

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Yesterday I was sitting out on the porch when I saw a face out of the corner of my eye. I get up and march over to confront the prowler. When I look over the gate I do not see anybody and I look around. Still nothing. Then there is a flicker of movement close to the ground and I look down. The prowler is our neighbor's Thai cat, the animal I call Silvercat because I cannot remember what the neighbor calls him. He is tensed to run when I open the gate. I don't bother doing so. Even if I had wanted to catch him he is faster and more agile than I am. What really worries me about his presence is that his owner might be ill again and he is hanging around our house because his owner is absent. I could feed him just in case but he does not appear to be starving and if I feed him I will be responsible for him. That responsibility would mean hauling him to the vet for shots and whatever other treatment he required including making sure he was fixed and getting a license for him. A case could be made that I have already been feeding him by buying catfood for the cat man but not all that good of one.

— Lisa

Table of Contents

Editorial	1
Reviewer's Notes	1
Anniversaries	4
Eclipse News	2
The Joy of High Tech	8
<i>The Killing of Julia Wallace</i>	3
Nebula Awards	11
Of Audiobooks	4
Off Work	4
Space Flight	4
The Travelling Trufen, O!	2
Worldcon News	11
Book Reviews	
JTM van den Boom, <i>Kaiserkrieg: Aufgehende Sonne</i>	5
JTM Gill, <i>Hollywood Double Agent</i>	7
LTM Grossman, <i>Crooked</i>	7
JTM Lapkin, <i>Righteous Kill</i>	6
JTM Lewis, <i>The Nazi Hunters</i>	8
JTM Lunnon-Wood, <i>Dark Rose</i>	6
JTM Pournelle/Weber, <i>Mamelukes</i>	7
JTM Sawyer, <i>The Oppenheimer Alternative</i>	5
JTM Wostyn, <i>With Iron and Fire</i>	5
TV Reviews	
TW <i>Cosmos</i>	10
TW <i>Homeland</i>	10
TW <i>Motherland: Fort Salem</i>	10
TW <i>Star Trek: Discovery</i>	10
Random Jottings	2
Letters	12
John Hertz, Robert S. Kennedy, Timothy Lane, Lloyd Penney, AL du Pisani, George W. Price, John Purcell, Joy V. Smith	

Comments are by JTM or LTM

The 146th Running of the Kentucky Derby will be **September 5, 2020**.
 The 145th Running of the Preakness Stakes will be **October 3, 2020**.
 The 152nd Running of the Belmont Stakes will be **June 20, 2020**.
 The 95th Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **August 8, 2020** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.
 The 66th Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **September 5, 2020** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.
 The 127th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **October 6, 2020** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.

Trivia: 18

Art:

Sheryl Birkhead	11, 12
Alexis A. Gilliland	5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 15
Trinlay Khadro	2
Marc Schirmeister	3, 4, 9

Printed on June 16, 2020
 Deadline is **August 1, 2020**

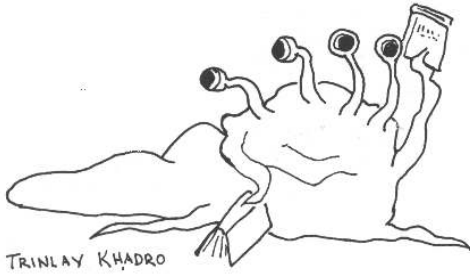
Reviewer's Notes

I haven't been shut in. I go out every morning to get Lisa coffee, and we go out to dinner a lot. We didn't "go" when the restaurants were shut to dine-in, but they had delivery. When they re-opened restaurants for dine-in, we went to Lee's Korean, one of our favorite (albeit expensive) places and we were welcomed. I think they know us. Now that Lisa is working I drive her there, since it's 25 miles away. That and my many medical appointments keeps me going. Back in February, see, I had an exam at the doctor's and mentioned my knee problems. I was having difficulty getting out of chairs, and of course my knees had been aching for several years. It turned out I had arthritis there. So I was sent to a physical therapist's. There was a break for a couple of months for the shutdown, but I've been going twice a week, and exercising daily. It seems to be working; the pain is gone and it's easier to stand. That and my regular doctor's appointments (for B12 shots, mostly) keep me going out.

