

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

I have been remiss in staying active and in late January resumed exercising because my clothes were starting to get tight. I have worked too hard to lose the weight just to gain it back again and so I have resumed walking. I started with four blocks and set myself the goal of adding four blocks every month. It is March and I have just added a third lap of four blocks each. This third lap is requiring no little discipline to keep putting one foot in front of the other. I have set myself the ultimate goal of walking the more than two mile pedestrian bridge separating Louisville from Indiana. Truly ultimate crazy goal, the Appalachian Trail. I am also bent on losing fourteen pounds this year. It seems unlikely to me that I will see the scales say 149. something on January 1, 2021 but then I never thought I could lose nearly fifty pounds either.

— Lisa

The 145th Running of the Preakness Stakes will be **at a later date**.  
The 151st Running of the Belmont Stakes will be **June 6, 2020**.

**January 28, 2020** marked the anniversary of the Challenger explosion and the death of all her crew.

**April 4, 2020** marks the anniversary of the sinking of my father's ship, U.S.S. *Bush*.

— LTM

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Comments are by **JTM** or **LTM**

Pascha is **April 19, 2020**.

The 146th Running of the Kentucky Derby will be **September 5, 2020**.

## Reviewer's Notes

Well, the Hugo nominees are out. And what is the most common comment?

"Who are these people?"

Darrell Schweitzer pointed out how "Vox Day" had set out to leave a smoking hole where the Hugos had been. This began, though, as an effort to promote books that were not being considered — not "Vox Day's" Rabid Puppies, but the "Sad Puppies", which died eventually. I think no one was looking at their books, and the presumed association was not beneficial.

Now influence had happened before: there was the trick by Caz Cazedessus that got *ERB-dom* the Best Fanzine Hugo (he printed a ballot in the zine). Then the author of *Battlefield Earth*, unable to buy himself a Nobel Peace Prize, tried to get a Hugo Award. That didn't work. And then there was the unfortunate event of 1989, complete with implausible explanation (what con would let twenty-five non-members into its Art Show?).

But "Vox Day" managed to get his list nominated. This provoked a reaction, which provoked a counter-reaction, down to a Rabid Puppies list that included a gay dinosaur porn story (don't ask). And now the nominees have shifted, though I think that part of it is that book editors aren't SF people any more, but English Lit grads, who buy what they read, and what is read is what is nominated.

Add to this that often, the "Hugo Award Winning Author" got the award for a blog, and we have a devaluation of the award. Perhaps it's another phase of the fall. Cyril Kornbluth said it:

We do not come again.  
We do not come. Ever again.

— 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.)

[https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B01BMIC4MU?ref=pe\\_1724030\\_132998070](https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B01BMIC4MU?ref=pe_1724030_132998070)

— Advt.

Sony Pictures Television has announced that they are bringing out a *Doc Savage* series, based on the popular pulp novels by “Kenneth Robeson” (Lester Dent, mostly), about a super-talented, trained from birth, scientific crime fighter. If they keep it a period piece (the books were of the thirties) and stay away from “this is all kiddy stuff” and “let’s show his relationships to all the other pulp heroes” it might be interesting.

As a follow-up to the *The Man In the High Castle* series, HBO is adapting *The Plot Against America* as a mini-series. (Reading the cast list, I notice by its absence the name of “William S. Stephenson”.)

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9308346/>

**Martin Morse Wooster** calls our attention to the publication of the first of a set of adventures of a mild-mannered customs agent who in midlife becomes a daring action hero: *Matthew Henson and the Ice Temple of Harlem* by Gary Phillips (2020; Agora Books; ISBN 978-1947993860; \$15.00). Anauaka would be proud of his daddy.

Steve Doyle has announced the resumption of *The Sherlock Holmes Review*, which has been called “the last great Sherlockian journal”. He is calling for a wide range of solicitations: “traditional Sherlockian scholarship; Arthur Conan Doyle; Sherlockian film, television, stage, and radio; original artwork; and short pieces for our standing department, ‘Collector’s Corner.’”

The magazine will be an annual, with the first issue of the new series coming out in

January 2021. Written submissions must be sent electronically, in MSWord format, to:

[TheSherlockHolmesReview@gmail.com](mailto:TheSherlockHolmesReview@gmail.com)

Items for review should be sent to:

The Sherlock Holmes Review  
Attn: Steven Doyle  
9 Calumet Court  
Zionsville, IN 46077-1934

**Hugh Lupus** has published *An Extra Knot Part V* (2020, APS Books, ISBN 978-1789961485; \$9.99; Amazon.com Services (Kindle); \$4.99), the latest episode in his alternate World War II. The *Hood* goes in for a refit in the Boston Navy Yard, having a chat with the USS *Constitution*; the latest Rifleman Dodd goes into action in Greece (dealing *Death to the Germans*, no doubt), and an agent traverses Vichy France on a covert rescue mission. The war goes on in different ways.

The Arctic cruise ship RCGS *Resolute* was at sea off the coast of Venezuela on March 30, 2020 when the Bolivarian Navy of Venezuela coast guard ship GC-23 *Naiguatá* ordered her to stop, fired a warning shot, and then attempted to divert the ship into Venezuelan waters. The Venezuelans said the ship was engaged in “terrorism and piracy” and was transporting mercenaries. When the *Naiguatá* rammed the *Resolute*, the coast guard patrol vessel capsized and sank.

The *Naiguatá* was a *Guaicamacuto*-class littoral surveillance ship (*Buque de Vigilancia de Litoral*), with a displacement of 1453 tons, a top speed of 22 knots, armed with one 76-mm gun, one 35-mm gun, and two 12.7-mm guns, with a crew of 34. The *Resolute* displaces 8378 tons and has a maximum speed of 15 knots. And an ice-strengthened hull.

We regret to report the death of **Alfred Merrill “Al” Worden** on **March 18, 2020**. Born **February 7, 1932**, Al was a pilot in the U.S. Air Force, being selected in NASA Astronaut Group 5 in 1966. He was Command Module Pilot for the Apollo 15 mission, orbiting the moon in the *Endeavour* while Dave Scott and James Irwin landed in the LM *Falcon*.

He is survived by his daughters Tamara, Merrill, and Alison. Another moon mission veteran has passed away. All too soon there will be none left, and those who believe it was all a hoax will be more empowered.

## OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Earl Kemp**, notorious and active fan, on **February 6, 2020**, at home. Born **November 24, 1929**, Earl was active in Chicago fandom, publishing the Best Fanzine Hugo winning fanzine *Who Killed Science Fiction?*, a survey of the state of affairs then by many leading figures of the field. He went from there to be chairman of ChiCon III in

1962. More recently he published *eI* (available on efanazines.com), with historical items about SF and fandom, including a reissue of *Who Killed Science Fiction?*.

Outside the field, Earl was a publisher of porno novels, climaxing er ending with an illustrated version of the *Presidential Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*, which got him a jail term.

He was an eager and enthusiastic recipient and a historic figure in fannish history, and we will miss him.

## MONARCHICAL NEWS

The **Prince of Wales** has tested positive for coronavirus, and is remaining in isolation. Reports further indicate that neither the Queen nor the Duchess of Cornwall is so infected.

**Prince Albert II of Monaco** is also infected.

Also infected are **Archduke Karl of Austria**, **Prince Antonio of Orleans-Bragança**, **Prince Francisco of Orleans-Bragança**, **Prince Pedro de Alcátra of Orleans-Bragança**, his wife **Princess Maria da Fátima of Orleans-Bragança**, **Prince Alberto of Orleans-Bragança**, and his wife **Princess Maritza of Orleans-Bragança**.

**Princess Marie-Thérèse Cécile Zita Charlotte of Bourbon-Parma** died of coronavirus at Paris on **March 26, 2020**. She had been born there on **July 28, 1933** to Prince Xavier of Bourbon-Parma and Madeline de Bourbon-Busset (i.e. she was a descendant of Cesare Borgia!), and studied philosophy at Oxford and political science at the Sorbonne. Because of her liberal political ideas, she was known as the “Red Princess”.

## ΩΔΕ Η ΣΟΦΙΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ [HERE IS WISDOM]

Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
**THE PURSUIT OF THE PANKERA:**  
*A Parallel Novel About Parallel Universes*  
by Robert A. Heinlein (NHOL G.183)  
(2020; CAEZIK SF & Fantasy;  
ISBN 978-1647100018; \$26.99;  
CAEZIK SF & Fantasy (Kindle); \$9.99)

Heinlein had an idea for a novel. He wrote a first draft, but his first reader, Virginia, thought it was less than his best, and so he laid it aside. This was during one of his less healthy periods, and indeed he had a Transient Ischemic Attack shortly thereafter. When he was feeling better after the surgery, he returned to the text, struck off in a different direction, and produced *The Number of the Beast* (1979; NHOL G.189).

This is not a new thing. H. G. Wells became dissatisfied with *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) and revised it as *The Sleeper Awakes* (1910). Sir Arthur C. Clarke had second thoughts about *Against the Fall of Night* (1948, 1953) and revised it as *The City and the Stars* (1956).

There is a market for Last New Heinlein. For example, when it was mentioned that there existed notes for a proposed but unwritten juvenile, another writer offered to write it. The resulting book read more like the actual writer's work, down to the protagonist being like him, and had an ending that was not in the original notes (he claimed that the notes did not include the final part). In spite of this, he lobbied for "another Hugo for the Admiral". This is sounding eerily like ElRon, except that *he* apparently actually did write all the million words of the *Mission Earth* books (he was known for his productivity).

But, the beginnings are the same, albeit there have been some textual revisions. Zeb Carter dances with Deety Burroughs, falls passionately in love with her before the first number is over, and proposes copulation immediately and marriage after. Then they have to escape in his flying car with her father and a equally passionate female friend when a bomb goes off.

They escape to a remote mountain stronghold with a stop along the way to pledge their troth. It turns out that they all have wealth and Oscar Gordon's attitude towards society ("I believe in not obeying any law I don't like."), as well as being cool with nudism. Not to mention that the women both passionately desire to get pregnant right away and do so. Perhaps this is not the most advisable thing to do before setting out on a wild adventure, much less while being assaulted by determined, skilled, and nasty foes.

Oh yes, a fake park ranger comes by and because he doesn't quite follow procedure, they kill him. Fortunately for the plot it turns out that he is actually an alien in human disguise. Someone is out to get them.

Doctor Jake Burroughs, it turns out, is skilled in a wide range of specialties (Doc Brown, call your office!), and has been working on a means to travel to alternative worlds. Harold Shea never had anyone going after him with bombs, and one would hope that Commissioner Verkan Vall would quickly sack any Paratimer who was so dramatically inefficient.

He also repeats the mathematical explanation of "666" — six to the sixth power to the sixth power. The original, though, was "εξάκοσιοι εξήκοντα εξ" [*hexakosioi hexēkonta hex*], "six hundred sixty-six" written out.

They modify Zeb's air car so that any of them can command it, and more to the point, they install the timeline traveling device. That done, they begin an expedition to a safe space, like the next planet over. Being fanatic fans of the professor's namesake, they end up on one of his worlds. No, not Laythe, with Kalkars waiting to take over their vehicle in the name of the People. Not even the Thorists of Amtor (one wonders how this debate-prone bunch would fare in the Room of the Seven Doors), much less the Zanis of Korva, the eugenicists of Havatoo, or the zombies of

Kormor.

And when they get there . . . they are attacked by a Thark, only he quits once he finds out they speak English (having used all sorts of exotic battle cries). He takes them to Helium. They know they are there by the sign put up by the Helium Chamber of Commerce.

Many of the flaws observed in *The Number of the Beast* are here, and worse. The interminable explanations of the programming of the aircar Gay Deceiver to perform a specific evolution, for example. There was a reason Gene Roddenberry cut out that two-page explanation of the *Enterprise* reversing course and replaced it with "Reverse course!"; going through detail for detail's sake is basically padding.

Other past questionables of Heinlein turn up. One of the women reveals herself naked to the "park ranger" and he doesn't respond, an upgraded version of Mary's act in *The Puppet Masters* (1951, 1990; NHOL G.091). That he might be gay, professional, or just not looking doesn't seem to have been considered but fortunately he's not a human.

Bill Patterson explained in the biography that Heinlein's standard for whether someone was worth being a friend with, in earlier days, was whether they liked Vincent McHugh's *Caleb Catlum's America* (1936). This says as much about him as about the book. The problem of fan fiction, of writing about another's characters, is that it is so easy to rewrite the characters as the new author likes.

There seem to have been a number of different titles for this book. In the New Heinlein Opus List it has the alternative title of *The Galleons of God* (from the mention of Sinclair Lewis's *The Galleon of God in For Us, the Living* (NHOL G.004, 1937, 2003). According to Bill Patterson's biography, the book was to be called *The Panki-Barsoom Number of the Beast*. When the book was first announced, the title was *Six-Six-Six*.

There is a point where it is clear that a writer has lost it. Virginia was probably right that this should not have been published.

## THE KEEPER OF THE GELDED UNICORN

Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
**THE UNICORN'S SECRET:  
Murder in the Age of Aquarius**  
by Steven Levy (1990)

"A hogshead of fine wine!"

The barmaid, her eyes wide with admiration, looked at the man who had shouted his order with such an air of confident gaiety. He was tall, lean, with broad shoulders, slender hips, eyes that blazed like live coals, dark unruly hair, and a twinkle in the corner of a mouth which could, at times, be stern enough to strike terror into the hearts of the greatest swordsmen on the Continent and in very England itself.

"Come, maid, God wot, 'sblood,

marry!" he called. "Did you not hear me, maid? A hogshead of fine wine!" He pinched her lightly and took her to bed, after which she brought the wine, her eyes tender and moist with devotion.

— Ira Wallach, "The Keeper of the Gelded Unicorn"

Wallach's parody of swashbuckling tales throws in half the famous names of a dozen eras, setting a panorama against which Warren of Hastings, the Keeper of the Gelded Unicorn, struggles with his eternal foe, Guise, Earl of Essence, for the salvation of the Kingdom. It might have been better if he had been the keeper of the ungelded Unicorn, for then there would have been someone to chastize the guy for his offenses against fair ladies.

Ira Samuel Einhorn of Philadelphia, the "Unicorn", knew a vast number of influential people. And others, such as Philip K. Dick. He cruised through the Age of Aquarius, preserving the model of Hippie long beyond its expiration date, inspiring connections among the most scattered and diverse sorts of people. He was a living internet node before ever it came into being.

Serving a sentence of life without parole, in the Pennsylvania prison system, he died April 3, 2020. He had been so much, but what brought him down was a darkness in his life-style.

Ira was born in 1940 in Philadelphia to a normal Jewish family. However, he was anything but. His intellect outreached his school grade level, leaving him terribly bored and as a result gaining him a reputation for disobedience. So, to show that he wasn't a geek, he bulked up and became a football star.

