

ALEXIAD

(AΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This month's library theme is local history and genealogy. This has enabled me to push the works of Janice Holt Giles and Jesse Stuart.

September is international month where each branch does a different country. The country my branch selected was Japan. This is a real stretch for me. I know very little about Japan. I have begun requesting books about Japan and hopefully I will have enough material to get through the month. Perhaps next weekend I will be able to track down a cheap fake bonsai. Live plants do not fare well at our branch.

The roly-polies continue to thrive. We began with ten of the little critters. The last census had a count of 40, a quite healthy population increase.

— Lisa

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The 92nd Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 5, 2017** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Perfect Spirit won after the disqualification of What the Hill for interference.

The 63rd Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **September 2, 2017** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.

The 125th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **October 8, 2017** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.

The 63rd Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **August 5, 2017** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Game Huntsville won by a neck.

The 62nd Running of the Messenger Stakes (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) is **September 2, 2017** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.

The 72nd Running of the Little Brown Jug (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) is **September 21, 2017** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio.

Printed on August 17, 2017

Deadline is **October 1, 2017**

Reviewer's Notes

I think it was Ray Nelson who did a story that out Space-Merchanted *The Space Merchants* on advertising. A man wakes up. There had been subliminal advertising broadcasting all night. As he gets out of bed, ignoring the ads printed on his sheets and pajamas, the television goes on with — of course — ads. He brushes his teeth, having to deal with subliminal messages flashed on his mirror. The telephone rings — it's an automatic advertising call.

Now Virgil Samms could ignore that overwhelming level of advertising (*First Lensman*) because he was, like, a Lensman. Most of us lack that will, but we manage.

However, people have started to manage by not answering any telephone call from out of state, because, see, it's an advertising robocall. Which cuts me off from a lot of people I know, and more I am trying to reach out to.

And people say that that old-timey stuff isn't relevant.

(Like, for example, where Samms's daughter Virgilia was playing tennis with Rod Kinnison's son. He complains she was wearing tight shorts — and doesn't mention her wearing anything else. Hm?)

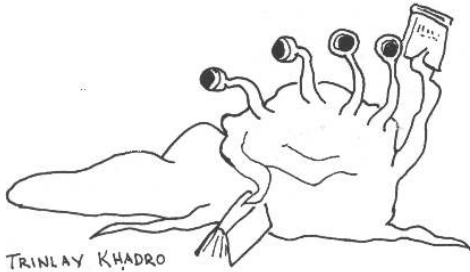
I am losing weight, thanks to Lisa *demanding* that I walk her to work. I had been over 300 pounds, so losing was a good thing. Also, I don't seem to have much of an appetite any more. I no longer get those wonderful chicken strips at Columbia Steak House, because I don't want to eat that much. If you're ever in Lexington, Kentucky go to Columbia Steak House. Grant discovered it when there was one in Louisville. It's probably just as well for my budget and waistline that the Louisville outlet is closed.

As I write I am preparing for darkness after noon. Thanks to Dave Herrington for his assistance, and we will strive to be there and report on the strange and wondrous things that take place. Will the Little Green Men return? Stay tuned.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



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

— Advt.

ConGlomeration 2018 will be **March 30 - April 2, 2018** at the Crowne Plaza in Louisville, Kentucky. This was once the Executive West, site of many RiverCons, including the last one.

ConGlomeration
P.O. Box 32095
Louisville, KY 40232-2095

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

Meanwhile Fandom Fest, Louisville's media con, was having all kinds of trouble. They had to move from the convention center to a former Macy's on the edge of town. Many guests canceled. And the fire department set the limit of attendees at 1700. Reports are mixed.

"Can the Tardis be full of bras?" some people ask with regard to the new Doctor.

What were the Doctor's female Companions supposed to do?

The newspaper *Le Figaro* and its subscribers presented gold Cartier models of the Lunar Module "Eagle" to Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins when they visited Paris in October of 1969. Armstrong donated his to the Neil Armstrong Museum in Wapakoneta, Ohio (it's right by I-75 so you can easily get to it).

On July 28, the museum was broken into and the model stolen. This may have been a targeted theft; someone with money and greed hiring a pro to get him a prize. The report does not mention anything else being taken.

The press release from Space.com says "The Wapakoneta Police Department is asking anyone with information about the lunar module model's theft to contact its office at 419-738-8802."

The model may be in some collector's hands; or it may have been melted down by a thief seeing only the gold. Or otherwise. In any case, a gift celebrating a magnificent and unique achievement has been lost. This is what we have come to.

There is great controversy over the announcement of the forthcoming HBO series *Confederate*, a story about the CSA winning the War Between the States and surviving to the present day, complete with Peculiar Institution. There seems to be no tolerance for examining the aspects of history, and a lot of biased assumptions.

Confederate
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt7163588/>

As if in immediate response, Amazon has announced *Black America*, about a separate Black nation being established in the aftermath of the War of the Rebellion, and how by today it became a technological and economic powerhouse, while the United States decayed into chaos. Talk about assumptions; there are a lot in this concept. I mean, the U.S. giving up New Orleans?

Catwoman News: Camren Bicondova is learning to use a whip, as was seen in the last episode of *Gotham*, third season. Isn't that called growing into the role?

British polar explorer Rupert Nigel Pendrill Hadow, generally known as **Pen Hadow**, has set out to sail from Alaska to the North Pole. However, preliminary reports indicate that the Arctic Ocean is still iced up.

MONARCHIST NEWS

Someone who had been reading a lot of supermarket tabloids and had an association with Yahoo.com posted a news article about how Queen Elizabeth had named her grandson Prince William heir. Nope nope nope. This would require an Act of Parliament and concurring legislation from the other Commonwealth countries.

PULP UNFICTION
Commentary by Joseph T Major on
THE TIME BEFORE THIS
by Nicholas Monsarrat (1962)

In the sixties, it seemed, Canada had its Great White North Frontier. This has continued; in 1991, diamonds were discovered in Canada and by now it is the third-largest diamond producer in the world.

But this is the story of a used-up man dying in a town that is past the frontier. Reporter Peter Benton is for some reason he really doesn't understand stuck in a village in northern Quebec. Down in the bar having a few, he notices a quarrelsome old man, whose catch phrase appears to be "We've been here before."

He seems to be a washed-up burn-out case, someone past his prime and finding respite in alcohol. Certainly no one else there takes him seriously. Benton finishes his drink and goes back to work.

His work takes him along the mountains in the north, and he is much taken by their frigid beauty; he describes one mountain as a castle of ice. By happenstance he returns to the village, to find the old man still in the bar, still being bullied, still with his sole defender.

Then the old man, whose name is Shepherd, breaks down under the verbal assault of the local louts. Benton and Shepherd's only defender, a local prostitute, take him back to his flat. Which is in bad shape; not only is it filthy and littered, but because of his not paying the rent, the landlady has confiscated his heater.

In his final hours, Shepherd begins telling his story. He was a man of various applications and a wanderer of the world. This led him to the north; to Bylot Island (north of Baffin Island).

While searching for furs or other valuables, he found a body. Not just any sort of body, either, for the man he found had armored skin. He had been on guard and died at his post.

Shepherd went on and found an entrance. And in the mountain . . . there was a gigantic food storage facility. He was more than a little amazed. The place was still powered, too, somehow.

After investigating, he concluded that it was a last storage place of a previous civilization, one destroyed by some terrible cataclysm. Finally he decides to leave.

But here he is. No one will believe him. His evidence of the place has decayed and is gone. And having told his story, for the first and last time, he dies.

Benton has to reconsider his life. This is a lesson, of sorts, about humanity destroying itself. Something has to be done.

Some reviewers have argued that this is only part of a book, that it quit just when it should have got going. That depends. Was Monsarrat writing a pulp adventure, like André Norton's "The People of the Crater" (*Fantasy Book* — 1947)? With Benton to descend into the fastness of the storage, find the captured princess, defeat the enemy, and become consort and ruler?

Or was it a fable, like Herman Wouk's *The "Lomokome" Papers* (1956), which against the story of a secret first voyage to the moon created a satire of the Cold War? Robert Bloch's criticism of it for having decisively dodged any explanation or possible use of the technology described therein was both incisive and not to the point. Wouk didn't want to write about technological wonders, he wanted to satirize the Cold War. It might be a waste of a promising idea, but it's still his fable.

This is in a sense both. There might be a great food warehouse in the Arctic north of Canada. The question (which he only begins to

confront) is whether it's a Wonder, a warning, or just a story. Perhaps Monsarrat didn't want to go there.

BEING A SPARROW

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE BITTER CUP

by R. E Tomkins

(2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)

"Compromise" is one of the reasons a spy will spy. Sharon Scranage, a stenographer for the CIA, had an affair beginning in 1983 with Michael Agbotui Soussoudis, a Ghanaian intelligence officer. As a result, all CIA operations in Ghana were compromised.

Now if it had been someone with more access to secret information, and a somewhat higher-ranking officer . . .

The story begins in 1934, when champagne salesman and Nazi party adherent Joachim von Ribbentrop sets out to seduce a married American woman. The married American woman happens to be Bessie Wallis Warfield Spencer Simpson — yes, *her*.

After a proper compromise, including pictures, the two go on their separate careers. Ribbentrop becomes German ambassador to Britain, while Mrs. Simpson becomes the royal mistress.

Then the crisis comes to a head. Ribbentrop sets out a solution — and as a result, Edward never has to renounce the throne for the woman he loves, but is crowned in 1937. And Wallis, the unacknowledged companion, has access to all sorts of confidential and secret papers.

War breaks out. And with this very well placed source (who gets uncovered too late), the Germans do extraordinarily well. To the point where, as the British and French Armies are cut off on the Flanders coast, an expert professional assassin makes a successful hit on Winston Churchill.

Broken, the British sue for a cease-fire, and the Führer grants it, planning to turn to the East without an exhausted Luftwaffe or a sunken Navy to deal with. The future looks dim.

The plot runs off the rails towards the end, as you can see. (Or such little goofs as having the cease-fire and peace made on the *Bismarck* and the *King George V*, both completed way too early.) The prospects are still not good, either, when this is . . . **To Be Continued.**

NO. JUST . . . NO

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE SECOND WORLD WAR: WW2 - AN ALTERNATE HISTORY

by Ralph Brandt

(2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$0.99)

I suppose this could be considered a riposte to works of Pearl Harbor Warning Optimism (see *Bitter Weeds* (2016) Advt.). Having prior warning, Kimmel sends the

Pacific Fleet out against the Kido Butai . . . and gets it almost completely wiped out.

