

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

I recently read a very good book, titled *The Girl Who Wrote in Silk* by Kelli Estes. It is the story of Mei Lien, an American girl of Chinese descent in the early days of Chinese descent who lived at a time when being such made her a target of mob violence and a modern young white woman named Inara. Their stories are told in alternating chapters. This is normally not something I like, because it requires real talent to carry it off. Estes is very good with description. More importantly she is talented at storytelling. From the first page I was drawn into the story.

— Lisa

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Pascha is April 28, 2019.

The 145th Running of the Kentucky Derby will be **May 4, 2019**.
 The 144th Running of the Preakness Stakes will be **May 18, 2019**.
 The 150th Running of the Belmont Stakes will be **June 8, 2019, 14**.

Printed on April 15, 2019
 Deadline is **June 9, 2019**

Reviewer's Notes

I wonder if TAFF (Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund) has outlived its usefulness. Its ancestor was WAW With the Crew, the fund to bring famous Irish Fan Walter A. Willis to the United States for the 1952 Worldcon, Chicon II. But this was for someone whose fame exceeded his purse.

TAFF nearly sank with scandals, from the problem over Samanda b Jeude's campaign to the bizarre defalcation of Abi Frost. Yet it seems to have recovered, structurally. Yet, from seeing fund-raising descriptions, it seems to cost as much to raise the money for the next candidate as to go.

It has created like funds, DUFF (Down Under Fan Fund, between the Americas and Australia-New Zealand) and GUFF (Get Up and Over Fan Fund, between Europe and ANZAC), and others. Yet these bridge a significant distance. Trans-Atlantic air fares are lower now.

My baby book has a page with check boxes for measles, mumps, chicken pox, and other diseases. It was considered normal for children to contract such illnesses.

The legacy of deaf, sterile, crippled, even dead children was thought to be a fact of life. Just as polio was; I know two fans who suffered polio, and were left less than whole as a result.

Now, it seems, the prevention against such diseases is considered worse than the diseases; it causes mental problems, or is against the will of God, or is an expensive and painful treatment for a problem that isn't worth considering.

Those who oppose immunizations have their own elaborate community, with its own apparently authoritative studies. For all that the skeptic community focuses on those ignorant redigulous antivaxxers, there are far more progressive enlightened families who explain about mercury and aluminium and more poisonous chemicals; who flaunt natural cures, herbs, crystals, and homeopathic treatments.

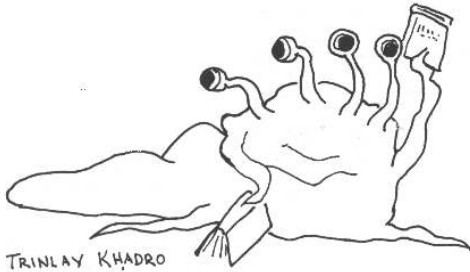
They talk about the terrors of autism. I just remember my mother telling me how she had held me as I suffered mumps, three years old, saying, "I feel so bod."

Speaking of health, I appreciate all those who expressed concern over my ill-health. I am trying to do something about it, but it seems that one problem causes another, and the resolution requires solving everything at once.

— 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.

Valery Fyodorovich Bykovsky (Russian: Валерий Фёдорович Быковский), call sign

(“Hawk”) died on **March 27, 2019**. Born **August 2, 1934**, Bykovsky became a fighter pilot in the Soviet Air Force and entered the cosmonaut program in 1960. His first flight was Vostok 5, June 14-19, 1963, which set a record which still stands for solo orbital flight. He also flew on Soyuz 22 (September 15-23, 1976) and went to the Salyut 6 space station in 1978. He was a Hero of the Soviet Union.

At the time of his death he was the Senior Person in Space. The Senior Person in Space is now **Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova** (Russian: Валентина Владимировна Терешкова), call sign “Seagull”, who flew on Vostok 6 on June 16-19, 1963. Valentina Vladimirovna was born **March 6, 1937** in Maslennikovo, Yaroslavl Oblast, RSFSR. She was married to fellow cosmonaut Andrian Grigoryevich Nikolayev [1929-2004]; they had one daughter, Elena Andriyanovna Nikolayevna who is a doctor. Valentina Vladimirovna is a Hero of the Soviet Union and an officer of the Order of Alexander Nevsky.

The RRS *Sir David Attenborough* has been moved from the dry dock for final fitting out. (This, you will remember, is the ship that was going to be named *Boaty McBoatface* until a grownup named Jo Johnson stepped in.) The ship will head down to Antarctica this polar summer. (The comparison with the ongoing inability to build a new icebreaker for the Coast Guard can be noted.)

Lieutenant-Colonel (ret.) **Richard Cole**, copilot of the first Tokyo Raider plane and of General Doolittle, died in San Antonio, Texas, on **April 9, 2019**. Born **September 7, 1915**, he served in the Army Air Force and Air Force from 1940 to 1966.

He was the last of the Raiders.

Toujours au Danger

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Janet O. Jeppson Asimov** on **February 25, 2019**. Born **August 6, 1926**, she studied at Stanford and New York University Medical School, practicing as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst and writing several papers on various relevant topics.

She met Isaac Asimov in 1970 and they got married **November 30, 1973**, remaining married until his death in 1992. She wrote several children's novels under her own name and in collaboration with her husband.

We regret to report the death of **Vonda N. McIntyre** on **April 1, 2019** in Seattle. Born in Louisville on **August 2, 1948**, she moved around the world in her childhood, eventually earning a BS in biology from the University of Washington.

She became famous when she received the Nebula Award in 1973 for her novelette “Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand”, which became part of her Hugo and Nebula Award winning novel *Dreamsnake* (1978).

MONARCHICAL NEWS

On the day after the thirtieth day of the fourth month of the thirty-first year of Heisei (April 30, 2019), the Tenn will retire and be titled Daij Tenn (“retired emperor”, abbreviated to J k . The new Tenn will be his son Naruhito. The new regnal era will be **Reiwa**, which term is taken from the eighth-century Nara era poetic anthology *Man'yō shū*. The word is written with the two characters for “good” and “harmony”, and means “beautiful harmony”.

May the Reiwa Emperor live ten thousand years!

THE QUIZMASTER IN THE HIGH CASTLE

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

SOLAR LOTTERY

By Philip K. Dick (1955)

Philip K. Dick is that short-story writer who for the past five years or so has kept popping up all over—in one year, 1953, he published twenty-seven stories—with a sort of unobtrusive and chameleonlike competence. To quote Anthony Boucher:

By now he has appeared in almost every science fiction publication—and what's more surprising, in each case with stories exactly suited to the editorial tastes and needs of that particular publication: the editors of *Whizzing Star Patrol* and of the *Quaint Quality Quarterly* are in

complete agreement upon Mr. Dick as a singularly satisfactory contributor.

Entering and leaving as he does by so many doors at once, Dick creates a blurred impression of pleasant, small literary gifts, coupled with a near-sighted canniness about the market—he writes the trivial, short, bland sort of story that amuses without exciting, is instantly saleable and instantly forgettable.

The surprise of a book like *Solar Lottery* from such an author is more than considerable.

— Damon Knight, *In Search of Wonder*

Such a categorical statement, given the legacy of Dick's writings, nowadays seems to be absurd if not ignorant. Yet this is a contemporary reference to his first novel, so such astonishment is quite plausible.

The Solar System is quite thoroughly settled in the twenty-third century; all nine planets (there were nine planets in 1955, understand) have inhabitants (or at least their satellites do), though Earth is still the center of humanity. And this vast domain is in the grip of omens and portents, incidents foreboding some vast upheaval.

From the Solar System capital of Batavia (er, that's Jakarta) the Quizmaster holds sway over this world-spanning dominion. And how did this mighty monarch rise to his pedestal of power?

Through a random-choice process. A random-number generator, styled “the bottle”, acts at unpredictable intervals to name one of the six billion inhabitants of the solar system as Quizmaster.

Well, maybe not. The bottle picks an individual based on his (or her) “p-card”, an identifier issued at birth. Yet most people don't have p-cards, while most of those who do have surrendered them to their employers as a condition of their employment. Many have even sold them, for a trifling sum.

How did this system come about? Well, the miracle of automation, which brought about a grandiose provision of manufactured goods, which no one could buy since automation had driven people out of work. After a disheartening period where these masses of unsaleable goods were publicly destroyed, the makers started holding random-choice giveaways. This evolved into a random-choice giveaway of the greatest thing; rule.

(Given the organization of the work environment, this might well be called a “timocracy”, a government of the rich, since rich people would hold the p-cards of their employees. The economic underpinnings of this seem less than well-established in reality, as economics are so often handled in science fiction.)

As a reaction to the unpredictability and meaningless of life, most people have become obsessed with this occult view of human existence. This is defined as “Minimax”, a phil-

sophy supposedly based on Theory of Games, but which seems to be more nihilistic.

One of these omens is a fire that damages the main plant of the megacorporation Oiseau-Lyre, causing layoffs. (Only one manufacturing plant for the entire company?) One of the layoffs is a chemist named Ted Benteley. Benteley gathers his assets and his will, and determines to do or die; to become a direct serf of the Quizmaster, a once-in-a-lifetime chance.

He makes his way into the Quizmaster's offices, where by some astonishing random choice his offer is taken up. Except for one little problem; he swears fealty to Reese Verrick, the Quizmaster. Except that Verrick isn't the Quizmaster any longer; a random event of the bottle has deposed him and chosen a new Quizmaster.

Who is this successor?

A century and a half before the events of this story, an eccentric man named John Preston believed that there was a tenth planet, which he called "Flame Disc". In this era of mysticism and cynicism, the belief in Flame Disc became a movement, albeit a fringe movement popular among the excluded classes. It survived him, which is even more amazing, and the current leader of the Prestonites, Leon Cartwright, is a mild unassuming man, a retiree who has taken up the Prestonite cause.

The security service of the Quizmaster descends upon him. Security service? Yes, you see, a counterweight to the absolute dominance of the Quizmaster has developed. It is perfectly legal to assassinate the Quizmaster. Therefore the Quizmaster has a well-armed and hyper-sensitive security force, along with telepaths.

Telepaths? Yes, there was a nuclear war, and in its aftermath a mutation for telepathy developed, the descendants of one man. They don't seem very restrictive, either, since one of Verrick's chief underlings is Eleanor Stevens, a former telepath — to leave the guild or whatever it is called, she had to undergo treatment to remove her telepathic ability.

While the Quizmaster is chosen by random chance, there are elaborate procedures for picking assassins. It seems hard to believe that only approved assassins would be permitted, and it turns out they aren't. Somehow a political system that grants validity and even endorsement to the acts of someone, say, wishing to impress an actress does not seem to be particularly stable. As a result of this, the turnover in Quizmasters is rapid; it is said at one point that the average term in office of a Quizmaster is two weeks. (This seems even less stable.) Thus Verrick's long term in office is remarkable.

The purpose of power is power. Plots has Verrick laid, inductions dangerous, by drunken prophecies, libels and dreams, to regain his power. He sponsors a grand convention to nominate an assassin to take down

Cartwright. It is covered the way Presidential nominating conventions used to be covered, and in a certain predictive mode, the convention turns out to have a preordained result.

Who is this nominated assassin Keith Pellig? This is where Benteley and Stevens come back in. Keith Pellig — isn't. He is an android drone, remote-controlled by distant operators. This is intended to defeat the powers of the Quizmaster's telepathic guards; as soon as they get fixed on one plan of action, the controller changes. The identification with the body can be unnerving; Stevens says about a certain body feature she possesses in virtual mode, that she "felt there was a snake in my slacks", for example. (Is he "fully functional", like Commander Data?)

In spite of a hot affair with Eleanor Stevens (who for a woman of nineteen seems to have slept around a *lot*) Benteley feels discontented. After an eerie meeting with Pellig, he becomes even more concerned, and realizes his new purpose in life; he is going to be inhabiting Pellig's body when he performs the hit, and he will die from the shock of being "killed" by the security troops.



He defects to Cartwright. Who seems particularly unconcerned by it all, and relocates, with security, his niece Rita, and this defector, to the Moon. Along the way, he sells Benteley a p-card.

Pellig follows. A deadly confrontation ensues, when Stevens, who has turned up, attacks Rita Cartwright, only to be killed herself when Pellig grabs her and steps through an airlock. He can live in vacuum; she isn't so lucky.

Cartwright calls on legal counsel to resolve the dispute, and Verrick comes to the Moon to settle the matter face-to-face. At first, Verrick wants Benteley back, to kill him for violating the terms of his servitude. They compromise; Cartwright will give Verrick his p-card, and Verrick will become Quizmaster again. He does — and then shoots Verrick dead.

Then he reveals his own plot. Before becoming leader of the Prestonite society, he was chief technician for the bottle. And he managed to bias it, bit by bit, until it would hit a list of p-cards. All of which he owned — and the next is

the one he sold to Benteley.

Having done this, Cartwright explains that he is dealing with the basic hypocrisy and falsehood of society. Everything is fake and posturing. Perhaps realizing the falsehood of the society can bring about a change.

Meanwhile, Pellig has taken off for Flame Disc — which actually exists. And John Preston's body is in a ship orbiting it. Cartwright has dispatched a ship there, with a somewhat ramshackle crew and vessel (you'd think the Quizmaster could get a better setup), and they are almost there. As the Prestonite ship reaches Flame Disc, Pellig is destroyed; and they find a recording by Preston expressing hope for further human progress to Flame Disc and the stars beyond.

The technician who worked on the bottle just happened to be picked by it to be Quizmaster? And nobody suspects that anything is wrong? Somehow this hardly sounds credible.

