage.

— JTM

Is Richard Dengrove talking about the possibility of a metal ship in Roman times? A steam engine would be unlikely, given the difficulty of developing the aeolipile into a functional engine. On the other hand, you can get by with oars — the first armored sea-going warship (the Korean turtle ships that defeated a Japanese invasion in the 1590s) were galleys. Bronze would probably be better due to its being less vulnerable to seawater.

Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey and later Duke of Norfolk (and grandfather of two of Henry VIII's wives, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, according to wikipedia) was indeed the one who dramatically described his loyalty to any crowned king. He was still kept in the Tower (and attainted) until 1489.

There were many Army bases, mostly in the South, named after Confederate leaders. Two big ones George Price didn't mention are Forts Benning in Georgia and Hood in Texas. The 101st Airborne's 39th Engineer Battalion was my father's final command, ending on May 18, 1966. Joe once took a photo of Lisa pointing at his name on a certain wall in DC.

LTC Ernest Edward Lane. Panel
07E Line 2

I know of other movies based on one story but with a title from another. *Burn, Witch, Burn* is based on Fritz Leiber's superb *Conjure Wife* but draws its title from A. Merritt, and *The Haunted Palace* draws its story from H. P. Lovecraft's *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* but its title from a Poe poem (they do quote some lines from the latter).

When I was a child, we had a book of jokes that included the one Price closes his letter with. Nice.

From: **Joy V. Smith** March 6, 2018
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

Thanks for all those reviews. I haven't read any of the books so I appreciate your bringing them to my attention. And I haven't seen *Darkest Hour*, though I've recently seen documentaries with footage of Churchill and Lord Halifax — and explaining the historical background. (I so admire Churchill for standing his ground. I cringe thinking about what might have happened to us and the world if England had given in to Hitler.)

I haven't read much steampunk, but I

recently enjoyed *Etiquette & Espionage*. That was fun, including the cute, though not cuddly, mechanical.

Lisa, I love rocks too and bought a little piece of one at Oasis con a while back; and I've bought big rocks of various sizes for our gardens over the years. Some were delivered by crane. (I'm serious about my rocks — granite, coquina, and others of various colors...)

I bought some more at
Conglomeration.

—LTM

Thanks to Robert Kennedy for his LOSCON report. And to all the contributors for keeping me in the loop about everything — including the solar system, universe, etc. ! And I loved the lightbulb cartoon. (Much more challenging.)

I'm sure Dr. Wizenbeak would be thankful for your kind words, and not hand you over to Chittabob.

— JTM

From: **George W. Price** March 26, 2018
4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL
60630-3333 USA
price4418@comcast.net

February *Alexiad*:

Rodford Edmiston, in *The Joy of High Tech*, says that "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."

He left out the units for that "3700." It can't be kilometers, since that would be 2299 miles. So what in the world (literally!) is it?

Mr. Edmiston also says, "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.)"

I think he means "bursts of planet formation." Also, Doc Smith said in *Gray Lensman* that the "Second Galaxy" is "Lundmark's Nebula," not the Andromeda galaxy. Lundmark's is much farther away than Andromeda.

Robert S. Kennedy, in his Loscon44 report, notes that he found Heinlein's *Citizen of the Galaxy* in the children's section of a public library, and he is "a bit baffled as to why it is considered a children's book." Now that's easy to answer: Because Scribner's published it as a juvenile, and that's what librarians go by. Never mind that it is adult in everything but

Thorby's age at the start.

The people who did the graphic novel adaptation (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 16 #1) apparently thought it was adult too. Some of the dresses they had Leda wearing would have made Alice Dalgleish's brain explode — even though that was how it was in the text.

Some really good science fiction and fantasy is shelved in juvenile fiction, such as Susan Price's *Sterkarm Handshake* and Cinde Chima's *Warrior Heir*.

—LTM

AL du Pisani discusses the problems Heinlein had with his agents. I have a story about that.

Many years ago, in my capacity as head of Advent Publishers, I got a letter from Lurton Blassingame, Heinlein's agent. He wanted a statement of the number of copies Advent had sold of *The Science Fiction Novel* (in which Heinlein had an essay) and what royalties were due. I wrote back that we didn't keep track of the exact number of copies sold, because Advent didn't follow the usual rules of royalty payment. Instead of paying a large advance and then a set amount per copy sold, we paid a token advance (usually \$100) as a binder, and then nothing until the book sales paid off its expenses (mainly the printer's bill, since the Advent partners got no salaries). Thereafter we paid the author half of all subsequent revenues. (Standard royalty payments are usually around 10% to 20% of sales revenue.)