Shocked by this, the U.S. quits building new warships and developing new long-range bombers. The key attacks against Germany and Japan are delivered by B-17's given extended range by mid-air refueling from KB-17 tankers.

And I haven't even mentioned the technical errors, such as the USS *Pennsylvania* being extracted from the drydock and sent out after the rest of the Battle Line, making 27 knots unescorted (hint, the *Pennsylvania* had a design speed of 21 knots).

Brandt has some good ideas but really needs to sit down and do some thinking.



DUNKIRK

Written and Directed by Christopher Nolan
Rated PG-13; 2017

See it.

In Nicholas Monsarrat's "I Was There" (*The Atlantic*, November 1957; *The Ship That Died of Shame*, 1959), three men are delivering a new yacht. The voyage goes past Dunkirk, and each of the men has a story about the evacuation. Then, they each confess that they weren't there. But the story ends, "Every Englishman was at Dunkirk."

And this is that sort of story. Nolan is not one to stick to a strictly linear narrative, and perhaps given the nature of the fields of operation of his three plots, that's not improper. Each of the three plots covers a different amount of time, and it's said so at the beginning. One plot concerns a soldier trying to get off the beach; another is about an older man (Mark Rylance, "Colonel Abel" in *Bridge of Spies* (2015)), his son, and another boy crossing the Channel to take soldiers off; and the third is about a RAF pilot covering the evacuation. There are linkings, people taking broader views (the colonel and the commander trying to load men on ships), and such, but the focus is on the events, not the people. The three plots come together at the end.

In fact, the soldier (Fionn Whitehead), who has the longest on-screen time, doesn't seem to

have a name; he is only referred to as "Tommy", which is more a general reference, the equivalent of "Grunt" now or "G.I." then.

So many reviewers and viewers didn't seem to pay attention. Like in complaints about the pilot (Tom Hardy) being killed, which [SPOILER] he isn't. Though that was a preposterously long glide he made over the beaches. Then there were political complaints; no women, no French, no persons of colour.

There are female nurses. There are a few Frenchmen, including one who nearly gets shot as a German spy. Commander Bolton (Kenneth Branagh) says he's staying behind to get the French off. There were four Indian supply companies in the BEF; about 800 men out of 400,000, so it's unlikely any would turn up there. Why does Connie Willis's "Ado" (*Asimov's*, January 1988) come to mind?

For what it's worth, Sir Michael Caine has an uncredited speaking role; he is talking to the pilots. (Not, unfortunately, "Looks bad in the newspapers and upsets civilians at their breakfast." (*Zulu* (1964)).)

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

The next solar eclipse will be a total eclipse on **August 21, 2017**, visible along a track that runs through Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The maximum totality will be two minutes forty seconds and will be visible from Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The eclipse is part of Saros 145, which began January 4, 1649 and will end April 17, 3009. The previous eclipse in this saros was on August 11, 1999 (see "Scenes from an Eclipse" by Alison Scott in *Plokta* V. 4 #3 WN 015, August 1999; available on plokta.com); the next will be September 2, 2035.

The lunar shadow will first touch the Earth's surface in the Pacific Ocean, at 15:46 Greenwich time. The first place on land where it can be seen is at Lincoln City, Oregon, at 9:04 a.m. PDT. The last place where the eclipse can be seen will be Charleston, South Carolina, at 2:46 p.m. EDT. The eclipse path will then pass into the Atlantic, and the lunar shadow will cease contact at 21:14 Greenwich time.

Maximum totality at Hopkinsville will begin at 1:24 CDT (also referred to as second contact), with first contact at 11:56. The totality will be 2 minutes 40 seconds, with third contact at 1:26, and fourth contact at 2:51, ending the eclipse. The last non-partial eclipse seen there was an annular eclipse on October 19, 1865 with a duration of 5 minutes 44 seconds, part of Saros 141, which began on May 19, 1613 and will end on June 13, 2857. The last total eclipse seen there was on July 29, 1478, with a duration of 2 minutes 17 seconds, part of Saros 127, which began on October 10, 991 and will end on March 21, 2452. The Cherokee did not think to record this with

pictographs of the sun being obliterated.

Hopkinsville is getting ready for this. Every hotel room in the city was booked up a year ago. There are special meetings to discuss activities. Little Green Men Day is adding a fourth day to their celebration for the attendees to see the eclipse. The newspaper is offering a countdown.

Estimates of total attendance began at 100,000 and have increased. Since the population of Christian County is only about 30,000 this is just a bit of an influx. Warnngs about the overstrain of cellular service have been made, which probably won't stop the look-at-their-phone-nonstop sorts.

("Little Green Men Day"? On the night of August 21, 1955, some of the residents of Kelly, Kentucky, a small town north of Hopkinsville on US-41, heard a noise outside their house. They saw, they said, unearthly creatures in metal suits. Which they promptly managed to prove shot-proof by dint of shooting at them with shotguns. The aliens, feeling unwelcome, departed, and the locals hightailed it to Hopkinsville and recounted their story. [In 2006 spoilsport Joe Nickell of Lexington and CSI reviewed the events, with the assistance of my relative William T. Turner among other locals, and concluded they had been shooting at owls and hitting a metal-walled building.]

For those who want a special eclipse thrill, and don't mind waiting around, an area centered on Makanda Township, near Carbondale, Illinois, will experience not only this eclipse but the eclipse of April 8, 2024 (part of Saros 139, which began May 17, 1501 and will end July 3, 2763).

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

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

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

The next total solar eclipse will be on **June 2, 2019**, visible across the South Pacific and in Chile and Argentina. The longest totality will be 4 minutes 33 seconds, at sea at 17° 24' S, 109° W. The eclipse is part of

Saros 127, which includes the eclipse at Hopkinsville of July 29, 1478.

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

Other useful eclipse websites:

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

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

Eclipse 2017:
<http://www.eclipse2017.org/>

Hopkinsville Eclipse Day:
<http://www.eclipseville.com/>

Kelly, Kentucky (home of Little Green Men Day):
<http://www.kellyky.com/>

BOY, THE WAY TOPHAT PLAYED
Review by Joseph T Major of
SPIES IN THE FAMILY:
An American Spymaster, His Russian Crown Jewel, and the Friendship that Helped End the Cold War
by Eva Dillon
(2017; HarperCollins Publishers;
ISBN 978-0-06-238588-8; \$28.99;
Harper (Kindle); \$14.99)



The four basic motives for spying are designated by the acronym MICE. This has nothing to do with that remake of Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, the device on the computer, or that little predator the cat is supposed to get. The basic motives are Money, Ideology, Compromise, and Ego.

For Money, look no farther than John Walker, pulling down two million for selling cryptological equipment. Ideology explains Teddy Hall, who wanted to save the world from Southern congressional committee chairmen. Compromise is a little more sordid, encompassing people like Sharon Scranage, whose Ghanian lover had the pictures (or in an infamous past example Alfred Redl and his strong young men). And Ego resides in the unprepossessing form of Pollard, Jonathan Pollard, Agent Oy Oy Seven of the Mossad, Licensed to Kvetch.

When Eva's father Paul Dillon died a lot of

strange people came to the funeral. And they had to run off the photographers.

This is the story of Paul Dillon, the CIA's Everyman, or so it seems. He began by recruiting Soviet-bloc refugees to go home and be killed (in effect) and ended up dying in harness, passing away from primary pulmonary hypertension. (Which, his daughter points out, is nowadays treated with Viagra. But Paul already had seven kids.)

After that inauspicious beginning, Dillon went through the ranks of the CIA. The Dillons had a all too typical Middle American lifestyle, albeit one often in foreign parts. Ozzie and Harriett, in other words, except Ozzie tended to leave home very anonymously. Then Dillon was handed a hot potato.

Dmitri Fedorovich Polyakov was a senior officer of the i i [Glavnoye razvedyvatel'noye upravleniye], "Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces", or for short GRU (and founded by Trotsky, but they didn't talk about *that*). For some reason, he was discontented, and wanted to talk to the Main Enemy. Dillon got the job.

This led to some odd ways of work. For example Dillon held a very senior rank in the CIA staff at the Delhi station. His sole task, however, was running Agent TOPHAT, Polyakov.

Which concerned some people. As you know, Bob, a Soviet KGB officer named Anatoli Mikhailovich Golitsyn had defected to the US. Golitsyn had a lot of hot information. For example, the Soviet Union had set up an elaborate charade to deceive their enemies; the Sino-Soviet split was a hoax, the Prague Spring was a hoax, the dissident movement was a hoax, and so on. And, Golitsyn declared emphatically, he was so important that **every** subsequent Soviet defector would be a fraud; he was the last real one.

A normal evaluation process would have characterized this as "How interesting," and tried to sort out useful information.

However, Golitsyn had been brought to the attention of James Angleton. In *The Spike*, by Robert Moss and Arnaud de Borchgrave (1980), the Angleton-version, Nick Flower, is a correct lone voice crying in the wilderness. More nonfictionally, Angleton's loyal subordinate Tennent "Pete" Bagley found one of the former opposition who charmingly verified all of his late boss's deductions (*Spymaster: Startling Cold War Revelations of a Soviet KGB Chief* (2013; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 13 #1)

In short, Angleton believed that TOPHAT was a fraud, and in effect that Dillon was being used, if not worse. This did not do well.

Eventually Angleton's dominance came to an end and Polyakov became regarded as a sincere and well-informed source. He continued to produce until he retired.

Paul Dillon was first to go. His pulmonary hypertension got to him and he was dropped as the TOPHAT case officer. In his final

assignment he was the escort for MiG Pilot Viktor Belenko, who defected to Japan with a MiG-25 "Foxbat" during MidAmeriCon in 1976. As the escort, in one incident of cultural differences Dillon had to help Belenko to keep from getting thrown in jail for bribing a policeman when he was pulled over for speeding. In Russia that was what you did. John Barron reports on this in *MiG Pilot: The Final Escape of Lieutenant Belenko* (1980) without mentioning the name of the CIA escort.

And then Paul died. The funeral mass had a lot of covert people, and naturally Philip Agee sent photographers to take pictures and have them identified for his Soviet friends.

Polyakov was unmolested until Philip Hanssen and Aldrich Ames identified him to the KGB. He was tried for treason and shot.

Given how ubiquitous Eva makes her father out to be, one might wonder if there is a bit of "Counterfeit Spy" here. No one identified Paul Dillon at the time.