And in many ways the society has a fifties air about it. SF is so often of its time, and one can imagine Cartwright driving to a meeting of the Prestonite Society, in a run-down building in a decaying part of town, in a car full of discarded junk, in 1955 as much as in 2203.

Quiz shows nevertheless were all the rage on Fifties TV. Until it turned out that they too were rigged. Perhaps it's a prediction.

One historical point: Dick has one of the industrial complexes that control the world economy be "Farben". This is not quite as egregious as in *The Stars My Destination* [*Tiger! Tiger!*] (1957) where Alfred Bester had a Farben family.

IG Farben was a cartel set up in 1925 and its full name was *Interessen-Gemeinschaft Farbenindustrie AG*, "Dye Industry Syndicate, Inc." The constituent chemical companies were spun off by the occupying powers after the war and IG Farben exists because no one seems to be able to terminate the business, which had a bad name because of its use of slave labor.

This book has a virtue that so many works, before, then, and now, lack; its characters are of the world they live in. So often a character is a grating anachronism, or otherwise far out of being part of the world; but the people here are of their world.

Even though all the women in the story are topless. Knight wondered if this was a poke at pulp-fiction prudery, where women wore tight and scanty clothing, but never quite exposed themselves. This may explain why this work hasn't yet been made into a movie.

And, as Damon Knight pointed out, Dick laid out his society, and then accepted it. The reader is not constantly reminded of the wonders of the era, or its constant failings. There is no, "As you know, Bob, women used to wear clothing that covered their breasts, but the advances in style and materials made this no longer necessary . . ." This is a story that is of

its society, one might well say a mundane novel of that world; perhaps a political thriller, but nevertheless an ordinary work. That is an accomplishment that few SF works seem to achieve.

JOHN STORY'S LOOKING-GLASS WAR

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
"DOC":

The Rape of the Town of Lovell

By Jack Olson
(2000, 2014)

... Raped women have been divorced by their husbands — who couldn't bear to live with the awful knowledge, the visions, the possibility that it *wasn't really rape*. There is the bone of it, the unspeakable mystery. Everybody has heard the joke about the lawyer who used a quill and an ink bottle to get his client acquitted on a rape charge. He told the jury there was no such thing as rape, and proved it by having a witness try to put the quill in the bottle — which he manipulated so deftly that the witness finally gave up.

That sounds like one of Cotton Mather's jokes, or the wisdom of somebody very much like him — somebody who never had his arm bent up between his shoulder blades. Any lawyer who says there's no such thing as rape should be hauled out to a public place by three large perverts and buggered at high noon, with all his clients watching.

— Hunter S. Thompson, *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*

John Huntington Story lives in Lovell, Wyoming. It is not surprising that he should do so, that being the location of his support structure. The fact and details of his residence there are available on the Internet, for reasons that will become apparent.

Lovell, Wyoming is a dying town. It has a population of about twenty-four hundred, but its industries are failing. Beet processing is seasonal, the oil industry is subject to booms and busts, and bentonite mining and processing are described by the Dave Barry-esque comment, "Bentonite builds better boogers."

Lovell is known as the Rose City. Doctor W. W. Horsley of Lovell was a rose fancier, and he publicized and promoted the Peace Rose. His patients were given rose bushes and he donated roses, particularly Peace Roses, to fanciers all about the country. But there was a canker in his career; he was too fond of boys, and he ended his practice under supervision, to keep from assaulting more boys.

Thus, when Dr. John H. Story came to Lovell in 1958, he was enthusiastically welcomed. He was an unexceptional, indeed

some might say nerdy, sort of man, short, unassuming, and devoted to medicine. He quickly made connections, anchoring himself in Lovell, becoming a leading figure in the local Baptist church.

This caused some difficulties. He was so devoted, and his wife Marilyn even more so, that they clashed with the majority of the population, who were Latter-Day Saints. Story sought to evangelize his neighbors and seemed to be baffled when they did not enthusiastically renounce their former ways. Even in his own church there were difficulties, and he split off from it to form a new congregation when he thought the pastor was deviating from the One True Way.

However, in the medical practice he was quite efficient and full-service, offering everything from minor surgery through general practice to gynecology. Indeed, he was quite enthusiastic about gynecology, having purchased a complex and elaborate table for performing pelvic examinations.

Which he seemed to be quite active in offering. Some of his female patients observed that they could not visit the doctor for a minor case of sniffles without being offered a pelvic exam. Young women needing exams for various school functions and the like, old ladies needing a checkup, and those in between, all found themselves on the table, legs up, the doctor making an examination.

Some of his patients began to suspect there was something . . . off . . . about his procedure. His examinations seemed to take longer than might be expected, and his instrument felt different. Or familiar, in another context.

Most of them were Saints. They were not given to discussing such intimate activities. But as the years passed, some began to suspect that the doctor was Up To Something.

And then it all came out . . . in the spring of 1984, Dr. Story was called up before the Wyoming state medical board for a hearing. The accusers testified, he defended himself. The accusers were sure that the old-boy network would kick in, the defense of a healer would prevail. Then they were proven wrong; Story was stripped of his license to practice medicine.

The Baptists rallied around him. Olsen tells the story from many viewpoints, everyone significant involved — except Story. However, his wife's version is expansive. She calls upon God to save her martyred husband from the persecution of his enemies, begging for prayers of support and intercession, and apparently getting them.

The members of the congregation were equally pious. They issued pleas for intercession for their fellow church member, being made a martyr to a false god, in terms which seem appropriate to someone asking for prayers for a cancer sufferer. Story's brother prepared an elaborate genealogy showing how all the accusers were related — ironically, using the LDS genealogical records — as Proofs of a Conspiracy.

On the other side, the accusers are presented

in their own words, and they seem profoundly rustic. Saying "Gol" and "shoot" instead of more explicit expletives, for example, and more to the point being dreadfully shy and even naive about sexuality.

The suspension was overruled, but other matters were in play, and on Halloween, 1984, Dr. Story was arrested for rape. The wave of support intensified, and the social structure of the town began to fracture. People chose up sides and boycotted their enemies.

The trial was remarkably like the licence hearing. Story took the stand and denied everything. When the jury finally came in, there were fears of violence. Olson depicts a strange reversal in Marilyn Story's observations. The accusers were not present in the courtroom when the verdict was read. When she arrived, she was apparently certain that they knew they had been shown up as liars.

Afterwards, she had a different explanation. Story was found guilty on six charges. His wife was then certain that the accusers had been tipped off beforehand.

Story was sentenced to fifteen to twenty years on the main charges, running consecutively. He did his time and as said, is living in Lovell — having to register as a sex offender.



PEEKABOO
(IS THERE NO PRIVACY?)

After his conviction, but before his sentencing, Story was required to meet with a presentence investigator, who would determine the potential for rehabilitation. The meeting did not begin well. When the PSI asked Story his height, he said, "Six-five". Then he corrected it to the more plausible five feet five inches.

The PSI did not form a particularly hopeful impression of Story. His attitude seemed to be, "An ordinary guy like you couldn't possibly understand an accomplished person like me."

The PSI talked to others. The supporters were vehement in their claims that this was a gross miscarriage of justice. But when he

looked up a former employee of Story's from before his move to Lovell, it turned out that his behavior had been suggestive even then.



There is someone more famous, or notorious, who resembles this:

I have tried to explore these questions by reconceiving Alger Hiss's life as a series of looking-glass wars. By that phrase I mean to suggest that Hiss's life was a series of critical episodes in which a secret portion of his life — the position concealed, as it were, behind the looking glass — was threatened with exposure. In each of these episodes Hiss sought to defend his secrets in a distinctive way. Understanding his distinctive response helps us understand why he chose to be a Communist and a Soviet undercover agent. And understanding the response also helps explain why he chose to fashion a lifelong narrative of innocence, in which he projected himself as a victim and a scapegoat, all the while knowing that his narrative was false. Finally, understanding Hiss's approach to his several looking-glass wars helps make sense of the two largest puzzles of his life. Why did he enlist his strongest supporters, and the most loyal members of his family, in perpetuating his false claims, and how was he able to transform his public image from that of convicted traitor to that of someone who might have been one of the casualties of Cold War excesses?

— G. Edward White, *Alger Hiss's Looking-Glass Wars*

John Huntington Story's looking-glass war was fought in a smaller venue, in a different cause. Nevertheless, he projected himself as a victim and a scapegoat, even though his narrative was false. His strongest supporters, and the loyal members of his family, perpetuated his claims of innocence. In his looking-glass, he could be a faithful unto death follower of the true way of the Lord, a martyr to the malice of the followers of a false god, yet also be a rapist.

There will be no VENONA decryption to

reveal the rapes. Raoul Duke and Dr. Gonzo will not roar into Lovell in the Red Shark and intimidate a confession out of Story, between binges of Quaaludes, amphetamines, marijuana, mescaline, cocaine, ether, amyl nitrate, whiskey, and so on. John Story's looking-glass war will persist, for all that he is disgraced and demeaned. Apparently, he has survived most of his accusers.

Jack Olsen died in 2002, never able to read *Alger Hiss's Looking-Glass Wars*. John Story still might; but would it avail anything?

TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO

Review by Joseph T Major of

REWRITE:

Loops In the Timescape

by Gregory Benford

(2019; Saga Press;

ISBN 978-1481487696; \$27.99;
Simon and Schuster (Kindle); \$7.99)

In *To Your Scattered Bodies Go* (1971), Sir Richard F. Burton discovers the economy class way of travelling the Riverworld. He takes the "Suicide Express", killing himself and being revived at another place along the world river of the planet. Sad to say, the discovery he makes after his last suicide turns out to be wrong, but the series never quite got coherent. Maybe Farmer just should have put out the original *You Owe for the Flesh* that got tangled up in the Shasta Press affair.

Professor Charlie Moment of George Washington University doesn't know and probably wouldn't care about *To Your Scattered Bodies Go*. Or other things, like seat belts, which means his encounter with a semi on a wintry day is very fatal.

Except, he wakes up and is no longer an aging decrepit professor, but a high-school student. He's been thrown back in time. (And hasn't read "Time and Time Again" (*Astounding Science Fiction*, April 1947).)

Just wanting to continue to pretend to be his younger self, Charlie picks up his high school career. Except, he writes an essay with his professorial sensibility. With one thing and another, he ends up in Hollywood, where he sets about making all the movies he liked. (Instead of making a decent *Riverworld* or even a *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* miniseries.)

But then he runs into some people along the way. Such as the Benford brothers. (Not making a movie of Ned Beach's sub-Arctic submarine adventure *Cold Is the Sea* (1978), either.) Or, more to the point, Giacomo de Senegault — Casanova!

It seems that Charlie wasn't the first of the time-loopers, and there is a secret society of them. Another member is one Robert A. Heinlein, whom one hopes would have learned from his previous life not to have married Elinor Curry so he could get the Rhodes Scholarship and go to Oxford to confront C. S. Lewis and overwhelm him with his staunch irreligiousness.

But there are also bad guys. The book has shifted to something like the "Circle of Ouro-

boros", facing mysterious enemies. (Given that all the names of the bad guys in *The Number of the Beast* (1978; G.189) are anagrams, sometimes very forced, of Heinlein and Virginia Heinlein, one wonders if the final great confrontation, in *Typewriter In the Sky* (*Unknown*, November-December 1940) mode, would have been of all the characters with the author of their misfortunes, Heinlein himself.)

This is the sort of shift seen in, for example, Philip K. Dick's *Ubik* (1969), which starts out as a pulpy war of the psionics adventure and then abruptly turns into an excursion on life, the universe, and fate.

Unaware he is trapped in a Dick story, Charlie decides to take the Suicide Express and reboot his life. Things get interesting then . . .

Benford has written once about the future informing the past, *Timescape* (1980). It was reassuring that he did not endorse conspiracism, as Bryce Zabel (*Surrounded by Enemies* (2015)) and Mark Huffman (*JFK in '64* (2018)) did.

THE MAN WITH THE IRON HEART

Review by Joseph T Major of

THROUGH DARKEST EUROPE

by Harry Turtledove

(2019; Tor;

ISBN 978-0765379988; \$25.99;
Macmillan (Kindle); \$13.99)

It's well to remember that *The Man With the Iron Heart* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5) is a Swiftian fable; a story with the sides reversed, as it were. Most of these are not as charming (such as, for example, *White Lotus* (1965), John Hersey's labored trope on the history of slavery and its aftermath).

In this case, what has happened is that Christianity had become anti-science, and Islam pro. Whether this can be credible is another matter. However, by this ploy Turtledove can comment on the horrors of Islam without being labeled "Islamophobic".

Investigators Khalid al-Zarzisi and Dawud ibn Musa find themselves being sent to fragmented and violent Italy to search out the fanatic Aquinists. (The irony of the line "Khalid couldn't think of any Muslim emirate or sultanate where mobs rampaged through the streets murdering every Jew they could catch" has a strange perspective from the point of view of readers of Andrew Bostom's *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #4).)

Khalid and Dawud find themselves being shot at up and down the length of the Italian Peninsula. Did Aquinas in his reversed expression decide that there were Christians who loved death more than Muslims who loved life? However, Khalid finds an infidel lady who wants to get away from it all. (Better not tell Phyllis Chesler, or she will force her way onto a Paratime Police transporter to knock some sense into the lady with a copy of *An American Bride in Kabul*.)

There are little flashes of humor. Khalid and Dawud encounter an Italian official named Dino Crocetti. (Did he have a Jewish partner named Yosef bar-Dani'el?)

This book is not without problems, but it is a striking analysis, done under the shield of fiction, of a current problem of destructive fanaticism.