(The reason for this odd payment plan was that since Advent's authors were sharing the risk of getting nothing if sales were poor, we felt obliged to pay them more generously if sales were good.)

I got back a fire-breathing letter from Blassingame saying that our system was unheard of, and not at all what the contract actually specified. I checked the file, and damned if Blassingame wasn't right. Apparently Earl Kemp (Advent's founder and my predecessor as manager) had made this arrangement directly with Heinlein, and Heinlein had not told Blassingame about it. (We can only speculate on whether this was an oversight, or if Heinlein was purposely keeping Blassingame in the dark.)

I wrote back to Blassingame giving him a rough estimate of the number of copies we had sold of *The Science Fiction Novel*, and how much Heinlein would have collected under the original contract. I noted that this was far less (about half as much, as I recall) than we had actually paid Heinlein under Advent's unorthodox plan. And I offered to withhold future royalties until we had made up

for the overpayment, then resume payment according to the original contract. I never heard back from Blassingame, and so I kept on paying in Advent's usual way, as invented by Earl Kemp.

That was the agreement Allen & Unwin had with J. R. R. Tolkien for royalties on *The Lord of the Rings*. As for *The Science Fiction Novel* itself, I noted that Heinlein's essay was copyrighted separately.

—JTM



From: **Lloyd Daub** March 29, 2018
6535 W. English Meadows Drive D205,
Greenfield, WI 53220-3995 USA
ldaub@wi.rr.com

I hope by now USS *St. Louis* has made it to sea. Then again, given that neither LCS class should ever have been born [A Churchill-ism] and can't be replaced soon enough, the crew was probably safer locked in the ice. There is no truth to the rumor that they watched the Arctic exploration/horror movie *The Terror* the whole time.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2708480/>

But here in WI we appreciate the procurement business.

It would have been interesting if she could have ended up like the *Baychimo*.

Book reviews RE: Your comment on the font face used in *A Traveller's Guide to Mars*. My interest in reading has not abated, as shown by my not clicking links to videos and instead clicking on text sites. But I am increasingly irritated by font size. I have books I used to read comfortably that now require my spectacles and a magnifying glass. And more recent books have even smaller font. Yet font sizes are larger than those of the 17th and 18th

centuries, as I have seen from reproductions of works from this time. I don't know how humans did it in those days. Or even how the printer could see to set the type. And without electric light. I am thankful for the <CTRL +> zoom feature in browsers.

Movie Reviews, *Star Wars VIII*: I spoiled all the fun there was in watching *Phantom Menace* by reading too many reviews before attending a showing. Having decided not to see *The Last Jedi*, I took advantage of the flood of reviews to know most of what is going on. This means I can understand your comment at the end about Kylo Ren leading an ineffective bad guy empire versus a depleted Rebellion. And thus the Star Wars galaxy has become a re-enactment of Rome in AD 69—a power vacuum that even the least competent can hope to fill. But I doubt that the keepers of the SW universe are capable of making a movie that has a new leader emerge from of the outer limits of the galaxy to sweep aside both Ren and Rey. But that's the likeliest outcome were this the 'real world.'

There was a discussion on the alternatetheory.com board about how it would look if they did Timothy Zahn's *Heir to the Empire* novels about Admiral Thrawn. It looks like you're presenting a pretext for doing so.

My LOC: Lisa, for backups of handwritten materials, I suggest a scanner. Then you can create multiple electronic backups.

Thanks for the suggestion. The idea is definitely worth considering.

—LTM

Robert S. Kennedy: Thank you for your best wishes on my retirement and reappearance in fandom. 'Regeneration' is what it will be called in my books, rather than resurrection. But I will consider some of those in the God Camp calling it that. Thank you.

You could be Jason Todd.

—JTM

Here's to the next issue!