Fans often vote for "exotic" bids. There was the Boat Bid, there was ConCanCun, and then the St. John, Puerto Rico NASFiC. That was so underperforming that I hope it would make people supporting exotic bids think twice. The example this year is the Jeddah, Saudi Arabia bid. They are bidding for a date in May. Admittedly the weather precludes a later bid. There was a long discussion of how they would handle the Hugo voting, which seemed optimistic. And there are other difficulties. Garth Spencer once wrote about some Vancouver fans who went to their first Worldcon, decided they could do something as big, and managed to start some hard times in Vancouver fandom. This may be that some Saudis decided they could do something as big. Next year there's Chengdu — about 1200 kilometers from Wuhan.
 — 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 directly from George Price for a reasonable sum.)

https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B01BMIC4MU?ref=pe_1724030_132998070

— Advt.

NASA has released a nice video of the Artemis moon-landing project. There are several striking features:

The landing sites will have equipment pre-positioned by unmanned missions. Andy Weir, call your publicist. (This was how he had his Ares Mars-landing missions.)

The Orion command module will fly to a station orbiting the Moon, where their lunar lander will be docked. A space station orbiting the moon!

The SLS launcher is far more powerful than the Saturn V.

The planned crew is up to four.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8cn2J13-4>

At present a SLS is being assembled for launch testing. The launch site is Pad 39B, first used to launch Apollo 10.

There is still not a definite date for the launch, though current plans call for it being in November of this year. The program calls for a lunar landing in 2024. There may still be some original lunar astronauts left by then.

The site conglomeration.info has been taken down. So ends our convention history.

OBITS

Louisville and other area fans (particularly filkers) will remember blind fan **Mary Lou Lacefield**. She had a reputation; several, in fact.

Checking Ancestry.com indicates that a Mary Lou Lacefield died in Frankfort, Kentucky on August 28, 2003. This woman was born in 1951; it seems to have been her.

MONARCHICAL NEWS

You will recall that Darrell Schweitzer pointed out in the context of a discussion of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) that if the Magdalene and Jesus had had a child, that child would have had thousands if not millions of descendants, not just the one woman Brown featured. And there was a thriller featuring the last descendant of Genghis Khan; but DNA tests indicate that there are millions.

And so it is with Kong Fuzi (Kung Fu-tze), also known as Confucius. He had children who had children . . . a recent genealogical work on the descendants includes eight million names. The senior heir is Kung Tsui-chang, a 79th-generation descendant of Confucius.

(Then there was H. H. Kung (Kung Hsiang-hsi), minister in Chiang Kai-shek's government and husband of Soong Ai-ling, one of the three Soong sisters, the sisters of T. V. Soong (Soong Tse-ven), another important minister. As you might think, Kung's sister-in-law was Soong Mei-ling, Chiang's wife. And Kung himself was a 75th-generation descendant of Confucius.)

As most of you Blackadder fans know, the writer Stephen Fry plays several generations of Lord Melchett, the snobbish and arrogant opponent of Blackadder. How the Right Hon. Peter Robert Henry Mond, great-grandson of the founder of Imperial Chemical Industries, felt about the matter has not been commented on. Oh, I mean Peter Mond, **Lord Melchett**. (And how he feels about Mustapha Mond may be yet another matter.)

Parenthetically, the writer John Brunner was the great-grandson of Sir John Tomlinson Brunner, Bt., the other founder of ICI.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There will be a solar eclipse on **June 21**, an annular eclipse visible in the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Pakistan, India, China, and Taiwan. The maximum eclipse duration will be 38 seconds, in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. The eclipse is part of Saros 137, which began May 25, 1389 and will end on June 28, 2633.