THE SHIP WHO SANG

Review by Joseph T Major of

AN EXTRA KNOT:

A Different World War II

by Hugh Lupus

(Part One: 2019; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99;

Part Two: 2019; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)

The "Extra Knot" results in a somewhat different ramming incident involving HMS Hood. Which is followed by a cascade of events changing the world. Such as, for example, the survival of the Basque Republic in Northeast Spain, not overrun by the Nationalists.

There is in addition a certain fantasy feature to the book, granting to the various ships consciousness and awareness. Nicholas Monsarrat and Daniel V. Gallery (who wrote a story about the ghosts of lost sailors seeking redemption, taking the spirits of their ships out to sea) might have appreciated that. The ships mourn losses and steel themselves for battle, loss, and sacrifice.

Not to mention the joke of having a British rifleman in Spain named Dodd who was the son and grandson of Rifle Brigade soldiers. C. S. Forester might have had something to say (*Death to the French* (1932); American title *Rifleman Dodd*)

Lupus gives perspectives beyond those of the ships; we have leaders making agonizing command decisions, soldiers in the front lines facing the horror of war, even children being heartbroken and honored. (Though I think Churchill would have had the Asturian Republic informed that "A source of high reliability indicates that German mobilization on your borders is for offensive purposes." Stalin was told something of the sort and he chose to reject this imperialist provocation.)

The war progresses in ways both familiar and unexpected, and ominous events are in sight when this is . . . **To Be Continued.**

TIME AND TIME AGAIN

Review by Joseph T Major of

TYPEWRITER KILLER:

H. Beam Piper

by John F. Carr

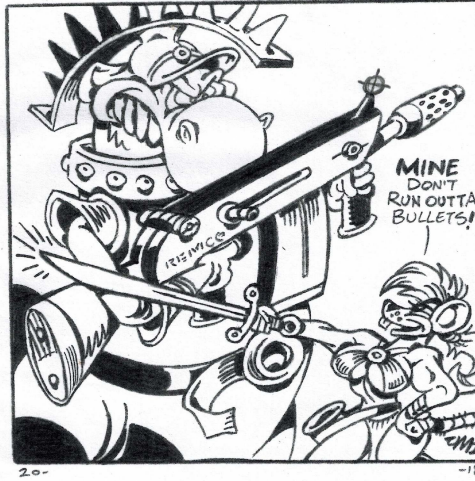
(2016; Pequod Press;

Amazon Digital Services; \$7.99)

Carr has had one bite at this topic, with his *H. Beam Piper: A Biography* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #6). What's the difference?

This book is more focused on his writing

career. Evidently, Piper was a very self-critical writer, and destroyed many works he found unsatisfactory. This seems to have been advantageous to his reputation but less so to his finances.



One matter which was not stressed in the first work but is so here is Piper's attitude towards money. Originally, his writing income was an addendum to his salary. When the job was abolished, he continued to have the same attitude, spending his payments and royalties liberally as they came in, and then having to endure periods of impoverishment.

One interesting point worth noting is a letter Piper wrote about a potential plot point in a future episode of the Calvin Morrison story. The letter is dated July 1964, which implies that he retained the feeling that life would go on for longer than some think.

For a perspective on how marginal some authors' lives could be, and how nevertheless they persisted, this is a striking reminder. Not everyone is a Piper fan; but everyone who is would gain by having this book.

A MARXIST LEXICON

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE ANNOTATED MARX BROTHERS:

A Filmgoer's Guide to In-Jokes, Obscure

References and Sly Details

by Matthew Coniam

(2015; McFarland & Company;

ISBN 978-0786497058; \$27.99;

Amazon Digital Services; \$9.99)

It is depressing to realize that the oldest movie covered in this is **ninety years old** (*The Coconuts* (1929)). And there is another problem consequent on this; there will be comments and references that were understandable then, but now are mysteries.

Coniam has, therefore, set out to explain the background. Technology has changed, and now the reader can have this book open in the Kindle app while watching the movie in the video

player, and at the noted time, see what Groucho was really saying.

He provides as well the often convoluted negotiations among the various members of the film industry that led to the creation of each work. This augments the descriptions in Joe Adamson's *Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Sometimes Zeppo* (1973).

In addition, Coniam discusses a work which I have not heretofore seen covered: *The Incredible Jewel Robbery* (1959), the half-hour (24 minutes) skit on *General Electric Theater*, their final appearance together. He wonders what a Marx Brothers short subject series would have been like. (It would depend on the writers. Imagine *Flywheel, Shyster, and Flywheel* two-reelers coming out every three months or so.)

Some say that explaining a joke spoils it. Not knowing the context of a joke spoils it even more. As for example, when Coniam reprints not one but two different essays by others explaining the references in "Lydia the Tattooed Lady" (*At the Circus* 1939)). You can learn a lot from Lydia.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There will be a solar eclipse on **July 2**, visible on Oeno Island of Pitcairn Islands, in Coquimbo Region and Atacama Region of Chile and San Juan, La Rioja, San Luis, Córdoba, Santa Fe, and Buenos Aires provinces of Argentina. The longest totality will be 4 minutes 33 seconds, at sea at 17° 24' S, 109° W. The eclipse is part of Saros 127, which began on October 10, 991 and will end on March 21, 2452.

The next solar eclipse will be **December 26**, an annular eclipse visible in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Oman, the Indian states of Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, the Northern, North Central, and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka, West Sumatra, Riau, West Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, and East Kalimantan in Indonesia, Sarawak in Malaysia, Singapore, Davao Occidental in the Philippines, Guam, and Rota in the Northern Mariana Islands. The maximum eclipse will be 3 minutes 40 seconds at 1° N 102° 18' E in Riau Province, Indonesia. The eclipse is part of Saros 132, which began August 13, 1208 and will end September 25, 2470.

NASA Eclipse website:

<https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

Other useful eclipse websites:

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

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

HEALTH ISSUES

by Joe

On Thursday morning I took my blood

sugar level and it was 314. Eek! Eek! Eek! After dropping Lisa off at work I went to the hospital. Hospitals, as I went to University Hospital first. The man ahead of me in the Emergency Room registration line was asked if he had been a patient there before. I thought, "I haven't been a patient here before, but I have been a patient at Norton Hospital." So I went back to my car and drove to Norton.

My blood sugar had fallen to 186 by the time they got to me. But there were other problems and I was admitted. They put me in one room, then moved me to another.

They were using all their toys. I had a chest X-Ray, and then a CT scan where Ms. Rotwang the tech didn't have any problems. I was taken back to my room where Lisa was waiting, having arrived just as I was being removed. She had her Kindles so wasn't completely at a loss.

With one thing and another I did not eat anything that day. I didn't miss it. I turned the thermostat in the room up and went to sleep, without being awakened for a chest X-Ray at 4 a.m.

Friday I was taken down to another place to have a stress test. I didn't do the treadmill properly so they gave me a drug instead before scanning my heart. Yes, I do have one.

A doctor came in and told me that my teeth were decaying and he could smell the plaque. This seemed odd to us since I had had my teeth cleaned two weeks before, and dentists like seeing decaying teeth since that means drilling, with better returns and less risk than wildcatting, and they hadn't seen any.

After an unsatisfactory dinner, my first meal in two days, I decided to go have a long sleep, beginning at seven. Whereupon the nurse came in and said I could go home. They pulled out the IV pick, I got dressed, and went down to my car. Except I couldn't find it.

It turned out that there were two parking structures and I had parked in the other one. The security guy at the parking structure kindly drove me to my car, and I left.

I had to pay parking charges both times, since I hadn't been admitted to University, and at Norton, in spite of the reassurance that my discharge papers would suffice, I ended up going through an automatic exit gate which didn't recognize those things.

I now wear support stockings, because apparently I now have heart failure and need to get the fluid out of my legs. I'm sure a lot of people will be happy to hear this.

So far the bill due is \$\$\$, though I got unerved when I looked it up on the medical system web page and discovered the billing was for \$\$,\$\$\$ — paid by the insurance. Subject to change without prior notice.

DERBY NEWS

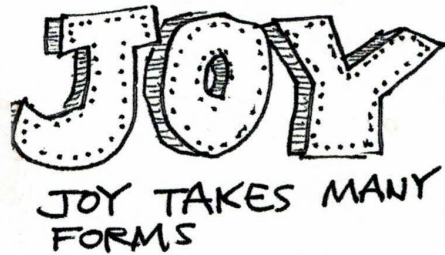
by Lisa

The Derby is almost upon us. It is risky picking a horse before race day. The Derby is

"the chance of a lifetime in a lifetime of chance" as the late Dan Fogelberg sang. Horses are not machines. They are living creatures with personalities all their own. Thunder Snow refused to run in the mud and gave spectators an unexpected rodeo performance in which he tried hard to buck his rider off. In the Breeder's Cup General Quarters had to be scratched because he refused to enter the starting gate. The great Sunday Silence, though, was solidly into getting his black head across the finish line first, whatever the track conditions happened to be. But I will take the risk of saying I like Roadster. There is a tendency to try to paint the Derby as a rivalry between two top colts but it is seldom that simple when the gate opens. My best handicapping came in 1999 when more than half the colts actually belonged. I figured that when the gate opened there would be one of the biggest traffic jams in Derby history and that the winner would probably come from the auxiliary gate where there would be less risk of getting stuck in the traffic jam. I got the first three finishers right, but thought the winner would be Menifee, not Charismatic. Sigh.

The Joy of High Tech

by Rodford Edmiston



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

Cultural Holdovers

There are many aspects of culture which can be traced to a technical innovation or limitation. This effect actually goes back tens of thousands of years. (Think of all the sayings which depend on the physical characteristic of some material, such as "clear as glass" or "like a lead bell.") However, more modern examples are better documented, and many such cultural impacts are still in effect and quite widespread. This exercise will therefore be limited to a very few relatively recent examples. Of course, some associations are a product of misunderstanding, or even outright fraud. Others are simply unclear.

Why is butcher paper brown? According to a popular myth, mummy wrappings. (Note: Take the following with a large grain of salt... and maybe a bite of steak.)

In the middle of the Nineteenth Century

several parts of the world were experiencing a paper shortage. This included the United States, where newspapers were a huge business. Most paper at the time was made from processed rags. Newly produced cotton or linen could be made available for the production of paper, but that was expensive, and had to vie with cloth production. Most paper was therefore made from rags. (There's a term which is a cultural holdover. In modern parlance, the percentage of rag content in paper is a measure of quality.) However, linen ages well and there was a huge reservoir of ancient linen just being tossed away.

The ancient Egyptians made a *lot* of mummies. By some estimates there were *half a billion* humans turned into mummies over those four thousand plus years the practice was widespread in northern Africa. There were so many, in fact, that they were actually a problem in some areas. The vast majority had been low-born people, and barely worth the effort of unwrapping to see what treasures they might have. Additionally, many thousands of mummies had been looted in antiquity, and often the wrappings were just tossed aside as worthless. (This calls to mind the bit from Sam Clemens, who in *The Innocents Abroad* had a locomotive engineer crying out "Damn these plebeians, they don't burn worth a cent — pass out a King!") On top of all those former people, many animals were also mummified, from cats to bulls. So, there was a huge resource for paper making in the fine linen used in mummy wrappings.

As the story is told, a famously thrifty paper mill owner decided to use mummy wrappings to make high-quality paper. However, no matter what he did, the linen wouldn't bleach white, remaining brown. He was forced to market the resulting product as cheap paper, fit only for a butcher to use in wrapping meat. Eventually the wrappings caused a cholera outbreak and the practice stopped. Yet to this day the tradition of butchers using brown paper survives.

Okay, cholera bacteria are unlikely to survive even the ointments and unguents the wrappings were impregnated with, much less remain viable for thousands of years. The paper mill most often identified with the practice of using mummy wrappings did have a cholera outbreak, but those were happening all over the "civilized" world at that time. Period newspaper accounts reported the use of mummy wrappings to make brown paper, but study reveals them to most likely be satire; darkly humorous commentaries on the stinginess of the factory owner.

That huge amounts of rags — including mummy linens — were imported from Egypt during that period for the purpose of making paper has been widely verified. Also verified is that mummy wrappings tended to be difficult to bleach white. Some newspapers actually bragged that they had switched to paper made (in what percentage is not stated) from mummy linens. Since these surviving publications are

rare and valuable historic documents and the paper in them likely a blend of old and new rags, tests to verify this will most likely never be performed.

So, while there is no technical reason for not using the linen from mummy wrappings to make paper, if this happened the scraps of mummy cloth were probably just tossed in as another source of rag, and were a minor component. As to why butcher paper is brown, most of it is actually white or ruddy. Not brown. The general type of paper is more generally known as kraft paper, and has a wide range of uses. Butcher paper is essentially kraft paper treated to make it food safe, stronger and resistant to moisture. Either can come in a wide variety of colors. There is, of course, dark brown paper, but that is more likely to be used as packing material than to wrap meat.



The early audio recording period is known as the acoustical era. The mechanical energy imparted to the needle by the changes in the groove surface was conducted to the diaphragm to produce the sound vibrations without amplification, so purely mechanical records needed to spin quickly to provide the necessary energy. Just not too quickly. The fidelity of such a process depends on how well the variations in groove depth or width can excite the needle. Playing too quickly means the needle skips. Too slowly and the playback is too quiet. The playing time of a phonograph record depends on the available groove length divided by the turntable speed. Total groove length in turn depends on how closely the grooves are spaced, in addition to the record diameter. From about 1898 well into the Nineteen Fifties the ideal speed for music was considered to be around 78 RPM. By 1908 most entertainment recordings played back at

78 - 80 RPM. Edison Diamond Disc Records always ran at 80 RPM. The standard of 78.26 RPM for electrically motorized turntables was adopted by the industry in 1925. This speed was suitable for most existing records, and was easily achieved using a standard 3600-RPM motor and 46-tooth gear.