From: **Sue Burke** March 31, 2018
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Spring has come, according to the tilt of the Earth, but according to the neighborhood daffodils, not quite. I live a half-mile from Lake Michigan, so the weather tends to be cooler, and spring comes later. I also live a few blocks south of Loyola University, and as the college basketball season draws to a close, its

team is playing in the final four tonight, the first time since 1963. People are excited about the Ramblers. Baseball's opening day was this week, and people are also excited about Chicago's north side team, the Cubs. I prefer football, which is still a ways away, and having been born in Wisconsin, I'm naturally a Packer backer: the Bears will always suck.

As I mentioned last time, Cook County, Illinois, had an advisory referendum on its March 20 primary ballot to legalize recreational use of marijuana. It passed 68% to 32%, no surprise, and now it's up to the state legislature to act. I'm not holding my breath.

I enjoyed many of the articles in the last issue, including "The Joy of High Tech."

Robert Kennedy says all the hotels at San Jose Worldcon are filled up. Not all the hotels, according to the Worldcon website, and the convention committee is trying to find more rooms. I'm staying at the Fairmont, which by luck is also the party hotel. I tend to stay up late, and I can sleep through noise, anyway.

Elsewhere in this 'zine, editors willing, are reports on Capricorn and my picks in the Nebula Awards short fiction categories. Other than that, I have little to report. My novel launch went well, and Tor has kept me working hard to help promote it.

Let me close this brief letter with a joke suitable for the science-minded, Schrodinger's emoticon :):

From: **Taras Wolansky** March 31, 2018
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Like the cast of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, you have many roles to play even if you don't have many people to play them!

Some belated comments on the December 2017 issue:

Joe's review of *True Believer*: Perhaps the NKVD report about how Noel Field and Alger Hiss tried to recruit each other, when they were both already working for different branches of Soviet intelligence, referred to Hiss' real name because he wasn't one of theirs and they didn't know his code name.

Joe's review of *A Portable Cosmos*: "The implication [of the Antikythera Mechanism] is that there was an entire unrecorded field of mechanical technology in the classic era." Machines to wow the rubes visiting the temples, I'm guessing.

Sue Burke (review of Windycon 44): "While the government has way too much data on us, corporations have immensely more". The difference is, the government wants to tax us or put us in jail, while corporations just want to sell us stuff.

John G. Hemry: Letting nonmembers into convention dealers rooms might work in some cases, but I suspect it would increase shoplifting as well as (or more than) sales.

I went to at least one ConGlomeration where they permitted non-members in the dealers' room. And once I took a woman I was seeing to the RiverCon dealers' room. I held her arm and if challenged planned to say she was part of my hall costume.

Anecdotes about "16-year old girls hauling men out of burning T-34 tanks" don't change the fact that women have half the upper body strength of men, on average, and 16-year-old girls less than that. How many men didn't get hauled out of those tanks?

The entire Soviet war effort was designed to protect just one man. Aside from that, combat casualties were simply not a consideration.

Richard Dengrove: The so-called Indian Wars ended only in the 1890s, so there were plenty of people in early Hollywood who remembered them or participated in them, or were told about them by their fathers. This was important because the more horrifying details about Indian atrocities were often omitted or bowdlerized in printed records. For example, when a woman settler was gang raped by her captors, a routine occurrence, newspaper accounts would merely say she was "degraded", if they said anything at all.

Mark Twain stopped writing *Huck Finn* and *Tom Sawyer Among the Indians* (c. 1884) when he realized he had put in a scene implying precisely that.

On the subject of living memory, it's worth noting that when director John Ford wanted to find out about the 1881 gunfight at the OK Corral, he went over to Wyatt Earp's bungalow and asked him! Earp died in 1929.

On to the February ish:

Joe: "Larque Press's statistics on prozine circulation ... Read 'em and weep". Actually, the digests aren't doing as badly as I thought.

Lisa: "The big problem with audiobooks is that it takes longer to get through them than a physical book." Thou hast said it! You can't skim, or jump ahead (other than blindly). Some books I gave up on because the audiobook was simply too slow: Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, one of M.Z. Bradley's Camelot books. I admire Neal Stephenson enormously (his *Seveneves* was the best SF book I've read in years), but I'm not sure I'll be able to get through the 32-disc edition of *REAMDE* — which I got for six bucks at audiobookstand.com.