And she had other problems; she complains about not being able to find Viktor Belenko. Yet Alexander Zuyev, who did the same thing Belenko did except with a MiG-29 "Fulcrum", had no trouble getting together with Belenko, and together they celebrated the fall of the Soviet Union (see *Fulcrum: A Top Gun Pilot's Escape from the Soviet Empire* (1992) by Alexander Zuyev and Malcolm McConnell). I guess it's not where you look, it's who you know.

What made Polyakov betray his government? It wasn't Money, he never asked for any and only got a few gifts. It wasn't Ideology, he never seems to have cursed the commies. It wasn't Compromise, they didn't have a thing on him. And it apparently wasn't Ego; he came across as modest and unassuming.

Perhaps it was what motivated his fellow GRU officer Vladimir "Viktor Suvorov" Rezun to defect:

The betrayers of the homeland are those who are now in the Kremlin. . . . Those in the Kremlin who have brought my people to complete moral and physical degradation — they are the traitors. These people are driving my comrades to their deaths in Afghanistan, demanding the deaths of innocent people — they are the criminals.

— *Inside Soviet Military Intelligence* (1984)

WEIGHT LOSS by Lisa

I have begun weighing myself every Friday.

Week 1: 166.8. Happy! I'm down a pound.

Week 2: I have not done my proper amount of walking and the scales reflect

this, logging me at 167.6. I resolve to do my proper exercise in the future.

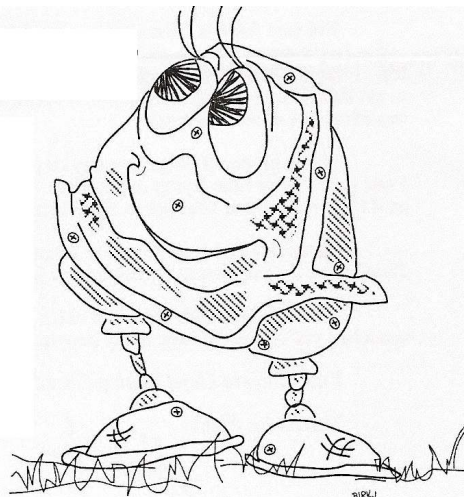
Week 3: This week I have done my walking and the scales reward me by reading 166.8. I am happy again.

Week 4: This morning the scales make me happy indeed. They log me at 165.8. If I can continue this I could well be at my joking goal of 150 by spring.

ADULT COLORING by Lisa

Coworker N has started an adult coloring group. It sounded interesting so I bought some crayons and a coloring book. It turned out that I should have bought coloring pencils, not crayons. Fortunately N had provided supplies. It was not difficult afterwards to find the proper tools. Family Dollar sells coloring pencils. So do Wal-mart, Staples and Office Depot. I liked coloring more than I thought I would. It is fun to blend the colors to create something that hopefully other people will like. Now I have two big sets and one small set of coloring materials, one big set for practice before and after work, a second big set for weekend practice at whatever other library we visit and a small set for my purse so that I can practice my coloring on small tables.

Review by Richard Dengrove of
**A MAN AND A PLANE:
An Alternate Germany**
by Joseph T Major
(2016; CreateSpace;
ISBN 978-1535095365; \$25.99;
Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)



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

The reviews of this novel in Amazon have been rave reviews, except for one who panned it. While I myself have found a few problems,

my position is far more skewed toward the rave reviews than the one doing the panning.

Before I get into my review. I would like to give you a precis of the novel; so you will understand what I'm talking about. The idea is that the Red Baron, Manfred von Richtofen, survived World War I. In our timeline, he died before the war ended. In the novel, he went home where he presided over a sizeable extended family.

Of course, there was the problem of making enough money to support yourself in the Weimar Republic. As a civilian, he also made a reputation as a civilian flyer; and, when the mark bounced back, he grew wealthy from his investments.

In addition, he visited the United States. While there, he made investments too, including a race horse. More important for the novel, he made friends with many notables. Among them, the Marx Brothers; the World War I fighter ace Captain Eddie Rickenbacker; the aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart and her publisher husband George Putnam; and the critic and commentator Alexander Woolcott. Some visited Germany while the Red Baron acted as Chancellor; and made their mark on events there.

As you can see, the Red Baron's finest hour was yet to come. In fact, a number of very finest hours. President Hindenburg asked him to serve, and, eventually, he accepted. He went on to serve as a Chancellor for many years as a centrist and compromise maker.

That saved Germany from the Nazis. When he entered office as Chancellor, in effect if not with the name plate, the Nazis threatened to take over as they did in our timeline. When he left, they had been rendered mere nuisances who shared the fringe with the Communists.

However, his career as Chancellor did not end with putting the Nazis in their place. One crisis after another called him back to serve.

Then, as one last present to Germany, he defeated the Soviet Union in its attempt to conquer Poland. The reason why was to contain the Soviet Union. At the time, morally speaking, the Polish government stood heads and tails above the Soviets. While Poland was fascist like Italy, it remained far less tyrannical and threatening than the Soviet Union with its show trials and mass deaths.

I guess this gives a good enough idea of the plot. Now, as I said, I will review the novel. If someone asked me whether this was a good read, I would have to say yes. However, everything is more complex than yes. So, to give you a better idea of my view, I will tell both what I liked and disliked about the novel.

First, what I liked. One thing — in fact, what made the novel — was Joe's research. Joe Major did an incredible amount of it, whether he is talking about American notables or German history. He is not shy about revealing his sources either. He adds a lot of end notes where he separates the novel's fact from the novel's fiction. In addition, he has compiled a bibliography where it looks like you can read

about the era in depth; and further separate the facts in this novel from the fiction.

Another thing I liked about Joe's novel is that it kept me reading. I found it easy to get through. No paragraphs which puzzled me; and I had to read them a second and third time. I got the essentials on the first read practically all the time. Along with the other pluses, this made the novel a very pleasant read.

Unlike those who gushed, however, I had two criticisms of Joe's novel. Neither was fatal for me. I enjoyed the tale anyway. However, I think a larger crowd would have enjoyed the novel better if they were corrected.

My first criticism is I wonder how many people these days have heard of the Marx Brothers, Amelia Earhart, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, etc. This first criticism does not pertain to me. At least I heard of them. The Marx Brothers and Amelia Earhart, I more than had heard of. However, I wonder how many people under thirty have. Under forty.

While that criticism does not pertain to me, the next criticism does. I think the novel would have been more interesting still if Joe increased the action and told us more about German history after World War I, both in fact and his alternate timeline. Just expanding on the action, like the violent behavior of the Nazis, rather than passing it over, which he sometimes did, would, for me, have helped.

I know Joe didn't want to include zombies or literal cliffhangers. However, I think the action and suspense could have been souped up without hurting the novel.

As I said, none of this would have stopped me from reading this novel. I found it delightful; and I might take a gander at some of Joe's other novels sometime. I, of course, wish him luck in making much needed money off them.

InConJunction XXXVII Con Report by Leigh Kimmel

InConJunction is an old-school science fiction convention held each year in Indianapolis, Indiana. It is hosted by the Circle of Janus, the local science fiction fan club, and as such is very fan-focused, without the autograph mill atmosphere that is becoming a real turn-off at a lot of the larger media conventions. This year it was held over the weekend of June 30 to July 2, 2017 at the Marriott Indianapolis East, which would be within walking distance for me if the neighborhood were walkable.

Because we needed to get a good spot for our van to load in and out, we went over to the hotel right after lunch to get parked near the loading dock but not within it. As a result, we had most of the afternoon to sit around in the air conditioning and relax. I pulled out a story and tried to get some work done on it.

To our surprise, they started dealer load-in early, so I had to scramble to put away my

notebook and get out to the van to start carrying everything in. However, it was still a slow process, since I was the only one of us physically up to the process of lifting all those boxes of t-shirts and books. It didn't help that we were getting hot and humid weather, which I found enervating. There were more than a few times where I just had to stop and try to pull my brain back together to think of the next step I needed to take.

Once we got everything inside, we had to start assembling our structures so that we could get merchandise out. Even with fewer structures to build, it was still time-consuming enough work that we weren't done before the dealers' room closed for the night. We went over to the con suite to see what was happening there, then headed back home to try to get some rest before the big push to get set up.

On Friday we had to get up and get going in a banging hurry to squeeze every possible minute of setup time out of the morning. However, the rush resulted in us forgetting several items, so one of our team had to make three separate trips back home to retrieve forgotten items.

We did get finished setting up in time to look around the dealers' room. However, this was at least partly a function of having less space to put things out, and thus less time spent in unpacking small fragile figurines and the like for those displays. Also, the smaller dealers' room made it easier to make the complete round of the area.

Once the doors opened to the general membership, we settled in to focus on selling. Obviously we had to dial back our expectations from even the smaller anime conventions we had done in the middle of June, let alone the giant comic cons we sometimes do. Even so, it was frustrating to spend so much of our time standing around in hurry-up-and-wait mode between customers.

After the dealers' room closed for the evening, we headed over to the con suite to have some munchies. I pulled out a notebook and did a little writing, mostly ideas I'd been thinking about while doing the highly physical labor of loading in and setting up. Then we went to the Capricorn party and reminisced about that convention's better days. I really miss going to it, since my very first convention ever was Capricorn XV, back in 1995. But after the loss we took in 2016, I simply couldn't justify going back, at least not as long as we're going to be trying to sell merchandise. Maybe if my indie writing career reaches the point that I can go purely as a promotional effort, but that would be a long shot.

When we got home, I ran up to the storage unit to pick up some books and a box of figurines that had been forgotten. Then I wrote some e-mails.

On Saturday we didn't have to get up so painfully early, and we could actually take a little time to eat and to make sure we had all our things before we left. When we got to the con hotel, we dropped our stuff off at our booths in

the dealers' room, then headed over to the con suite to grab a second breakfast.

Once we got everything open, we finally got some serious sales, big enough to make a real dent in our book stock. We also had some people ask about other books, so I made notes of things to retrieve from the storage unit.

When the dealers' room closed for the evening, we went over to the con suite to hang out and munch until the parties. I got my notebook out and made some more notes before we headed off to the Honorverse party.

Afterward, I ran up to the storage unit to retrieve more stuff. That is one of the good things about being a local dealer — you don't have to kick yourself when you find out that someone wants *The Thing You Didn't Bring*.

On Sunday we headed back to the hotel for the final day of sales. We dropped by the con suite and got some more munchies, then opened our tables for sales. At first traffic was so slow it made me wonder why we were even bothering. Then everything sped up to double-time and we had several major book sales while I was supposed to be packing all the figurines.