All this together meant that at the beginning of the 20th century discs played for about two minutes, the same as earlier cylinder records. Because of this most popular recordings were limited to that duration. Soon the larger 10-inch 78 RPM discs played for about three minutes per side. The 12-inch disc, introduced by Victor in 1903, increased the playing time to between three and four minutes. Even today, popular music is often limited to that interval, long after technology has moved beyond the format which caused that restriction.

Interestingly, the common usage of playback speed (such as "seventy-eight") to distinguish between types of discs didn't become widespread until after WWII. Before that they were generally called "records" regardless of speed.

Early records were made from various materials. Each formulation vied for a balance between cost, how closely the grooves could be placed, fidelity and durability. Shellac-based compounds were popular from around 1895 until the requirements of WWII caused a general switch to vinyl. After that vinyl became the standard for nearly all records. The shellac-based records were actually composite structures. They were typically composed of about one-third shellac and two-thirds mineral filler (which was usually finely pulverized slate or limestone) with cotton fibers to add tensile strength. Carbon black was added for color and a very small amount of a lubricant was usually included to ease release from the presses on which the records were made. Vinyl records — as with the later CDs on more modern vinyl presses — could be produced on the same machines. The biggest problems with shellac records were weight and brittleness.

Once technology moved to electronic amplification records could be slowed. However, the 78 RPM standard held for a long time even after this. This was partly because that meant the platters could still be played in areas with no electricity, but largely due to industrial and social inertia. The LP format played at 33 1/3rd revolutions per minute. This allowed greater fidelity and storage density, since they had electronic amplification of the mechanical signal.

The use of both vinyl and the 33 1/3rd RPM format were pioneered in 1931 by RCA, in 30cm discs with 10 minutes of sound per side. There were other long-play formats introduced during the same period. However, due largely to the Great Depression these records were soon discontinued. Both vinyl and the extended play format would return later, on larger records. (There is conflicting information that Bell Labs developed the 33 1/3rd RPM and 16" format before this because it allowed a simple gearing

which worked with film projectors and matched one record side to run the same length as one reel of film. Yet another source claimed it was introduced by Columbia in 1948. Having more than one company declare that "We invented it first!" is not uncommon. Apparently one claim is for motion picture application, another for consumer application, and the last for the adoption of Microgroove technology, which led to the actual Long Play or LP format.)

The 45 RPM record came on the market in 1948 — by RCA — on vinyl or polystyrene. The speed was chosen due to patent licenses. The size, again, was to create up to four and a half minutes of music or voice.

Over and over, the manufacturers focused on a format to produce a length of playback which was already familiar to consumers from decades of previous formats. Yes, LP records were used for longer compositions, including entire symphonies. However, radio airplay and records for popular music continued to force artists to fit an old — and largely obsolete — format. Hence the plaintive Billy Joel lyric "If you're gonna have a hit you gotta make it fit. So they cut it down to 3:05."

The topic of recording formats is quite complicated, and enormously varied. This overview barely scratches the surface.

Tin was the aluminum of the Nineteenth Century. Now, the elemental metal had been used for thousands of years. Among other historic applications it is a component of bronze. The pure metal can take a high polish and is resistant to corrosion. Compounds with tin have a very wide variety of use. While the metal itself is non-toxic, some tin compounds are deadly poisons. Tin is easy to refine, and the pure metal is ductile, easily formed in many ways. In fact, its main flaw is that it does not deal well with extreme (in terrestrial environmental terms) cold, slowly turning to powder, a process which is called "tin pest." Supposedly, this hampered Napoleon's invasion of Russia, when his army's new tin uniform buttons began to deteriorate. However, this transformation is prevented by small amounts of antimony, bismuth, copper, lead, silver, or gold. These are actually normally present in commercial grades of tin, so only very pure tin is actually affected by this.

Why were those buttons made of tin? (If they were...) Tin is easily stamped into intricate shapes, resistant to corrosion and not very expensive. These characteristics lent themselves well to the growing use of multiple industrial processes.

One of the more interesting modern uses of tin is in glass manufacture. Glass is floated across a pool of molten tin to produce smooth, plate glass, in what is known as the Pilkington Process. It's melting point, surface tension, lack of reaction with glass (and at most reacting to the tank materials just to form a thin layer of plating) and low toxicity make tin ideal for this.

The first known use of tinning for food

containers was in 1812, in London, England. Tin bonds well with several container materials, including iron and steel. It is nontoxic and resistant to corrosion. All this makes it very useful in food preservation. Since its the tin people see, around the world they call such coated metal containers “tins” or “tin cans” even though the large majority of material in the can is steel. Similarly, tin-plated steel whistles are often called “tin whistles.” Copper cooking or serving vessels — pots, pans, plates, goblets, etc. — are sometimes tinplated, since copper exposed to acidic food may form toxic compounds. Today, steel or even aluminum cans with polymer coatings and no tin may still be called “tins.” This term is sometimes even used for entirely polymer containers.

Tin’s ductility led in the late 19th century to the production of tin foil. Aluminum foil was introduced in 1926, but did not widely replace tin foil until after World War II. However, due to both being thin sheets of shiny material some people continue even today to refer to the new product by the name of the old one. Tin foil is stiffer than aluminum foil. It also tends to give some foods a slight tin taste. Both characteristics helped aluminum foil to replace tin foil.

Because of its corrosion resistance, availability, low cost, low toxicity, and malleability, tin foil was even used as a filling for tooth cavities prior to the 20th Century.

Harking back to a preceding part of this document, the first audio recordings were made on tin foil wrapped around backing cylinders.

There are many more examples of how technology affects culture, and *vice versa*. This short exploration of the topic barely scratches the surface. What examples can you think of?

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ON (NOT) POSTING AT TOR.COM
by Taras Wolasky

Was I naïve? Here’s a comment in my Loc to the December issue of *Alexiad*:

I post a bit at Tor.com, and I am often amazed when comments, on some innocuous topic like “what are the good Robin Hood movies”, are censored for violating the terms of use. What did they get heated about, and what did they write?

When I wrote that, I was still under the illusion that Tor.com suppresses only comments that are abusive or intemperate in character. I no longer believe that; but you be the judge.

Emily Asher-Perrin’s February 5th post-

ing, “How to Handle the Baron Harkonnen in a Modern Dune Adaptation” concerns the problem (?) that the chief villain of Frank Herbert’s famous novel is both obese and “queer” (Asher-Perrin’s term). As one might expect, most of the discussion concerned the latter issue.

It seemed to me that the portrayal of a villainous homosexual might have been problematic at one time, that is, when there were so few depictions of homosexuals in SF. Today, however, there are many positive gay characters everywhere so, I suggested, if it ever mattered, it doesn’t any more.

I AM INTOLERANT OF
CRITICISM...EVEN OF
PRAISE IF IT IS NOT
CLOSELY REASONED!

AND DON'T TALK
TO ME ABOUT
TRUTH!



I clicked the submit button, and my comment sank into the swamp, never to be seen again. Especially because, not expecting to be censored, I hadn’t saved a copy of it.

So I tried again, making a special effort to be extra tactful:

There is no reason to demand that every individual work be balanced, any more than we demand that every individual scene in every work be balanced.

The character of Baron Harkonnen was problematic in the 1960s because there were so few positive gay characters around. (Setting aside, for the moment, the complex question of whether he actually is a gay character in the first place.) Today, there are thousands, rendering moot the question of whether this one portrayal might miseducate

impressionable young minds.

This time, I saved a copy before I hit the submit button, and my comment burned down, fell over, and then sank into the swamp.

At some point, I had noticed there were a lot of missing sequence numbers among the comments; for example, comment #66 is immediately followed by #72. In fact, between #1 and #117, 42 comments — or 36% — are missing and presumed censored. Like most people, I’m sure I assumed there must be a lot of anti-gay trolling going on. I no longer believe that. In any case, after two attempts to leave a comment, I gave up.

Not long afterward, I had another encounter with the censors.

In response to James Davis Nicoll’s February 20th posting, “Move Over, Westeros: Six SFF Series That Would Rule the TV Landscape”, dozens of people had suggested additional series that might be suitable for television adaptation. I made a couple of suggestions of my own, including this one:

As far as I can tell (though it’s hard to believe), so far no one has mentioned Marion Zimmer Bradley’s sprawling “Darkover” series, more than forty books and counting.

This comment was posted, and got a swift response, to the effect that the reason no one had mentioned “Darkover” was that no one wanted to promote the work of a child molester. As it happens, I had completely forgotten about the posthumous accusation, published a few years ago. I responded as follows:

Sorry to hear it. I guess I’m not up to date on my sci-fi scandals and accusations.

Actually, now that I think back, I had heard something about this when the chief accuser was nominated for a Hugo. But that was the year a band of bizarre right-wing trolls had taken over the nominations, so perhaps I paid less attention than I should have.

To what extent do accusations of personal misconduct invalidate an author or creator’s work? I’m not sure. Woody Allen is still making movies, I note. But then, he’s still alive to defend himself — and, I see here, he’s suing Amazon for not releasing the movie he just did for them.

Whatever the case, as we’ve seen above, there are approximately a gazillion nifty series out there, without baggage . . . at least, no baggage we know about!

This comment was silently suppressed, though I saved a copy before I submitted it.

A few days later, I commented about a couple of other series, and added a postscript, addressed to the poster who had brought up the accusation against MZB:

I tried to respond to your comment, but it didn't make it through.

This time, my comment was posted, together with the postscript. It was immediately followed by a note from Tor, to the effect that the moderators "aim to keep the discussion civil, constructive, on topic and relevant to the original article"; and, like Lucy holding the football for Charlie Brown, inviting me to try again.

I seriously thought about rewording my comment to pass the censors, but I hadn't had any luck with that the other time, so once again I threw in the towel.

NEBULA AWARD NEWS



2018 Nebula Award Finalists

Novel

- The Calculating Stars*, Mary Robinette Kowal (Tor)
The Poppy War, R.F. Kuang (Harper Voyager US; Harper Voyager UK)
Blackfish City, Sam J. Miller (Ecco; Orbit UK)
Spinning Silver, Naomi Novik (Del Rey; Macmillan)
Witchmark, C.L. Polk (Tor.com Publishing)
Trail of Lightning, Rebecca Roanhorse (Saga)

Novella

- Fire Ant*, Jonathan P. Brazee (*Semper Fi*)
The Black God's Drums, P. Djèlí Clark (Tor.com Publishing)
The Tea Master and the Detective, Aliette de Bodard (*Subterranean*)
Alice Payne Arrives, Kate Heartfield (Tor.com Publishing)

- Gods, Monsters, and the Lucky Peach*, Kelly Robson (Tor.com Publishing)
Artificial Condition, Martha Wells (Tor.com Publishing)

Novelette

- The Only Harmless Great Thing*, Brooke Bolander (Tor.com Publishing)
"The Last Banquet of Temporal Confections", Tina Connolly (Tor.com 7/11/18)
"An Agent of Utopia", Andy Duncan (*An Agent of Utopia*)
"The Substance of My Lives, the Accidents of Our Births", José Pablo Iriarte (*Lightspeed* 1/18)
"The Rule of Three", Lawrence M. Schoen (*Future Science Fiction Digest* 12/18)
"Messenger", Yudhanjaya Wijeratne and R.R. Virdi (*Expanding Universe*, Volume 4)

Short Story

- "Interview for the End of the World"*, Rhett C. Bruno (*Bridge Across the Stars*)
"The Secret Lives of the Nine Negro Teeth of George Washington", Phenderson Djèlí Clark (*Fireside* 2/18)
"Going Dark", Richard Fox (*Backblast Area Clear*)
"And Yet", A.T. Greenblatt (*Uncanny* 3-4/18)
"A Witch's Guide to Escape: A Practical Compendium of Portal Fantasies", Alix E. Harrow (*Apex* 2/6/18)
"The Court Magician", Sarah Pinsker (*Lightspeed* 1/18)

Game Writing

- Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*, Charlie Brooker (House of Tomorrow & Netflix)
The Road to Canterbury, Kate Heartfield (Choice of Games)
God of War, Matt Sophos, Richard Zangrande Gaubert, Cory Barlog, Orion Walker, and Adam Dolin (Santa Monica Studio/Sony/Interactive Entertainment)
Rent-A-Vice, Natalia Theodoridou (Choice of Games)
The Martian Job, M. Darusha Wehm (Choice of Games)

The Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation

- The Good Place: "Jeremy Bearimy"*, Written by: Megan Amram
Black Panther, Written by: Ryan Coogler and Joe Robert Cole
A Quiet Place, Screenplay by: John Krasinski, Bryan Woods and Scott Beck
Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, Screenplay by: Phil Lord and Rodney Rothman
Dirty Computer, Written by: Janelle Monáe and Chuck Lightning
Sorry to Bother You, Written by: Boots

Riley

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

- Children of Blood and Bone*, Tomi Adeyemi (Henry Holt; Macmillan)
Aru Shah and the End of Time, Roshani Chokshi (Rick Riordan Presents)
A Light in the Dark, A.K. DuBoff (BDL)
Tess of the Road, Rachel Hartman (Random House)
Dread Nation, Justina Ireland (Balzer + Bray)
Peasprout Chen: Future Legend of Skate and Sword, Henry Lien (Henry Holt)

My vote for the Nebula Award short stories
 by Sue Burke

I've read all the short stories nominated for this year's Nebula Awards, presented by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. The awards, which include novels, novellas, novelettes, game writing, dramatic presentation (television, movies, etc.), and young adult books, will be presented May 18 in Los Angeles.