Rodford Edmiston: "Our solar system has been within a hundred light years of a supernova of some type within the past few million years". Perhaps more evidence for the hypothesis that planets stable enough to evolve intelligent life are vanishingly rare.

Robert S. Kennedy (Loscon 44 report): "Most of the session was spent on Robert A.

Heinlein and not the actual novel." I attended a panel like that at Heliosphere, a few weeks ago. I had recently listened to audio recordings of several classic Heinlein stories from the 1940s, and I was able to remind the panel that, by the standards of his time (if perhaps not ours), Heinlein was a crazed, wild-eyed feminist.

By the way, *Citizen of the Galaxy* is considered a juvenile only because the protagonist is a teenager, and it was part of Scribners' series of juvenile SF. Now that you mention it, I don't know why they didn't ask Heinlein to write sequels to any of the books.

He apparently didn't want to. You'll remember that he had planned to write a number of sequels to *Rocket Ship Galileo*, under its original title of *The Young Atomic Engineers*, with that as the series title, but decided otherwise. The standard for juvenile novels then was that they were a series, with each book having the title of the next one announced in boldface on the last page.



This feminist prof on the same panel also went off on the new *Death Wish* movie, claiming it's about white men killing black men. I had just seen the film, and told her Bruce Willis shoots no black people at all, but instead acts to protect them. The filmmakers were no dopes!

"I would like to see someone give a complete Helsinki Worldcon report." What I remember most vividly about Helsinki is

standing in line in a hot, sweaty hallway, to get into a hot, sweaty, packed hall where every possible light is turned on for no good reason and where I can hear the panelists but I can't see them, and there is virtually no chance of asking a question. But I will see if I took any useful notes, in spite of everything.

I sometimes chose which panel to attend based on its physical location; for example, picking something on the first floor because the first floor had high ceilings, and was for that reason less hot and sweaty. I can't blame the concom very much, though. They had no way of knowing that all the young people in Northern Europe would suddenly decide that they wanted to go to a science fiction convention in Helsinki.

My sister did her DNA. I was hoping for something interesting: for example, there's a family tradition that some of our ancestors were Gypsies who settled down and pretended to be Jews, because that was more respectable. And another tradition that there was an officer who married a beautiful Jewess; and somebody made some comments, and there was a duel — and she was left to raise three children by herself.

But it came back "Boring Eastern European"; in fact, I think those were the exact words.

It could have been worse: it could have been, "Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries."

— JTM

I was unhappy with Emma Watson's performance in *The Circle*. I've noticed a problem when young British actresses play American characters: they have to concentrate so hard on the accent that they lose all their vivacity. This was particularly striking on the short-lived *Bionic Woman* show. In one episode, the story required the lead character to "pretend" to be British: she could speak in her natural accent, and her personality just lit up. Too late to save the show, though.

Finally, if San José is in driving distance for you, you can save a lot of money by staying at a cheap motel and driving in to the convention. During the last San José worldcon I stayed at a Motel 6 a few miles away and took the train.

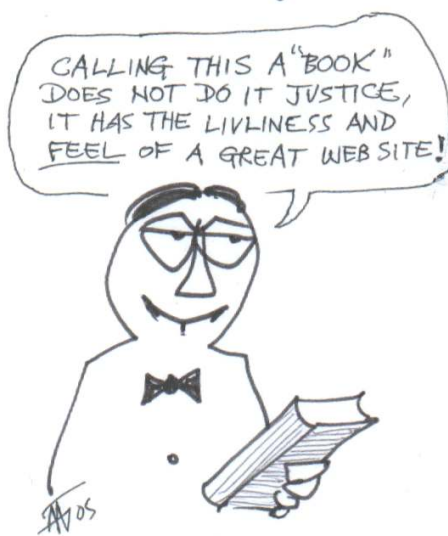
Lloyd Daub: How do Sue Blom's Inca handle their biological disadvantage; that is, that they have no resistance to Old World diseases? This same thought occurred to me when I read Esther Friesner's story about the Aztecs invading Spain.

George W. Price: "Heisenberg ... 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." Did he underrate the Jewish scientists that Germany drove away

and America gained?

"We can bring back chaperones. Just imagine a Weinstein's face ..." Maybe the creepiest part of the story is that old Harvey provided chaperones — fake chaperones, that is, who would quietly disappear when he signaled them. One could make the case that what those women did was more evil than what Harvey was doing. If he's a sex addict, what's their excuse?