Once we did get everything packed, it was time to start hauling out far too much merchandise. Again, I ended up being the only able-bodied person hauling stuff out, and by the time we got it all out and packed into the vehicles, I was so worn out I could hardly even think about cooking. So we decided to just run up to our favorite Chinese buffet and grab supper. We arrived just in time to get seated, and they actually turned out the "open" light while we were finishing up eating. But it was a very satisfying meal, and a lot easier than trying to scare up something at home.

ONLY TWO GLITCHES

Review by Sue Burke
**2016 HUGO SHORT FICTION
NOMINEES**



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

Half of the 18 stories nominated for the Hugo Awards, which will be presented on August 11 at Worldcon, were also nominated for the Nebulas. Despite a couple of works that came from over the horizon and aren't appropriate, I think the nominees represent a good overview of today's speculative short

fiction, and I expect to be pleased by whoever wins. I reviewed the Nebula nominees in the April 2017 issue.

NOVELLA

This Census-Taker, by China Miéville (Tor)

A young boy living in an eerie post-war small town believes his father killed his mother, but he can't prove it. Miéville is one of my favorite writers, but I don't think this is his best work. While the writing is beautiful at the sentence level, the plot moves slowly and ends with loose ends all over the place. Still, there are moments of slow, pure terror to savor.

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

If you like Bujold, you'll like this. Penrick, a demon-ridden young man (this is nicer than it sounds), must help solve a murder, and things take a strange turn. It's set in a medieval-like world of five gods who periodically meddle in human affairs. Much of the story explores the world and the people in it, and if it's not always fascinating, it's always fun. As you would expect from Bujold, it all unfolds masterfully. That said, I'm not a big Bujold fan, although many people are, and I can't fault them. This story is just too gentle for my tastes, but I don't regret the time I spent reading it. While it won't rank high on my ballot, I will vote for it and won't mind if it wins.

In fact, all the novella nominees deserve to win. Four were also on the Nebula ballot: ***The Ballad of Black Tom***, by Victor LaValle; ***The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe***, by Kij Johnson; ***Every Heart a Doorway***, by Seanan McGuire (which won the Nebula); and ***A Taste of Honey***, by Kai Ashante Wilson.

NOVELETTE

Touring With the Alien, by Carolyn Ives Gilman (Clarksworld)

A newly arrived alien takes a secret bus tour of the United States. During the trip, the driver sorts through her own problems as she bonds with the alien's caretaker and eventually the alien itself. It's a quiet story exploring how people at the fringes of alien contact get caught up in the intrigue, and it reaches a satisfying conclusion, but perhaps not as big a twist as the author had hoped.



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

This is yet another Sad Puppy nomination meant to dishonor the Hugo Awards, although it reflects more on the Puppies than it does on the author. An alien with three boobs falls for a customer who is sort of a half-human half-Tyrannosaurus rex. I won't be voting for it, but it's not the worst thing on the Hugo ballot.

The Tomato Thief, by Ursula Vernon (Tor)

An old lady living in the desert catches a shapeshifter stealing her tomatoes and decides to help free the unfortunate young woman from a malevolent spirit. And that's what happens, pretty much as you might expect. The worldbuilding is impressive, but I don't think the story ever rises above a harmless young adult tale. By "harmless" I mean that it will not make the reader feel any doubt or unease about the world, fear for the safety or integrity of the protagonist, or wonder whether good and evil might be complicated and complex concepts.

The Art of Space Travel, by Nina Allan (Tor)

A woman who works at a hotel copes with a very ill mother who has never said who her father is. Astronauts will be speaking at the hotel before a mission to Mars, and the woman starts to think about the mystery of her father again. Essentially, this is literary fiction from the future, a fine story that explores human relationships and how both successful and failed space explorations affect the people who never set foot in a rocket.

Other stories that had also been nominated for the Nebula are: ***The Jewel and Her Lapidary***, by Fran Wilde, which I didn't like; and ***You'll Surely Drown If You Stay Here***, by Alyssa Wong, which I did.

SHORT STORIES

The City Born Great, by N. K. Jemisin (Tor)

This surreal story tells about a city that must be born – New York City, to be precise. In this tale of magic, a young man is recruited to sing it through the birthing process. But the city has enemies. While the telling gets heavy-handed in its treatment of homelessness, race, sexual orientation, and the police, the story's energy keeps building to the end.

That Game We Played During The War, by Carrie Vaughn (Tor)

Two former enemies had bonded over chess. Now the long, exhausting war has given way to uneasy peace. But the people on one side of the war are telepaths, and those on the other side are not. How can they even play a game together? The way they do shows how peace will be possible. The story stands out for its careful characterizations and its thought into what telepathy does to telepaths and the people whose thoughts they read.

An Unimaginable Light, by John C. Wright (God, Robot: Castilia House)

In this story, a robot and human have a

debate: "I do not wish my thoughts to house any inappropriate content!" "Human emotion and passion must accord with reality; the self deceptions you claim are innate to all thought and must be eschewed. We robots are meant to serve man, not to destroy them." (Sic.) This kind of debate continues for many pages. Apparently, it's what the Sad Puppies consider fine writing. They soil themselves with dishonor yet again. The Stix Hiscock story is genuinely better in many respects.

Other short stories on the ballot are ***A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers***, by Alyssa Wong, which I love but don't think is speculative fiction; ***Our Talons Can Crush Galaxies***, by Brooke Bolander, which I love and think definitely falls within the genre; and ***Seasons of Glass and Iron***, by Amal El-Mohtar, which I think tries too hard to set old fairy tales right – but it won the Nebula.

HUGO RESULTS

Courtesy of *File 770*
(<http://file770.com>)

Best Novel

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

Best Novella

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

Best Novelette

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

Best Short Story

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

Best Related Work

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

Best Graphic Story

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

Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form)

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

Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form)

The Expanse: "Leviathan Wakes",

written by Mark Fergus and Hawk Ostby, directed by Terry McDonough

Best Editor – Short Form

Ellen Datlow

Best Editor – Long Form

Liz Gorinsky

Best Professional Artist

Julie Dillon

Best Semiprozine

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

“Best Fanzine”

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

Best Fancast

Tea and Jeopardy, presented by Emma Newman with Peter Newman

“Best Fan Writer”

Abigail Nussbaum

Best Fan Artist

Elizabeth Leggett

Best Series

The Vorkosigan Saga, by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen)

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer

Ada Palmer (1st year of eligibility)

“Alien Stripper” (the Rabid Puppies Best Novelette finalist) came in dead last with only 45 first place votes out of 1981 (77 nominations). “An Unimaginable Light” (the Rabid Puppies Best Short Story finalist) came in dead last with only 58 first place votes out of 2148 (87 nominations). Vox Day (the Rabid Puppies Best Editor Long Form finalist) came in dead last with only 32 first place votes out of 1407 (83 nominations). The Castalia House Blog (the Rabid Puppies “Best Fanzine” finalist) came in dead last with only 22 first place votes out of 1210 (85 nominations). Jeffro Johnson (the Rabid Puppies Best Fanwriter finalist) came in dead last with only 20 votes out of 1487 (80 nominations).

It’s been obvious that they’re not in it to win, but they are losing so badly that even what they’re trying to do is failing. Consider, though, that John C. Wright is defending Science Fiction As It Usta Be; he’s writing to the literary standards of thirties pulp.

This has happened before, if not so organized. Christopher Priest tried to get *Battlefield Earth* nominated for the Best Novel Hugo, in order to discredit the awards. Even though affiliates of the author also tried, the scheme didn’t work.

On the other hand, *Ghostbusters* came in dead last with only 143 first place votes out of 2866 (297 nominations).

Much to Chris Barkley’s pleasure, the YA Award was approved.

And in other news . . . the Dragon Awards seem to be descending into farce, if they weren’t already there. The administrators have admitted they can add nominees. There are so many categories that there is no focus. And certain hydrophobic persons are exulting that these are the real Fan’s Awards.

The flaw in this awards procedure was demonstrated in 1966. But to the Dragon*Con people that was like so old-timey and five minutes ago.

(Until 1966 anyone could vote for the Hugos. But Caz Cazedessus printed a Hugo nominations ballot in *ERB-dom*. *ERB-dom* won the Best Fanzine Hugo at the Tricon that year. After that you had to be a member to nominate and vote.)

WELL, WE WANTED FREDDY KRUEGER TO BE THE AGENCY SPOKESMAN, BUT HE'D ALREADY SIGNED WITH THE IRS.



WORLDCONS

2018

Worldcon 76
San José, California
<http://worldcon76.org/>
August 16-20, 2018

2019

Dublin 2019
Dublin
<https://dublin2019.com/>
August 15-19, 2019

Reports indicate that while attendees enjoyed NASFiC 2017, there were only about 200 of them. Perhaps their only having a Twitter feed kept people less informed about the con beforehand. There was a special “Caribbean” membership rate that does not seem to have been taken up.

There were considerable comments about Helsinki being overcrowded; rooms being too small for the desired attendance for the panels, no time for discussion afterwards, and the like. I haven’t seen any discussion of the non-program; parties, get-togethers, and the like.

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

There is a certain fondness for bids that are more exotic than workable. Remember the Bermuda Triangle Bid for 1988? Neil Rest and Joni Stopa started it as a hoax, but so was New Zealand in 2020 at first. The bid provoked Bob Asprin’s and Phil Foglio’s graphic presentation and novel “The Capture”, but not only wasn’t it serious, it wasn’t workable, which didn’t stop it from coming in second in the votes.

It looks as if the Worldcon will be a **Worldcon** for two consecutive years. This may give an impetus to various proposals to set up a permanent North American con. The ones I have seen have ranged from unworkable to risible (and then there was Robert Sacks).

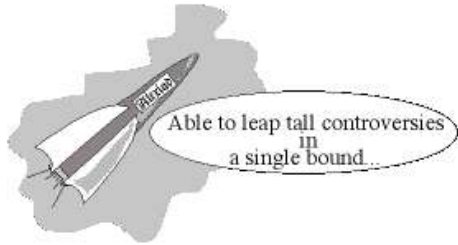
GLADYS J. BOYER

April 24, 1936 — August 13, 2017

Gladys Boyer, mother of our good friend, faithful contributor, and hard working dealer Leigh Kimmel, has died at home in Heyworth, Illinois. The funeral was August 18.

Our condolences to Leigh and Larry and the rest of the family.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** June 28, 2017
cathypl@sympatico.ca

Rolly pollies are probably sow bugs—not pleasant to find in your basement!! :-> It usually means there is damp getting in somehow. I have never heard of them as pets.