I'm sorry to say I loved only two of them. As a member, I must vote for one (ranked voting is for the Hugos, not the Nebulas), and here's my vote:

"A Witch's Guide to Escape: A Practical Compendium of Portal Fantasies" by Alix E. Harrow (*Apex* 2/6/18) My heart was in my throat, hoping the witch librarian would help the troubled boy find the book he needed to escape his life, and the boy would accept the magic that the book had to offer him. I read this slowly, knowing it was a short story and would end soon, trying to give myself more time to enjoy it. Magic, indeed.

My opinions of the other stories, ranked in order of preference:

Second place: **"The Secret Lives of the Nine Negro Teeth of George Washington"** by Phenderson Djèlí Clark (*Fireside* 2/18) The story encompasses nine short biographies of the slaves whose teeth came to be part of Washington's dentures. (True story: Washington had dentures made of human teeth.) Since they form an alternate history of a world in which there are various kinds of magic, I kept expecting the consequences of this magic to change the sweep of history, but they did not. Still, well worth reading.

Third place: **"And Yet"** by A. T. Greenblatt (*Uncanny* 3-4/18) A visit to a haunted house led to disaster for a boy. Now an adult, he returns. The house is still haunted, but he might be able to beat its time-space mutations. The real story is the protagonist's personal history of his unhappy family, shortcomings, and childhood disasters. This is done well, yet it feels familiar, resembling quite a few other literary short stories I've read. Perhaps un-

happy families can be alike, too.

Fourth place: **"The Court Magician"** by Sarah Pinsker (*Lightspeed* 1/18) A boy discovers the cost of magic, and he learns that good intentions do not overrule cold cause and effect. The fable-like telling feels too distant, and the story seems familiar. There are no new stories, true, but perhaps a more detailed, close-up telling could have revealed new contours of yearning within an old idea.

Nope: **"Going Dark"** by Richard Fox (*Backblast Area Clear*) A military commander must turn off a humanoid robot that was badly injured in the line of duty. Up to that moment, the commander has shown the emotional response of a turnip, yet he suddenly sinks into bathos. This story got on the ballot through the not-a-slate 20BooksTo50K@ slate. It has some merit, but it's not ready for prime time and is not one of the year's five best short stories. It shouldn't be on the ballot.

Nope: **"Interview for the End of the World"** by Rhett C. Bruno (*Bridge Across the Stars*) An asteroid is about to destroy the Earth, and a rich man with a rocket must pick the three thousand people who will escape death and perpetuate humanity. This is a cliché within a cliché, and poorly told at that. The story is another on the not-a-slate 20BooksTo50K@ slate, and it doesn't deserve to be on the ballot.

HUGO AWARD FINALISTS

Courtesy of Dublin 2019 and File.770.com



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

Best Novel

- The Calculating Stars***, by Mary Robinette Kowal (Tor)
Record of a Spaceborn Few, by Becky Chambers (Hodder & Stoughton / Harper Voyager)
Revenant Gun, by Yoon Ha Lee (Solaris)
Space Opera, by Catherynne M. Valente (Saga)
Spinning Silver, by Naomi Novik (Del Rey / Macmillan)
Trail of Lightning, by Rebecca Roanhorse (Saga)

Best Novella

- Artificial Condition***, by Martha Wells

(Tor.com publishing)

Beneath the Sugar Sky, by Seanan McGuire (Tor.com publishing)

Binti: The Night Masquerade, by Nnedi Okorafor (Tor.com publishing)

The Black God's Drums, by P. Djèlí Clark (Tor.com publishing)

Gods, Monsters, and the Lucky Peach, by Kelly Robson (Tor.com publishing)

The Tea Master and the Detective, by Aliette de Bodard (Subterranean Press / JABberwocky Literary Agency)

Best Novelette

"If at First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try Again," by Zen Cho (B&N Sci-Fi and Fantasy Blog, 29 November 2018)

"The Last Banquet of Temporal Confec-tions," by Tina Connolly (Tor.com, 11 July 2018)

"Nine Last Days on Planet Earth," by Daryl Gregory (Tor.com, 19 September 2018)

The Only Harmless Great Thing, by Brooke Bolander (Tor.com publishing)

"The Thing About Ghost Stories," by Naomi Kritzer (*Uncanny Magazine* 25, November-December 2018)

"When We Were Starless," by Simone Heller (*Clarkesworld* 145, October 2018)

Best Short Story

"The Court Magician," by Sarah Pinsker (*Lightspeed*, January 2018)

"The Rose MacGregor Drinking and Admiration Society," by T. Kingfisher (*Uncanny Magazine* 25, November-December 2018)

"The Secret Lives of the Nine Negro Teeth of George Washington," by P. Djèlí Clark (*Fireside Magazine*, February 2018)

"STET," by Sarah Gailey (*Fireside Maga-zine*, October 2018)

"The Tale of the Three Beautiful Raptor Sisters, and the Prince Who Was Made of Meat," by Brooke Bolander (*Uncanny Magazine* 23, July-August 2018)

"A Witch's Guide to Escape: A Practical Compendium of Portal Fantasies," by Alix E. Harrow (*Apex Magazine*, February 2018)

Best Series

The Centenal Cycle, by Malka Older (Tor)

The Laundry Files, by Charles Stross (most recently Tor/Orbit)

Machineries of Empire, by Yoon Ha Lee (Solaris)

The October Daye Series, by Seanan McGuire (most recently DAW)

The Universe of Xuya, by Aliette de Bodard (most recently Subterranean Press)

Wayfarers, by Becky Chambers (Hodder & Stoughton / Harper Voyager)

Best Related Work

Archive of Our Own, a project of the Organization for Transformative Works
Astounding: John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard, and the Golden Age of Sci-ence Fiction, by Alec Nevala-Lee (Dey Street Books)

The Hobbit Duology (documentary in three parts), written and edited by Lindsay Ellis and Angelina Meehan (YouTube)

An Informal History of the Hugos: A Personal Look Back at the Hugo Awards, 1953-2000, by Jo Walton (Tor)

www.mexicanxinitiative.com: The Mexicanx Initiative Experience at Worldcon 76 (Julia Rios, Libia Brenda, Pablo Defendini, John Picacio)

Ursula K. Le Guin: Conversations on Writing, by Ursula K. Le Guin with David Naimon (Tin House Books)

Best Graphic Story

Abbott, written by Saladin Ahmed, art by Sami Kivelä, colours by Jason Wordie, letters by Jim Campbell (BOOM! Studios)

Black Panther: Long Live the King, written by Nnedi Okorafor and Aaron Covington, art by André Lima Araújo, Mario Del Pennino and Tana Ford (Marvel)

Monstress, Volume 3: Haven, written by Marjorie Liu, art by Sana Takeda (Image Comics)

On a Sunbeam, by Tillie Walden (First Second)

Paper Girls, Volume 4, written by Brian K. Vaughan, art by Cliff Chiang, colours by Matt Wilson, letters by Jared K. Fletcher (Image Comics)

Saga, Volume 9, written by Brian K. Vaughan, art by Fiona Staples (Image Comics)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

Annihilation
Avengers: Infinity War
Black Panther
A Quiet Place
Sorry to Bother You
Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

The Expanse: "Abaddon's Gate,"
Doctor Who: "Demons of the Punjab,"
Dirty Computer
The Good Place: "Janet(s),"
The Good Place: "Jeremy Bearimy,"
Doctor Who: "Rosa,"

Best Professional Editor, Short Form

Neil Clarke
Gardner Dozois
Lee Harris
Julia Rios
Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian
Thomas
E. Catherine Tobler

Best Professional Editor, Long Form

Sheila E. Gilbert
Anne Lesley Groell
Beth Meacham
Diana Pho
Gillian Redfearn
Navah Wolfe

Best Professional Artist

Galen Dara
Jaime Jones
Victo Ngai
John Picacio
Yuko Shimizu
Charles Vess

Best Semiprozine

Beneath Ceaseless Skies, editor-in-chief and publisher Scott H. Andrews
Fireside Magazine, edited by Julia Rios, managing editor Elsa Sjunneson-Henry, social coordinator Meg Frank, special features editor Tanya DePass, founding editor Brian White, publisher and art director Pablo Defendini
FIYAH Magazine of Black Speculative Fiction, executive editors Troy L. Wiggins and DaVaun Sanders, editors L.D. Lewis, Brandon O'Brien, Kaleb Russell, Danny Lore, and Brent Lambert
Shimmer, publisher Beth Wodzinski, senior editor E. Catherine Tobler
Strange Horizons, edited by Jane Crowley, Kate Dollarhyde, Vanessa Rose Phin, Vajra Chandrasekera, Romie Stott, Maureen Kincaid Speller, and the Strange Horizons Staff
Uncanny Magazine, publishers/editors-in-chief Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas, managing editor Michi Trota, podcast producers Erika Ensign and Steven Schapansky, Disabled People Destroy Science Fiction Special Issue editors-in-chief Elsa Sjunneson-Henry and Dominik Parisien

Best Fanzine

Galactic Journey, founder Gideon Marcus, editor Janice Marcus
Journey Planet, edited by Team Journey Planet

Lady Business, editors Ira, Jodie, KJ, Renay & Susan
nerds of a feather, flock together, editors Joe Sherry, Vance Kotrla and The G
Quick Sip Reviews, editor Charles Payseur
Rocket Stack Rank, editors Greg Hullender and Eric Wong

Best Fancast

Be the Serpent, presented by Alexandra Rowland, Freya Marske and Jennifer Mace
The Coode Street Podcast, presented by Jonathan Strahan and Gary K. Wolfe
Fangirl Happy Hour, hosted by Ana Grilo and Renay Williams
Galactic Suburbia, hosted by Alisa Krasnostein, Alexandra Pierce, and Tansy Rayner Roberts, produced by Andrew Finch
Our Opinions Are Correct, hosted by Annalee Newitz and Charlie Jane Anders
The Skiffy and Fanty Show, produced by Jen Zink and Shaun Duke, hosted by the Skiffy and Fanty Crew

Best Fan Writer

Foz Meadows
James Davis Nicoll
Charles Payseur
Elsa Sjunneson-Henry
Alasdair Stuart
Bogi Takács

Best Fan Artist

Sara Felix
Grace P. Fong
Meg Frank
Ariela Housman
Likhain (Mia Sereno)
Spring Schoenhuth

Best Art Book

The Books of Earthsea: The Complete Illustrated Edition, illustrated by Charles Vess, written by Ursula K. Le Guin (Saga Press /Gollancz)
Daydreamer's Journey: The Art of Julie Dillon, by Julie Dillon (self-published)
Dungeons & Dragons Art & Arcana: A Visual History, by Michael Witwer, Kyle Newman, Jon Peterson, Sam Witwer (Ten Speed Press)
Spectrum 25: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art, ed. John Fleskes (Flesk Publications)
Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse – The Art of the Movie, by Ramin Zahed (Titan Books)
Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth, ed. Catherine McIlwaine (Bodleian Library)

John W. Campbell Award for Best New**Writer**

Katherine Arden (2nd year of eligibility)
S.A. Chakraborty (2nd year of eligibility)
R.F. Kuang (1st year of eligibility)
Jeannette Ng (2nd year of eligibility)
Vina Jie-Min Prasad (2nd year of eligibility)
Rivers Solomon (2nd year of eligibility)

Lodestar Award for Best Young Adult Book

The Belles, by Dhonielle Clayton (Freeform / Gollancz)
Children of Blood and Bone, by Tomi Adeyemi (Henry Holt / Macmillan Children's Books)
The Cruel Prince, by Holly Black (Little, Brown / Hot Key Books)
Dread Nation, by Justina Ireland (Balzer + Bray)
The Invasion, by Peadar O'Guilin (David Fickling Books / Scholastic)
Tess of the Road, by Rachel Hartman (Random House / Penguin Teen)

Congratulations to **Christopher J. Garcia**, **Alec Nevala-Lee**, and **James Davis Nicoll** on their nominations. Chris, if *Journey Planet* wins again, can we have another Hugo nomination-worthy happy dance? Alec is up against Jo Walton, and I think it's going to be a titanic struggle. Fortunately there are no Chicks Dig books up for consideration this year. And as for Nicoll, has anyone ever heard of ANY of the other nominees for Best Fan Writer?