Universities somehow didn't agree with him. He started at a course of study, but then bailed out. Then came the hippie era, and Ira found himself a slot. He tuned in and turned on, becoming a guru of spiritual expansion. He also became something of a polymath. And in spite of his unprepossessing personality and appearance, somehow he managed to charm people of power and influence. When he did a fanzine, it got published by Pennsylvania Bell. He would prepare a list of comments and a list of people he wanted it sent to, deliver it to a telephone executive and it would get mimeographed and mailed at their expense. And their gain, too, for Ira networked among the thinkers and the doers. He was a major organizer and participant in Philadelphia's first Earth Day, though he exaggerated his importance.

He wrote a book and tried to have it published without a title. Not being Raymond Smullyan (who wrote a book titled *This Book Needs No Title* (1980)), he couldn't pull it off, so he settled for the book having the title of its Library of Congress number, 78-187880 (1972). (The book's ISBN is 0-385-06387-3. Now I expect someone will do *that* for a title.)

Not that all of his associates were quite so

savory. For example, he became entwined with Andrija Puharich, and the man Puharich championed, Uri Geller. (Somehow Ira never ran into James Randi.) Ira dipped into the paranormal as he did into the technological.

His path crossed that of Helen “Holly” Maddux of Tyler, Texas. Holly was in many ways a typical Texas girl — as when she entered the cheerleading competition of her school and won handily. Cheerleaders are a big thing in Texas. Holly had intellectual ambitions, but never quite seemed to fit in. Then in 1972 she met the Unicorn.

Ira’s and Holly’s relationship was ambiguous. There would be times when they seemed in perfect spiritual harmony and times when they were quarreling and split apart — but then they would get back together again.

And in September of 1977, Holly came back to get her things. She stayed for a day or two, then went out to go shopping and never came back.

In spite of their less than harmonious relationship with their daughter’s squeeze, the Madduxes tolerated Ira. But when they didn’t hear from Holly for a couple of months, they had concerns, Ira said she had walked out and never come back, and this indifference should have been a cause for concern in itself. (For example, apparently she had not taken her medicines with her.) The Madduxes launched an investigation, which led only to discoveries that no one knew where Holly was.

The standard of cleanliness in the apartment house where Ira lived was not the highest, but the neighbors began to notice an even more rank smell than usual. In March of 1979 the police got a warrant and searched Ira’s apartment. They found a locked closet. He allowed them to open it, and there was a large trunk in there. Opening *that*, they found — Holly Maddux’s body.

Apparently Ira thought he was smarter and better than those stupid cops and didn’t need a lawyer, as he made some statements that were extremely detrimental to his case. But when the time came to set bail, he had so many persons of probity and influence testifying on his behalf that he was released on \$40,000 bail, of which he (or rather one of his many supporters) only had to put up \$4000.

That was when the darker side of his personality came out — and when you realize this is someone who answers the door naked, never bothers with bathing, and beyond that acts domineering, it has to be pretty bad. Ira drew women to him, but then drove them away by being abusive. (He liked blue-eyed blonde WASP girls. This is a job for Harley Quinn.)

Financially, he lived off others. He only made enough to pay income tax in one year. He sponged in various ways, great and small. His parents remembered how he would order books through the mail and never pay for them because he was a minor and couldn’t legally sign contracts, and he kept up that attitude of the law only applying to others.

When his trial came up, in 1981, it was without him. Ira Einhorn jumped bail and fled to Ireland, because it did not have an extradition treaty with the U.S. at that time. Back in Pennsylvania he was tried in absentia, and convicted.

He lived under a pseudonym, with his latest woman (a Swedish woman, this time) until he was outed in 1987. Since by then it was possible to extradite him, formally or not, he vanished again.

Seven years after Levy’s book was published, Ira Einhorn was finally run to ground, in France. It took four years to get him extradited, because of the tangled web of legal ploys he spread to avoid extradition. He appealed to human-rights associations, and to the French President and Premier. One of his claims was that if he were tried in Pennsylvania, he would face the death penalty, which was not the case. John Walsh, in his book *Public Enemies* (2001), describes the finale of Einhorn’s efforts (and his own confrontation with the Unicorn). Finally, finally, in 2001, he was extradited to the U.S.

His defense was . . . well, not forgery by typewriter, but about as plausible. He claimed that Holly had been murdered by the CIA, which had planted her body in his apartment in order to discredit his findings in Tesla physics. The jury considered the little things, such as the air fresheners placed in the trunk in a vain effort to kill the stench, or the two neighbors who had been asked to help him dump a trunk, and found his defense less than plausible. The Unicorn would be caged for the rest of his physical existence, life without parole, and there he was until he died.

Whittaker Chambers once complained that his case would have been lost when one respectable notable could say to another one that of course someone as upstanding and distinguished as Alger Hiss could not possibly have been a Communist conspirator and Soviet spy. And many respectable people were quite willing to put themselves on the public record as resolutely declaring that someone as life-affirming as Ira Einhorn could not possibly have committed a brutal murder.

The image that one gets of Einhorn is of someone who considered himself so outstanding that ordinary rules did not apply to himself. This attitude was particularly dangerous when combined with his intellect and persuasiveness. Had he not been so outré, he might have had a far more destructive career. At least Ira no longer has champions, dying unheralded and unmourned.

It was a gay and lighthearted Warren of Hastings who brought the jewels to the Queen’s chamber. Although she had lost neither whit nor tittle of her regal bearing, her eyes spoke for her as she said, “You may kiss me, Warren of Hastings.”

“And now, beloved lady,” cried Warren of Hastings, “on to the War of

the Roses!”

Her eyes filled with tears. “Honor will always take thee further afoot than love,” she sighed.

“God wot,” he replied, bowing his head. Through the window the sun rose on the battlements and on the triumphant standards of the Queen.

Warren of Hastings silently arose from bed and removed his hat.

England was safe.

— Ira Wallach, “The Keeper of the Gelded Unicorn”

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## A CONSPIRACY SO IMMENSE

Review by Joseph T Major of

### THE INITIATE

by James L. Cambias

(2020; Baen; ISBN 978-1982124359; \$25.00; Baen (Kindle); \$9.99)

Sometimes power forces itself upon you whether you plan for it or not. Sam Arquero thought he had an ordinary life, but then his wife and child were killed and he nearly joined them. Not by anything so mundane as a storm or a semi or something like that, but by a demon which entered his house and shredded his family.

Shortly thereafter, he was encountered by someone who knew the sender of the demon. Not that he knew who among his circle of associates had done it, but one of them did. They were the Apkallu, a council of sorcerers who had wielded power over humanity since time immemorial. And this man Lucas who reached out and touched Sam was offering help.

It would be infiltration. Sam would take on a new identity and join the lower ranks of the conspiracy; but he would be free of any commitment to anyone. He could find out who had exterminated his family and return the favor.

This meant, though, exterminating the local leaders of the Apkallu. (This is set in New York City, by the way.) They have the strangenesses and the distortions of great power and long life. Whether it is the living mummy who possesses his attendants in order to go out and have a good time on their tab (so to speak), the prim and proper lady who has an orphanage as a source for blood, or the researcher who uses Satanic groups as recruiting grounds, they are a bizarre and repulsive lot. Sam exploits their weaknesses to their ending.

But he makes new connections along the way. Some are useful, as the helper who turns out to be closer than Sam thought. Or the new girlfriend, for whom he lives a second life.

And when the final devastating revelations come out about Lucas and his plans, Sam makes a strange and powerful choice . . .

There is a depth to this. The Apkallu are distorted, cruel and arbitrary. Even those with a semblance of sympathy have a grim and evil darkness beneath. Similarly, Cambias knows his methods; for the purpose of his plot he has

it that a lot (not all) of that mystic stuff is basically true.

This isn't a romp. There are no sensitive emo vampires, sexy witches, misunderstood demons, or the like. The theme is the corruption of power; how long possession of it warps the psyche. The sleep of reason produces monsters.

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### AUTOPSY FOR A COSMONAUT

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **BLUE GEMINI:**

##### **A Thriller**

by Mike Jenne

(2015; Yucca; ISBN 978-1631580475; \$24.99; 2015; Simon & Schuster (Kindle); \$1.99)

Book 1 of "Blue Gemini"

In *Autopsy for a Cosmonaut* (1969) [alternative title *Death of a Cosmonaut*], a secret Gemini mission is launched to investigate a failed Soviet Voskhod space mission. This involves making a rendezvous with the capsule and a spacewalk to investigate.

Blue Gemini was a real program, though like all the other Air Force space programs, it was cancelled by Robert McNamara after years of development and expenditure. The Blue Gemini would have had surveillance equipment and be configured for specifically military missions.

Scott Ourecky doesn't know about this. He wants to be a NASA astronaut — but he keeps on making goofs in his flight training, and will never get his wings. Nevertheless, he persisted, becoming an engineer.

The Blue Gemini project is very marginal; they are relegated to facilities at Wright-Patterson AFB, run by a comparatively low-ranking officer and a retired one, both rather colorful and not very technical officers, and having to work without backup pilots, and with the leavings of the various NASA techs. Including Lieutenant Scott Ourecky, taking regular flights to Dayton.

Then, one pilot refuses to tolerate his fellow crew member. They are so short of personnel that Ourecky is pressed into taking part in the Blue Gemini testing as the unwanted man's replacement.

They get a functioning capsule. Again, the project is using whatever they can get, including about-to-be-decommissioned Titan II nuclear missiles. Which causes problems when a rocket explodes due to a component that was good enough to launch H-bombs, but not good enough to launch people.

So Ourecky gets press-ganged into being an astronaut. Somehow that doesn't seem to bother him. And when he and his partner are launched — more malfunctions. Nevertheless they persisted (and against orders). And what they found . . .

Jenne interleaves this with a number of side-plots, such as Ourecky's wooing and winning of a stewardess. Farther afield, a maimed Soviet space official works on devel-

oping space plans, some of which require stealing actual space gear from the Main Enemy's used spacecraft. And setting something up for future volumes, the training of a very special and covert recovery agent, named of all things Matthew Henson (and nobody ever ever asks him, "You related?" — yes, he's black). And then there was the guy who needed to pay off a loan shark, so he tried to sell stories of UFOs at Wright-Pat . . .

Some of the training seems out of Harry Harrison's "Space Rats of the CCC" (*Final Stage*, 1974) if not *Achilles' Choice* (by Steven Barnes and Larry Niven, 1991), deliberately designed to kill off the candidates. Or at least the "impossible standards" of *Galactic Patrol (Astounding Stories, 9/1937-2/1938; 1950)* and *Space Cadet* (1948; NHOL G.070). Or it might be setting up someone by failing him, as in Cyril Kornbluth's *Takeoff* (1952; reviewed in *Alexiad V. 9 #4*).

So it looks like Major Ourecky (promotion came fast) will have more turbulence to come in the next two volumes when this is . . . [To Be Continued]

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### MAROONED

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **BLUE DARKER THAN BLACK:**

##### **A Thriller**

by Mike Jenne

(2016; Yucca; ISBN 978-1631580666; \$24.99; 2016; Simon & Schuster (Kindle); \$12.99)

Book 2 of "Blue Gemini"

In the movie version of *Marooned* (1969), the X-RV is launched on its rescue mission in the eye of a hurricane. The Blue Gemini rescue mission here is not quite so finicky but there is still a rescue and a hurricane, both of which have their own problems.

Scott Ourecky has survived a bit of insubordination in space, mostly because the on the scene decision produced wildly positive results. But the colorful, covert, and on-the-cheap Blue Gemini program continues to launch him into space, to the point where he and his teammate have more time in orbit than any NASA astronaut. And some very dramatic disasters (that rescue guy Matt Henson finally proves his worth, in an exotic and grimly-described setting).

Which puts strain on his marriage. Add to this chasm between him and his wife the concern that their child might be well born dead or nonviable, and it is clear that this is not a less-stressed family.

Meanwhile, the Navigators (the GRU) continue to unriddle this riddle of a second American space program. Looking at the description of their investigation, it can be seen that often intelligence is misled and off-course.

Oh, and the guy who was in hock to loan sharks and tried to get cash by telling the story of captured alien spaceships at Wright-Patterson? He suffers the fate of a man ahead of his time. And of a chronic gambler, too.

Meanwhile, what seems like an utter aberration, an Air Force officer sent to Naval Reactor School, turns out to have its use. (And you thought an Army Engineer (Rog Healey of *I Dream of Jeanie*) being an astronaut in the sixties was bad!) But the Navy MOL suffers a disaster, and the tired duo of Blue Gemini get sent up to execute a rescue.

Jenne shows a deep familiarity with proposed but canceled space programs, realizing them with great technical plausibility. One can question the organization and financing, but these are "black" operations done as cheaply as possible. Think of the moon landing project in Kornbluth's *Takeoff* (1952).

Similarly, he shows an awareness of the late sixties culture, and a devastating picture of the strains that can come in a marriage. Ourecky may win the skies but lose his happiness, his future, when this story is . . . [To Be Continued].

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### THE RED DOVE

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **PALE BLUE: A Thriller**

by Mike Jenne

(2016; Yucca; ISBN 978-1631580840; \$24.99; 2016; Simon & Schuster (Kindle); \$12.99)

Book 3 of "Blue Gemini"

Derek Lambert's *The Red Dove* (1983) features a disturbing use of a space shuttle. The mission profile for the Soviet space shuttle *Dove-1* [*Голубь-1 (Golubka-1)*] features an unusual payload. The plan is to carry a high-yield nuclear weapon into orbit, then detonate it above the Main Enemy, destroying their communications systems and computers with an electromagnetic pulse.

This new triumph of Soviet Space just drops the bomb. There are problems, one of the cosmonauts gets a infected ingrown toenail and has to be replaced, the space station is breaking down, and oh yes, one of the officers in charge is passing information to the Main Enemy. (He uses a piece of CIA gadgetry that is just like the sort of thing they would use, except that it just might well work!)

Across the ocean, Scott Ourecky is still concerned about his marriage, though his wife has a valid reason for being out of the house. His partner Drew Carson is champing at the bit to get a few combat missions in 'Nam on his record, so he can get promotion later. (The Blue Gemini is TOP SECRET SENSITIVE NODIS so it will never get into his records, in spite of several in-orbit kills.) Finally, under a false name, Carson gets his wish, becoming a Naval Aviator in the process.

Then things begin to come apart. The Soviet bomb station is falling to bits, one of the cosmonauts gets ill, and the agent gets caught through some exhaustive work by the GRU internal security. Carson gets into some very heavy fighting over North Vietnam, bringing him down to earth. The program is winding down except they may have to have one more

flight. At least Bea Ourecky is coming back to her marital bed.