The next solar eclipse will be on **December 14**, visible in Arucania Region, Los Ríos Region, and Bío Bío Region of Chile and the Northern Patagonia Region of Argentina. Maximum totality will be 130 seconds, visible at 40° 18' S. 67° 54' W. in Argentina. The eclipse is part of Saros 142, which began April 17, 1624 and will end June 5, 2904.

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

Other useful eclipse websites:

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

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

THE TRAVELLING TRUFEN, O!

Commentary by Joseph T Major

I used to dream of the Traveling Trufen.

This would have begun in the seventies, when there was a convention every weekend (or two or three). They would show up on Thursday, and live up the Warm Puppy Party. Only one of them would buy a membership, and he would hand-copy badges for the others. They would go to parties, hold a big bash themselves, and mingle. They would all be sleeping in one room, on every surface, including the bathroom floor. They would stay until the end of the Dead Dog Party, and in the morning load up their van and be off.

They would work at various places around the destination during the middle of the week, to get money for gas and supplies, but otherwise they lived a carefree, forever fannish life.

But then the seventies gave way to the eighties, and towards the end of that the cons became fewer. Then, one day, the van broke down, and with no way to carry on, they scattered, like dandelion seeds in a hard blow.

And one day, one of the old fans would be coming home from a convention where his only connection with anyone was with a Captain Nice fan who had a completely correct Captain Nice suit (which she wore throughout the convention) and had memorized every word of every episode, from scripts, then bootleg VCR tapes, and now bootleg DVDs, and knew the back story of every character in every episode of the show, including the ones who only appeared in one scene, and had written several stories about the passionate connections Captain Nice had had with Mr. Terrific and with the Greatest American Hero, and who talked about her enthusiasm nonstop. But in the old days he had seen *Captain Nice*, one or two times during its brief run. No one else there had ever seen (read? What's that?) anything he had ever seen. He would stop at a gas station along the way home, with his great bundle of electronic equipment and his box of medicines. The clerk would be one of these lost souls, now tied to a mundane job, with no connections to anyone. They wouldn't know each other, even if they had met in the old days, and they would part all unknowing.

Mind you, this is only my dream, of a day when things seemed more alive. In what little con time I had, I never saw anything like this, but there were bits and pieces, and I felt I was on the edges of something wonderful . . . something wonderful that is now gone, like tears in rain, like that song.

[Someone cited *Fallen Angels*. That's Jerry Pournelle's wish-fulfillment dream that everyone in fandom was like him. Nope Nope Nope.]

THE MAN FROM THE PRU

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE KILLING OF JULIA WALLACE
 by Jonathan Goodman
 (1969, 2017; Kent State University Press;
 (Kindle); \$10.99)

H. P. Lovecraft might have got along very well with William Herbert Wallace. They were both reticent until you got to know them, and they were both interested in science. But what happened to Wallace, while not being rugose, squamous, mephitic, or even cthonic, was certainly blasphemous and showed the utter indifference of the cosmos to human lives.

Wallace had a varied life, born in Cumberland, going out East, then contracting a kidney disease that required the removal of a kidney and a more sedate life-style. So he became an insurance man, collecting accounts and selling new policies for the Prudential Assurance Company, the "Pru".

He had several interests. He was interested in science, proud of the microscope he had which he had bought for 80£. He was learning violin. And, he played chess in a chess club.

He had married Julia Dennis from Yorkshire, an ordinary woman, and they had a placid marriage, with perhaps a flareup or two, but nothing serious. They moved about and ended up in Liverpool. Such was their future.

Except, on the night of January 19, 1931, someone called the chess club. He gave his name as R. M. Qualtrough. He was too busy to come down that evening, but if Mr Wallace would come to his house at 25 Menlove Gardens East in Liverpool they could talk insurance. Wallace wasn't there yet and the person who got the call took a message.