RETRO-HUGO AWARD FINALISTS
Courtesy of Dublin 2019 and File 770.com

Best Novel

Conjure Wife, by Fritz Leiber, Jr. (Un-

known Worlds, April 1943)
Earth's Last Citadel, by C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner (*Argosy*, April 1943)
Gather, Darkness! by Fritz Leiber, Jr. (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, May/July 1943)

Das Glasperlenspiel [The Glass Bead Game], by Hermann Hesse (Fretz & Wasmuth)
Perelandra, by C.S. Lewis (John Lane, The Bodley Head)
The Weapon Makers, by A.E. van Vogt (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, February-April 1943)

Best Novella

“*Attitude*,” by Hal Clement (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, September 1943)
 “*Clash by Night*,” by Lawrence O'Donnell (Henry Kuttner & C.L. Moore) (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, March 1943)
 “*The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*” by H.P. Lovecraft, (*Beyond the Wall of Sleep*, Arkham House)
The Little Prince, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (Reynal & Hitchcock)
The Magic Bed-Knob; or, How to Become a Witch in Ten Easy Lessons, by Mary Norton (Hyperion Press)
 “*We Print the Truth*,” by Anthony Boucher (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, December 1943)

Best Novelette

“*Citadel of Lost Ships*,” by Leigh Brackett (*Planet Stories*, March 1943)
 “*The Halfling*,” by Leigh Brackett (*Astonishing Stories*, February 1943)
 “*Mimsy Were the Borogoves*,” by Lewis Padgett (C.L. Moore & Henry Kuttner) (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, February 1943)
 “*The Proud Robot*,” by Lewis Padgett (Henry Kuttner) (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, February 1943)
 “*Symbiotica*,” by Eric Frank Russell (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, October 1943)
 “*Thieves' House*,” by Fritz Leiber, Jr. (*Unknown Worlds*, February 1943)

Best Short Story

“*Death Sentence*,” by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding Science Fiction*, November 1943)
 “*Doorway into Time*,” by C.L. Moore (*Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, September 1943)
 “*Exile*,” by Edmond Hamilton (*Super Science Stories*, May 1943)
 “*King of the Gray Spaces*” (“*R is for Rocket*”), by Ray Bradbury (*Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, December 1943)
 “*Q.U.R.*,” by H.H. Holmes (Anthony

Boucher) (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, March 1943)
 “*Yours Truly – Jack the Ripper*,” by Robert Bloch (*Weird Tales*, July 1943)

Best Graphic Story

Buck Rogers: Martians Invade Jupiter, by Philip Nowlan and Dick Calkins (National Newspaper Service)
Flash Gordon: Fiery Desert of Mongo, by Alex Raymond (King Features Syndicate)
Garth, by Steve Dowling (Daily Mirror)
Plastic Man #1: The Game of Death, by Jack Cole (Vital Publications)
Le Secret de la Licorne [The Secret of the Unicorn], by Hergé (Le Soir)
Wonder Woman #5: Battle for Womanhood, written by William Moulton Marsden, art by Harry G. Peter (DC Comics)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

Batman
Cabin in the Sky
A Guy Named Joe
Heaven Can Wait
Münchhausen
Phantom of the Opera

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

The Ape Man
Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman
Der Fuehrer's Face
I Walked With a Zombie
The Seventh Victim
Super-Rabbit

Best Professional Editor, Short Form

John W. Campbell
 Oscar J. Friend
 Mary Gnaedinger
 Dorothy McIlwraith
 Raymond A. Palmer
 Donald A. Wollheim

Best Professional Artist

Hannes Bok
 Margaret Brundage
 Virgil Finlay
 Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
 J. Allen St. John
 William Timmins

Best Fanzine

Fantasy News, editor William S. Sykora
Futurian War Digest, editor J. Michael Rosenblum
The Phantagraph, editor Donald A. Wollheim
Voice of the Imagi-Nation, editors Jack Erman (Forrest J Ackerman) & Morojo (Myrtle Douglas)

YHOS, editor Art Widner
Le Zombie, editor Wilson “Bob” Tucker

Best Fan Writer

Forrest J. Ackerman
 Morojo (Myrtle Douglas)
 Jack Speer
 Wilson “Bob” Tucker
 Art Widner
 Donald A. Wollheim

I asked H. P. L. (or his assistant Leeman Kessler) what he thought about his nomination. He said he was beyond such things, but please send money because he needs sugar.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxx0Tfgfxkk>

With Heinlein and Asimov out of the game, we are seeing Kuttner & Moore, van Vogt, and other formerly neglected candidates. Even Tintin. And Donald Duck vs. Bugs Bunny!

WORLDCON BIDS

2021
 Washington, D.C.
<http://dcin2021.org/>

2022
 Chicago
<https://chicagoworldconbid.org/>

2023
 Chengdu

Nice, France
<http://worldconinfrance.org/en/>

New Orleans

2024
 United Kingdom
<http://www.ukin2024.org/>

2025
 Seattle
 Perth, Australia

NASFiC BIDS

2020
 Columbus, Ohio

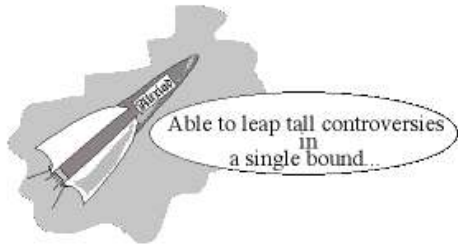
WORLDCON

2020
 ConNZealand
 Wellington, New Zealand
 July 29-August 2, 2020
<http://ConNZealand.nz/>

NASFiC

2019
 Layton, Utah
 July 4-7, 2019
<https://www.spikecon.org/>

Letters, we get letters



From: **Joy V. Smith** February 26, 2019
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 33810-0341 USA
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Thanks for the reviews; I confess there are very few alternate history books that I want to read. And thanks to Leigh Kimmel for the con reports.

Lisa, We recently had to put Bree, our black and white Manx, to sleep (cancer); she was only two years old — a baby! Now with only one dog and one cat, the house seems incredibly empty. So another kitten — or two — or a puppy (we never got another dog after we had to put Brynn to sleep — and Blizzard missed him for a long time — and she needs company because Pemberley, our tortoiseshell (3 years old) bullies her. Oh, yes, it is easier to travel without thinking about pets. We have a friend, btw, who has to crate one of her dogs when going out for a while, so you can't be gone long then either. (Life is sometimes complicated, or we would have gotten another pet sooner, but we've been thinking about it for a long time . . .)

When I lived alone, I could set out a self-feeder and a self-waterer for Sulla, but if I was gone for very long he apparently moped and quit drinking. Grant looked after the cats when he was with us.

— JTM

I enjoyed all the LOCs too, and thanks to Sue Burke for the link to "If I Were a Plant".

From: **Timothy Lane** March 9, 2019
timothyane51@gmail.com

I just noticed the Greek version of the title, which ends with a capital sigma rather than a delta. That would be Alexias, not Alexiad.

You were there when the man said it should be "Alexias".

— JTM

It's nice to see Leigh Kimmel's con re-

ports, especially for one I used to attend when that was physically possible. Missing InConJunction (and Conglomeration) are among my greatest regrets. It would be nice if she could report on some of the programmings. InCon has plenty of evening programming worth seeing. I'm a bit confused about her exact timing for her western trip. Were she and Larry away 2 full weeks?

Elizabeth and I last attended a Worldcon in 2001, but I don't think the 9/11/01 attacks had anything to do with it. For one thing, after that year I could hardly afford to go, and more recently we both became physically incapable of attending. I doubt we're the only elderly fans with those problems.

It would indeed be interesting to figure out the different effects of Hitler's death at different times. If he had died after Munich but before he invaded Poland, some form of Grossdeutschland might still exist today, since his likely successor (Goering) saw nothing personally to gain by war. Since European peace would have made it easier for Britain and America to concentrate their navies in the Pacific theater of Japan went to war, even the Japanese Army (which largely made the decisions, especially after their commander became the Prime Minister in late 1941) might have chosen peace. (Without the war in Europe, the US might have been less inclined to press them.)

In that case, the 3-way struggle for China would have been very interesting. A nice historical novel about that might be rather interesting. Mao vs. Chiang vs. Hirohito . . . who knows?

Regarding The Mule, I will note that Han Pritchler was converted by the Mule in the original story, and in fact in the next story (after the Mule had established his empire) he commanded the first search for the Second Foundation.

From: **Lloyd Penney** March 18, 2019
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 2B2 CANADA
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<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Thank you for *Alexiad* WN 103. Let's see what we can say about the issue at hand, and still make the deadline. Thanks for the time warning, by the way; sometimes, I lose complete track of time.

Opportunity is dead, but Curiosity still rolls on, in more ways than one. May we always be so curious, and may we advance ourselves so that we can indeed put at least one of these rovers into a museum. In this day, when we seem more willing to kill the people we don't like rather than do anything remotely constructive, the science fiction we love seems more fictional than ever. I sincerely hope I am wrong.

And then comes the potential viciousness of social media. I see the benefits of it, and community can be constructed on it (even if it is faint compared to the true community we can build when we actually work together, live), yet

I've been torn apart online by those who don't truly read what I've written, and I do try to be careful on what I might write. Some just seem determined to misunderstand me, or have their own agenda to follow, and they don't care who they run down.

And now, one of those who drove Amelie Zhao into pulling her book before publication has pulled his, as a result of a similar Twitter pile-on.

An old-school science fiction convention...there's a turn of phrase I never thought I'd hear, and yet, these days, it's true. The big pro-run con is ascendant, and the fan-run con is dying. Participation is down, and passive consumption is up. In July, we will be attending our own local old-school con, Ad Astra.

The letter column... Yvonne and I both love dogs and cats, and other pets, too, but we've never had one of our own. We always figured that our lifestyle wouldn't be fair to the animal, and our place is the least kid-proof we've ever seen, so we can imagine what a dog or cat might do to it. We are happy to spoil the pets of others, and be a happy aunt and uncle.

My loc...this past weekend was the relatively large Toronto ComiCon, held downtown at the convention centre. We didn't go, but friends on Facebook indicate that for every one of them who did go, there was another who could have gone, but didn't bother. Indeed, Torcon 3 has good and bad memories, and I still hear about good and bad experiences from it. Good in plan, poor in execution. Those who felt they were competent pushed out those who really were competent, and those left refused outside help, and they failed miserably. With one or two exceptions, they all gafiated, I think, in embarrassment.

I think I mentioned Garth Spencer's story about the Vancouver fans who went to Worldcon and thought, hey, they could do something as big too. Things happened, few of them good.

— JTM

Update . . . Yvonne's assignment at the local racetrack came to an end, and now she is working a shortshort-term assignment with a medical tech firm downtown. I have actually been able to find some at-home work with a Christian organization in Mississauga, plus some registration work and voicework coming up, so my luck seems to be changing. Maybe it's just the fact winter is almost done. We head off to England in about 2½ months, and after that, Yvonne plans to stay retired. Hmm, we'll see what happens . . .

Time to go, just about filling the page. Take care, stay healthy, and let's hope for warm weather and better luck for all of us.

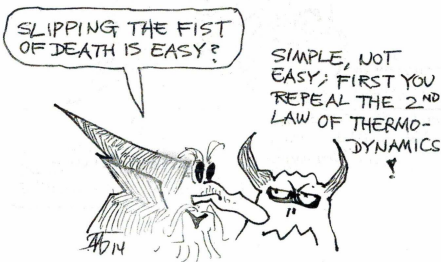
From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 20, 2019

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ldaub@wi.rr.com

My thanks for Vol. 18 No. 1 (February 2019, Whole Number103).

In your review and commentary of *Them Bones* by Howard Waldrop you make a short reference to Neanderthals. Given that those of us of European ancestry have Neanderthal DNA (mine is 2.8%) I found that interesting. For anyone who is interested I highly recommend a book that I recently purchased and read: *The Neanderthals Rediscovered — How Modern Science Is Rewriting Their Story* by Dimitra Papagianni & Michael Morse (Thames & Hudson, 2015).



Your review of *Heinlein in Reflection* by Christopher G. Nuttall was interesting. I have read a large number of Nuttall's novels and given the volume of his output thought the name might be a cover for several authors. However, I have been told that it is really him with incredible output. Anyway, your comment that "Nuttall examines Heinlein in his time, not by the standards of other eras" caught my eye. I have long said that people have to be judged by the time in which they lived, not by the standards of today. A couple of examples are the attacks on Washington and Jefferson for owning slaves. They both believed slavery was wrong. But to free their slaves would have impoverished them. Slavery was horrible and we are still paying the price. And slavery still exists in some parts of our world.

Considering that one of the causes of Amelie Zhao's being targeted was that she said that slavery existed in other places than the United States, I think a proper reminder is in order.

That's about it. Everything is fine here. Next week my niece and I are going to see SHEN YUN. Yes, Boise, Idaho is part of the United States. ☺

Shen Yun will get to Louisville on May 1.

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Daub**

March 27, 2019

Thank you again for another *Alexiad*.

Like Lisa, let me lead off with a lament for the Mars Opportunity rover. I had the good fortune to encounter a link to the blogger Stuart Atkinson and thus follow him via my RSS feed-reader as he 'walked' along with Oppy across the Mars surface.

It was quite an accomplishment making the rover, getting her there and keeping her going all this time [just for example, I believe she was on her third human 'driver,' perhaps more]. Atkinson was there all the way, and his archive is worth exploring:

<https://roadtoendeavour.wordpress.com>

Since there are many unprocessed/unenhanced images still in the JPL files, he promises we aren't done seeing what Oppy saw. But when is unknowable at present. His life goes on, as likewise the careers of the rover team.

Of course, for someone like me, the vistas beyond Martian horizons only go just so far. I want new tasty critters. Or new civilizations. But it all made StuartA happy, and I enjoyed his prose as well as his enhanced imagery.

Reviewer's Notes — you obliquely make a point that could be emphasized about the comic-book movies now in vogue. They involve a tremendous amount of physical destruction that gets ignored. Looking at what America did after 9-11, it is nonsensical that more isn't done to rid the planet of supervillains. Why leave it to an angsty spidery hero or super-woke heroine? Especially when we can't even keep the same actors deployed until the mission is accomplished? We need the draft, and 'for the duration.'

In some of the early comic-book movies they included a scene where the super-villain showed how impotent the conventional forces were. (I believe there is a scene in *Superman* (1978) where General Zod blows away a number of army tanks by breathing on them.)

— JTM

Back to work here. Next up are more revisions in my terraREforming haibun for Teri Santitoro and Scifaikuest. Fourteen months from publication, but she wants the text locked down so she knows how much space I take up. That's because I keep telling her that a guy like me takes up a lot of space. It's all my own fault.

From: **George W. Price** March 28, 2019
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February *Alexiad*:

I questioned the discrepancy between Joe's count of 961 pages for David Weber's *Uncompromising Honor* and the 773 pages in my copy. He replied that 961 is "the equivalent page count for the Kindle edition." Now that had not occurred to me. I've never used e-books, and didn't even know they have an "equivalent page count." I assumed they have no fixed page divisions, since pagination is meaningless when the amount of text on the screen at one time varies depending on what font size is chosen. Can you say how this page equivalent is calculated? Do they just assume a standard number of characters per page? Or what?

They say:

The estimated length is calculated using the number of page turns on a Kindle, using settings to closely represent a physical book.