Then, when the prisoners of war were returned, Carson fell through the cracks, being “sheepdipped” as a Naval Aviator without records. And he does not do well. Although his fate is tragic, it does include a touching example of one to whom mercy was shown, and who showed mercy. The GRU interrogators were amazed, but not surprised.

Meanwhile, the man on the doomed Soviet nuclear-weapons space station is helped to escape. It never happened and no one was involved (unlike *The Red Dove* where the Soviet space shuttle, complete with nuclear weapon in the cargo bay, landed at JFK International Airport<sup>1</sup>).

And Ourecky gets a unique reward for having saved the life of the MOL pilot. Carson too, but his is posthumous.

In a coda, the surviving people of the story assemble for the funeral of Drew Carson. Their subsequent lives are laid out and there is reconciliation.

Given all the extra spaceflights involved in this, I have to wonder how it was kept secret. The spatial combat between the first and second men in space in Allen Steele’s *V-S Day* (2014; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 13 #2) was heard over every ham radio in the eastern U.S. There are people who listen in on spacecraft frequencies and the like. And think of what would the Judica-Cordiglia Brothers would make of this abundant fodder for their Dead Cosmonauts stories.

1. Lambert messed up the orbital parameters, having the *Dove* in a low-inclination orbit, instead of the high-inclination orbits used by Soviet orbiting missions. Since his cosmonaut defector was trying to land the *Dove* at Cape Kennedy, it would make more sense to have the re-entry delayed and changing the landing site, instead of the orbital plane shift he has.

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### THE MAN WHOSE NAME WOULDN'T FIT

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*HUMBLE PI:*

*A Comedy of Maths Errors*

by Matt Parker

(2019; Penguin; ISBN 978-0593084687;  
\$27.00; Penguin (Kindle); \$13.99)

Arthur Duane Carrington-Chickering was a humble employee. Some organisations had trouble with his long double-barrelled name, but he managed. Then the company installed a new computer system — and he was fired.

The employee records in the system were limited by the available resources. The NAME field, for example, had twenty characters. You will notice that “Carrington-Chickering” has **twenty-one**. Somewhat put out over the arbitrary nature of his firing, Arthur took his revenge. Thus the story of *The Man Whose Name Wouldn't Fit* (1968) by

Theodore Tyler.

Sun Microsystems had more advanced systems than the Hollerith card that got Arthur fired. (As you know, Bob, the famous computer punch card had eighty spaces.) However, their employee Steve had problems. He kept on disappearing from the employee database.

Steve did not have a long double-barrelled last name. In fact, it was only four characters long. Yet he was regularly and dutifully entered into the employee database, only to just as regularly disappear.

His name was Steve Null. An entry of NULL in any field of the Sun Microsystems HR database meant that that record was invalid, to be deleted. Instead of firing Steve (perhaps they were concerned about what he could do to them in retaliation), they fixed the database system.

*Humble Pi* is the story of how little mathematical errors can become big disasters. Parker describes the engineering failures of such notorious incidents as the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the Kansas City Hyatt Regency walkway. He points out how the drawings of footballs [soccer balls] on London Transport signs are mathematically impossible. He describes how a chain of errors, none significant in itself, led to a dramatic air disaster. He explains how Michael Larson won \$110,237 on *Press Your Luck*.

The most trivial of errors can create disasters. A typo in a Unix command can, for example, lead to **ALL** the data on the computer being erased. Don't do this at home. (A modern Carrington-Chickering could use this on the system server at work.) Microsoft does this too, with this frustrating loading error:

Keyboard error or no keyboard present  
Press F1 to continue, DEL to enter SETUP.

*Humble Pi* is a reminder of how even the most well-designed of systems can contain fatal errors — and how trivial errors can expand to fatal results.

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### OF SECRETS AND SPIES

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*SNOW:*

*The Double Life of a World War II Spy*

by Nigel West [Rupert Allason]

and Madoc Roberts

(2011; Biteback Publishing;  
ISBN 978-1849540933; \$29.95)

Dr. Stanley P. Lovell was the technical director for the Organization for Strategic Services. Afterwards, he wrote his memoirs: *Of Secrets and Spies* (1963). In them, he described how the British had taken over the entire German spy network in Britain. They had co-opted the first agent, and as others were sent over they were caught and turned. Finally, they set up an entirely phony network, which successfully hoodwinked the German spy apparatus.

This, you note, is nine years before the publication of J. C. Masterman's *The Double-Cross System*. The description of the latter part

is a confused description of GARBO (Juan Pujol Garcia). But the beginning, that is the story of Arthur Graham Owens (SNOW). And unlike the other prominent Double-Cross agents, SNOW was out for himself, instead of being against the Nazis.

Owens was a businessman; he made batteries and sold them to any customer who would buy — including the Kriegsmarine. He began supplying information to the SIS, and then to the Germans. This got him into trouble, until war broke out, when he became a useful courier of misinformation.

Indeed, one of the useful parts of his double agency was quite interesting. The Abwehr would rebroadcast his messages without paraphrasing, because they were using the unbreakable Enigma machine. Right, the codebreakers at the GC&CS now had a plaintext to compare the message against, and so they would have every day's Enigma keys for the Abwehr.

Some of his other connections were grandiose. There was the attempt to capture his Abwehr contact officer, which involved a trawler and a dramatic boarding plan. This never came about.

But Owens finally became a liability. His agency was wound up, he was temporarily sequestered until they could be sure he was not going to make trouble, and then he was set free. He changed his name to “Arthur White” and continued in his chaotic life until he died in Ireland in 1957. Obligatory SF connection: his daughter Patricia played the female lead, Helene Delambre, in *The Fly* (1958).

Roberts was interested and researched the sad life of this conflicted man. Then he and Allason wrote the book. This is another small part of a grand scheme, rendered in its dramatic and dull scope.

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### THE BULGE REMEMBERED

by Lisa

Recently I read *Ardennes 1944* by Antony Beevor. In it there is a picture of a young SS soldier taken prisoner. The caption says he was lucky not to be shot out of hand. I looked at the American guarding him, blinked, looked again. I found what I was seeing strange and disturbing. Captor and captive looked alike enough to have been brothers. It was eerie. It has been more than 75 years. It is likely both the German and his American lookalike are dead even if they survived the war. . Did the American spare the German because of that resemblance? Did he perhaps see a kid brother's face on an enemy and hold his fire for that reason? I will probably never know and yet I wonder.

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### EVICTING A TENANT

by Lisa

The cage we had proves ineffective at detaining mice. I go to Feeder's Supply and get what is hopefully a better one. That night I

throw a peanut butter cracker into the cage. It does not take long before a mouse comes searching for the delicious smell. I lie very still and waiting. Joe does not. He shifts and makes noises that send the mouse into retreat. Fortunately for me, unfortunately for the mouse, it does not realize my stillness is much more dangerous than Joe's sleep noises or that I am very much awake. The mouse comes to the edge of the cage several times and retreats. It must really want the cracker. After several minutes temptation wins out and the mouse goes into the cage. I slam the door shut and the mouse goes into panic mode. Its behavior makes me think it has escaped from the ineffective cage. Joe remarks that it behaves like a mechanical mouse. He suggests putting something on top of the door to make it more secure. It's a good idea and I do so. Its frantic bouncing around the cage keep me from sleeping. I move the cage further from the bed. It doesn't work. I can still hear the mouse struggling to get out. Finally I get up, go tap the cage and growl at the mouse that if it isn't quiet I will eat it myself. The bluff works and the mouse is quiet for at least as long as it takes me to go back to sleep nor does it wake me again. Morning comes and we complete the eviction of the mouse.

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### PETS

by Lisa

Under the virus lockdown I have yielded to the temptation to keep pets. I am still suffering burnout from mammal pets so I chose to make a little terrarium in a plastic box and install roly polys in said box. I have learned that they too breed possessions in their care. They require regular mistings and so I have a tiny watering container for them. I have also bought food for them. Unfortunately buying food from the pet stores involves temptation.

The local Feeder's Supply has adoptable cats. One of them has a sad dignity that made me long to pick it up and try to cuddle the sadness away. I was saved from that by the corona quarantine. The quarantine did not save me from temptation with the rats the store had for sale. There were two kinds there, fancy companion rats which behaved in entertaining ways and feeder rats.

And yes, it was the feeder rats which tempted me. They could be had for eight dollars apiece. What stopped me was the thought that they would require large, costly cages and vet care. I was also not sure about the ethics of buying from pet stores or my ability to care well for said rats. The question of ethics would not have arisen from the cat.

In regards to cats, Feeder's Supply deals strictly in animals from rescue groups, not kitten mills. The rats, however, were not guaranteed to be the same. I cannot help seeing cosmic injustice in the eventual fate of the two kinds of rat.

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AP Indy March 31, 1989 — February 21,

2020

Son of Seattle Slew. Grandson of Secretariat. Winner of the Belmont Stakes. Sire of Bernardini, the horse who raced into my heart in the 2006 Preakness. I got to meet Indy once. He was gentle enough for strangers to pet.

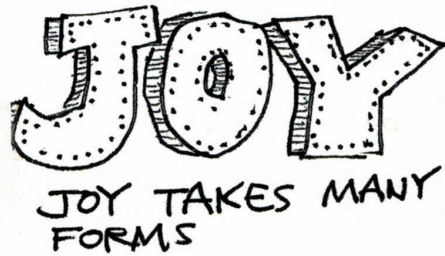
**War Emblem** February 20, 1999 — March 11, 2020

War Emblem won the Derby and Preakness in 2002. He failed to win the Triple Crown after stumbling at the start of the Belmont and a bad trip during the race. After his racing career he was sold to Japan and returned when he was pensioned. He ended up at Old Friends in Lexington, Kentucky where Joe and I saw him several times. Unlike A.P. Indy, he was not safe to approach and there were two sets of fences between visitors and War Emblem.

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### The Joy of High Tech

by Rodford Edmiston



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

### What the Telescope Sees

These columns have repeatedly pointed out how technological requirements have spurred developments (sorry about that) in our understanding of the universe. Likewise, the quest for a better understanding of the universe has repeatedly driven developments in technology and science. As noted below, these are also connected with the pursuit of artistic expression. The challenge of accurately recording new scientific discoveries is a fascinating topic. One small branch of how that challenge was addressed is discussed in brief below.

Before the telescope, what was known of the heavens was, of course, limited to what could be seen by someone with good, unaided vision. This was recorded in drawings, but also in the constructs made to aid observation. Cultures around the world at the very least built structures aligned to astronomical events. Some created actual observatories, with references built in to help locate what was seen in the sky. Much important work was done with these aids. However, telescopic examination of the skies provided multiple revelations. As well as revo-

lutions.

The telescope was probably invented around 1608, most likely in the Netherlands, actual creator unknown. Just a year later it was greatly improved by science and engineering tutor Galileo di Vincenzo Bonaiuti de Galilei, who designed a better lens arrangement using mathematical modeling of light rays. Apparently, without actually seeing a telescope first, but just from reading about the concept. Galileo was the first person on record to turn a telescope towards the heavens. (As often happens in science, it seems that many people were doing similar things at the same time. Thomas Harriot, a British ethnographer and mathematician, also used a spyglass to observe the Moon. His August 1609 drawings of the Moon predate Galileo's, but were not published at the time, so Galileo gets the credit.) Regardless of who first directed a telescope upwards, ever since then astronomers have been trying to preserve what they see, in part to show others. (Galileo was obsessive about having others look through his telescopes, which is probably how he got multiple eye infections. Most likely because of these, he was effectively blind for his last few years.)

As a method to record what the telescope revealed, drawings of course came first. That was all the early observers had available. Astronomers had to make do with that method of recording what they saw for centuries. Even when photography finally became available in the early Nineteenth Century, the images through a telescope were generally too faint for practical photography using the early methods. The first known successful photographic recording of a telescopic image was a Daguerreotype of a particularly bright object: the full Moon. This process used activated silver on a prepared copper surface (tintypes came later; they used a different process on treated iron (not tin) and were somewhat more light sensitive; ambrotypes came between, using a wet emulsion process on glass). Daguerre himself is believed to be the first person to take a photograph of the Moon, on January 2, 1839. Unfortunately, in March of that same year his entire laboratory burnt to the ground, destroying all his written records and much of his early experimental work. Including that historical image of the Moon. A year later, John William Draper, an American doctor and chemist, took his own Daguerreotype of the Moon. This resulted in a beautiful — though small — image of the Moon in silver. In 1850 Draper collaborated with astronomer William Cranch Bond to produce a Daguerreotype of the star Vega.

The event of photographing the Moon on a Daguerreotype was recreated by modern astronomers using a period telescope in the late Twentieth Century. The result was again an exquisitely beautiful image of the Moon in delicate silver. (Anyone who denies there are links between art and science doesn't know enough about both. As mentioned above, art has repeatedly driven the development of

science and technology, and those have provided new media for artistic expression.)

As photography improved, its use for astronomy increased. However, even towards the end of the use of photography for astronomy (in some cases this use actually continues as this is written) more sensitivity and resolution were desperately sought. The problem is that there is a tradeoff between sensitivity and resolution. All other factors being equal, greater sensitivity means larger photographic grain size, which reduces resolution. As well, chemical photographic media are subject to what is known as reciprocity failure. That is, below a certain light level photons will go unrecorded, regardless of exposure time. Still, chemical photography improved markedly through the decades and became vastly capable. There are also multiple methods of increasing the sensitivity of existing chemical negatives with little or no effect on resolution. These sensitizing techniques are generally lumped together under “hyponing.”

One improvement more essential to scientific photography — especially astrophotography — than to portraits or even landscapes is uniformity in the emulsion. When photographing stars and planets you want all of the emulsion — whether on glass or film — to have the same response. Otherwise you might find yourself declaring light or dark spots as significant, when they're actually due to flaws in the emulsion. Naturally, the techniques developed to improve scientific emulsions found their way into commercial and personal use, greatly improving the quality of all photographs.

Note that, regardless of the specific mechanism used to record such faint light, the optics must be clean. Otherwise the astronomer will be spending a lot of time eliminating the recorded dust specks.

One of the many tradeoffs of chemical photography — for whatever purpose — is that, all other factors being equal, the larger the negative, the less light which strikes any particular portion of the emulsion. This is because the camera is literally spreading the light out over a larger surface. For this reason, medium and large format cameras often have much larger lens apertures than smaller format cameras. Telescopes, of course, have very large apertures in comparison with the lenses used on any conventional camera.

However, they are taking images of very faint objects. Also, many astrophotos were made on fairly large glass plate negatives. The idea was to photograph as much of the sky as was practical per observing session. In part this was due to the expense of observing time; in part due to the optical limits of the telescopes themselves (above a certain magnification the images are just larger blurs); and in part due to the realization that anything which appeared interesting on these plates could be photographed in more detail later. Astrophoto negative plates (there is still some use of glass plate negatives, mainly for consistency in

ongoing sky surveys) typically have very fine grain, and are frequently treated (“hyponed”) to increase sensitivity. (This increase in sensitivity can also be performed on film negatives.)