No, they are not sow bugs but are closely related. Nor are they really bugs, although they are also known as pillbugs for their ability to roll into little balls, which sowbugs cannot do. They are more closely related to shrimp than to insects. I had not heard of them as pets either but I played with them often when I was a child.

— LTM

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodlouse>

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** June 28, 2017
 6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA
 19149-2128 USA
darrells@comcast.net

The last cartoon on page 18 is actually a good one. You have noticed how modern technology seems to have improved the sanity of the public. It used to be that people talking to themselves and having arguments with invisible persons were deemed mad. Now they are merely on the phone.

July 20, 2017

As for your being out of step with science fiction (p. 1), I think you're absolutely right that the thrust is major publishing these days is to find the next J.K. Rowling or Stephen King and discard everything else. Back in the days of the Ghetto in science fiction, we had a lot of freedoms we don't have today. If, in the eyes of the Suits that run the publishing corporations, science fiction was just a product and any book with a science fiction cover on it would sell a predictable amount, this may have meant that there was a ceiling beyond which very few books could ever rise, but there was also a floor below which very few would ever fall. If any SF book sold as

well as any other, then it did not matter what was in it. There was, in effect, no adult supervision. SF editors could be lazy, and reprint old pulp hack stuff, or they could publish boldly eccentric and experimental material, and it didn't matter. Can you imagine story collections by R.A. Lafferty or Avram Davidson in mass-market paperback today? Could you imagine a book like David Bunch's *Moderan* in mass market today? Unthinkable. Impossible. Most of the really innovative stuff is in the small presses.

I think we lost our innocence in the '80s when, as a result of Baby Boomer demographics, SF novels began to make the bestseller lists regularly. What the Suits did not understand is that writers like Heinlein and Asimov and Farmer and Herbert had been building their readerships for a couple decades. Baby Boomers were now in their thirties. They could afford hardcover books. So when Asimov's *Foundation's Edge* came out in hardcover (1982) a lot of his fans bought it all at once, and it was a bestseller. This happened again and again with later Dune novels, with late Heinlein, with the Anne McCaffrey dragon books, etc. Now that it was clear that SF could become bestsellers, the Suits divided the field up into bestsellers and failed bestsellers. A midlist writer, who in the past could have expected to sell novel after novel without ever reaching the bestseller lists, was now deemed a failure. They knew how his books sold, and there was no upward curve on the graph, so the investments were transferred to some newer writer who might become a bestseller. So the old-timer (e.g. John Brunner) was out. The newcomer would get three or four chances, and if the numbers were not right, he was out. The field is now littered with what I call post-novelists, i.e. often very distinguished writers who can sell all the short fiction they want, but will never get into the major publishers again. The people who have survived in this environment (sometimes after several changes in byline) tend to play it very safe, and tend to write series, often very generic series in safe categories like the George R.R. Martin imitation epic fantasy or in military SF. So much of the creativity we saw in the '60s or '70s is gone, or confined to the small and independent presses.

Mike Resnick was saying the same thing back in the eighties. You'll note that he now only publishes in "small and independent presses".

And "safe categories" — following the trend has been common for a long while. One example that struck home was looking at *HundredZeros.com* once and seeing the books available were almost entirely romances, and *Fifty Shades of Gray* knockoffs at that.

— JTM

One of the ironies is that the Baby Boomer demographic has passed. Such readers are now in their sixties, and buying fewer books. So what was taken for granted in the 1980s is unattainable today. I can remember when six out of the ten hardcover fiction titles on the New York Times bestseller lists were science fiction. We will not be seeing that again.

From: **Robert Runté** July 5, 2017
runte@uleth.ca
<http://runte.blogspot.ca/>

In regards to the Paul Gadzikowski cartoon on the last page of the June 2017 issue of *Alexiad*, I am reliably informed that this is a real thing: people with mental health issues that lead them to speak aloud to people who are either not real or currently absent are now routinely issued with fake bluetooth earpieces that they may more easily navigate through the general public without attracting undo attention.

From: **Milt Stevens** July 6, 2017
 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA
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In *Alexiad* #93, the letter column contains a lot of comments on losing weight. Originally, I was going to say there were a lot of comments on losing weight in the letter column. Then I realized I had never heard of anyone losing weight in a letter column, so I revised the sentence.

I also lost 20 lbs earlier this year. I had this intestinal infection, and it worked really great for weight loss. However, I wouldn't recommend this method of weight loss to anyone. (Well, maybe to a few people I don't like much.) My weight went from the low 190s to the low 170s and has stayed there. Strangely enough, I don't feel any lighter, and nobody has commented that I look any thinner. The only difference that I've noticed is that hard chairs are a lot less comfortable than they once were.

I've had three sure ways to lose weight; cold sores, hiatus hernia, and Crohn's. I don't recommend any of them, though.

My weight was usually stable for long periods of my life. I was 5-11 and 155 lbs in high school and college. At 23, I went in the Navy and had to develop some muscles. My weight went to the 170-180 range and stayed there for the next 40 years. Then I shrank to 5-9 and my weight went to the low 190s. I figured it was just an adjustment to age and didn't worry about it. So now I'm in the low 170s again. The weight seems stable, and I don't see any reason to worry about it. If my weight fell much further, the trend could be reversed by regular visits to my local pizza parlor.

Joseph writes that he feels he is getting out of step with science fiction. Personally, I feel

more out of step with award nominated fantasy novels. I don't feel any enthusiasm for most of them. I've probably always had a preference for science fiction over fantasy, but the divide between the two seems to be getting more pronounced.

So many of them seem to trace back to either Darkover or Buffy.

— JTM

I always manage to find a few SF items I really like. On this year's Hugo ballot, I really liked *A Closed and Common Orbit* by Becky Chambers. I liked it so well that I went back and read the first novel in the series, *A Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*. Both novels are definitely worth it. From a couple of years ago, I really liked *A Darkling Sea* by James L. Cambias. I'm still enjoying the *Expanse* series through book six, and the TV series is excellent also. Greg Egan is another writer I've been enjoying.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** July 8, 2017
2651 Arlington Drive, #302,
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This comments on *Alexiad* April 2017. Late late again. I don't know what it was this time around. I finished this zine a while back; but I think I took an inordinate amount of time on a letter to another zine. However, I'm back. Of course, I don't expect you to clap because I don't look like Steve McQueen.

What do I look like? Apparently, not too bad for a seventy-two year old. The body is more proportional than it used to be. The reason is diabetes scared me a number of years ago, like it did Lisa recently. Plus arthritis scared me. I exercise one day with weights and, another day, walk on the treadmill.

At least, I don't look like a rabid puppy. On the other hand, I have to eat crow. I and a lot of others didn't believe the new rules would work to keep the "Rabid Puppies" at bay. They seem to have. Also, fannish vigilance has. Finally, I have to give credit to the puppies who know how to press every other fan's buttons.

As for the book *All the Way with JFK*, I can't say I think President John F. Kennedy was Saint John Kennedy. Some have acted as though he was. He definitely played hard ball at times. And his positions were not positions most of us currently, whether Liberal or Conservative, would take.

We know how John F. Kennedy was. How was Andrew Offutt? Can you believe a son, like Chris, about his father? Can you believe a father about his son? There's lots of animosity in families — even my own. On the other hand, I reconciled myself with my father long ago; Chris never can.

Now for the letters. While Dale Speirs

may have forgiven his father, he can't forgive George Lucas' scripts for the Star Wars franchise. For instance, he asks whether people do the same stupid things over and over again.

I can vouch for that in government. While I worked as a Fed, both Democrats and Republicans were doing the same stupid things over and over. On the other hand, as viewers, it might make a more satisfying story if the Empire and Rebels learned from experience.

I found a nice picture:



Also, I would give the Empire some everyday concerns. As you say, maybe somebody should figure out how they afford death stars. Let me add to that: who supports the Empire? I hear that only in the novels is it clear various planets do. Of course, that doesn't answer the question of why.

Another comment I would like to make does not concern Star Wars but something just as entrenched in myth, Pearl Harbor. Is that ever shrouded in myth! Concerning it, Timothy Lane comments that, before Pearl Harbor day, General Walter Short was more afraid of sabotage by Japanese than by the prospect of an invasion.

Like I said, he had probably read Hector Bywater's *The Great Pacific War* (1925), which has a Japanese uprising on Oahu.

It reminded me of a tidbit I heard. Unlike General Short, not every big wig in Hawaii was suspicious of the Japanese. The next territorial governor, General Delos C. Emmons, resisted pressure from Washington to intern the Japanese.

I don't mind whether the Japanese come here or the Arabs. However, some foreigners should stay in their place. Joe, I am taking about DeepSouthCon/Westercon, which you were talking about. I am fairly involved with DeepSouthCon. I have been going every year

and attending the business meeting.

I know, for instance, the constitution of the Southern Fandom Confederation limits DeepSouthCon to the States of the Confederacy. Furthermore, I have been corresponding with one of the advocates of DeepSouthCon/Westercon.

I came to the conclusion that he was joking because his reasoning was, like yours, DeepSouthCon was south and so was Southern California. Nope, wrong south; and he damned well knew it.

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that all Southern Fandom Confederation affairs should take place in the Confederate States. In fact, I would gladly attend one under the auspices of the Confederation in California. Just that I think all the DeepSouthCons should take place in those States in accord with its constitution.

That was one Constitution. Robert Kennedy mentions another, the US Constitution. He's right that the US started out as a Republic and, ostensibly, with independent States. However, unhappiness with both have attenuated them, often by Amendments to the Constitution.

A lot of things you think are one are many. Contrariwise, there are a lot of things you think are many but are one. The US Constitution isn't the only one. Of course, it depends on how you look at things. John Hertz claimed that there was only one universe; and, at one point, he used the Greek word "cosmos," of which a present day Greek said there could only be one. Others have disagreed. The Ancient Greek sect of the Epicureans thought there was an 'infinite' number of cosmos, or cosmoi. All designed like the believers in one cosmos designed theirs.

I guess that's the end. We ended with one, which could be 'infinite.' I guess we could have ended with the Rabid Puppies, John F. Kennedy, or Pearl Harbor. However, they didn't come last in your zine; only the one one did. The reason is I'm sufficiently obsessive compulsive about my sequences.