The next evening, Wallace went out to make the sale. He took the tram, asking repeatedly if it were the right route. When he got to Menlove Gardens he began making enquiries along Menlove Gardens North, Menlove Gardens South, and Menlove Gardens West. There was no Menlove Gardens East. (Looking at Google Maps shows that the three streets surround a park, with houses only on one side of each street.)

Baffled, he returned home. There was some trouble getting in, the locks were stuck. And when he got in . . .

Julia had been beaten to death, lying dead on the floor in the front room, in front of the fireplace. He was disturbed but recovered quickly. Too quickly, some people later thought.

The police were called in and proceeded to make an utter muck of it all. One of the more important items of evidence was the cashbox where Wallace put the day's takings. Every policeman handled it. So much for fingerprints. Most of the crime-scene investigation was like that. ("Inspector, you have a call from Sussex, a Mr Holmes, who seems quite

annoyed.")

The person who cleaned out the cashbox seemed to have got four pounds, a very low day's work. Yet he ignored Mrs Wallace's purse entirely. And apparently he put the lid back on the cashbox, though it might have been done by the police.

The medical examiner seems to have made a very superficial examination of Mrs Wallace's body, setting the time of death on the progression of rigor mortis, and not taking the body's temperature. The autopsy also seems to have been as superficial. ("Oo's 'at Oi 'ear screamin'?" "That Spilsbury bloke from Lunnon." "Wot's 'e screamin' abaht?" "Don't 'ave a bleedin' clew.")

The Press took up the calling, wanting to have the cunning chess killer brought to justice for his bloody crime. And the police focused on Wallace like a spotlight (they didn't have laser beams then). So on February 2, Wallace was arrested for his wife's murder.

The initial hearing presented the police case. The magistrate hearing the case had no legal training, and he accepted it. Then Wallace had to pay for his defence.

The Prudential Staff Union held a meeting and conducted a mock trial. A large number of members were present. After hearing the case as presented to the magistrate, and asking Wallace's solicitor some questions, the meeting held a vote. They *unanimously* voted that Wallace was Not Guilty, whereupon the union proceeded to pay for his defence.

As you know, Bob, having seen *Rumpole of the Bailey*, in a British court then, a case is conducted by a barrister, representing the defendant, and another barrister, chosen to represent the Crown. The barrister for the defence was Roland Oliver, K.C., a man with a deep grasp of the law and a great ability for communicating it to a jury, but personally cold.

The barrister for the prosecution was a different sort. Edward Hemmerde, K.C., had a colourful public life. He had been elected to Parliament for both the Liberal Party (East Dengbighshire and Northwest Norfolk) and the Labour Party (Crewe). He was a playwright, and in his University days at Oxford he had been a rower. However, he had financial problems and needed something big to get him over them. (He not only gambled, he had borrowed money to play the stock market. That had worked so well in 1929.)

That is to say, the defence attorney was better suited for a prosecution, and the prosecution attorney was more a defence lawyer. This was not the only inversion in the case.

The case went to trial on April 22. The judge, Justice Robert Alderson Wright, had been more experienced with civil law than criminal, and wanted to get the case over quickly, so he only scheduled four days for the testimony. The jury was selected from outside of Liverpool, it having been considered that the newspaper publicity might have biased any local jury.

The prosecution presented its case. Among

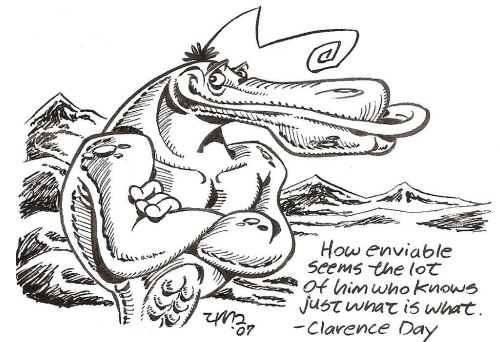
the interesting features of the case was their incredible explanation of how Wallace had managed to beat his wife to death without getting any blood on him, or leaving any bloodstains washing it off. Also, his amazingly athletic ability (he was in his fifties and in poor health) to make it to the tram in the time established, disposing of the murder weapon and whatever bloody clothing he had had along the way in such a fashion that they had never been found. ("The bailiffs will please remove young Master Rumpole before he screams himself hoarse.")