One trick used in hyponing is to cool the emulsion to reduce noise. This is still necessary for modern, electronic detectors. Some of which need to be cooled with liquid helium for best performance. Heat — or thermal — noise is the bane of sensitivity.

As part of the drive (sorry about that) to record ever fainter objects, the mechanical tracking mechanisms used on telescopes improved concurrently. These mechanisms were originally driven by clockwork, and for the most part did very well for direct viewing. However, as photography improved and the need to record dimmer bodies for longer periods increased, astronomers often had to ride close herd on the telescopes. This included making frequent, fine adjustments to keep the telescope pointed at the precise part of the sky being recorded as the Earth turned. Later means of doing this involved electric motors and precise location sensors on the mount. Yet that was not enough. Even the mighty Hale 200" often required someone to sit in the prime focus cage at the top of the telescope for hours, despite all the work put into giving it the finest guidance systems of the time. Today, of course, important astronomical instruments are digitally guided, with far better results than even the finest eyeball and most delicate fingers of old. Much to the relief of the astronomers and telescope technicians, I'd like to point out! Observatories are often built on mountaintops and have to be at ambient temperature during use to prevent air currents from causing distortions. It gets cold, sitting there for hours, staring through an eyepiece to make sure the telescope stays pointed at the right spot!

Speaking of the Hale, its robust design has made — and still makes — it a favorite for trying out heavy, bulky prototype detectors of all sorts. Whether historic glass plate cameras or modern detectors which count each photon, just bolt it on and go!

Astronomers are constantly seeking something better when it comes to detectors, just as they have for over a century. Some tried using electronic methods of recording what a telescope showed as early as 1910. However, those primitive devices did little more than provide methods for standard measurements of how bright a particular body was. Still, early on there was great hope for the future of electronic astronomical observing. At the 1933 annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Science, one talk was on how the rapidly advancing technology behind television might soon replace chemical photography. This development turned out to be longer in coming than some expected. Many observatories and researchers indeed experimented with various types of video tubes during the following years. However, even when those had an output which was considered adequate, there remained the problem of recording what they revealed. In many cases, the only way to preserve that image

was to photograph the image on the TV tube. The poor resolution and difficulty in recording the image made electronic images uncommon in astronomy for most of the Twentieth Century. However, because the contrast on such images could actually be better than direct astrophotography such work continued, though it was uncommon. Even in 1973, the National Academy of Sciences noted that astronomers did not yet have a suitable electronic device to replace chemical photography. Part of the delay was due to development of electronic devices being taken over for military use during the Second World War.

One interesting hybrid technology combined electronic amplification with chemical photography. In 1934 André Lallemand began work on photomultipliers, soon producing a type of electronic camera which would soon be named after him. This, indeed, produced an electronically amplified image on a photographic medium. Unfortunately, preparation was complicated, and this device was limited to one exposure per setup. This was due to putting all the works of the device — including the electron-sensitive emulsion — in a vacuum, inside a single, glass container. After exposure, the device was broken open to retrieve and process the emulsion. Despite the shortcomings, some observatories used variations on this process into the Sixties.

The Orthicon camera tube was one early type of electronic image detector, in use for television from 1946 to 1968. While it was also used in astronomy, purpose-made devices were soon more common.

In the Fifties the Carnegie Institute even formed the Carnegie Image Tube Committee, which was intended to produce an image tube specifically for observing. While their device they created — with considerable help from private industry — was used in many observatories, it still did not completely replace chemical photography. However, these instruments were used. Among other ground-breaking applications, a Carnegie image tube was used by Vera Rubin to gather strong evidence that the outer parts of the Andromeda Galaxy was spinning faster than expected from the amount of visible mass. This was a major step in confirming Fritz Zwicky's proposed “dunkle materie” or dark matter.

For the past several decades solid state image recording equipment — such as the Charge Coupled Device or CCD — has increasingly replaced chemical photography. Anyone who has switched from a film camera to a digital understands why. Modern solid state imaging devices have greater resolution than even professional grade film, and greater sensitivity than even the best hyponing can provide. Another advantage of modern imaging is that, since the image is digitized, what a telescope reveals can be viewed anywhere in the world with an Internet connection. In fact, most professional observing these days is done remotely. An astronomer will get time on some large telescope and run it from his office or



home, perhaps thousands of miles away. Even the directing of the instrument is done remotely, with technicians on site rarely having to help. However, chemical photography — specialized film and even glass plate negatives, as mentioned above — is still used for some purposes. The flat plane of a glass plate is much better suited to some types of precision photography than flexible film. Of course, sometimes large sheets of film are carefully fitted to curved backings for certain other types of photography.

The real current value of chemical photography, though, is for the record it provides. Do not dismiss the previous use of photography in recording what was detected by telescopes. By the early Twentieth Century the emulsions on dry plate glass negatives had enormous resolution, and both that and sensitivity continued — and continue — to improve. By the middle of the century there was photographic proof of multiple theories about stars and groupings of stars. As well, those old photographic plates have far more than historical significance. There are currently multiple projects underway by observatories and college astronomy departments to perform high-resolution digital scanning of existing photographic plates. This serves multiple purposes, including creating a computerized library of standardized images of the same objects, going back many decades. This library of images can be examined by volunteers or computers to find changes which have previously gone unnoticed, or to provide history for changes which have only lately been noticed. Several announcements of discoveries made by such comparisons of old data with new have been made in recent years. Moreover, these scans are often bringing out details previously missed, perhaps by being too small or faint for the Mark I Eyeball which originally scanned the negatives.

Moving away from optical observations for a moment, modern astronomy of everything from Gamma rays to UV to IR to radio waves has also repeatedly revolutionized our understanding of the heavens. We're even detecting cosmic gravity waves now! All of this data is recorded and analyzed digitally, but often presented visually.

Some of the gravity wave discoveries have been presented audibly. Sound also has been used to portray things such as recordings of magnetic and electrical and other data detected by probes around Jupiter and Saturn. There are a few other examples. The development of analogue sound recordings came after early photography, but that doesn't seem to be the reason astronomical data is far more often visually. Most astronomical data simply fits better with visual representations. Something to be expected from the type of data.

We are well into the Big Data era of astronomy. Professional astronomers rarely look through telescopes with their own eyes these days, unless it's for their own entertainment. Of course, many still do just that. (If they weren't interested in what they can see over-

head, they wouldn't have gotten into professional observing, would they?) Also, even the best current computer reviews of data sometimes miss things. This is where volunteers come in; they often find new discoveries missed even by the best supercomputers and search algorithms. Regardless of how it is found, when something new *is* discovered, somebody has to check and decide what it means. Modern digital imaging makes this far more easy and convenient, besides revealing information invisible to even the trained eye or best chemical photograph. Small wonder so many interesting discoveries are being made in the sky these days.

### ISAAC ASIMOV SIGNS AN AUTOGRAPH

by Taras Wolansky

The January, 2020 issue of the *Mensa Bulletin* includes several letters recalling encounters with Isaac Asimov, who had been Mensa International's Honorary Vice President for many years.

The longest letter, by a long-time member named Betty Claire, describes how she met Asimov in New York in the early 1980's, following a presentation he gave on the then novel theory that an asteroid impact had caused the extinction of the dinosaurs.

I ... handed him the little 3x5 spiral-bound notebook I carried with me. He took it and in 10 seconds had written a quite dirty limerick based on my name. As he handed the notebook back to me, I felt a sharp tweak of my left nipple. The notebook had covered his hand, and I could not at the moment fathom what it happened to my nipple. ... There was no expression on his face; his wife was right there by his side. How could he do what I thought if he were also holding the notebook? I couldn't believe what he had done. It was against all common sense that this famous man should tweak my nipple. I was in shock.

The audacity of his act should have been met with a swift smack across his face. What if I was wrong, I thought, and my nipple pinched itself? I did nothing.

Evidently Asimov had developed considerable sleight-of-hand skills in pursuit of his avocation. Comparing notes with other women who were there, Claire discovered she was only the first among several victims: "Surreptitious pats on the behind, with no expression on his face ..."

In light of the defenestration of H.P. Lovecraft and John W. Campbell, merely for saying what are now, long after their deaths, considered the wrong things, should Asimov's name continue to reside on the cover of the leading SF magazine?

Because, like Harvey Weinstein, Asimov would occasionally make the appropriate femi-

nist noises, are we to give him a pass on his actual behavior toward women? What do you think?

### A STORY THAT FAILED TO ESCAPE

Review by Sue Burke of

**ROGUE MOON**

by Algis Budrys

(1960; Gold Medal Books paperback; no ISBN; bought used for \$2 from a dealer at Capricorn)

Although this novel was praised by Alfred Bester as "one of the finest flashes of heat lightning to dazzle us this year" (that is, the year 1960), and John Clute in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* called it "now widely regarded as an sf classic," I respectfully disagree.

I think there was a great SF story in there trying to get out, but it stood as much chance as an escape from Alcatraz. The author also seemed to be trying to write a different story than the SF one, and he failed at that, too.

Clute said the "perfectly competent surface narration deals with a hard-SF solution to the problem of an alien labyrinth, discovered on the Moon, which kills anyone who tries to pass through it." Well, it aspired to being competent. Readers are shown some technology about the means to reach the Moon, or rather, the reader must wade through long monologues about the technology. This could have been a story with a lot of action. Instead it's largely a collection of windy speeches: a lot of telling, not much showing.

In addition, the alien labyrinth on the Moon is a piece of nonsense once we get on the inside. Passing through it added no more meaning to the story than swimming through an alligator-filled moat. It's a lost opportunity to create a transcendent story about an alien artifact that tells us something about our universe.

Clute also says, not unreasonably, that the means to get to the Moon, which involves creating two copies of a person, then killing one of them, "is a sustained *rite de passage*, a doppelgänger conundrum about the mind-body split, a death-pean." Well, it aspired to being that, too. The idea isn't really explored, however. Instead, various characters deliver long monologues about life, death, courage, and what it means to be a man (to be macho masculine, that is, not a human being). For example:

"A man should fight, Hawks," Barker said, his eyes distant. "A man should show he is never afraid to die. He should go into the midst of his enemies, singing his death song, and he should kill or be killed; he must never be afraid to die; he must never be afraid to meet the tests of his manhood. A man who turns his back — who lurks at the edge of the battle, and pushes others in to face his enemies —" Barker looked suddenly and obviously at Hawks.

“That’s not a man. That’s some kind of crawling, wriggling thing.”

The reader will also find long, sometimes shouty, monologues in which men jostle over who is the sexually dominant alpha male. (What does this have to do with an alien artifact on the Moon?)

In addition, although Budrys gives us strong characterizations, those characters are deeply emotionally troubled, disturbingly self-destructive, and some of them might be sociopaths. They spend a lot of time (and speechifying) trying to hurt each other emotionally and sometimes physically in a vicious psychodrama that is a pointless sideshow to the actual SF story. Edward Albee could have written it, and probably less tediously.

Carl Sagan, in a 1978 article for the New York Times, called *Rogue Moon* one of the “rare few science fiction novels [that] combine a standard science fiction theme with a deep human sensitivity.” He seems to have read it as a boy, and I think children have such an intense, sensible hunger for big ideas that they can be willing to overlook big ideas that are poorly presented. An adult might think otherwise: this is a could-have-been-good SF story that gets obscured by a different story, and both are badly told.

## NEBULA AWARD NEWS

### 2019 Nebula Award Finalists

#### Novel

- Marque of Caine*, Charles E. Gannon (Baen)  
*The Ten Thousand Doors of January*, Alix E. Harrow (Redhook; Orbit UK)  
*A Memory Called Empire*, Arkady Martine (Tor)  
*Gods of Jade and Shadow*, Silvia Moreno-Garcia (Del Rey; Jo Fletcher)  
*Gideon the Ninth*, Tamsyn Muir (Tor.com Publishing)  
*A Song for a New Day*, Sarah Pinsker (Berkley)

#### Novella

- “Anxiety Is the Dizziness of Freedom”, Ted Chiang (Exhalation)  
*The Haunting of Tram Car 015*, P. Djèli Clark (Tor.com Publishing)  
*This Is How You Lose the Time War*, Amal El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone (Saga)  
*Her Silhouette, Drawn in Water*, Vylar Kaftan (Tor.com Publishing)  
*The Deep*, Rivers Solomon, with Daveed Diggs, William Hutson & Jonathan Snipes (Saga)  
*Catfish Lullaby*, A.C. Wise (Broken Eye)

#### Novelette

- “A Strange Uncertain Light”, G.V. Anderson (*F&SF* 7-8/19)  
 “For He Can Creep”, Siobhan Carroll (Tor.com 7/10/19)  
 “His Footsteps, Through Darkness and Light”, Mimi Mondal (Tor.com 1/23/19)  
 “The Blur in the Corner of Your Eye”, Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny* 7-8/19)  
*Carpe Glitter*, Cat Rambo (Meerkat)  
 “The Archontology of Love”, Caroline M. Joachim (*Lightspeed* 4/19)

#### Short Story

- “Give the Family My Love”, A.T. Greenblatt (*Clarkesworld* 2/19)  
 “The Dead, In Their Uncontrollable Power”, Karen Osborne (*Uncanny* 3-4/19)  
 “And Now His Lordship Is Laughing”, Shiv Ramdas (*Strange Horizons* 9/9/19)  
 “Ten Excerpts from an Annotated Bibliography on the Cannibal Women of Ratnabar Island”, Nibedita Sen (*Nightmare* 5/19)  
 “A Catalog of Storms”, Fran Wilde (*Uncanny* 1-2/19)  
 “How the Trick Is Done”, A.C. Wise (*Uncanny* 7-8/19)

#### Game Writing

- Outer Wilds*, Kelsey Beachum (Mobius Digital)  
*The Outer Worlds*, Leonard Boyarsky, Megan Starks, Kate Dollarhyde, Chris L’Etoile (Obsidian Entertainment)  
*The Magician’s Workshop*, Kate Heartfield (Choice of Games)  
*Disco Elysium*, Robert Kurvitz (ZA/UM)  
*Fate Accessibility Toolkit*, Elsa Sjunneson-Henry (Evil Hat Productions)

#### The Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation

- Avengers: Endgame*, Christopher Markus & Stephen McFeely (Marvel Studios)  
*Captain Marvel*, Anna Boden & Ryan Fleck & Geneva Robertson-Dworet (Marvel Studios)  
*Good Omens: “Hard Times”*, Neil Gaiman (Amazon Studios/BBC Studios)  
*The Mandalorian: “The Child”*, Jon Favreau (Disney+)  
*Russian Doll: “The Way Out”*, Allison Silverman and Leslye Headland (Netflix)  
*Watchmen: “A God Walks into Abar”*, Jeff Jensen & Damon Lindelof (HBO)

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

- Sal and Gabi Break the Universe*, Carlos Hernandez (Disney Hyperion)  
*Catfishing on CatNet*, Naomi Kritzer (Tor

Teen)

- Dragon Pearl*, Yoon Ha Lee (Disney Hyperion)  
*Peasprout Chen: Battle of Champions*, Henry Lien (Holt)  
*Cog*, Greg van Eekhout (Harper)  
*Riverland*, Fran Wilde (Amulet)

## SHORT AND UNEVEN

Review by Sue Burke of Nebula Award finalists for Short Story and Novelette

Usually the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America presents its annual Nebula Awards at a gala ceremony. This year, for obvious reasons, the award presentation will be live-streamed at 8 p.m. EDT on May 30 without a ballroom full of people.