From: **John Hertz** July 7, 2017
236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057 USA

In memory of the late Baron Thomas of Swynnerton (1931-2017) I've just read his intermezzo, as he called it — I suppose, between *Rivers of Gold* (2003) and *The Golden Age* (2010), or maybe *Eduardo Barrios and the Recovery of Spain* (2009) — *Beaumarchais in Seville* (2006).

Of course Beaumarchais never was in Seville. Only Figaro.

For me a highlight was this throw-away line on p. 126 — three-quarters of the way through — about the new (1764) palace in Madrid:

It was very grand and lasted as the home of the kings till the temporary overthrow of the Spanish monarchy in 1931.

None of my fellow Leftists have appreciated it.

When Thomas was raised to the peerage, he took for his motto (as you may know) "Late but in time".

When *The Murder of Rudolf Hess* came out in 1979, people wondered if Hugh Thomas had gone gaga. However it seemed that Dr. W. Hugh Thomas was not Hugh Swynnerton Thomas, who two years later became a life peer.

— JTM

July 28, 2017

Darrell Schweitzer's poetry is always an ornament. Once when Evelyn Leeper said he was the only one to rhyme "Cthulhu" in a limerick, I responded (*Vanamonde* 451)

"Hey, Abbott! I think it's Cthulhu!"
 "Such blubbering never will do, Lou.
 When we met Frankenstein
 The box office was fine;
 You knew our next would be a lulu."

I applaud Sue Burke's haiku on "lotus after midnight". At first seeing her report of a haiku earring party I thought that was the topic, reminding me of earrings in the shape of Hakuin Zenji's mu which Liza Dalby wore when I met her in April ("A Skiff Hails a Bark", <File770. com> at 26 May 17, Van 1246).

Poems in our ears
 Stretching our lobes — do short, long,
 Have Buddha-nature?

Sue knows, and you may too, what earlobes have to do with images of the Buddha (also what Hakuin had to do with mu and Buddha-nature). Poor fellow, his teaching was "No images", but it didn't stick. Muhammad's did.

Thinking which of the Three Stooges most resembles which U.S. President reminds me of a T-shirt which I've only found Darrell, and Harry Turtledove, Byzantine enough to wear.

Might the Alexis Gilliland cartoon on p. 9 be a self-portrait?

Robert Kennedy, thanks; I hope you're not boasting about not having nominated for the Hugos. When nice guys leave, into whose hands does that give the field?

From: **Rod E. Smith** July 21, 2017
 stickmaker@usa.net

One reason I haven't been contributing much lately is that I have been involved with Doppler Press to bring out my Masks stories for Kindle. The first two are now available from Amazon, with more to come.

I started these tales in 2004, mostly as a hobby. They were posted to a couple of e-mail writer's lists. Starting a few months back I

was invited to post them to a writer's blog. They were popular enough that the associated Doppler Press offered me a contract to publish the first one. That sold so well — and so quickly — that they have already brought out the second story in the series. I don't know if you include what is basically promotional material in *Alexiad*, but if you do I'd appreciate a mention.

The stories are superhero tales set in my own universe, with seventeen completed so far. One of the main characters is a man who becomes a female superhero (it seemed like a good idea at the time). I know that neither of those are to everyone's tastes.

First book: Randal Devon was one of those born with the potential for super powers, but he never wanted to become a costumed adventurer. A mask. However, he did like to help. This led to him becoming a non-costumed assistant for a super team. When an emergency occurs he is the only person with powers who is available to help. Randy's abilities include being able to alter his appearance, and he decides on a female alter-ego. This is partly for the disguise value this provides, and partly due to the components available for piecing together a costume.

Template — Randy's super identity — proves herself to be powerful and competent. After more than a year of helping with disasters and fighting superhuman brawlers — successfully, for the most part — though, Randy still feels like something is missing. It is this realization, and the idea which follows, which lead Randy to what he now sees as his life's work.

Second book: Setting up a school for training young superhumans had seemed like a good idea — was a good idea — but there are times when Template misses the life of fighting empowered thugs and foiling mad geniuses. Not that there aren't some of both at the Pine Island Academy, but they're either teachers or students. Unfortunately, with a political movement against supers gaining power in the US the school may also become a refuge... if it can survive.

Both books are listed at:

<http://amzn.to/2v6trVT>

See Darrell Schweitzer's letter above.

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** July 23, 2017
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Thank you for *Alexiad* Vol. 16, No. 3 (June 2017), Whole Number 93.

Many years ago I found that I was not reading most of the stories in *Asimov's*. I wrote and asked them to transfer my subscription to my subscription to *ANALOG* and they did so. Now, I find myself in the same position with

ANALOG. So, after more years than I care to remember my subscription to *ANALOG* will not be renewed.

I had the same problem.

The DVD "SPACE BETWEEN US" was obtained from the library. It's not a really bad movie. But, it has so many holes in it that one could drive a truck through. The major one is how to keep it a secret that a female astronaut is pregnant, gives birth to a boy on Mars, and she dies in childbirth. She is cremated and her ashes returned to Earth to be spread in an ocean. Buried on Mars would have made more sense. Anyway, the existence of the boy is kept a secret. The main part of the movie involves the boy at age 18. How is his existence kept a secret for all those years? By the age of 18 there has to be several hundred people knowing of his survival. As the old saying goes, two people can keep a secret if one of them is dead. Anyway, as the movie progressed I kept lowering my rating on my scale of 1-5, finally giving it a 1.5. If anyone else has seen the movie I would be interested in their comments.

Is the boy named Smith?

— JTM



Rodford Edmiston: Good "The Joy of High Tech". I do, however, have some answers to your opening questions. I had to replace a dimmer light switch a couple of years ago. That seemingly simple operation resulted in my shutting off power to the Dining Room and Living Room and my finally calling an electrician. I've replaced numerous light switches. But, this one I really screwed-up. Even the electrician had a problem. But, it was finally fixed. Earlier this year my power was off for something like 10 hours along with a large area while the electric company replaced a number of power poles. A week ago my water was off for two or three hours while a plumber dug a deep hole to repair a broken water line and did some other repairs. Several years ago my computer crashed. Luckily it happen while it was in the shop for some other work. Four years ago my car would not start. The battery was dead. Apparently, these days a car battery either works or doesn't work.

From: **Joy V. Smith** July 24, 2017
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Running late, but I wanted to say how much I enjoyed your reviews, the history, and reading about Lisa's book displays. (I've done some at our local library, using little critters and figures to enhance the display.) So, Lisa, it was hard finding some of the old classics; I know the libraries are tossing many classics, but now I've got some of them on my own shelves.

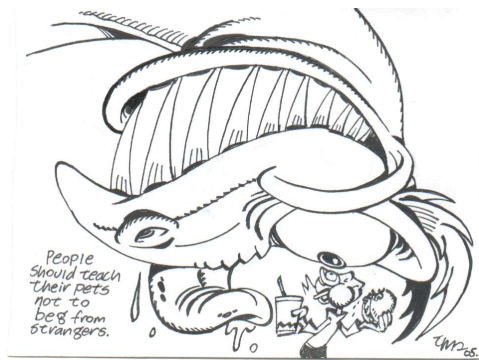
Thanks to Rodford Edmiston for the background on electrical switches. I confess I pay more attention to fancy switchplates. Thanks to Sue Burke for her con report — the next best thing to being there . . . Sniffle.

Thanks to everyone for their LOCs. So much more to read. Re: Morgan and Morgan; their office is in my neighborhood. (Their commercials never impressed me, btw.) And I really enjoyed Citizen Selena.

And now the inevitable is happening — until the next reboot.

— JTM

Almost done with our house remodel — and we had to buy more butterfly weeds for our voracious Monarch caterpillars. Chrysalises everywhere!



From: **Lloyd Penney** July 27, 2017
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Thank you for *Alexiad* 93. I have a huge stack of fanzines to respond to, and you're next, and it's done just in time for your deadline.

SF has left me behind, too. I find little I want to read, and so, I read little. With the fading of fandom, especially around here, Yvonne and I now put a lot of our efforts into local steampunk fandom, especially by being steampunk vendors, and we are having fun

again. As a result, we entered the USA for the first time in about five years, and travelled to Romulus, Michigan for Motor City Steam Con. A fine time was had by all, especially us.

Indeed, Rodney Leighton has passed away. I tried my best to respond to his zines, but I always got the impression that he didn't like me, what with me living in Toronto, the city the rest of Canada loves to hate. At least now, he is at rest, out of pain. In *Monarchist News*, I have seen mention of Olivia de Havilland, and the surprise of many that she is still with us.

It does look good that there are many places around the world that want to stage the Worldcon. Sigh... if only I could go again. Still, England was pretty good last year, and Yvonne is already saving to go back.

Bless your heart, Dave Haren! So few see the number of zines I receive. I try my best to respond to most of the zines I get and see on eFanzines.com. As a journalism student, I like seeing my byline here and there in the publications I receive.

This loc is just too short, but it may be all I can do right now. Dinner time approaches, and I have to get something good ready for dinner. So, off this goes to you, with a little embarrassment. Thank you for this issue, and I resolve to do better with the next one. And like most resolutions, New Year's or otherwise, I will try my best to carry through. See you then.

From: **George W. Price** July 27, 2017
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June *Alexiad*:

Monarchist News mentions J. K. Rowling's induction as a Companion of Honour. I've enjoyed her books; now I'd like to know how to pronounce her name. Can anyone authoritatively tell me whether it rhymes with "bowling," or with "howling"?

Wikipedia says *"/ˈroʊlɪŋ/*, which doesn't help much unless you know IPA.

Reviewing Greg Benford's *The Berlin Project*, an alternate history of the Nazi development of an atomic bomb, Joe notes that in our world the Germans suffered from "Nazi-style chaos . . . where a number of organizations bickered for resources, and none had the material advantages the Manhattan Engineering District possessed."

A long time ago I read Samuel Goudsmit's *Alsos* (1947), the story of the U.S. team that went into Germany right after the war to check out the Nazi nuclear project. As I recall, they found that the Germans were way behind us, partly because of Werner Heisenberg's overconfidence in "German science." Having discovered how tough the problems were, he was quite sure that the Allies couldn't possibly

be doing any better, or even as well. Had Heisenberg known his team was Number Two, they would have tried harder.

In *Horses*, Lisa mentions laughing at a Christian documentary movie that showed "a Roman officer mounted on an American Quarter Horse," a breed that in Roman times had not yet been developed.

I attended Central YMCA High School in downtown Chicago (because my parents didn't approve of the local public school). Once a student group presented a version of the *Passion Play*. After I saw the afternoon performance I privately approached the guy playing the Roman centurion and quietly suggested that at the evening performance for the night school he should not wear his wristwatch. He didn't. There hadn't been any giggles, so maybe I was the only one who had noticed the anachronism.