PARADIGM
SHIFT!



A couple of wrinkles on your evolutionary schemes.

Natural selection probably ensures that to a man the most attractive woman will be one who appears to be ready to bear a child, but has not yet done so. A firstborn child has the inside track for survival and reproduction, because it gets the mother's undivided attention, and by attention I mostly mean food. It will also tend to establish dominance over its younger siblings.

Thus the appeal of Victoria's Secret and Sports Illustrated models. Some of them actually have kids, but they look like they don't.

Natural selection also designed women to play a double game. They look for the good husband and father, the provider. But especially when they are ovulating, the sexy bad boys start to look good to them, the ones who could give a woman sexy sons who can father many more children than she could ever bear herself.

Thus, why women are attracted to men who they know will make them miserable. Sleeping with promiscuous bastards may give you a promiscuous bastard of your own, who will

leave a trail of broken hearts and swelling bellies.

Sue Burke: "[Pot legalization in California] can only mean one thing: pot parties at Worldcon 76 in San José". Hey, I just got an idea how you can fulfill your contractual obligation to promote your book!

AL du Pisani: "After working with [John W.] Campbell for a while, it appears that most authors that remained in SF moved on." Well, maybe. I looked at *Analog's* 1971 contents, Campbell's last full year. It includes Gordon R. Dickson, James H. Schmitz, Christopher Anvil, Lloyd Biggle Jr., Katherine MacLean, Stanley Schmidt, F. Paul Wilson, Alan Dean Foster, Verner Vinge, Ben Bova, Jerry Pournelle.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** April 1, 2018
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Ah, *Alexiad* February 2018, and I'm just starting it in March. If I cut down on all my LOCs, I might be able to get all of them in on time — but I can't.

There are pluses and minuses to LOCs just as there are pluses and minuses to everything. Of course, I wouldn't continue to use a 'knife' like Lisa bought from Half-Price Books. Not if my fingers were in danger. I hope there's a way of avoiding that that she knows of.

There are pluses and minuses to knives and LOCs. There are also pluses and minuses to the New Fandom, which you mention in Reviewer's Notes.. A minus is that there are so many fan specialties, like gaming and cosplay. An even greater minus are fans who just come to conventions to be entertained. That is the result of science fiction being accepted by mundanes, who are, for the most part, spectators.

Yes there were pluses and minuses to New Fandom. Moskowitz and Taurasi kept six of the Futurians out of the NyCon and let in the one who had done the problematic brochure, Dave Kyle.

Are there any pluses? There should be one. Fandom has been accepted by the great unwashed. A lot of fans in the old days yearned that that would come to pass.

I have spent some time in modern day fandom. Next, I will go back to the good old days and wonder whether a certain radio personality belonged to fandom. So much belongs to fandom these days which we wonder about. Why not him?

His name is Jean Shepherd, whom I remember very vividly. You reviewed the novel *I, Libertine*, and he was the inspiration for the book. I knew him from his radio show, which, at that point, ran between 11:00 PM and 12:00 AM on WOR in New York City.

I don't know whether his subject matter would be included in fandom. He specialized in satire, stories about his childhood, and humor in general. He rarely discussed science fiction. Still, as I have said, others even less science fictional than Jean have been considered faanish.

By the way, I bet *I, Libertine* was a parody on the fashion then for referring to Samuel Pepys 17th Century diary, even if the referers never read it.

Or *I, Claudius*.

Now we go from one novel to a bunch of novels. I have been astonished by all the different alternate timelines people have written about. They make a mockery of the stereotype that alternate histories are either the Nazis or the Confederates winning their wars.

In Gerald Hall's *Yesterday War Book 2*, there is no Pearl Harbor and the Japanese decide to take over Australia. In *Triumph of a Tsar*, Alexander II survives being assassinated and takes Russia in a less autocratic direction.

Actually, there remain a genre of alternate timelines to be fully exploited. The novels up above seem almost entirely based on the Great Man theory of history. A great man changes things, and history takes a completely different course.

Couldn't alternate timelines be due to the action of a whole bunch of people in the trenches? Or butterfly wings flapping with a different rhythm? Or a stray electron? All of which have been thought to have the potential to change history. I remember Ray Bradbury wrote a short story where a dinosaur hunt in prehistoric times leads to a different President being elected in the near future.