As a diligent SFWA member, I’ve read all six of the finalist short stories. Overall, I think they’re all worth reading. Unlike the Hugo Awards, there’s no ranked voting; I only get to vote for one, but I’ve ranked them here anyway from my least favorite (as I said, they’re all good) to the one I’ll vote for. Of course, my ranking is subjective and even a bit arbitrary, and your opinions may vary.

“Give the Family My Love” by A.T. Greenblatt (*Clarkesworld* 2/19). In a series of letters to her family back home, an explorer searches in an alien library for information that would help Earth. The voice is compelling, but the overall story reveals no big surprises, and the tale ends on a defeatist and depressing note.

“A Catalog of Storms” by Fran Wilde (*Uncanny* 1-2/19). As storms become sentient, a small town’s children fight back. The writing evokes a timeless dreamlike quality and creates sharp characters: pathos abounds. The point of view character is a child, however, which traps us in a limited horizon that is both claustrophobic and kind of a cheat, since the larger picture can go unexplained. In the end, nothing in the story transcends narrow personal interests.

“And Now His Lordship Is Laughing” by Shiv Ramdas (*Strange Horizons* 9/9/19). This classic-style horror story involves a dollmaker in India during the British Raj – so classic that the ending can be guessed less than halfway through the story. Cultural anger animates the story, but the conventional plot weakens it.

“How the Trick Is Done” by A.C. Wise (*Uncanny* 7-8/19). Jilted lovers get revenge through magic. The narration and characters show self-awareness and self-reflection, which gives the story a sober, solemn, literary strength. No one winds up happy, but they do wind up wiser.

“The Dead, In Their Uncontrollable Power” by Karen Osborne (*Uncanny* 3-4/19). Mutiny, death, and blood on a generation ship. The savage story manages to find a happy ending. For me, it had the intensity and velocity of a television show, and since we live in a golden age of television, that’s a good thing indeed.

My vote: “Ten Excerpts from an Anno-

tated **Bibliography on the Cannibal Women of Ratnabar Island**” by Nibedita Sen (**Nightmare 5/19**). In 1891, something tragic happened, and we’re still living with the consequences. This very short story smacks the reader upside the head with nuance, ambiguity, and pitiless social criticism. Its densely packed details make it hard to read and irresistible to re-read: very much a story of our moment, and I mean that as high praise. I also value the unconventional storytelling style: I think the Nebula should reward attempts to expand the genre in one way or another.

As for the novelettes, although every one was competently written and received enough votes to become a finalist, I’m a little disappointed with this year’s selection. Good, yes, but great? I don’t think so. Some of the stories seemed formulaic: the characters worked themselves into a situation with a problem, which they solved, and the story ended without further ado. No wisdom was wrested at great price, no storytelling technique pushed the genre or displayed exceptional skill, big ideas and wrenching changes weren’t explored, and the plot moved along well enough but without gripping urgency – the story did not become greater than the sum of its words.

Of course, your opinions may vary.

“**The Blur in the Corner of Your Eye**” by Sarah Pinsker (**Uncanny 7-8/19**). A mystery writer finds a man dead, apparently in an accident, and learns the truth. The story never develops much tension, and it’s resolved too easily.

“**His Footsteps, Through Darkness and Light**” by Mimi Mondal (**Tor.com 1/23/19**). A kind-hearted circus performer rescues a slave and angers a goddess. This turns out to be a simple, straightforward, sentimental story of loyalty, responsibility, and love, but nothing more.

“**For He Can Creep**” by Siobhan Carroll (**Tor.com 7/10/19**). A cat battles Satan for the soul of a poet. Light and humorous, this is the most stylish of the stories on the ballot, and perfect for cat lovers.

“**The Archonology of Love**” by Caroline M. Yoachim (**Lightspeed 4/19**). Everyone in a colony on a distant planet died while investigating strange alien technology, and researchers have come to find out why. Some of the dead were loved ones. In a way, the story is one long, slow goodbye – or rather, the search for a way to say goodbye.

“**A Strange Uncertain Light**” by G.V. Anderson (**F&SF 7-8/19**). This classic ghost story is set in rural England in 1938 and a century earlier. To say more might be a spoiler. Every trope seems to be touched, but with subtle twists, and a strong sense of characters and place with plenty of suspense. It’s a close second to the story that won my vote.

My vote: **Carpe Glitter** by Cat Rambo (**Meerkat**). A young woman inherits her grandmother’s homes, knowing that her grandmother was both a magician and a hoarder. She hopes to find treasure in the rooms packed

with old stuff, and she finds the unexpected. The first half explores the fractured family relationships without haste, and the second half speeds to a climax as the pieces fit together.

## HUGO AWARD NEWS

### 2020 Hugo Award Nominees

#### Best Novel

*The City in the Middle of the Night*, by Charlie Jane Anders (Tor; Titan)

*Gideon the Ninth*, by Tamsyn Muir (Tor.com Publishing)

*The Light Brigade*, by Kameron Hurley (Saga; Angry Robot UK)

*A Memory Called Empire*, by Arkady Martine (Tor; Tor UK)

*Middlegame*, by Seanan McGuire (Tor.com Publishing)

*The Ten Thousand Doors of January*, by Alix E. Harrow (Redhook; Orbit UK)

#### Best Novella

“**Anxiety Is the Dizziness of Freedom**”, by Ted Chiang (Exhalation (Borzoi/Alfred A. Knopf; Picador))

**The Deep**, by Rivers Solomon, with Daveed Diggs, William Hutson & Jonathan Snipes (Saga Press/Gallery)

**The Haunting of Tram Car 015**, by P. Djèli Clark (Tor.com Publishing)

**In an Absent Dream**, by Seanan McGuire (Tor.com Publishing)

**This Is How You Lose the Time War**, by Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone (Saga Press; Jo Fletcher Books)

**To Be Taught, If Fortunate**, by Becky Chambers (Harper Voyager; Hodder & Stoughton)

#### Best Novelette

“**The Archonology of Love**”, by Caroline M. Yoachim (Lightspeed, April 2019)

“**Away With the Wolves**”, by Sarah Gailey (*Uncanny Magazine*: Disabled People Destroy Fantasy Special Issue, September/October 2019)

“**The Blur in the Corner of Your Eye**”, by Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny Magazine*, July-August 2019)

**Emergency Skin**, by N.K. Jemisin (Forward Collection (Amazon))

“**For He Can Creep**”, by Siobhan Carroll (Tor.com, 10 July 2019)

“**Omphalos**”, by Ted Chiang (Exhalation (Borzoi/Alfred A. Knopf; Picador))

#### Best Short Story

“**And Now His Lordship Is Laughing**”, by Shiv Ramdas (Strange Horizons, 9 September 2019)

“**As the Last I May Know**”, by S.L. Huang (Tor.com, 23 October 2019)

“**Blood Is Another Word for Hunger**”, by Rivers Solomon (Tor.com, 24 July 2019)

“**A Catalog of Storms**”, by Fran Wilde (*Uncanny Magazine*, January/February 2019)

“**Do Not Look Back, My Lion**”, by Alix E. Harrow (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, January 2019)

“**Ten Excerpts from an Annotated Bibliography on the Cannibal Women of Ratnabar Island**”, by Nibedita Sen (*Nightmare Magazine*, May 2019)

#### Best Series

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

*InCryptid*, by Seanan McGuire (DAW)

*Luna*, by Ian McDonald (Tor; Gollancz)

*Planetfall series*, by Emma Newman (Ace; Gollancz)

*Winternight Trilogy*, by Katherine Arden (Del Rey; Del Rey UK)

*Wormwood*, by Tade Thompson (Orbit US; Orbit UK)

#### Best Related Work

*Becoming Superman: My Journey from Poverty to Hollywood*, by J. Michael Straczynski (Harper Voyager US)

*Joanna Russ*, by Gwyneth Jones (University of Illinois Press (Modern Masters of Science Fiction))

*The Lady from the Black Lagoon: Hollywood Monsters and the Lost Legacy of Millicent Patrick*, by Mallory O’Meara (Hanover Square)

*The Pleasant Profession of Robert A. Heinlein*, by Farah Mendlesohn (Unbound)

“**2019 John W. Campbell Award Acceptance Speech**”, by Jeannette Ng  
**Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin**, produced and directed by Arwen Curry

#### Best Graphic Story or Comic

*Die, Volume 1: Fantasy Heartbreaker*, by Kieron Gillen and Stephanie Hans, letters by Clayton Cowles (Image)

*LaGuardia*, written by Nnedi Okorafor, art by Tana Ford, colours by James Devlin (Berger Books; Dark Horse)

*Monstress, Volume 4: The Chosen*, written by Marjorie Liu, art by Sana Takeda (Image)

*Mooncakes*, by Wendy Xu and Suzanne Walker, letters by Joamette Gil (Oni Press; Lion Forge)

*Paper Girls, Volume 6*, written by Brian K. Vaughan, drawn by Cliff Chiang, colours by Matt Wilson, letters by Jared K. Fletcher (Image)

*The Wicked + The Divine, Volume 9: Okay*, by Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie, colours by Matt Wilson,

letters by Clayton Cowles (Image)

### Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

*Avengers: Endgame*  
*Captain Marvel*  
*Good Omens*  
*Russian Doll (Season One)*  
*Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*  
*Us*

### Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

*The Good Place: "The Answer"*  
*The Expanse: "Cibola Burn"*  
*Watchmen: "A God Walks into Abar"*  
*The Mandalorian: "Redemption"*  
*Doctor Who: "Resolution"*  
*Watchmen: "This Extraordinary Being"*

### Best Editor, Short Form

Neil Clarke  
Ellen Datlow  
C.C. Finlay  
Jonathan Strahan  
Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian  
Thomas  
Sheila Williams

### Best Editor, Long Form

Sheila E. Gilbert  
Brit Hvide  
Diana M. Pho  
Devi Pillai  
Miriam Weinberg  
Navah Wolfe

### Best Professional Artist

Tommy Arnold  
Rovina Cai  
Galen Dara  
John Picacio  
Yuko Shimizu  
Alyssa Winans

### Best Semiprozine

*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*  
*Escape Pod*  
*Fireside Magazine*  
*FIYAH Magazine of Black Speculative Fiction*  
*Strange Horizons*  
*Uncanny Magazine*

### Best Fanzine

*The Book Smugglers*, editors Ana Grilo and Thea James  
*Galactic Journey*, founder Gideon Marcus, editor Janice Marcus, senior writers Rosemary Benton, Lorelei Marcus and Victoria Silverwolf  
*Journey Planet*, editors James Bacon, Christopher J Garcia, Alissa McKersie,

Ann Gry, Chuck Serface, John Coxon and Steven H Silver  
*nerds of a feather, flock together*, editors Adri Joy, Joe Sherry, Vance Kotrla, and The G  
*Quick Sip Reviews*, editor Charles Payseur  
*The Rec Center*, editors Elizabeth Minkel and Gavia Baker-Whitelaw

### Best Fancast

**Be The Serpent**, presented by Alexandra Rowland, Freya Marske and Jennifer Mace  
**Claire Rousseau's YouTube channel**, produced & presented by Claire Rousseau  
**The Coode Street Podcast**, presented by Jonathan Strahan and Gary K. Wolfe  
**Galactic Suburbia**, presented by Alisa Krasnostein, Alexandra Pierce and Tansy Rayner Roberts, producer Andrew Finch  
**Our Opinions Are Correct**, presented by Annalee Newitz and Charlie Jane Anders  
**The Skiffy and Fanty Show**, presented by Jen Zink and Shaun Duke

### Best Fan Writer

Cora Buhlert  
James Davis Nicoll  
Alasdair Stuart  
Bogi Takács  
Paul Weimer  
Adam Whitehead

### Best Fan Artist

Iain Clark  
Sara Felix  
Grace P. Fong  
Meg Frank  
Ariela Housman  
Elise Matthesen

### Lodestar Award for Best Young Adult Book (not a Hugo)

*Catfishing on CatNet*, by Naomi Kritzer (Tor Teen)  
*Deeplight*, by Frances Hardinge (Macmillan)  
*Dragon Pearl*, by Yoon Ha Lee (Disney/Hyperion)  
*Minor Mage*, by T. Kingfisher (Argyll)  
*Riverland*, by Fran Wilde (Amulet)  
*The Wicked King*, by Holly Black (Little, Brown; Hot Key)

### Astounding Award for the best new science fiction writer, sponsored by Dell Magazines (not a Hugo)

Sam Hawke (2nd year of eligibility)  
R.F. Kuang (2nd year of eligibility)  
Jenn Lyons (1st year of eligibility)

Nibedita Sen (2nd year of eligibility)  
Tasha Suri (2nd year of eligibility)  
Emily Tesh (1st year of eligibility)

### 1945 Retro-Hugo Award Nominees

#### Best Novel

*The Golden Fleece*, by Robert Graves (Cassell)  
*Land of Terror*, by Edgar Rice Burroughs (Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc.)  
**"Shadow Over Mars"** (*The Nemesis from Terra*), by Leigh Brackett (*Startling Stories*, Fall 1944)  
*Sirius: A Fantasy of Love and Discord*, by Olaf Stapledon (Secker & Warburg)  
*The Wind on the Moon*, by Eric Linklater (Macmillan)  
**"The Winged Man"**, by A.E. van Vogt and E. Mayne Hull (*Astounding Science Fiction*, May-June 1944)

#### Best Novella

**"The Changeling"**, by A.E. van Vogt (*Astounding Science Fiction*, April 1944)  
**"A God Named Kroo"**, by Henry Kuttner (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, Winter 1944)  
**"Intruders from the Stars"**, by Ross Rocklynne (*Amazing Stories*, January 1944)  
**"The Jewel of Bas"**, by Leigh Brackett (*Planet Stories*, Spring 1944)  
**"Killozer!"**, by Theodore Sturgeon (*Astounding Science Fiction*, November 1944)  
**"Trog"**, by Murray Leinster (*Astounding Science Fiction*, June 1944)