— JTM

To my observation that Western clothing appears to have conquered the world, Sue Burke suggests that it's because mass production makes it cheap, and also vast amounts of cast-off Western clothing go to Third-World countries as charitable donations. Taras Wolansky makes the same point about donations.

Um, well, maybe. That could account for poor people dressing Western, instead of going in rags or breechclouts. It certainly does not explain why Xi Jinping and his ministers always appear in dark business suits with neckties. Among the rich and powerful who can afford whatever they please, it's rarely anything but Western dress. (The Saudi rulers are the major exceptions.) African dashikis and oriental robes are rarely seen.

As for cheapness due to mass production, might the causation be the other way around? Western clothing is mass produced (largely in Third World countries) because that is what sells best everywhere. Dashikis and burnouses could be just as easily mass produced if they were in high demand.

So I think I will stick with my original suggestion that Western dress has swept the world because (in addition to its practicality in a mechanized world) people everywhere follow Western fashion in admiring emulation of the West (and the U.S. in particular) as the most economically advanced society. We're the richest, so they copy us.

To be sure, I do not expect to see a fad for wearing too-long red neckties. Emulation has its limits, thank God.

Taras also says he wishes he had kept his father's slide rule. I still have two slide rules

and a book of logarithm tables from my undergraduate days circa 1950. And that reminds me of a lewd joke from that time, a joke made obsolete by the invention of pocket calculators.

First a bit of background for younger readers: Logarithms (abbreviated as “logs”) are mathematical functions that can be used to multiply and divide multi-digit numbers relatively quickly, and with more precision than a slide rule allows.

It is said that a joke that has to be explained isn’t funny. So take it as a historical curiosity:

- Q.: What is the difference between how an engineer and a mathematician solve the problem of being constipated?
 A.: The engineer works it out with a slide rule, while the mathematician works it out with logs.

I’ve been observing Chicago politics for seventy-odd years (some of them very odd indeed). I thought I had seen it all, but in the recent aldermanic election the Machine showed us something brand new.

In the 13th Ward — a Machine stronghold — a 19-year-old college student named David Krupa decided to run against the incumbent, who had been expected to run unopposed.

To get on the ballot, a candidate must submit nominating petitions signed by a certain number of registered voters, the number being a specified small fraction of the total number of voters in the ward. For the 13th Ward it had to be 473.

Krupa submitted 1,729 signatures. (Candidates submit far more than the required minimum, because part of the game in Chicago is to invalidate as many as possible of the opposition’s nominating signatures, on whatever pretexts can be found, such as a signature varying in the least bit from how it appears in voter records.)

This time it was different. The Machine’s workers — nobody seems to know exactly who — gave the Board of Election Commissioners sworn affidavits from 2,796 ward residents revoking their signatures on Krupa’s petitions.

Doing the arithmetic, 2,796 less 1,729 means that at least 1,067 more people revoked signatures than had given signatures in the first place. Since the revocation affidavits were notarized, falsifying them was flat-out perjury. (Only 187 of the revocations were of signatures actually on Krupa’s petitions.)

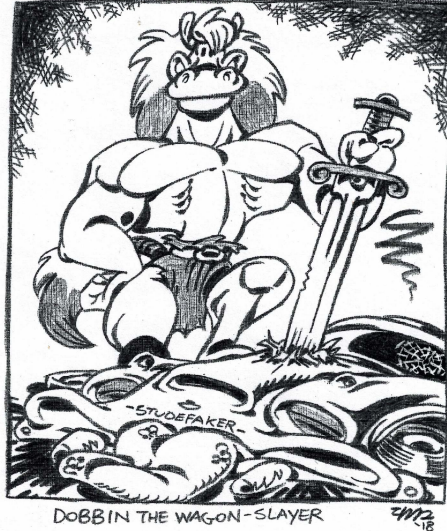
Well! Political columnist John Kass of the *Chicago Tribune* found out about this merry prank and wrote several juicy columns exposing it. The revocation affidavits then somehow went away, and Mr. Krupa was put on the ballot.

And how did the election turn out? Oh, Krupa got creamed, of course, 85% to 15%.

And don’t hold your breath until anybody gets prosecuted for all those perjured affidavits. The Machine still rules!

That reminds me of some of the elections in Liberia where the story I heard was that the losing candidate got more votes than there were people in the country.

— JTM



From: **AL du Pisani** March 31, 2019
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I did not celebrate Earth Hour, but then I never do — I appreciate electricity too much. Grew up at times and places where I had to go without electricity on a lot of holidays. And recently the South African government have made me appreciate electricity more — we had the Son of the Return of Loadshedding — this time it is personal.

With me it’s insulin. The cheap motels have refrigerators in the rooms. The high class ones . . . you have to pay extra.

Our beloved electricity supply monopoly, Eskom, unexpectedly had to re-institute loadshedding, and it was very bad for a week — Being without electricity for at least one four hour block every day for a week, including weekends. Some days you have two blocks when the electricity was off. This exclude the times that there were additional power outages, quite often because of electricity supply equipment failing because the power on, power off situation was not handled properly. Or for that

matter, because substations burned down.

In the end, it was the midnight to four block which caused me the most trouble — as I now need to sleep with a CPAP machine to assist my breathing. With no power, I slept really badly. (To think that a year ago I did not know what was really wrong, I just slept badly and started to fall asleep at work.) In the end, I had to get myself a very expensive, but proper, solution that would hopefully last a night or two.

A friend of mine is convinced that this round of loadshedding was blackmail — Eskom had asked for something like a 25% increase in the price of electricity, every year, for the next five years, and had been rebuffed. And although the government had announced a bailout for Eskom, they are financially not capable of servicing their existing debt, and need to borrow more money to carry on operations.

The official excuse was that because the electricity supply from Mozambique (Cahora Bassa dam) was knocked out by cyclone Idia (1.1 GW), they had a shortfall of 4 GW, which could only be fixed by loadshedding. South Africa has on paper a generating capacity of 47 GW, and a usage that peaked at 27 GW. During the March 2019 loadshedding, Eskom could only supply 21 GW.

And what happened to the two giant coal fired power stations, Medupi and Kusile, that was going to solve all our problems? Well, the power stations was going to be expensive from the very start, with a planned cost per MW generated about three times the industry average. And then Eskom did not do proper project management. And the Unions went on strike every now and again for more money. And the ANC made out like bandits from their involvement with the procurement of supplies (According to one report, a ROI of 5000%). And the Guptas got involved and acquired a bit of money, maybe a billion or two. And Eskom had to transform their staff to fully reflect the population composition of South Africa (I.e. white managers, supervisory personnel and workers got fired, and people with the right colour or gender or political or victim status, got hired.)

So in the end both Medupi and Kusile are way over budget, years late, and the parts commissioned are not working properly. Some of the existing generation units will have to be shut down to be repaired to full working condition.

And it is coming to light that Eskom caused a previous instance of loadshedding. So that they could enter into coal purchasing agreements with people who would not have got the contracts if normal tendering regulations had been followed.

At least I found out about Vanadium redox batteries as a result of all this — It looks as if Eskom is interested in getting a lot of them into the grid, which would smooth out the instability caused by adding lots of wind and solar generating capacity. And since we produce Vanadium, it may become a lot cheaper than

the alternatives.

All of this is happening shortly before the next general election, which also include the provincial layer. A total of 45 parties are contesting the election – I think I know who ten of them are – Most of them are minor single issue parties, with no or very little hope of getting a single MP elected. (For instance, the party aimed at security guards.)

The big three are the ANC, DA and EFF, and they are expected to pull a good 90% of all the votes. However, a lot of voters are dissatisfied with them. I, for instance know that I want to vote against two of them, and at this moment do not want to vote for the remaining big party. (All three of them have leadership issues, governance issues, and I have difficulty in seeing much of a difference in their economic policies, except on how quickly we go full Communism.)

The problem I have is that most of the rest of the parties have given me no indication that they will be any better, except maybe for the newly formed South African Capitalist Party (ZACP). (Not the SACP, which is the Communists.)

Now you know what the AWB was leaving to go back to 1864. At least Richmond did not have loadshedding, though that was because they didn't have electricity.

In the mean time I try to keep my head down, and carry on. Life at work is currently OK, and I may actually start work on stuff which have been promised to be here real soon now for the past two years.

I have recently read Nigel West's *Churchill's Spy Files* – with particular attention to the Southern Africa incidents. It was interesting in many ways, one of which was that I had shortly before reading the book attended a lecture on some aspects of spying in WW2 in Southern Africa that covered the incidents from a different angle – mostly concentrating on the role of the *Ossewa Brandwag*. (One translation of it would be the ox wagon sentinels – an Afrikaner paramilitary organization who did not like the British, and looked to the Germans.)

(By the way, did you know that the OSS had an office in Pretoria during WW2? I did not, and still do not know what they did here.)

Probably monitoring affairs in Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). Malcolm Muggeridge worked for MI 6 in Delagoa, or Lourenço Marques, that is Maputo then. The OSS also had an office in Lhasa, for example; it is mentioned in *The Way Back* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #1).

— JTM

Like most talks of the kind, it assumed an implicit connection between the OB and the National Party, while never explicitly stating that there was such a connection. And that is because Dr DF Malan, while leader of the National Party, made clear that you could either be a member of the NP or the OB, but not both. It was only once the OB had been disbanded that prominent ex-OB members (such as John Vorster and Oswald Pirow) was able to run for parliament as NP members. (And achieve high office, later.)

For some reason Robey Leibrandt seems to have a hold on the imagination of the Left in South Africa. All of the talks, movies and writings about him that I encountered was done by people opposed to him and his purpose – Or to put it differently, I have not come across any person writing about Robey Leibrandt that wrote about him from a position of admiring what he planned.

I am mostly fine – just financially less stable than previously – all due to people who did not do their work properly. But I should be OK in the not too distant future.

I still enjoy the meetings of the local SF people – Just that we have known each other for long enough to have heard the war stories too often. I am finding that at times I am unable to communicate, as the understanding I have of a lot of things are not shared, and I have found that I have to keep my mouth shut about more and more, as I am not interested in fighting with people who have been part of my support structure for years.

I wish all of you well. Hoping that the next book you read will be enjoyable.

From: **Sue Burke** March 31, 2019
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First of all, good wishes to our fearless editor, Joe, for various health problems and solutions.

Which continue. See above.

Note the new address. My husband and I have moved. We now live in that iconic kind of Chicago edifice: a high-rise. Specifically, we've rented an apartment in the Park Tower Condominium, 55 stories, 728 units, and about 1500 residents. We're only four blocks away from our old place in the Edgewater neighborhood at the north end of Lincoln Park. Our old apartment was on the ground floor, stuffed between two other buildings and a train embankment.

My houseplants love the sunshine in their new home because the exterior walls are all glass, so it's basically a vertical greenhouse adapted to human habitation. We're on the (cheaper) west side and a (cheaper) lower floor, the 17th, but the views are still splendid.

We can see Osterman Beach at Lake Michigan from the bedroom I use as an office. From the bedroom we use as a bedroom, we can see the right field lights of Wrigley Field, 2.2 miles/3.5 kilometers down Sheridan Road, as well as the Willis Tower and other buildings in the Loop. Off to the west on the horizon, we can see airplanes ascending and descending from O'Hare Airport. (Chicago is very flat.)

However, for a bit of humbling perspective, we're not as far off the ground as the topmost leaves of the average sequoia tree.

Because we've spent the month of March packing and unpacking, this letter will be abbreviated. Although my husband and I attended Capricon, there will be no con report. I will send my comments on the Nebula Award short story nominees, but that's the only category I've had time to read in its entirety.

In addition to Capricon, I also attended C2E2, the Chicago Comic and Entertainment Expo, one of those commercial cons attended by about 80,000 people. Capricon was attended by fewer than 1,000. Both are genuinely fun, but here's what I think is the key difference: You go to C2E2 (and its professionally-run ilk) with your friends. You go to Capricon (and similar fan-run cons) to make friends. Not for nothing does Windycon, a similar convention, describe itself as "a family." Capricon was a three-day-long conversation. C2E2 was a spectacle. (I went because the Tor publicity department told me to speak at couple of panels, then took me and my fellow panelists out for pizza and beer. I will work for food and booze.)



As I've said again and again, it indicates a transition from participant to consumer.

Joe opened the last issue speaking of a YA disaster on Twitter. Since then it's grown worse: Kosoko Jackson, one of the leaders of the charge against Amelie Wen Zhao's book, had his own young adult novel attacked on Twitter, and he had to withdraw it. I'm trying hard not to feel schadenfreude.

But this kind of destructive pile-on happens

too often on social media. I'm convinced that the nature of social media both enables and encourages bullying because nothing in their architecture allows anyone or anything to control or prevent mob behavior. In fact, a lack of controls means greater profits for the corporations owning those media. So mobs of all sorts attack targets of all sorts – QAnon is attacking Sebastian Gorka right now. (I do feel schadenfreude.) These mobs can cause financial harm and physical danger, and nothing can protect you if you draw their ire for any real or imagined reason.

We have a problem. The YA Twitterati or the New Zealand mass murderer are merely symptoms, like inflamed lymph nodes in a bubonic plague victim. And we have no antibiotics.

I had to delete a picture of myself on Facebook because someone started spewing child-molestation accusations. I know too much about that sort of thing.

Meanwhile, on a lighter note, Taras Wolansky asked what the fight was about regarding autonomous cars at Windycon 45. Mostly it was about safety, independence, surveillance, and reliability, as well as practicality. Thank you to Joy V. Smith for the congratulations. George W. Price, yes, the loss of bookpost has done a lot of harm to book sales because mail is no longer an affordable international option. Lloyd Penney, I agree, too many tasks are being assigned to phones, and phones are far from affordable for all, and are not exactly intuitive to use.