In addition to reviewing books on alternate history, you review one on history history that actually took place in our timeline. Also, rather than dealing with the swathe of history, it deals with how one person was responsible for a small change in history.

Stalin's Englishman by Andrew Downie delves into how Guy Burgess got away with being a Soviet spy, even in Russia, while being obnoxious. In Britain, I gather he was the British elite's equivalent of a good old boy, an Etonian. Of course, in Russia, he was a person who gave valuable information; and the Soviet government was reluctant to formally rein in his excesses.

"[Who] had given valuable information." But in Moscow, he was a lonely drunk who longed to go back to Blighty, and went prowling for golden boys.

I think everyone agrees with Andrew Downie there. Whom some may not agree with is Chris Garcia. In a letter, he claims digital data lasts many decades. However, I heard someone claim DVDs go after five years.

I confess that's not been my experience. However, I'm soon going to put more DVDs to the test, and see. Will an example of a 1950 "Lights Out" produced during '90s have survived?

Unlike about DVDs, I don't weigh in about some things, believe it or not. I thought you were dubious about the bronze steamship, and I was just wondering about whether bronze would be able to withstand all the heat needed. In reaction, however, you seem to have changed your mind; and support von den Boom, that bronze steamships are possible, .

By the same token, I don't think I am disagreeing with Lloyd Daub when he claims that the Japanese during World War II did not believe the US could have actually developed an atomic bomb; and the Germans did believe that they were pretty well along in developing one. . .

My only point had nothing to do with that. It had to do with why the Nazis did not develop an atomic bomb rather than what they thought of the state of their development.



We leave that belief about World War II. It was an earth shattering development that ended the war in the East. Instead, I will comment on something trivial. Robert S. Kennedy criticized me for referring to a General Kimmel as being in command at Pearl Harbor when it was Admiral Kimmel.

All I can say is guilty as charged.

Be glad Leigh Kimmel didn't notice. Or did she? Leigh?

We go from the misplaced Kimmels to Lloyd Penney's feeling that Rodney Leighton didn't like him. It was hard to tell from moment to moment whether Rodney liked you or not. Even I who wrote him an incredible number of letters, and received a number back. Rodney could be moody, no doubt about that.

We go from Lloyd Penney to George Price, and from faanish relationships back to the Axis atomic bomb projects. I don't disagree with George that the advocates of German science were a bunch of crackpots. However, they were powerful crackpots until Himmmler decided relativity and quantum mechanics would be permitted again in Nazi Germany.

In fact, in the mid-30s, they had many advocates of relativity fired from German universities. Many fired went to the US. and

ultimately ended up making substantial contributions to the Manhattan Project. At least, that is what I remember hearing.

From disagreeing with George – sort of – I go on to disagree more with Al du Pisani somewhat more. With George, it was only a matter of disagreeing about the power of said crackpots. With Al, I disagree about the destructiveness of editors. I suspect they're often needed. .

I agree that a bad editor can set writers back. However, having had to plow through some of Heinlein's later works. I think he desperately needed an editor to take out the excess baggage.

In fact, as far as I can tell, he did better with an editor than he did without one. On the novels upon which a good deal of his fame rests, his juveniles, I gather he was thoroughly edited, like novels for juveniles have usually been. I gather he had a lot of fights with his editor at Scribner, Alice Dalgliesh; and he was often right. However, their collaboration produced a lot of great novels.

Read the biography by Bill Patterson or the letters in *Grumbles from the Grave* (1989) for more on this.

— JTM

That's it. I spent a lot of time on the atomic bomb in my LOC. I hope the letter doesn't bomb.

From: **Lloyd Penney** April 5, 2018
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It's a little past the deadline, but I hope you will forgive that. I have here finally the time to make some comments on *Alexiad* WN 97. Such as...