Sheilah Kennedy comments on Abigail Tucker's *The Lion in the Living Room*, which inspires me to a few more remarks on cats, and also dogs.

You may have noticed that cats like to ensconce themselves under things, such as furniture indoors and parked cars outdoors. I've heard that this is because cats in the wild are in danger of attack by eagles and other big birds of prey. So they favor places where they cannot be swooped down upon and taken unawares.

Have you ever noticed the difference in the way cats and dogs will try to cross a busy street? The cat will wait until he sees a clear path all the way across, and then he's a furry streak. He nearly always makes it. But a dog will nose out into the street and get confused and jink back and forth, multiplying his chance of getting run over.

About ten years ago I killed a dog doing that. He dodged one car by jumping sideways right in front of mine. I was already on the brakes and down to about 10 mph, but that was still enough to kill him instantly. Awful!

So why do dogs act that way? My guess is that as pack animals that pull down prey much larger than themselves, such as deer and cattle, dogs instinctively expect cars to be afraid of them. When the car shows no fear and keeps on coming, the dog gets confused. And that can be fatal.

Timothy Lane and Robert S. Kennedy agree that President Roosevelt knew that the Japanese were about to go to war with us. The big question is why he apparently did not anticipate that they would attack Pearl Harbor. Why did the Philippines seem a likelier target than Hawaii, the base of the Pacific Fleet?

I suggest that it was because the Pearl Harbor attack was so utterly unorthodox. With

our knowledge of how the Pacific war played out, it is easy to forget that in 1941 it was taken for granted that battleships had to be fought by other battleships. Aircraft were useful for scouting, and possibly for damaging battleships enough to let them be caught by the opposing fleet (as the *Bismarck* was). But the primary action would be our 16-inch guns against their 16-inch guns. That an aerial attack would be the decisive stroke was simply not taken seriously.

(I've read that in the early 1930s a junior admiral won a U.S. Navy war game by sending carrier planes to attack Pearl Harbor. His superiors did not appreciate his unorthodoxy. Could it be that the Japanese naval attaché was more appreciative?)

Admiral Harry E. Yarnell won Fleet Problem XIII in 1932 by attacking with his carriers on Sunday morning. The referees promptly disallowed his victory. (Mentioned in my novel *Bitter Weeds* (2016), available on Kindle from Amazon for a quite reasonable price. Advt.)

That "battleship admiral" mindset would amply explain why FDR was taken so completely by surprise at both the location and the magnitude of the attack. We need not assume, as many Roosevelt-haters have, that he didn't warn Kimmel and Short because he was afraid that if the Japanese intercepted the warning they would call off the attack and he wouldn't get the war he was deliberately provoking. That's going much too far in painting Roosevelt as a diabolical plotter.

I have wondered how the war would have gone if the Japanese had played it orthodox and attacked as expected in, say, the Philippines. Would the Pacific war have become a series of battleship encounters, with carrier planes relegated to a secondary role? How long would it have taken for the superiority of air power to have become evident? Would the "battleship admirals" have ever been displaced? Our naval strategy was carrier-centered out of necessity, not doctrine — after Pearl Harbor the carriers were practically all we had. The doctrine changed because it had to. Without that necessity — well, who knows? Perhaps the Japanese did us a favor by forcing us to go to a carrier-centered strategy right from the start, without first having to suffer through years of bloody and inconclusive battleship actions.

I thank Sue Burke for letting me know that I erred in citing the New York attorney general's suit against Exxon as an example of punishing a heretic for opposing the Church of Climate Change. In fact, she says, the suit alleges fraud in that Exxon did not relay to its investors the results of its research showing

that climate change would impact Exxon's business. I stand corrected.

However, I am not ready to let go of the "church of climate change" trope. A better example is in the uproar over the U.S. leaving the Paris Accord. I was surprised to learn that the Accord does not actually commit the signatories to any action — there are no penalties for not meeting the targets. In effect, the Accord is not really an agreement to do anything; it is more in the nature of a statement of good intentions. This irresistibly reminds me of a religious credo ("I believe . . .") that unifies the faithful but does not really commit them to any particular behavior. Trump's rejection of the Accord is seen as a declaration of apostasy, to be met with shuddering horror.

I asked for the editor's guidelines on political discussion, and Joe responded that he does not "want to see a screeching, angry, bloody argument about current political issues." Fair enough. Let me suggest a way to keep arguments civil.

Imagine that you are a man who has fallen deeply in love with a woman. (This works just as well for other combinations of the sexes, but I'll stick to man-and-woman to avoid clumsy "he-or-she" usages.)

She is everything you want in a woman — not only physically and emotionally attractive, but also smart, well-read, and fluent in conversation. And she seems attracted to you. There's only one drawback: Her political sentiments are diametrically opposed to yours.

You don't want to risk losing her by being insultingly dismissive of her opinions. So how do you explain your positions without offending her? Well, you start out by realizing that "you're crazy!" is not a persuasive rebuttal. Then it's up to you to find ways to calmly and rationally set forth your thinking while being fully respectful of hers. And you encourage her to treat you the same way. I offer no details on how to do all this, but will leave it as an exercise for the reader. Let's just say you have to learn how "to disagree without being disagreeable."

Of course this advice is useless to the fellow who can't even imagine falling in love with a woman of opposite politics, since he knows that her disagreeing with him is absolute proof that she can't possibly be worth bothering with. And it's probably better for her that he doesn't try; he's not worth having.

Finally, you should consider treating all your political adversaries this way, even ones you do not love. Who knows, they might even respond in the same spirit.

Hope is often in vain.

— JTM

From: **Taras Wolansky** July 28, 2017
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June 2017:

Darrell Schweitzer: Your mastery of Byzantine theology is bitchen.



Sue Burke: Congrats on Semiosis!

"I bought a used book, *The World of Null-A* by A.E. Van Vogt". You might want to look for the 1999 collection of his short story work, *Futures Past*, with an introduction by Harlan Ellison. Some of his best novels/serials are collected in *Transgalactic* (2006), edited by Eric Flint and David Drake, which you can probably get for free from Baen. It includes *Mission to the Stars* (1943-45), which I believe was the primary inspiration for Star Trek.

Also the original versions of *I, Clane* and *Clane the God* — er, *Empire of the Atom* and *The Wizard of Linn*.

JK Rowling "seemed unaware that Native Americans have many tribes and nations, all with very different beliefs and customs." And, in the past, all at war with each other!

At a Wiscon party "we debated which member of the Three Stooges most closely resembled the each president". OK, I'll bite: which one was Obama?

AL du Pisani: "They do not understand how a bunch of dumb Afrikaner Nationalists could have understood the ANC in power so much better than their enlightened clever selves." Back in the 90s I predicted that post-apartheid

South Africa would gradually come to resemble the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

Dave Haren: Edgar Rice Burroughs was probably as sexy as was permissible back then. His Martian maidens run around nearly naked, I recall.

Once you're grown up you realize what Tan Hadron actually saw when he was wandering around in the womens' quarters of Haj Osis's palace while invisible, and it's a good bit more, well, interesting.

In general, Western depictions of the evils of communism fell far short of the reality.

The Heinlein story recently adapted into the film, *Predestination*, starring Ethan Hawke, is "All You Zombies—," not "By His Bootstraps".

April 2017:

Hugo Award Nominees: "Votes for [best novel] finalists ranged from 156 to 480." Should the number of nomination votes received by each work be included on the final ballot?

Robert S. Kennedy: The "Emerald City" TV show gave us a rather fetching, Middle Eastern Dorothy and, as the Wizard, Vincent D'Onofrio putting in the worst performance of his career. I was curious to see how they would work out the story of the runaway boy who, once away from his stepmother's magic, is horrified to find himself reverting to what he didn't know was his natural form: a girl. The show was canceled, so we'll never know.

So they never got to *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904)? Tip ran away because Mombi told him she was going to turn him into a marble statue, which would have made his life extremely boring, standing out in the garden all day. (She was dumb enough to tell him beforehand, or there wouldn't have been much of a story.) Glinda talked Tip around, so I don't think "horrified" is quite the right term, and then strong-armed Mombi into turning him back into Ozma, so "reverting" isn't a complete description of the process.

George W. Price: Wouldn't an unsuccessful Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor be just as good as — or better than — a successful one, from FDR's point of view?

Timothy Lane: No, I called progressivism a "religion", not a "cult" (which is mostly a pejorative term). Conservatives are reluctant to say that, I think, because for them religion is supposed to be something good.

Lloyd Penney: In the US, Republicans

tend to be more favorable to space exploration, which they see as a continuation of the "winning of the west". Democrats, for whom the winning of the west was an act of imperialism, tend to see space as a jobs program that is inefficient at delivering benefits to their constituent groups.

Richard A. Dengrove: "Native Americans were more often the villains in that less pluralistic era." For one thing people were better informed in those days about the atrocities that Native Americans had committed routinely, both on white settlers and on enemy tribes. One story that sticks in my mind is about a 15-year-old captive girl who had been routinely brutalized, gang raped and enslaved; and, for extra laffs, the Comanche women had burnt off her nose. After such sights, narrow-minded frontier folk tended to get a little bit — impatient.

"One would think that a Puerto Rican NASFIC goes against the idea of NASFIC." Quite so; it was very expensive. I think they sold about 280 attending memberships but only a little over 200 people showed up. Erwin Strauss and I agreed that it reminded us of Albacon, a small convention in upstate New York.

Sue Burke: "Bishop Diego Palaez of Compostela never bludgeoned anyone to death with a mace during a meeting with his counts and in the presence of a daughter of William the Conqueror". In other words, Bishop Diego bludgeoned somebody to death with a mace during a meeting but the daughter of William the Conqueror wasn't there? [;)]

The Science Fiction Encyclopedia article on Cuban science fiction writer Yoss shows him as often published in Cuba and winning awards in Cuba. Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't those publishers controlled by the government and aren't those organizations giving awards controlled by the government? That's not the way a communist government treats dissidents!



John Hertz: "As for fiction making more sense than real life..." For example, my niece was at her wedding dinner when, dressed in her wedding gown, she performed the Heimlich maneuver on the chief bridesmaid, her sister; but if you put that in a book people would laugh.

Milt Stevens: "I don't see how apartheid events are supposed to help." Sadly, there was

a "People of Color" event at NASFIC as well, this year.