The defense was noted mostly by Wallace's indifference to his situation. This was held against him.

In his summation of the case, Justice Wright said:

If there was an unknown murderer, he has covered up his traces. Can you say it is absolutely impossible that there was no such person? But putting that aside as not being the real question, can you say, taking all the evidence as a whole, bearing in mind the strength of the case put forward by the police and the prosecution, that you are satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that it was the hand of the prisoner, and no other hand, that murdered this woman? If you are not so satisfied, if it is not proved — whatever your feelings may be, whatever your surmises or suspicions or prejudices may be — if it is not established as a matter of evidence and legal proof, then it is your duty to find the prisoner not guilty.

How strong and steadfast those without
 The least uncertainty or doubt.



The jury was out for an hour and found Wallace guilty. Wright had no choice but to sentence Wallace to death. He did not thank the jury for their service.

The appeal had to go to the Court of Appeals. The Lord Chief Justice, Gordon, Lord Hewart, was known as a firm defender of the jury system. And only two murder cases had ever been reversed on appeal.

The court deliberated on May 18-19, 1931. Wallace recounted his agony as he sat through Lord Wright's ruling, which took him fifteen minutes and ended:

Suffice it to say that we are not concerned here with suspicion, however grave, or with theories, however ingenious. Section 4 of the Criminal Appeal Act of 1907 provides that the Court of Criminal Appeal shall allow the appeal if they think that the verdict of the jury should be set aside on the ground that it cannot be supported having regard to the evidence . . . the conclusion at which we have arrived is that the case against the appellant, which we have carefully and anxiously considered and discussed, was not proved with that certainty which is necessary in order to justify a verdict of guilty, and, therefore, that it is our duty to take the course indicated by the section of the statute to which I have referred. The result is that this appeal will be allowed and this conviction quashed.

Wallace left the courtroom a free man. In theory, that is. He tried to go back to work but there was too much prejudice against him. Finally, he went to live with his brother and sister-in-law, where he died on February 26, 1933 of his kidney problems.

The question of his guilt or innocence has two levels. The first is relatively simple: did the prosecution prove its case? It didn't.

The second, though, is more problematic. Forensic profiler John Douglas draws a distinction between "organized" and "disorganized" criminals. The furor of the attack on Julia, the lack of effort to get money, indicate a "disorganized" criminal. The elaborate procedure required to place Wallace away from the house at the time of the murder and have it known indicate an "organized" criminal. Somehow these do not seem to go together very well. It should be considered that the forensic profiling field is not as highly regarded now as it once was. Ask Richard Jewell.

Barring that, the telephone conversation is problematic. The prosecution theory was that Wallace disguised his voice to make the call. Given that he was talking to someone he knew who had dealt with him often, this has problems. But one should consider that the quality of the connection was not all that great.

Motive should be considered. Wallace had kept a personal journal and while it generally expressed love and devotion for his wife there was one quarrel. The significance of this depends on the investigator's prior convictions. For an insurance agent's wife, Julia was not very heavily insured; she had one policy, for 20£, to cover funeral expenses.

For those who think "fake news" is a

modern phenomenon, the Wallace case will be a surprise. The newspapers called him out as a cunning chess player, planning several steps ahead (he was, sorry to say, a patzer). It was claimed that he had murdered his brother earlier so he could now marry his sister-in-law (his brother was coming back from the East at the time). Even after his acquittal, in need of money he allowed a sensationalist writer to write up a "biography" under his own name for the newspapers, which by its inventions has further confused researchers.