#### Best Novelette

**"Arena"**, by Fredric Brown (*Astounding Science Fiction*, June 1944)  
**"The Big and the Little"** ("The Merchant Princes"), by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding Science Fiction*, August 1944)  
**"The Children's Hour"**, by Lawrence O'Donnell (C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner) (*Astounding Science Fiction*, March 1944)  
**"City"**, by Clifford D. Simak (*Astounding Science Fiction*, May 1944)  
**"No Woman Born"**, by C.L. Moore (*Astounding Science Fiction*, December 1944)  
**"When the Bough Breaks"**, by Lewis Padgett (C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner) (*Astounding Science Fiction*, November 1944)

#### Best Short Story

**"And the Gods Laughed"**, by Fredric Brown (*Planet Stories*, Spring 1944)  
**"Desertion"**, by Clifford D. Simak (*As-*

*tounding Science Fiction*, November 1944)

“**Far Centaurus**”, by A. E. van Vogt (*Astounding Science Fiction*, January 1944)

“**Huddling Place**”, by Clifford D. Simak (*Astounding Science Fiction*, July 1944)

“**I, Rocket**”, by Ray Bradbury (*Amazing Stories*, May 1944)

“**The Wedge**” (“The Traders”), by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding Science Fiction*, October 1944)

#### Best Series

**Captain Future**, by Brett Sterling

**The Cthulhu Mythos**, by H. P. Lovecraft, August Derleth, and others

**Doc Savage**, by Kenneth Robeson/Lester Dent

**Jules de Grandin**, by Seabury Quinn

**Pellucidar**, by Edgar Rice Burroughs

**The Shadow**, by Maxwell Grant (Walter B. Gibson)

#### Best Related Work

**Fancylopedia**, by Jack Speer (Forrest J. Ackerman)

**'42 To '44: A Contemporary Memoir Upon Human Behavior During the Crisis of the World Revolution**, by H.G. Wells (Secker & Warburg)

**Mr. Tompkins Explores the Atom**, by George Gamow (Cambridge University Press)

**Rockets: The Future of Travel Beyond the Stratosphere**, by Willy Ley (Viking Press)

“**The Science-Fiction Field**”, by Leigh Brackett (*Writer's Digest*, July 1944)

“**The Works of H.P. Lovecraft: Suggestions for a Critical Appraisal**”, by Fritz Leiber (*The Acolyte*, Fall 1944)

#### Best Graphic Story or Comic

**Buck Rogers: “Hollow Planetoid**”, by Dick Calkins (National Newspaper Service)

**Donald Duck: “The Mad Chemist**”, by Carl Barks (Dell Comics)

**Flash Gordon: “Battle for Tropica**”, by Alex Raymond (King Features Syndicate)

**Flash Gordon: “Triumph in Tropica**”, by Alex Raymond (King Features Syndicate)

**The Spirit: “For the Love of Clara De-foe**”, by Manly Wade Wellman, Lou Fine and Don Komisarow (Register and Tribune Syndicate)

**Superman: “The Mysterious Mr. Mxyzplk**”, by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster (Detective Comics, Inc.)

#### Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

**The Canterville Ghost**  
**The Curse of the Cat People**  
**Donovan's Brain**  
**House of Frankenstein**  
**The Invisible Man's Revenge**  
**It Happened Tomorrow**

#### Best Editor, Short Form

**John W. Campbell, Jr.**  
**Oscar J. Friend**  
**Mary Gnaedinger**  
**Dorothy McIlwraith**  
**Raymond A. Palmer**  
**W. Scott Peacock**

#### Best Professional Artist

**Earle Bergey**  
**Margaret Brundage**  
**Boris Dolgov**  
**Matt Fox**  
**Paul Orban**  
**William Timmins**

#### Best Fanzine

**The Acolyte**, edited by Francis T. Laney and Samuel D. Russell

**Diablerie**, edited by Bill Watson

**Futurian War Digest**, edited by J. Michael Rosenblum

**Shangri L'Affaires**, edited by Charles Burbee

**Voice of the Imagi-Nation**, edited by Forrest J. Ackerman and Myrtle R. Douglas

**Le Zombie**, edited by Bob Tucker and E.E. Evans

#### Best Fan Writer

**Fritz Leiber**  
**Morojo/Myrtle R. Douglas**  
**J. Michael Rosenblum**  
**Jack Speer**  
**Bob Tucker**  
**Harry Warner, Jr.**

#### WORLD CON BIDS

2022

Chicago  
Mid-August — Labor Day Weekend  
<https://chicagoworldconbid.org/>

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia  
May 4-8, 2022  
<https://jeddicon.com/>

**[YES THIS IS A REAL BID]**  
Maybe Montreal was not so bad.

— LTM

2023

Chengdu  
August, 2023  
<http://www.worldconinchina.com/index-e.html>  
What she said.

— JTM

Memphis, Tennessee  
August 23-27, 2023  
<https://www.memphis23.org/>

Nice, France  
August 2-6, 2023  
<http://worldconinfrance.org/en/>

New Orleans  
(On hiatus)

2024

Glasgow  
August 8-12, 2014  
<http://glasgow2024.org/>

2025

Seattle  
Mid-August 2025

Perth, Australia  
(On hiatus)

#### WORLD CON

2020

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

The ConNZealand Committee has announced that the Worldcon will be virtual. There were concerns about their having enough staffers to do all that was necessary, but this solution isn't very desirable.

2021

DisCon III  
Washington, D.C.  
August 25-29, 2021  
<http://discon3.org/>

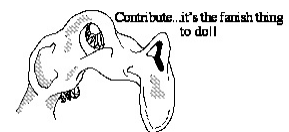
#### NASFiC

2020

Columbus, Ohio  
August 20-23, 2020  
<http://columbus2020nasfic.org>

#### CONGLOMERATION 2020

The ConGlomeration committee has announced that ConGlomeration 2020 has been canceled because of the health crisis. There are few enough fan-run cons these days and losing one, especially here, is bad.



## Letters, we get letters

From: **Trinlay Khadro** February 8, 2020  
1734 S. 56th Street, West Allis, WI  
53214, USA  
[trinlay63@wi.rr.com](mailto:trinlay63@wi.rr.com)

I've been busy for several years now making amigarumi critters and selling them at con art shows.

Lately, I've done a few lino prints including this one of Megumi that I thought you'd enjoy.



From: **Joy V. Smith** February 21, 2020  
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL  
33810-0341 USA  
[Pagadan@aol.com](mailto:Pagadan@aol.com)  
<http://www.joyvsmith.com/>

Thanks for all the reviews — always an education! And they help me make choices. Thanks to Lloyd Daub and Taras Wolanski too. (I read *Doctor Little* when I was a kid. It'd make a good movie...) And I never knew or thought about Yiddish books. I'm glad some are being saved.

There are new ones, too, Michael Chabon to the contrary. For example, *Harry Potter un der filosofisher shteyn* — that's right, Potter in Yiddish (and "Philosopher's Stone" to boot). There's also *Der Hobit, oder Ahin un Vider Tsurik* ["In a lokh in de erd hot gevoynt a hobit."] — JTM

Lisa: Trumpybear. EEK! Have you seen the Trump toilet brush?

No, but at least that serves a useful purpose. — LTM

Thanks to Rodford Edmiston for the background on Betelgeuse (Is it really pronounced beetle-juice?), supernovas, the universe and everything.

Letters: Thanks to Timothy Lane for the

interesting almanac tidbit. I enjoyed Rafael Sabatini's 1922 historical novel *Captain Blood*, also *The Black Swan*, *The Sea Hawk*, .... And thanks to all for the additional background and follow-up to articles and letters.

From: **Timothy Lane** February 24, 2020  
[timothylane51@gmail.com](mailto:timothylane51@gmail.com)

I remember reading *A Man Called Intrepid*. I wondered about how much Sir William seemed to be affecting events. Now I find I had good reason for my doubts. It would be interesting to compare it to the actual events, but that would take a lot of effort. And besides, how much could I remember of it at this point?

I think you're making an error in French in the title of your review of the mountain climber Bradford Washburn. The French verb *aller* means "to go", and the reflexive *s'en aller* means "to go away". So "I go away" would be "Je m'en vais" (present indicative) and the informal singular of "you go away" would be "tu t'en va". The imperative is *va t'en*. So you started with part of the infinitive or the third person singular, then appended the second person singular informal imperative.

That's the title of the song.

An interesting "Joy of High Tech" this issue even if Rod doesn't actually discuss any form of technology. When people talk about "the science is settled" on any topic, one can point out what Michelson-Morley and other experiments to "settled" Newtonian mechanics.

Lloyd Daub's discourse on fear was most interesting. I can share his dislike of false accusations of any sorts, which greatly affects my reaction to some books, such as Fredric Brown's *Here Comes a Candle*. No doubt this goes back to some childhood incident.

The FBI would seem to have early concluded that Richard Jewell was the bomber, and once they've done that any police force will mostly be concerned with proving their case, not making sure they got the right person.

That is an amazing charge for books. I suppose the Blish books, if you have them all in trade paperback, would weigh a pound or so. It would cost less than \$10 to ship them in the US, I think.

I've seen *Captain Blood* (though I haven't read the book, or as far as I recall anything else by Sabatini). The ending, as Peter Blood informs his father-in-law of his new post, is a fun one.

Jared Diamond dealt at least somewhat with the issue of invasive infections in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, and as far as I know no one objected. But that was many years ago, and the outrage culture has gotten steadily more intolerant since then.

I remember reading a short *Reader's Digest* article on the Bermuda Triangle. I had always assumed it meant some small area near Bermuda. When I saw how large it was (virtually the entire West Indies as well as Bermuda) and

considered the weather, my immediate thought was that it was a fallacy. In that area, there were going to be lots of disappearances.

Lawrence David Kusche talked to Bill Verity, who had been reported "lost in the Bermuda Triangle" (*The Bermuda Triangle Mystery — Solved*, page 212). Verity was amazed at the report.

I've attended Ditto twice, when it was held in Cincinnati. I've never made it to Corflu, partly because only once was it located within a reasonable distance (Nashville). That one was inconveniently opposite the Holmes-Doyle symposium in Dayton, and we also heard from Tom Feller that it didn't sound like something we really wanted to attend anyway.

I notice Lloyd Penney's struggles with editing. For what it's worth, one approach I take in writing is to go by how it sounds to me. The idea is to be grammatically correct unless it seems overly pedantic, and to see how the content flows.

The generic use of fascist as an insult is nothing new. Orwell pointed it out around 80 years ago.

One reason for the poor German intelligence in Britain specifically was the Double-Cross System. Their few agents all linked up with their main agent, a Welsh nationalist named Arthur Owens, whose German code name was Johnny. His British code name was Snow, and he was actually a double agent. By 1942, the British realized that every German spy in Britain was a double agent, and this was probably true even earlier.

See the review of the book by "Nigel West" on Owens; *Snow: The Double Life of a World War II Spy* (2011; with producer Madoc Roberts, who seems to have done much of the research). I think you have it, too.

— JTM

Frederik Pohl (I think it may have been in one of his collaborations with C. M. Kornbluth) dealt with a system based on some form of corporal punishment. It didn't work too well with masochistic criminals, just as systems based on fines work poorly with the very wealthy. That may be why prison is the usual punishment for major crimes — when the death penalty isn't used. The death penalty has the virtue that the recidivism rate for executed criminals is zero.

The Holodomor and the Yezhovshchina may have given the Nazis some ideas, but they already knew about the Armenian genocide and used it as an example. I think it was Hermann Goering who used it as an example of how no one remembers such victims.

From: **Lloyd Penney** March 17, 2020  
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Got your warning. It is St. Patrick's Day, but you'd never know it. The premier of Ontario has declared a province-wide state of emergency. All restaurants and bars (except those with take-out facilities) are closed, and such closure will be enforced. Thanks to the COVID-19 coronavirus, much of Canada is in a shutdown state, and we are just beginning our self-quarantine, self-isolation, social distancing. Some say who knows what we will do, but Yvonne and I know...we have lots to do at home. Two weeks? Right now, I'd take three, and we will still have lots to occupy us. Like...writing a letter of comment for *Alexiad*, whole number 109.

Kentucky is racing everyone else to shut down places. I have to wonder; what is happening in those homeless camps?

We have adopted a minimalist lifestyle, as much as we can, mostly because of lack of money coming in. Our investments are taking a beating, and we have been cleaning out the apartment, to see what we can easily rid ourselves of. We've already taken about ten bags of stuff to the local thrift shops, and more will likely come to be bagged and donated. I still can't find work, but I am doing some work online for a client of World Vision, so at least some cash will be coming in shortly. Like the Sheryl Crow song goes, it's not getting what you want, but wanting what you have.

Most deaths I see here, and in issues of *Ansible* and the File 770 website, depress me. My own world of SF&F is slowly crumbling, one passing at a time. With Christopher Tolkien's passing, have we truly left Middle-Earth? I hope not, but I suspect we have.

Just this morning, I saw reports online about Betelgeuse brightening up again. Maybe it's returning to normal, or getting ready to nova, don't know. All I know it takes our mind off worrying about COVID-19.

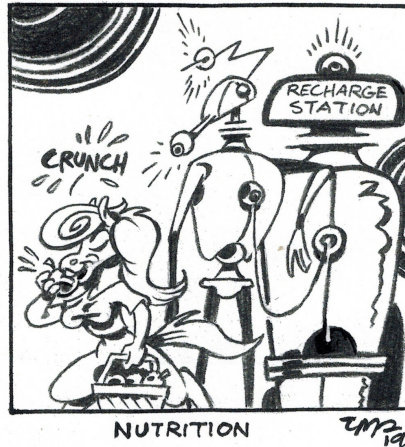
The loccol...George Price is discovering what much of us in the rest of the world have known for some time. With postage rates continually rising, we've found that purchasing something overseas consists of the price of the product, and the postage matching or even exceeding the price of the product. Pretty typical here.

Canada has had legal pot for about a year now, so there are cannabis stores everywhere, with mixed reviews and levels of success. Legal pot doesn't seem to be much stronger than tobacco, so illegal pot is still fairly popular. The hallways of our apartment building often have that skunky smell. Cannabis edibles are coming soon, too. I am not interested in the smoking part, but I am looking into the CBD oil part, and how useful it may be as a nutritional supplement.

Last night was a fannish pubnight at our local, and it closed until further notice not long after we left. There may not be much entertainment for the local fans, with so many conventions cancelling or postponing, but social media is the easiest way to stay informed, and pass the info along. Best way to keep up with fanzines, too. Take care, see you with the next.

Conventions are canceling all over. Fanzines may be the last refuge of fandom.