Rod E. Smith: "How long has it been since anyone reading this has had a tire sidewall blowout, for example?" A couple of years ago: I had scraped the side wall on the curb and it eventually gave way.

Review of *French Betrayal*: The story of how French Communists sabotaged the French war effort against Germany, then Stalin's ally, is little known today. Does it play a role in Dugan and Cluotat's alternate history?

Since the French aren't fighting, non.

Sue Burke: Thanks for your Nebula nominee reviews. "I think awards like the Nebula ought to expand the genre by offering some 'politically incorrect' stories (incorrect to traditionalists, who seem to be sensitive types)." I'm still scratching my head over this one!

The rules of political correctness are very strict; for example, all female characters must be "strong". Thus, Jack Campbell's brawny female space Marines. In real life, the military has different standards — different minimum standards — for men and women.

Darrell Schweitzer: "Almost as big an embarrassment as the patronizing review the Huxley book [*Brave New World*] got in *Amazing* when it was first published." Did you ever read Asimov's silly review of George Orwell's *1984*?

What about H. G. Wells's review of *Metropolis*, where he accused Fritz Lang of ripping off *The Sleeper Awakes*?

— JTM

Generally speaking, the Retro Hugo vote seems to be better informed (and less politicized) than the regular Hugo. The worst award I can recall is when they gave Best Fan Writer to Robert Silverberg, obviously based on his later, professional work.

February 2017:

AL du Pisani: A Dave Freer book I enjoyed is *Rats, Bats, and Vats*, about a bumbling military facing alien invasion.

Richard Dengrove: SpongeBob comes under the heading of animal fables.

As George W. Price points out, the electoral college acts as a firewall against ballot stuffing. In Ukraine about 10 years ago the pro-Russian party controlled politics in the east of the country and used that control to stuff the ballot boxes and win the national election.

Joe: The late Debbie Reynolds was in *How the West Was Won*, not *The Way the West Was Won*.

Lloyd Penney: I enjoyed *Hidden Figures* but I did not take it very seriously as real history. Hollywood takes shocking liberties with the facts even when it doesn't have a

powerful motive to do so.

In *Whisky Tango Foxtrot*, for example, which is based on Kim Barker's biographical account, the climax of the film is when Barker blackmails a high Afghan official to get him to rescue a kidnapped friend. When I read the book I discovered that a friend of hers did get kidnapped but she played no role in his rescue.

From: **Sue Burke** July 30, 2017
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On average, Chicago gets nine times more rain in July than Madrid, Spain, where I used to live, and this month is unusually wet here, with flooding a little to the north. This is my welcome to my first full summer back in the Midwest. I feel like I'm swimming on dry land – which isn't altogether unpleasant. Besides, fireflies love moisture and are flying around in my yard.

Remember to punch holes in
the lid of the mason jar.



My husband and I went downtown to watch the Fourth of July fireworks, which were spectacular, but the "freelance" pyrotechnics in every part of the city were amazing in their own right, with surprisingly little death and destruction. It reminded me of New Year's Eve in Madrid. Explosives seem to galvanize fools everywhere.

Beyond that, we're spending the summer quietly, with occasional outings to dine at street and church festivals. My husband's master's degree homework keeps us from doing much else. So I write and translate, which I adore doing, so I'm happy. I just sold a story to *Asimov's Magazine*, but I don't know when it will appear.

I did take time to visit Chicago's new American Writers Museum, the self-proclaimed "first museum of its kind in the nation!" It opened downtown in May, so it's still probably the only one of its kind. And it's not bad. It offers good history lessons, author bios, writing tips, and reading guides. Comfy sofas, shelves of books, and stacks of paper encourage reading and writing on the premises. It's too new to tell, but it might turn

into a valuable resource. But if they want people to sit around and read and write, they need to add a coffee bar.

Speaking of writers, I enjoyed Rodford Edmiston's article, "The Joy of High Tech," and Sheilah Kennedy's review of *The Lion in the Living Room*. Also, thanks to John G. Hemry for a strange and delightful surprise. I looked up *Girls und Panzer* (and his books!). It was as he said: the television show deals with überhappy teams of school girls competing in tank wars – even a pink Panzer.

I also read all the short fiction nominated for the Hugo, and my review should appear in an article in this issue.

And thanks, Joe, for telling me about Textsfromsuperheroes.com. In one, Wonder Woman says: "Your city is under attack! The sun has disappeared and white death is falling from the sky. . . I will slay the God of winter and return the sun." Superman replies: "Your problem solving skills are really outside the box, you know that?"

Can I recommend Amazing Stories? Their correspondent Ricardo Manzanaro covers the Spanish SF scene.
<http://amazingstoriesmag.com/>

Among writers in Spain, this summer's excitement is "Irosgate." It's a grammar question involving the second person familiar plural reflexive imperative form of "irse" (to leave or go). Is it "idos" or "íos" or "iros"? The Spanish Royal Academy has just decided that the often-used form "iros" is acceptable, although "idos" is technically correct and therefore preferred; "íos" was used a century ago by educated speakers without condemnation. Oh, the controversy! I've never had cause to issue such a command, so I've never had to take a stand. Since there is a noncontroversial subjunctive form, "que os vayáis," I hope to remain firmly noncommittal.

Would that all controversies were so easy to sidestep.

In the end the decision will be in favor of how the uneducated say it. They have "autenticidad".

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** August 4, 2017
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It has been a mild Winter in Johannesburg. I found it quite good, as I was not looking forward to the cold as I recuperated.

Even as I went down to the family beach house for a short holiday, the weather was mild. Which is a problem for the area: It was supposed to rain, so that the dams can fill up a bit. In the south and west, the drought is not over. And that is were both of my sisters now

live.

I had a good rest, and manage to recuperate a lot from my original eye operation. Once I came back, I had a follow up operation. This time round I had to wait quite a bit in the hospital's waiting area, before the operation. The anesthesia hit me badly, but not for as long as the previous time. And this time around I had much less restrictions on movement and the things I could do. I could start to work again after ten days.

I am glad that I am able to work from home, as the highway I normally travel to work is reputed to be the second busiest in South Africa. I am not yet ready to drive, and I was quite surprised how many things I do normally which require driving around.

To keep my blood pressure manageable, I have stopped reading the local news. Most of the news which slips in, are really depressing. A lot of it involved the Guptha family, and their capture of portions to the Government, channeling money to them, for little or no work. Somebody got hold of a lot of their e-mails, and the newspapers have been having a ball with some of the things found there. Such as a British PR firm which was employed to promote race hatred against White South Africans.

A good thirty years ago I read a letter in a magazine, there the writer described her love of South Africa with the image of a heart, impaled on a thorn tree, dripping blood onto the dust.

There are more days than not when I associate myself with this image. Because when you have Africa in your blood, there is no cure.

I recently started to prepare a talk on Anime to the local club. One of the examples I plan to talk about is *Girls und Panzer*. Not my favorite of the bunch, but quite pleasant, which I enjoyed. And the "Russian" girls sing Katyusha, while driving their tanks through the snow.

First John Hemry, then Sue Burke, now you. It looks like I'll have to get it.

— JTM

I really enjoyed *Little Witch Academia*, the series. I'll probably promote that as a gateway Anime for the next few years.

I'm starting to read a bit again, now that my eyes are getting better. Unfortunately, not much that I want to tell the world about.

I hope that each of you are living lives with a small moment of quiet joy regularly.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Martin Morse Wooster, the same.

Steve Fahnstalk, Earl Kemp, James Nicoll, George Phillis who got it.

Jerry Kaufman, who is sending out a new issue of *Littlebrook*.

A CAMPBELL LETTER

Astounding Science Fiction
Street and Smith Building
New York, New York
March 18, 1949

Dear Mr. Weir:

I am returning the manuscript of your novel The Martian for some changes, which I hope you will have done in time to have it serialized, probably in February of next year.

I am very enthusiastic about this novel. Your portrayal of the imagined technology is exhaustively plausible and detailed. I can well imagine some of our readers attempting to recreate the efforts your Mark Watney made in his struggle to survive.

The portrayal of that effort is itself striking. I often had to pause and tear myself away from the manuscript, or I would have neglected reading other manuscripts and wondered if I were indeed on Mars.

The background is also intriguing. I realize that some of our readers may not be pleased with your portrayal of a Communist victory in their civil war, but I can concede that a unified, peaceful China, whatever its ruling ideology, can mobilize the scientific and mechanical talent of that nation and combined with their traditional devotion to hard labor, produce a space program to challenge the American program you describe.

Another problem might be with your mission commander being a woman, but some writers have brought forward the potentials of women in space — Bob Heinlein has a new story coming out chiding space station engineers for assuming that a new engineer is a man — and this will be more of the same.

Now as to the problems. These are not in plot, but in style. Your spellings of Chinese names and words are eccentric. I have checked with Sprague de Camp and he is unaware of any Romanization of Chinese words like this. You may want to check with someone who knows the language.

My final point is the hardest to discuss. The language.

Now, I am aware that men do indeed speak like this, working men, soldiers, and the like. Some "lit'ry" writers have had characters use such language.

But we couldn't publish it, not and not have the magazine banned. In fact, you are fortunate that Miss Tarrant, my assistant, was out sick the day the manuscript arrived, or she would have fainted when she read the first line, and when she recovered, thrown the manuscript into the incinerator.

You will have to remove the foul language before we can publish your story.

I am so confident of this that I have sent notes to some of our artists asking for preliminary drafts of art for it. Our readers will love your novel.

Sincerely yours,
John W. Campbell, Jr.
Editor, Astounding

P.S. I like that trick of dating your submission letter in 2011. You may have noticed where one of our readers, Richard Hoen, sent in a letter, which was published in the November '48 issue, reviewing the November '49 issue. I have been working to have the real November issue resemble this as much as possible. (Making Bob Heinlein think it was his idea took an enormous effort.) I congratulate you on your imitation. JWC

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

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

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

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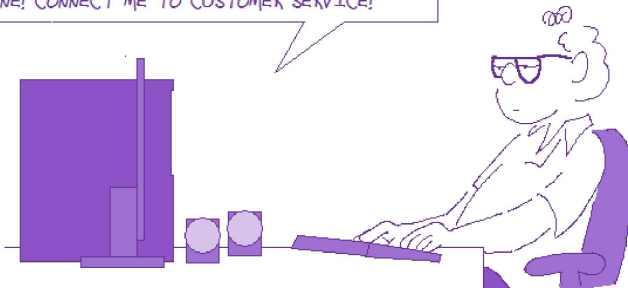
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