In the first edition of this book, Goodman said that he had a suspect in mind, but could not name him. The suspect died, and Goodman called him out: Gordon Parry, another Prudential agent. Parry had had some financial irregularities, it seemed. Somewhat suspiciously, a petrol station attendant said that he had seen a bloody glove in Parry's automobile that night, but as it was thirty years later that he said so, that item of evidence is not quite as solid as it should be.

Even now, nearly ninety years later, the case is still discussed. P. D. James, for example, wrote an article for the *Sunday Times* claiming that the call from R. M. Qualtrough had been a practical joke by Parry, or someone, and that Wallace had just happened to kill his wife that night. She seems to have bought the police theory that he removed all his clothing and covered himself with the mackintosh which was found, partly burned, under her, to commit the murder. The timing of events does not bear her out.

There have been a number of fictional portrayals of the case. One of the more notable was the *The Man from the Pru* (1990), part of the BBC's series *Screen Two*, starring Jonathan Pryce as Wallace. The film indicated Parry was the one who did it.

The Man from the Pru
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097822/>

ANNIVERSARIES

Noted by Lisa

May 18 was the anniversary of the explosion of Mount St. Helens. I take a moment and remember stubborn old Harry Truman who refused to let a volcano drive him from his home and who paid with his life for that refusal.

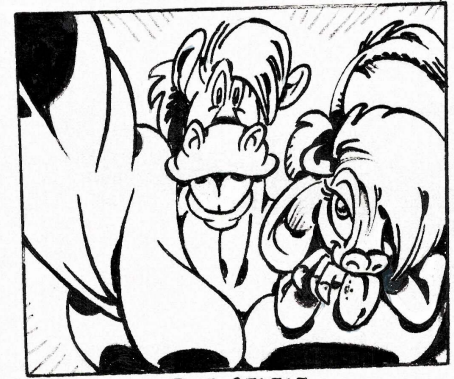
On **May 30** Space X made history by launching the first privately owned rocket carrying humans into space and the first American rocket in nearly ten years, something we desperately needed to be able to do without depending on other countries.

June 6 marks the 76th anniversary of D-Day.

OFF WORK

Commentary by Lisa Major

May 3, my branch of the library closes down for an indeterminate time and I am out of a job.



THE SELFIE

ON AUDIOBOOKS
Commentary by Lisa Major

Audible offers free books for children. I cheat and listen to them. *Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis, then a very good Audible original titled *Interview with the Robot* by Lee Bacon. I highly recommend this. Audible price is \$4.16. It is unfortunately only available as an audiobook but perhaps that will change sometime in the future. I yield to temptation and pay the \$4.16 in order to listen to it when it is no longer free.

SPACE FLIGHT
Commentary by Lisa Major

I spend way too much time searching out answers to bizarre questions. I learn that there is one publicly traded space company. Its name is Virgin Galactic. Hmm. When I get called back to the library perhaps I could find a way to buy a single share. I think it would be neat to own even a minuscule piece of a space company, even if it has yet to turn a profit. I will have to think on this. Virgin Galactic is not the only publicly traded space company.

I listen to the SpaceX launch at the local McDonald's. The lobby was not open but the employees did not bother me as long as I did not sit down in their closed lobby. The first launch of a private rocket goes off without a hitch and I let out the breath I have been holding. I leave the McDonald's when the rocket achieves MECO, main engine cut off.

SPECIAL TASKS

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE OPPENHEIMER ALTERNATIVE
 by Robert J. Sawyer
 (2020; CAEZIK SF & Fantasy;
 ISBN 978-1647100131; \$16.99;
 2020; SFWRITER.COM Inc. (Kindle);
 \$4.99)

Sawyer has given us a deep portrait of some of the men most important in science during the forties and fifties, banding together to face a problem of literally world-ending scope. He has limned his historical characters in firm and clear phrases, making the reader see them as they were then.