— JTM



From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 18, 2020  
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My thanks for Vol. 19 No.1 (February 2020, Whole Number 109).

Help, I'm trapped in a CCRC and can't get out. Actually, that's not really funny. There are some 300 of we old people here and the COVID-19 is apparently especially dangerous for us. All activities have been canceled. No more gathering in groups and we are to try and keep at least 6 feet from each other. How that works for couples I don't know. No more eating in the dining room. We can order meals and they will be delivered to our rooms. Very difficult to get to medical appointments as transportation will only take one person at a time. So far no one here has contracted COVID-19. So, we'll just keep our fingers crossed.

"The Joy of High Tech" by Rodford Edmiston was enjoyable as usual. We'll just keep watching the skies.

Good to see Lloyd Daub with so many reviews. Keep it up, Lloyd.

Then there's Taras Wolansky with his reviews.

But I was especially taken by the review of *Joker* by Taral Wayne. Based on his review I'm going to order a copy from Amazon along with

some books already on my list. It'll be next month after my pension and Social Security gets deposited.

**George W. Price:** Your mention of Rafael Sabatini reminded me of how much I enjoyed his novels years ago. I once had the chance to purchase what appeared to be a complete collection of his works at a used book store. But I passed it by as it would have added another pile of books to my already overloaded room full of books.

**Sue Burke:** Were women just excluded from Ivy League schools? Where I went to college from 1951-1955 there seemed to be about an equal number of women and men students.

**Taras Wolansky:** What did you think of the grand finale of *The Good Place*? It received excellent reviews. After watching it I seemed to be a bit disappointed. But on further thought I came to the conclusion that it was a good ending and didn't really see where they could have done anything better.

From: **John Purcell** March 24, 2020  
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Hey, lucky you: *Alexiad* gets the first letter of comment from me in the current apocalypse. There is always something unique going on in this world, and I guess this is one of them.

Getting into this latest issue, Lisa's opening salvo about books definitely strikes a bell. Her comment that "the things you own you" makes sense, and I do not mind being owned by books. Heck, that's part of my profession as a college English professor, so I am constantly surrounded by books both at home and at work. And like Lisa notes, one of these days I do need to cull the collection a bit, remove unwanted books that I don't believe need preserving. Then again, my current collection of sf & f is nowhere near as big as it once was back in the early 1980s. By 1983 I had something on the order of 2500 science fiction and fantasy books in my possession, and I was damn proud of it. A cross-country move from Minneapolis to Los Angeles warranted selling off 75% of it, which raised a lot of money to fund the move. Now my total collection — all cataloged on the LibraryThing app on my cellphone — numbers just shy of 600 books.

The major difference between now and then is that I am much more selective now in terms of what I want to have in the collection; 35 to 45 years ago I was in the peak years of my "completist" mode of collecting. These days I actually read what I buy and shelve either at home or in my office, which is my lending library to colleagues who also like reading this crazy Buck Rogers stuff. Even so, I might have to trim the herd a bit by removing books that have been read and which I consider expendable. And so it goes.

My vision problems led me to

switch to Kindle (Kindle app on an iPad) and when I had the cataract surgery that cleared that up, I stayed with the iPad. It saves on space.

— JTM

Lisa also noticed something that rankled my wife and I one night while watching a program on a channel we rarely tune into just because it was running a Firefly mini-marathon. Yes, you guessed it: this channel ran Trumpybear commercials practically every half hour. At first we couldn't believe it, thinking it was a big gag, but no, it's for real. Hard to believe.

And all this during the COVID-19 pandemic. I was fearful of losing a lot of money as Corflu 37, which I chaired, came close to being shuttered by the state, but fortunately that order did not come from the Governor's office until the Wednesday after the Convention ended. \*Whew!\* Dodge a big bullet there. Still made a little bit of money thanks to the Auction and 33 fine folks showing up. All in all it went very well, and attendees told me that they had a splendid time. Made me feel good. That is all I really wanted to do: create a place where everybody could sit, enjoy, sip, eat, and kibbutz to their hearts' content. All in all, I am glad I did this, even if Greg Benford questioned my sanity. I did it! So there.

You were better off than the organizers of ConNZeland. This will be a very interesting world-con.

— JTM

And I have to say it: I could not have pulled it off without the help of my wife, Valerie, who is a brilliant organizer when it comes to practical matters, and Pat Virzi, who was a font of wisdom and ideas throughout. Thank you, ladies. I truly could not have done it without your massive help.

With that, I believe I am done here. May you, Lisa, and Grant all be well and make it through this latest viral madness. We are all in this together, and I wish you all good health.

From: **George W. Price** March 26, 2020  
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February *Alexiad*:

Lloyd Daub's review of *The Best of Jerry Pournelle* brings back old memories. I first met Jerry at the 1961 Worldcon in Seattle. He was introduced to me by Poul Anderson (whom I already knew). One evening Poul and Jerry had a long bull session with me and my wife in our room. I found Jerry so interesting that the next year I invited him to be on the program at Chicon III (of which I was treasurer). He joined the panel on "Politics in Science Fiction" that I moderated.

Many years later, in 1987, I had a letter published in *Chemical and Engineering News* (the house organ of the American Chemical Society) on how to dispose of nuclear power plant waste. I cited a speech I had heard Pournelle give. He said the solution is simple — it doesn't require super-secure storage for a million years in deep caverns. All we need is to set aside a square mile of desert and put a storage building at the center. It wouldn't have to be very big to hold the accumulated wastes of centuries. The waste is brought in and handled entirely by standard remote-control machinery. And around that square mile, Jerry said, we put ordinary cyclone fencing — with signs every few feet reading, "If you cross this fence you will die."

The magazine published a letter in response from a reader living in the desert in the Southwest, demanding we find someplace other than "my desert." I didn't bother to reply with an offer to avoid the part of the desert that was his private property. But I thought it telling that he saw himself as the guardian of all the desert.

**Many environmental activists are against all forms of power generation. How they reconcile this with their use of a great number of electric-powered devices is an exercise left to the reader.**

(This was before suicidal terrorism became a serious danger. Now that square mile would need a strong guard force.)

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Noting my mention of the horrors of gender in German grammar, Timothy Lane wonders if I have read Mark Twain's "The Awful German Language." Indeed I have. It was a long time ago, but I think that's where I saw the idea of the "verb strainer," which scoops up the verbs in a German sentence and deposits them at the end. Twain exaggerated, of course — but not by very much.

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Sue Burke scores a good solid hit on me, saying: "George Price says that the power loom made it possible for women to earn enough to be self-supporting. That goes against what I know about the history of textiles. Women had been weavers since ancient times. As artisans they operated looms they owned, and as professionals they were able to earn a living. The industrial revolution transferred ownership and operation from artisans to textile mill businesses, and the results were dangerous working conditions, pitiful wages, and irregular employment for both men and women (and for a time, children)."

Yes, I expect that's all true, as far as it goes. But it doesn't go far enough. Not anywhere near. Without knowing anything more about the specifics of the textile industry, I will make some guesses (which Ms. Burke can verify or dispute):

- 1) The number of women employed by the new textile mills was much greater than the number of hand-weaving artisans put out of business.
- 2) For the women in the mills, this employment was a solid step upward, giving them both better working conditions and higher incomes than they had before. (Otherwise, why would they have taken those jobs? I've never heard that workers were drafted into the new mills.)
- 3) Machine weaving made cloth prices fall sharply, and greatly increased the quantity produced, raising the standard of living for everybody, but especially for the poor. (Well, maybe not quite everybody — the artisan weavers had to find other ways to make a living. Maybe some of them kept on weaving for sale to snobs who would pay a higher price for "genuine hand-woven cloth," the way people now pay extra for "organic" food which is no more nutritious than the cheaper stuff from factory farms.)

Paul Ehrlich (*The Population Bomb*) once said that the Japanese people would have been happier and healthier if they had only focused on producing netsuke instead of industrial goods.

— JTM

To my suggestion that revolvers became equalizers between men and women, Ms. Burke allows that "it says something sad about men that women need to be armed against them." Yes, indeed it does. Sad, but true. Harvey Weinstein is not a rare aberration. There are all too many men who will behave like him when they think they can get away with it. Our "prudish" and "repressed" Victorian ancestors may actually have known what they were doing when they erected high barriers to keep men and women sexually separated except within marriage.

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The editor has a note in Taras Wolansky's letter commenting on how the Left uses "fascist" not as a real descriptive term, but simply to silence opponents. Yes, I've noticed that it has come to mean anything more right-wing than a leftist can tolerate.

Let me ask a historical question. Leftist terminology has prevailed so widely that it is now customary to speak of the Nazis as fascists. But were they, really? That is, in their own eyes? Specifically, did Hitler think of himself as a "fascist"? He allied with Mussolini's Fascists, but did he ever explicitly say that his National Socialism was a form of fascism? If so, I've never heard of it. Has anyone else?

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Taras says that my idea of replacing imprisonment with flogging would be unconstitutional, as “cruel and unusual” punishment.

No, it wouldn’t be. When the Constitution was adopted, flogging was more common than imprisonment. The U.S. Army still used the lash during the Civil War — see the movie *Glory*, in which a deserter is shown mercy by being flogged instead of hanged.

Also, if we want to be technical, the Constitution forbids punishments that are “cruel AND unusual,” not “cruel OR unusual.” Cruel is permitted as long as it is the usual punishment for that offense. In any case, the Constitution can be amended.

From: **Sue Burke** March 29, 2020  
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Greetings from my Fortress of Solitude. Since I normally work from home, my daily life hasn’t changed much, although I faced some cancellations: promotional appearances and a class I was going to teach, as well as a variety of social events, church services, and other optional things to do outside of the house. “Cancel culture” has a new meaning now. I hope everyone reading this is safe, healthy, and minimally inconvenienced. My family and friends are doing well, so far.

Thank you, Lloyd G. Daub, for the kind review of *Interference*. I was aiming more at adventure than horror, but there is a lot of suffering and bloodshed, so “atavistic fear” is a reasonable interpretation.

Although my day job continues pretty much as usual, I’ve had time to do a little reading, and my reviews of *Rogue Moon* by Algis Budrys and of the Nebula-nominated short stories and novelettes should appear in this issue, editor willing.

Beyond that, I have little to say. Mostly I’ve been transfixed by the news and, as best I can, I’ve been enjoying some of the jokes about the pandemic, although I think there is very little remaining humor to be found in toilet paper hoarding.

**I have not seen anywhere anyone defending the people who buy enormous quantities of toilet paper; nevertheless, they persisted.**

—JTM

From: **Lloyd G. Daub** March 31, 2020  
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Thank you again for another *Alexiad*. I hope all is well there and among all readers in this Age of Wuhan. I was self-quarantining

anyway due to a head cold and missed my chance to moan about being forced to stay ‘safer home’ as our governor put it.

We are still in the ‘fog of war’ part of the pandemic. People are dying while infected, but Wuhan isn’t the real cause of death. Or people die from something, but no one checks if they were also infected. And thus no one knows if the stats are correct any more, because no one knows if regular deaths are being chalked up to Wuhan or not. “Deaths above normal” is what some are looking at as a marker. And death rates per capita [per 100,000] is their key. Everything else is fog.

We do know that all countries make mistakes, or deliberately publish false statistics. The more untrustworthy the government, the less trustworthy are the reported stats. Despite growing incompetence in the bureaucracy here, it’s also getting clear that the USA is keeping the most reliable stats overall. We’re going to be doing far more testing than anyone else in the next couple of weeks. I’m guessing that at the next trip to the pharmacy they make you take it. If not then, the next one. Soon. The tests are coming out fast.

Testing is the key to the stats. Tests conducted are the denominator in any calculation of the danger of the disease. The more tests, the more correct positives, and the more we know how likely it is for anyone to get it. The more positives, the clearer idea we have of virulence and the severity of symptoms. We will then have a clearer idea of lethality and chances of recovery even without treatment. On that basis we can better judge lockdowns, shutting businesses and requiring the wearing of surgical masks outdoors. And the caseload will allow better controlled testing of treatments.

Testing, tracing contacts from the positive tester, quarantine of the positives (only). The pandemic changes names, but not these essential actions to take to contain it.

And planet Earth, let’s face it — until that government and culture changes, everyone leaving China must permanently be quarantined before being allowed into any other country. Swine flu, avian flu, SARS, H1N1, Wuhan — how many pandemics does it take? BTW, the market that we know spawned this latest pandemic is open again, with no changes in wares or procedure. But the Chinese movie theaters, reopened briefly, have been closed again.

As for the treatment controversy, I have long been an advocate of the Do No Harm school when it comes to using a known drug on another illness. I think it is wrong to say that the treatment must prove its value before being used. As long as it is known to be reasonably safe, let the doctors and patients make the choice to try it. The FDA, alas, is of the “Prove it works” school. Which means unnecessary deaths every time. The FDA used to be much more flexible when it comes to “off-label” uses of medicines. Rigidity is a sign of decline. That the CDC refused to allow Seattle doctors to test locally, insisting that they wait for the official CDC test, is a sign of a sclerotic, even senile bureaucracy

— they are thick-headed and unthinking. And their test was faulty. Meanwhile, they rely far too much on ‘models’ based on flawed data. All of Big Science and Government Science is guilty of that.

Reviewer’s Notes — as an author of fan fiction, I do indeed write my own characters, and I do try to be faithful to the original ‘universe’ I am writing. But I can understand the worry this can cause the original author, or the scholar seeking the definitive text. I own a copy of a book simply titled *Philology*, which begins with seeking that definitive text of Homer and proceeds to a history of the Humanities in higher education. I also have somewhere about a large volume of Biblical pseud-epigrapha, which may actually be the title of that. I did not take it as Gospel, of course, but I was happy I read a lot of it. In passing, you mention deconstructionism, and the primacy of the reader in setting meaning to a text. That happens to be the basis of Japanese poetry in the haiku era — that half the meaning of one is how the reader understands and interprets it. [I believe the same principle applies to translations, because the translator must interpret a text before choosing the word from the other language. Sue Burke is your expert there, but my principle is that the best translation is another one, in order to get closer to the original author’s meaning.] When the poem is meant as the hokku to a renga, without that interpretation by the reader, there could be no second verse, and so on. Nor could the hokku ever be re-used to start another one, which was always the intention of the author. Your mention of the twist to the plot in *The Last Ringbearer* is timely. I just received a post on the Pournelle Chaos Manor blog that argued for something we have seen by others — that the real villains in *Star Wars* were the Jedi. Lying, tyrannical, theocrats is the gist of it.

Speaking of pastiches, fan fiction and pseud-epigrapha, it’s nice (for him) to see Nicholas Meyer is still at the task of making bad sequels to Doyle’s Holmes stories. The one I read was bad enough to swear me off them in favor of other, better things.