Reviewer's Notes...for decades, I tried to make things happen fanwise locally, and the only one to credit me with all of this is me, for I am the only one who knows just how much time and effort I put into local fandom. We are definitely seeing that transition from participating to consuming. But, I think we are being forced that way. There is little to do at many conventions but sit down and watch the actor cavort on stage, or the author drone on in a reading. That's one reason why we've moved to steampunk events and conventions, where there may be guests, but the main feature is everyone's participation through costumes and events. It is simply more enjoyable. Fandom as we know it is fading away, so we're moving where the fun is, simple as that. I want to see the old cons continue, but they are increasingly expensive, the pro-run cons offer too much for too much money, and our friend base has moved onto other things.

Are you going to Corflu? I t's

the first weekend in May at the Ramada Plaza Toronto. (We have another engagement that weekend.)

— JTM

Other awards...not only does Rob Sawyer have his Order of Canada, but he also has his Order of Ontario. We're not sure, but we think Rob has run out of highfalutin' awards to win, so he will return to his work as novel and screenplay writer.

We did see *Darkest Hour*, and while different people certainly have different opinions of Winston Churchill, everything from saviour to monster, this movie shows him, warts and all, at one of his own finest hours. Great movie, and deserving of all the nominations and trophies.

And ah, fond memories of Loscon. Yvonne and I have spoken with each other about returning, and I hope one day that we can, on our own dime this time.

The local...Nic Farey is right, we predict the demise of fanzines, and yet we persist, because we know that no matter the format, paper or electrons, it is the communication that is most important. His *Incomplete Register* provided a lot of valuable information for FAAn Award voters. That demise will come, though, and this generation shuffles off, and new ones come on with little reason to talk to each other, other than through social media.

My own loc...the job I had with the mystery shopper company lasted six months. They simply ran out of work for me. I am now at a short-term assignment with a medical marketing company, but that should end in a day or two, and the hunt will continue again.

Thanks for all of this, and all the book reviews, too. I cannot comment on them, mostly because the chance I haven't read a particular book, and probably never will, reaches close to 100%. I am enjoying costumes and creating jewelry a lot these days, but I am also enjoying writing, the communication thing I referred to a little earlier. See you with the next issue, I hope.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** April 6, 2018
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Re, the discussion of Heinlein and his editors, let me pass on something Michael Swanwick told me once. Michael was teaching at Clarion. He typed up the first page of the unedited *The Puppet Masters* and gave it to his students, followed by another copy, in which all the edited parts were crossed out in red pen, followed by another manuscript of the first page, which is the edited version. Everyone agreed, and could see why, the edited version was far superior. The whole thing was a lesson in how to edit. Said Michael of the unedited version, "This is the

author of *I Will Fear No Evil*," which is about the worst put-down of a Heinlein novel I can think of.

Let me heretically suggest that Heinlein was never a great novelist. He was *edited* into a great novelist. More than most writers, he needed the discipline forced on him by the maximum word-lengths for Doubleday books in the 1950s, or the maximum word lengths of magazine serializations. How fortunate we were that the publisher decided that *The Puppet Masters* needed to be no more than 75,000 words to be profitable. These may be extra-literary considerations, and they could be detrimental to some writers – *Dune* would have been impossible in such an environment – but if you go back and read the good Heinlein, back when his work was tight and uncluttered, it is really amazing how fine a storyteller he once was. I found *The Door into Summer* a real eye-opener, reading it for the first time in perhaps forty years. This is **not** the author of *I Will Fear No Evil* or *The Number of the Beast*. As soon as Heinlein no longer had editorial or commercial restrictions, his fiction deteriorated very quickly. I remember a cruel fannish joke from the '70s: "Robert Heinlein used to write juveniles. Now he writes seniles."

More seriously, a friend about my age (60 something) told me that a young woman (20 something) in his local SF club asked the older members, "Why does Heinlein have such a good reputation when he writes such terrible books?" They asked her what she read. It was *The Number of the Beast*, etc. She did not know the early work at all, and at this rate was unlikely to discover it.

My feeling is that if Heinlein's reputation is to survive long term, we are going to have to lop the second half of his career off, with the possible exceptions of *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* and *Friday*. Most of his other later work merely detracts from his greatness.

One of the things you discover from reading Bill Patterson's biography is how so many of what seem to have been Heinlein's later obsessions were actually earlier obsessions that were suppressed for various reasons, including as you said editing. For example, the "Circle of Ouroboros" of all his characters and characters from his favorite works stems from *Caleb Catlum's America* (1936). Back in the thirties he had the rule that you had to like that book before he would take you as a friend.