The lead-in is slow, showing the problems of the development of the enormous Manhattan Engineering District, the more than top secret program to split the atom and turn it to weapons use. Marshalling such talent and managing to keep it from the public vista took great effort, yet it was accomplished.

But once the process was turned into actual nuclear fire, the scientists turned to other related issues. And discovered, much to their horror, that the sun was building up to a massive solar flare, one that would burn off the surface of the earth, exterminating humanity, by 2030.

Thus, they launch a major research project to find out what they can do about it. The scientific minds organize themselves into various research groups, all the while trying to keep up normal lives with this work being unnoticed.

In the meantime, the boss of the project, Dr. Oppenheimer, has his own problems. His associations with Communists come back to haunt him, and though not one himself, he is considered tainted, and is downgraded. Meanwhile his personal life is also shattered, as his mistress and would-be love commits suicide (for a different reason).

The secret program grinds on and in the sixties suffers a major blow. Mars turns out to be uninhabitable; there is no place to go.

Then a miracle happens.

There are perspective problems. For example, Sawyer quotes approvingly Leo Szaliard's proposal for a demonstration of the atom bomb for an audience of Japanese experts, who would then return home and tell their leaders about this unanswerable weapon, whereupon they would see reason. This is a gross failure of perception. People who say, "Would it not be wondrous for this whole nation to be destroyed like a beautiful flower?" do not seem very likely to be impressed by a report of something of that sort.

And the perceptive reader will note some people missing from the vast list of historical characters who introduce the book: Theodore Alvin Hall, Klaus Fuchs, Alan Nunn May, Oscar Seborer. That is to say, MLAD, CHARLES, ALEK, GODSEND. Not to mention their associates whose code names

we don't know (Bruno Pontecorvo, George Koval) and those whose identities haven't been determined. It's almost as if he doesn't want to admit that the Soviet Union had spies in the project.

Another name is omitted. At one point Oppenheimer wants to recruit leading Soviet scientists for the project, and he suggests Igor Kurchatov (but not, later, Sakharov). But he goes with German rocket scientists, i.e. von Braun, and never mentions Russian ones, such as Sergei P. Korolev.

Going on in the omitted names progression, one of the groups that the project is divided into takes a flier into seeing what the scientification guys say, getting complete runs of the SF magazines. Yet none of the writers seems worth bringing on in person.

The book is better as a biographical novel of Oppenheimer and his associates than a speculative fiction. Sawyer has said it is not alternate history but secret history.



BOMBARD THE HEADQUARTERS!

Review by Joseph T Major of
WITH IRON AND FIRE:
The History of Superpower China
 by David Wostyn
 (2016; Sea Lion Press (Kindle); \$6.99)

The Point of Departure for this novel is interesting and different. As you know, Bob, Yuan Shih-k'ai (Yuan Shikai), was made president of the new Republic of China after *The Last Emperor* (1987) was forced to abdicate. Then, figuring that the Mandate of Heaven was lying around waiting to be picked up, he proclaimed himself the Hongxian Emperor. It didn't work, and after eighty-three days he went back to being President of the Republic, dying a little more than two months later.

What if he died before he could ascend, and one of his subordinates became huang-ti (huangdi)? Enter Kang Youwei (K'ang Yu-wei), Yamamoto Isoroku is a *kaigun dai-i* (lieutenant), and the events of the thirties are only the Meiji style. After political maneuvering, Kang ascends the throne as the Jiangguo (Chiang-kuo) Emperor of the Qian (Ch'ien) Dynasty and begins a thoroughgoing modernization program.

One small problem in Wostyn's narrative is the means by which Jiangguo attempts to consolidate the beliefs of the nation. He installs an official cult of Confucius, appointing a chief religious authority. Why the then current Duke Yangsheng, Kung Ling-I, senior descendant of Confucius, wasn't appointed is an interesting question, and indeed the heirs are never mentioned.