I have been getting those "We've been trying to contact you regarding your extended automobile warranty" calls on my cell phone. Too many people have just quit answering their telephones. This puts a decided crimp in my efforts at reaching out to find members of my family.

—JTM

From: **Taras Wolansky** April 1, 2019
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Thanks for *Alexiad* #103.

Joe: "The popular movies are superhero comic movies, most of which seem to involve massive destruction that never kills anyone."

For better or worse, this Comics-Codeish approach no longer seems to be the rule. In *Batman v Superman* (2016), for example, Bruce Wayne is out for vengeance for the deaths of his employees in a battle between Superman and his nemesis, General Zod (in the previous Superman movie).

And in the latest Avengers movie, almost everybody dies — though most of them will of course be brought back in the next Avengers movie, opening shortly.

Oh, the embarrassment!

I can understand why Michael Palin and Christopher Nolan would receive honors from the British government, but why Philip Pullman? For undermining the Anglican Church?

Sue Burke: "Spanish has changed less over time than English has." Does anybody have any idea why?

I've had a soft spot for *Amadis of Gaul*, ever since I learned it was Don Quixote's favorite novel.

You may not make any money off them, but every book you write is another message in a bottle to the future.

I just published another novel.

Tim Lane: Glad your legs are feeling a little bit better.

"Cultural appropriation" is just a scam to undermine artistic freedom. If I buy a jacket just like yours, that's imitation, not appropriation. If I steal your jacket, now that is appropriation.

George W. Price: "Blacks in Africa rarely wear afros". In a couple of recent movies and TV shows, I've noticed that an Afro is treated as a sign of nerdiness, like a pocket protector. So perhaps it's going out of style here as well.

Back when I used to watch *Grey's Anatomy*, there was a funny scene in which the main character, who is white, is out with her adopted African baby, and another white woman keeps staring at them. She starts to make a scene about racism, until a black colleague explains to her that what that woman was staring at is the baby's hair, which her white mother is horribly mismanaging.

John Hertz: I consider being surprised by a book or a movie or TV show a rare privilege. For example, I was fortunate enough to see Masaki Kobayashi's *Hara Kiri* (1962) without knowing what it was about, so I could be as stunned by developments as the characters in the story. The oddball superhero movie, *Hancock*, starring Will Smith, is another film by which I was delighted to be surprised.

In prose, Richelle Mead's "Vampire Academy" hexalogy pulls off some great surprises. In one case in particular she plants a clue as apparently nothing more than an unimportant bit of character detail; then, four books later, a door swings open, the characters' jaws drop, and so do the readers'.

As Chekov said, "If in the first act you have hung a phaser on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired."

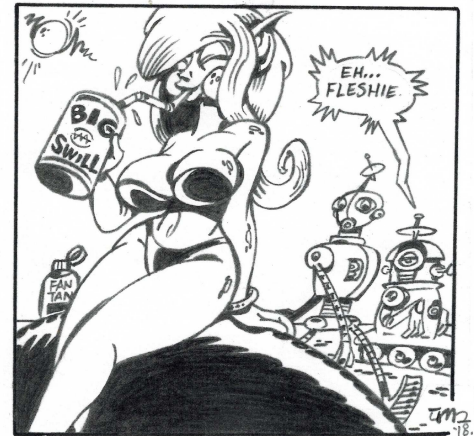
— JTM

WAHF:

Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.

Steve Fahnstalk and **Patrick McCray**, with thanks.

Marc Schirmeister, whose postcard was hideously maimed by the Postal Service. I'm sorry about the whole thing, Schirm.



Fear and Loathing in Dallas

... the rain had struggled to wash away the miasma of prejudice and bigotry perpetrated by the fat swine, bloated on their oil money, and the degenerate descendants of the cowboys who did their bidding. The President was going to thrust his head into these great grinders of jaws in a hope of reviving the fortunes of his policy.

The *National Observer* had sent me down to this pesthole in order to report on the visit. Fortified by some uppers and half a bottle of Jim Beam, I was standing on the curb in this dinky island of green surrounded by melting asphalt which they fancied was a park when it happened.

Three shots rang out, and in the tumult I raced across the street to the site of their origin. There had been a rifle visible in the window of the building and I presumed it was just another redneck saying "hey looka this!"

A slimy little man was coming out the door when I came up to it, and I thought I could make out a whiff of gunpowder. I drew my .357, stuck it up his nostril, and said, "Not so fast!"

Instantly we were surrounded by large menacing thugs in official blue uniforms with badges, and I was handcuffed and taken away.

About six that evening my lawyer Dr. Gonzo came down, forcing his 300-pound

body through the narrow corridors of the jail which were redolent with the stench of fear from Negroes taken into the cells to be beaten with clubs. "You're free to go," he said.

At the front desk the spiteful little clerk handed me back all my possessions, even the revolver, which they had thoughtfully unloaded, and then said, "Dr. Duke, they'll take you out the back door."

His face seemed to be melting, turning into the visage of a lizard, as he issued this threatening ukase. No doubt the police would shoot me while I was trying to escape, or something of the sort. Dr. Gonzo said, "What's the matter?"

"The press is packed ten-deep out front."

Lynched by the newspapers or shot by the police, now that was a choice. We allowed ourselves to be escorted out back, where we were stuffed into the back seat of a police car and taken at high speed to a motel.

The news was not good. The President had been killed by the sniper, whose smirky face I recognized instantly. For some reason they were exulting about how quickly he had been captured, thanks to the intervention of a passerby.

I took six Miltowns in an effort to become a man in a gray flannel suit and drifted off into sleep . . .

. . . there is nothing more depraved than a man in the throes of an ether binge. That was what I had to do in order to endure the pains of being made to testify.

Once I had spoken my piece I could sit in the courtroom and do my reporting first-hand but as a witness I could not be there until then. I had written up the previous days' testimony, stoking my fires with alternate binges of cocaine and uppers, based on the reports.

Then I was called. I said to myself, "Remember, be quiet, be calm, say nothing, speak only when spoken to: name, recall of events, nothing else, ignore this terrible drug, pretend it's not happening . . ."

There is no way to explain the terror I felt when I finally began to testify: "My name is . . . ah, Raoul Duke, yes . . ."

As the prosecutor's face melted and turned into that of a lizard with great grisly fangs and a flicking tongue I recounted the story of why I had been there that day. Eventually the inquisition came to an end.

Then the defense attorney, who had somehow acquired the face of a bloated pig, asked a few absurdities about how I had managed to read minds, was I a bourgeois, and what was my relationship to a man named Ruby who had been arrested for brandishing a gun in a Dallas police station.

The floor opened up and revealed a shaft to hell and I walked around it on edge, taking a seat in the press section. The court then adjourned for lunch.

Over the next few days a procession of fat fascist police types testified to various incidents. They showed someone's grotesque

home movie of the shooting, with blood spattering everywhere as if from some EC comic of the early fifties when they were good.

The prosecution rested and I hoped I could go back to Colorado, but for some reason they presented a defense. The accused had sat through all the testimony smirking and I wished I could have brought my .357 in and finished the job . . .

. . . his defense had been simple but brilliant, all the evidence was forged or lies. I would have to ask and find out what he was taking and where he got it.

This was followed by the testimony of the inhabitants of a mental institution who had escaped somehow. They saw an army of gunmen and I wondered how I had escaped being shot.

The next batch of lunatics accused everyone except the men's room at Freddy's Bar & Grill. Most of those people couldn't plan their way out of a paper bag. I did make some notes about the hot drugs the spies were using so I could try some.

The jury was out about three-quarters of an hour. After the guilty verdict, I managed to ask one about how hot and unpleasant it must have been in the jury room. It turned out that most of the delay was the lineup for the john.

After writing my day's report I found a bar that sold raw tequila and had a bottle, with cocaine around the rim of the glass instead of salt. Once the big ugly scary beast got out from under the bed so I could shoot it, things were all right and I drifted off to sleep.

However we had to all go back the next week for a sentencing hearing. For some reason an old west lynching was off the table, which was a pity as it would have made big money, replacing a soap opera. But that sort of off-hand justice was apparently reserved for Negroes.

Dr. Gonzo predicted the man would get the death penalty and life without parole. When I pointed out the contradiction there he said, "It's the legal system. What do you expect?"

After a truly spectacular amphetamine binge we fought our way through the giant eye-eating plants that had sprung up around the courthouse and bullied our way into seats behind the defendant, so close I could smell the cheap oil they used on his hair. . . .

. . . the testimony on that little worm Lee's behalf had been divided. His wife had cried, in bouts of broken English and shaky Russian, that she couldn't raise her children alone. His mother, who seemed to have been released from the pigsty, said that her dear boy couldn't possibly have done that. Those animal tranquilizers can do strange things.

The asylum inmates took the stand next. Drooling from the bouts of Thorazine they needed to exist, they repeated how everyone else was guilty.

Finally, Lee himself spoke on his behalf. He ran through the litany of how he had been framed. The judge slapped him down every

time he tried to speak on behalf of Communism. It was interesting watching the mallet pop up from beneath the judge's wig and boink Lee on the head.

The prosecution repeated its case in brief. They left, their scales chattering as they went through the door, and Dr. Gonzo gave me a couple of peyote buttons to get me through to dinner.

In the morning the jury foreman announced the verdict. He was really a giant stork and his long beak shook at Lee as he sentenced him to a burning. I imagined him being strapped to a rack, being basted with barbecue sauce by two giant Mexicans who were turning the rack over a mesquite fire, but it turned out they meant he would be executed in the electric chair.

I went back to my hotel room, finished off the bottle of Cuevas, popped a couple of uppers, and began writing . . .

. . . Over the next few years I tried to forget this. The television wouldn't let me, and I often had to peg a few shots in the direction of some drug-crazed madman who had a new theory about "what really happened".

They were dragging out the appeals, spending thousands of their own dollars on promoting their theories, which money would have paid for good drugs. Often I would see a report of one that was highlighted by small chattering things pouring out of the screen and trying to eat me. I had to buy a lot of televisions.

They were warming up for the tenth anniversary when it happened. Those great ambling greaseballs in Washington who covered their inhumanity in black robes issued a legal diktat. I wondered what they were taking, and fortified myself with two blotter papers before reading the decision.

The demon that rose up out of the paper went away once I ran it over with the car, and I managed to make some sense of the thing. Apparently all death sentences were unconstitutional. How they would raise the dead from prison cemeteries was another matter, and I had some cocaine while thinking about this.

The next morning's news showed that little shit Lee giving the high-sign, and saying he was vindicated. I started looking into sniper rifles better than that piece of Italian trash he had had . . .

— Not by Hunter S. Thompson

I appreciate all the concern about my health. I keep on getting reminded about how my mother died. This is not reassuring.



PROOFS OF A CONSPIRACY

After the Constitutional Convention was called in May of 1787, many people were concerned. The Polish activist J. L. Neil Neil, herald of the Revolution, came out with a pamphlet criticizing the effort which was distributed through the streets of Philadelphia . . .

Proofs of a Conspiracy, by "Cato"

How can we account for our present situation unless we believe that men high in this Government are concerting to deliver us to disaster? This must be the product of a great conspiracy, a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man. A conspiracy of infamy so black that, when it is finally exposed, its principals shall be forever deserving of the maledictions of all honest men.

Who constitutes the highest circles of this conspiracy? About that we cannot be sure. We are convinced that Alexander Hamilton, who steadfastly serves the interests of nations other than his own, must be high on the roster. General Washington? He is their captive. I have wondered, as have you, why he did not dispense with so great a liability as Hamilton to his own and his party's interests. It is now clear to me. In the relationship of master and man, did you ever hear of man firing master? Washington is a satisfactory front. He is only dimly aware of what is going on.

I do not believe that General Washington is a conscious party to the great conspiracy, although it is being conducted in his name. I believe that if General Washington had the ability to associate good Americans around him, he would have behaved as a good American in this most dire of all our crises.

What is the objective of this great conspiracy? I think it is clear from what has occurred and is now occurring: to diminish the United States in world affairs, to weaken us militarily, to confuse our spirit with talk of surrender in the Indian Territories and to impair our will to resist evil. To what end? To the end that we shall be contained, frustrated and finally: fall victim to English intrigue from within and English military might from without. Is that farfetched? There have been many examples in history of rich and powerful states which have been corrupted from within, enfeebled and deceived until they were unable to resist aggression. . . .

The time has come to halt this tepid, milk-and-water acquiescence which a discredited administration, ruled by disloyalty, sends down to us. The American may belong to an old culture, he may be beset by enemies here and abroad, he may be distracted by the many words of counsel that assail him by day and night, but he is nobody's fool. The time has come for us to realize that the people who sent us here expect more than time-serving from us. The American who has never known defeat in war, does not expect to be again sold down the river. He does not want that kind of betrayal. He has had betrayal enough. He has never failed to fight for his liberties since Josiah Winslow rode out against the Naragansett in 1675 to put himself at the head of a band of colonists unversed in war. He is fighting tonight, fighting gloriously in a war on a distant American frontier made inglorious by the men he can no longer trust at the head of our affairs.

The America that I know, and that the Continental Congressmen know, this vast and teeming and beautiful land, this hopeful society where the poor share the table of the rich as never before in history, where men of all colors, of all faiths, are brothers as never before in history, where great deeds have been done and great deeds are yet to do, that America deserves to be led not to humiliation or defeat, but to victory.

The Continental Congress of the United States in Congress Assembled is the people's last hope, a free and open forum of the people's representatives. The people, no longer trusting their executive, turn to us, asking that we reassert the confederal prerogative of the Congress to declare the policy for the United States.

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Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa

This is issue **Whole Number One Hundred and Four (104)**.

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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