**I think I mentioned the polls for Best Pastiche and Worst Pastiche, both won by *The Seven Percent Solution*.**

Sir Arthur C. Clarke is correct that the truth is stranger than fiction. But after all this time, I still don’t believe a word of any spy book — fiction or non-fiction. Too many times the ‘authentic full story at last comes out’ faces a new set of revelations in the next decade that demonstrate how the earlier version had to resort to fiction to avoid revealing “sources and methods.” JRR Tolkien wrote a long piece (published by Christopher) describing the events just prior to *The Hobbit* from Gandalf’s point of view. It ended with a hobbit remarking “I don’t suppose you have told us the full story, even now.” To which Gandalf replied,

“Of course not.”

Of course, to return to Meyer and other pseudepigrapha, that’s exactly why there is fan fiction. There’s always more to say. Or someone wants there to be more.

LOC George Price: I would not claim to have a definitive reason for the sexual dimorphism (as it’s called) of the human species. But the evolutionists trace our lineage back into that of the apes, and the larger size of the male in gorillas and suchlike comes in handy for fighting other males for mates and protecting the feeding grounds and family. Certain other pithecin characteristics continue in the hominins, and sexual dimorphism is just another one. The question more on the minds of today’s evolutionists seems to be ‘Why are we still dimorphic? Does there remain a selection advantage in Nature for human males to be larger?’ And the answer to that seems to come from Darwin’s work on Sexual Selection. That is, ‘Women seem to like it that way.’ See *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and any number of Hollywood romance movies for examples of the woman selecting for the he-man over the wimp. As always, ‘based on a true story.’

I think that’s all for this issue. And in the immortal words of Scotty at the end of the vastly superior version of *The Thing from Another World*: “Keep your distance. Keep washing your hands!”

“Very superstitious: Wash your face and hands!”

— JTM

From: **Taras Wolansky** April 1, 2020  
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Thanks for the February *Alexiad*.

So New Zealand is to be a virtual world-con. Maybe a lucky break for me: after I looked at the hotel situation, I had decided not to take advantage of my attending membership. Exactly how it will work I find it difficult to imagine, however.

**Joe**: The cracked.com article was very funny, and very snarky. However, I think it’s a bit of froth and no weight should be put on it.

A website that is for fan fiction won a Hugo. Those people “own” the material they did not create.

Rather than the “Returns from Troy” being a kind of fan fiction to the *Odyssey*, my impression is that the *Odyssey* is merely the most notable of the genre of “The Returns”, with most of the others lost, except for references in other writers.

The thing is, Odysseus was not that important, by no means the highest ranking member of the Achaean force at Troy. His “Return”

was just the best written, or should I say composed.

Review of *Protocols* by Nicholas Meyer: On the one hand, I like the idea of Sherlock Holmes investigating a real-life mystery; but on the other hand, because it’s a real-life mystery, we know that his labors will prove in the end to be futile.

The people who need to read this, won’t; and even if they do, well, it’s only a novel. On the other hand, a mass market motion picture might do some good.

**Lisa**: “I have resumed the attempt to live a more minimalist lifestyle.” You are a wise woman.

Trumpybear is the perfect gift for everyone. Trump fans will want one, and Trump haters will want one even more, to stick pins into.

(Couldn’t Trump haters just cut a picture of Trump out of the paper?) LTM

**Rodford Edmiston**: Great article about Betelgeuse and Eta Carinae.

For a minute I thought the giant star in A.E. Van Vogt’s *Mission to the Stars* was Eta Carinae, but that was actually S Doradus.

**George W. Price**: “why women are smaller than men. Has anyone heard of a good evolutionary reason for that?”

Darwinian superiority for a woman translates into how well she can pass nutrients through to her offspring. A large, muscular woman needs to take a lot of nutrients and calories to keep herself healthy, before she has anything to spare for a developing fetus or nursing baby. When food is short, her small, plump cousin can still produce healthy babies while she can’t.

By contrast, our male ancestors had to hunt and engage in warfare and, in general, win status among their peers, or our female ancestors would not smile on them. In addition, a large frame may play the same role as a peacock’s tail, displaying general health and fitness to the opposite sex.

**Sue Burke**: “Taras Wolansky recalls seeing women in Columbia University in the 1970s. Those were not Columbia students. .... women were only accepted as Columbia students in 1987.”

Remember, Columbia University is a whole constellation of schools. Columbia College is the selective Ivy I attended, that started admitting women in 1983, with the Class of 1987. The reason they waited so long is because they didn’t want to destroy the sister school, Barnard College. It’s like when feminists weren’t exactly overjoyed when the Boy Scouts announced they would start admitting girls.

On the other hand, the Columbia engineering school started accepting women in 1942, the last (!) Columbia professional school to do so. So the women I met in the freshman dorm almost 30 years later were novel only in terms of where they were living.

**Women and guns**: Many years ago, my sister and a girlfriend drove across the West, visiting 26 states. When their car broke down on a lonely mountain road, and a biker gang

chose the same stretch of road to take a break, the two girls sat up all night with a cheap rifle.

**Taral Wayne** (review of *Joker*): “the images that lie behind a decaying, modern-day society already feel dated. ... Much of the story of *Joker* was a remake of Robert De Niro’s *Taxi Driver*, made in 1976.”

In general, the superhero genre has remained imprinted on the social trends of the 60s and 70s, when crime was going up and up, and the authorities seemed unable to do anything about it. This is what justified the costumed vigilantes we call superheroes.

When these trends reversed in the real world (i.e., when the criminal justice system got tough again), the “lawless streets” continued unchanged in the comic book world. (Similarity, a lot of animated films, like *The Incredibles*, are set in some nostalgic version of 1950s America.)

But about the faux-1980s background of *Joker*: people tend to gloss over how contentious that period really was, and how dark from the viewpoint of many people. The belated crackdown on crime, for example, looked like neofascism to the Left.

Liberals feared Ronald Reagan would start a nuclear war; that’s what motion pictures like *The Day After* and *The Terminator* were really about. When he instead won the Cold War by breaking the Soviet Union economically, this was a real downer for people who had believed socialism was a stronger economic system than capitalism.

It seems to me they believe that it was all Gorbachev and besides the Soviet Union wasn’t really socialist.

People who see their own time as dystopian are usually suffering from “temporal parochialism”, failing to see the present in a broader context. Either they are too young or don’t remember how bad things used to be. (Or they are insufficiently skeptical consumers of propaganda; e.g., “a very real chance that the United States is fated to become a right-wing autocracy”.) I prescribe a dose of Steven Pinker’s *Enlightenment Now*, which is filled with objective data about how life has improved in almost every way.

**Robert S. Kennedy**: Some years ago, I had a letter published in the *Skeptical Inquirer*, arguing that they should spend time debunking dangerous irrational beliefs, not harmless ones. To which the author of the article I was responding to replied: all irrational beliefs are equally dangerous.

Which, I think, qualifies as a moderately dangerous irrational belief held by an author who, I am sure, thinks of himself as a skeptic.

Clint Eastwood’s *Richard Jewell* is good; but I think it is overshadowed by the epic Spectrum on Demand series, *Manhunt: Deadly Games*. This covers not only the FBI’s disgraceful treatment of Jewell but also the pursuit of the diabolical real bomber, Eric Rudolph. If

you think the movie made the FBI look bad, the series makes them look like Keystone Kops.

I was surprised they didn't indict Jewell. They had a profile, they had the Press working for them (as John Douglas recommended), they even had a sort of confession (they had asked him "how it could have been done"). The case would be solved, the families of the dead and the injured and their families would have had closure, and the FBI would have another triumph on its record. Guilty? What's that got to do with anything?

**Lloyd G. Daub:** Thanks for the review of Sue Burke's *Interference*, though I won't read it until after I finish the book.

From your review of Daniel H. Wilson's *Andromeda Strain* sequel, *The Andromeda Evolution*: "[With a scenario involving] deaths numbering in the billions ... When that many lives (as a percent of any size population) are lost in a short time, human life continues, but civilization must start over."

"Start over" seems too strong an expression. After all, most of the information needed for rebuilding civilization continues to exist, in a plague scenario. In *Lest Darkness Fall*, Martin Padway believes he has forestalled the Dark Ages by introducing printing technology, so information exists in too many copies to lose.

A record of information is useless if no one knows how to read it. This was why Michael Ventris was so significant in understanding Minoan history. By way of contrast note the resignation in George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* (1949) where the schoolmaster ends up by closing the school and going out to get himself killed.

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** April 1, 2020  
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We are about 5 days into a three week country wide lockdown over Wuhan Pneumonia. After a two week social distancing order, which, among other things, banned all meetings with more than 250 people. And a lot of meetings with less people than that also cancelled themselves.

It is bad when your weekends fall apart – No meeting up with friends, no going to church. I'm worried that the latter is going to cause trouble – There are already churches

meeting in defiance of the ban. And I wonder what is going to happen around Easter, especially for the ZCC, which normally have a humongous three day meeting, which about a million people attending.

There is quite the scandal here about church services.

I am still working – have been able to work from home. A bit lonely, but it has a couple of benefits. Lack of human contact is not one of them.

The initial social distancing regulations were propagated shortly after I met up with my sister at the airport, where she was on her way to the USA, to meet up with her son. He is studying there, and they have not met in person for about two years. So shortly after she left, we hear that people from high risk countries will be limited in entering the country, and one of the high risk countries is the USA.

My sister appears to have had a good time in New York, but left much earlier than planned. Landing back in South Africa shortly before the lockdown came into effect.

Oh, ever since I heard that the people of China calls the disease Wuhan Pneumonia, and that the Chinese Communist government hate the name, and have been repressing it both locally and internationally, I have made certain that it is the name I use.

Such a spiteful attitude! Just because they did not promptly report it and therefore let it spread across the world?

— LTM

I have finished watching *Star Trek: Picard*. I found it to be in some ways an incoherent mess. With some gems in an otherwise forgettable series. Some thoughts: It is chick heavy, and I do not know if it is in meaningful ways. Self medicating with alcohol, smoking and swearing? Definitely not the STAR TREK I remember. Frenzied action making up for story? Not the STAR TREK I remember.

But then, my STAR TREK is *Deep Space 9*. The stepchild of STAR TREK. Yet the one that every series thereafter tried to imitate in some way or another, without understanding what made the original successful. In many ways *ST Picard* tried to tell a *DS9* story, without the elements which worked in *DS9*.

I have been reading a bit. Currently busy reading the Kris Longknife series. Finding it OK, but for some reason keeping a bit of distance. Unlike, for instance, Pam Uphoff's *Wine of the Gods* series, which I devour and reread – for some reason it clicked with me. Some of Nathan Lowell's *Golden Age of the Solar Clipper*, and associated series, also grab me.

It is strange to go to a bookshop, browse briefly in the SF and Fantasy section, and then drift over to the interesting stuff in the Craft section. Because the SF&F section only contains the stuff I already have, the stuff I am

never going to read, and the otherwise bland stuff I cannot be bothered with. And I find the current book covers ugly, in a bland way.

I got there a few years ago.  
So I comment on older books.

— JTM

I am currently re-evaluating my future plans. Something happened in December, and it is affecting me. I need to see what is going to happen, but can see a change coming my way.

I hope that all of you find something good to read or watch, and for good enough health.

From: **John Hertz** March 30, 2020  
236 S. Coronado St., N. 409 Los Angeles, CA 90057 USA

The fellow who could not comprehend there might be a script, seeming to believe actors spoke and carried out actions entirely on their own, was simultaneously complimentary and insulting. I wish he had been more unusual.

It was complimentary because the actors' verisimilitude was evidently effective. In a sense that's the impression they devote all their powers to create.

It was an insult because it disregarded those powers, and the labor they almost certainly cost.

May I say, even to you, that Thorstein Veblen would not have approved?

I thought it was ultimate fanboyism, loving the actors so much that they must be the initiators of those wondrous deeds. If I wanted to please Veblen I would get tuberculosis and wear an elaborate waistcoat, for if you're going to have consumption, it ought to be conspicuous.

—JTM

Too many of us in SF are guilty of a similar fault. I haven't forgotten the Heinlein centenary panel at the 65th Worldcon. The panelists spent their hour agreeing and disagreeing with opinions expressed by characters in his books. Finally I said, from the audience, "No one would notice or care about those opinions if he had not written so well."

The world is feminine — in German, anyway. So it's „über alles in der Welt“.

Your title, "You Don't Know Him" for a review of Hutton's *Agent Jack* must have been inspired.

Skepticism can be overdone too. I like the Muslim image of the Bridge to Heaven. At one side is skepticism, at the other is credulity; the Bridge is the width of a razor's edge; and below are the fires of Hell.

WAHF: **Martin Morse Wooster**

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## DAY OF THE RED HOOD

"I won't be long," Bond said to the young woman in her hotel room. Outside revellers in skeleton outfits danced down the streets of Mexico City, but Bond was not there to dally. He was there on a double-O mission, to take out a terrorist named Marco Sciarra.

Gun in hand, he stepped out the window, and walked along the tops of the buildings, unnoticed by the dancing masses below. The adobe of the city was old and flaking.

There! Sciarra was in that room. Bond took a post behind the wall around the rooftop and listened on the wiretap. Sciarra was not near the window and he needed a clean shot.

He moved. Bond saw his target and fired, shattering the window, missing Sciarra but taking down the man he was negotiating with, then the bodyguard in the next room. He fired another shot. The building exploded.

The wall collapsed and almost hit him. A moment later the building fell in and Bond was propelled downwards.

There was Sciarra! He was unhurt, but fleeing. Bond took off in pursuit and they fought their way through the funereal parties.

He was going to escape! A helicopter was hovering over the crowd, which flinched away. It descended, and Sciarra battled his way to the landing site.

A man in a brown leather jacket reached out and grabbed Sciarra. Bond caught up with them and punched Sciarra out. The two men looked at each other.

His new helper was a stocky, muscular man with dark red hair, except for some white in front. Bond said, "This way," and the two of them dragged Sciarra away.

Bond looked at the ring he had taken off Sciarra. It had a mark that looked like an octopus. Then he looked at his new assistant. An American! "What were you doing there?"

The man said, levelly, "He is a drug dealer. He was running millions of dollars of cocaine and heroin up to Gotham."

"He is an international terrorist."

"You have to pay for all that somehow."

Bond said, "What got you on this? I can't see an ordinary bloke getting into covert action. Are you DEA, or whatever?"

"My mother died of taking drugs."

"Playing with the big boys could get you killed."

The man laughed. "I died once. I'm not afraid of anything." He took out a pack of cigarettes, got one and lit it, offered the pack to Bond, and began to smoke.

Bond took one. "Very well. My name is James Bond. What's yours?"

"Todd." He let out a puff of smoke. "Jason Todd."

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