As for John Campbell, yes, he seems to have alienated most of the Golden Age writers, as he became more crackpot and dogmatic in the 1950s. Alfred Bester told a wonderful story of how he went to visit Campbell in his office about 1950, to discuss the story "Oddy and Id." First, before he would discuss anything,

Campbell handed Bester a galley of the original Dianetics article by L. Ron Hubbard and insisted he read it right then and there. Campbell sat glaring while Bester skimmed through the article, trying hard not to burst out laughing. When Bester had finished, Campbell said, "Hubbard's going to win the Nobel Prize," and then explained how "Oddy and Id" needed to drop all its Freudian terminology, because psychiatry was now rendered obsolete by Dianetics and one could not have obsolete science in *Astounding*. The story was published as "The Devil's Invention." Bester went away thinking that Campbell was a raving lunatic. He changed the title back to "Oddy and Id" when the story was collected, and never wrote for Campbell again. (I heard this directly from Bester, by the way.) The result was that all Bester's great work of the 1950s appeared outside of *Astounding*. The de Camps also mentioned that their inability to embrace Campbell's various crackpotteries cooled their relationship with him. Campbell did indeed manage to lose almost all of his best contributors that way. Damon Knight observed that he did something shrewd thereafter. He latched onto writers like E.B. Cole and others who really had very few prospects elsewhere, and used them as his mouthpieces. He also attracted cynical hacks like Randall Garrett, who made a sport out of racing to sell Campbell a story based on his latest editorial. The long-term result was that *Analog* in the 1960s was a shadow of what the magazine had once been, and although it paid better than the competition, it was markedly inferior to *Galaxy* or *If* or *F&SF*, or even *Amazing* and *Fantastic*.

The way it worked for Heinlein, I gather was that if you ever rejected any submission from him, you never got another. Heinlein expected to be treated like royalty. Fred Pohl caught on to this and published anything he was sent, even *Farnham's Freehold*. I once heard Pohl say, "Even if it's bad, if it's by Heinlein, people will still want to read it."

Thus Pohl's capitulation over Algis Budrys's review of *Stranger In a Strange Land*.

— JTM

WAHF:

Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.

Sue Burke, James Nicoll, Rod E. Smith who got it.

Earl Kemp, who said "I did have reading pleasure. Keep doing it, please." We will do it as long as we can.

F. Paul Wilson, with thanks.



IT — This Time It's Personal!

The paper boat bobbed in the drain. The boy in the red and yellow outfit looked down into the opening.

"Hi, Damian," it said.

Damian blinked and looked again. There was a clown in the stormdrain. The clown held a bunch of balloons in one hand and the paper boat in the other. "Want your boat, Damian?" The clown smiled.

Damian scowled. "We're not big on strangers in this part of Gotham," he said.

"Very wise indeed. Therefore I will introduce myself. I, Damian, am Pennywise the Dancing Clown."

"I know someone who wants to meet you."

Damian scampered off. The clown laughed and waited. They always come back.

Sure enough, Damian came back with a friend. "Pennywise, this is Jason," he said. Jason was wearing a leather jacket — and he had a mask covering his face.

"Oh, two of you," the clown said. "Want to come to the circus? Can you smell the peanuts?"

Jason reached.

The clown seized his arm.

A growl came from behind the mask. "I HATE CLOWNS!" Jason said, and pulled hard.

The clown came out of the drain, but it was beginning to change, become something hard and evil, something with a miasma of fear.

Jason had something else in his hands now. He brought down a crowbar on the clown's back, and it made a thud. "*I died once! I'm not afraid of anything!*" he screamed over and over again as he rained blow after blow on the clown.

It writhed under his blows. And then, it was gone, turned into an ooze that flowed away into the drain.

For a moment Jason stood there, his breath rasping through his mask. Damian blinked and said, "I think we'd better go home."

The big man was silent. The boy took his hand, and he began to shamble down the street.

There was a long limousine waiting there. Damian opened the door and got Jason in, then buckled him up before running around to the other side and quickly getting in.

"Master Jason had a hard time?" the driver said as he started the engine.

Jason pulled off his red hood, buried his face in his hands, and began to shake again.

— Not by Stephen King

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

This is issue **Whole Number Ninety-Eight (98)**.

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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