The new empire doesn't face problems with warlordism, the Whampoa Academy bunch, the Green Gang, or the Soong family. Or Japan. (Wang Tsu, the military genius of *The Great Pacific War* (1925) might have other fields in which to exploit his talents.) In fact, it helps Japan acquire a large district of Eastern Siberia. How it is that Lenin lies down and lets them have it isn't mentioned, just as the Mad Baron von Ungern-Sternburg and his boss Ataman Semyonov seem to have gone on vacation.

Spared civil war, the Chinese economy flourishes. China becomes one of the economic powerhouses of the world. (Presumably the Unequal Treaties are abrogated.)

Interestingly, half the book is not the story of the timeline per se. Instead, there are stories-within-the-story, various observations by people seeing the New China. Most striking is an expedition tale by Richard Halliburton, in our time-line well known as a traveller and here too.

While there are considerations, Wostyn has told a fascinating tale of an alternate time line, a charming difference to the common Nazi-win and CSA-wins works. There is so little Chinese-centric alternate history, and this goes far to fill that gap.

TEMPLE ORNAMENTS

Review by Joseph T Major of
KAISERKRIEGER 7:
Aufgehende Sonne
 (The Emperor's Men 7: Rising Sun)
 by Dirk van den Boom
 (2020; Atlantis Verlag;
 ISBN 978-3864027345; \$12.00;
 2020; Amazon.com Services; \$5.45)

It is well to remember, before reading this, that the Imperial Japanese Navy and Army were very respectful of the laws of war in the period up to and through the (First) World War. Prisoners of War were treated according to the regulations of the Geneva Conventions, and the historical record shows that they commended their captors, when released. This was the reason that Hector C. Bywater presented them so favorably in *The Great Pacific War* (1925).

But Hector C. Bywater is a journalist, Yamamoto Isoroku is a *kaigun dai-i* (lieutenant), and the events of the thirties are only the Meiji style. After political maneuvering, Kang ascends the throne as the Jiangguo (Chiang-kuo) Emperor of the Qian (Ch'ien) Dynasty and begins a thoroughgoing modernization program.

honored guest, pass out.

On the other hand, the people of the beleaguered Mayan state of Yax Mutal are a little startled when a great tube of some material beyond their imagination appears on top of their brand new temple. And it has (sort of) people in it!

Just in time to fight off the invading enemy, and to be assimilated into the culture, or assimilate it. This looks to be interesting.

As with the previous books in this series, van den Boom has spun a tale of mutual adjustments, mutual misunderstandings and accommodations, and factional pressures both within and without. He is to be commended for not rewriting his original tale, but putting a different development into play, and in the end giving a hint as to what happened to Rheinsberg and the men of the *Saarbrücken* from the earlier books.

INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS

Review by Joseph T Major of

RIGHTEOUS KILL

by Ted Lapkin

(2020; Silvertail Books:

ISBN 978-1909269415; \$19.95;

Silvertail Books (Kindle); \$3.99)

One of the features of works on sending military units into the past appears to be the scene where they systematically destroy all their equipment so that they will not affect the future any more than they have already done. In this work, it becomes necessary not to.

The Israeli government becomes aware of a time-travel device. Someone gets the brilliant idea of aborting the Holocaust and shortening the war, and even finds a date, where Hitler travels to France to see a movie premiere, or to meet with the Vichy leaders, in November of 1940, and takes with him the more important leaders of the Reich.

And the IDF doesn't scant on their resources. They send a crack contingent from the *Sayaret Matkal* (the Chef of Staff's Boys, the unit that conducted Entebbe) backed up by other specialists.

The plan works splendidly; not absolutely perfect, but it does accomplish its goal. In a brief but forceful strike the Führer and his associates find out that those subhumans are far more effective than anyone in the German Army, even that great hero of Alternate History Otto Skorzeny, but not for long enough to do anything about it.

Then there is the homecoming. Except there isn't; the time-travel return doesn't return. So here they are, trapped in Vichy France, with a somewhat angry German SS on their trail. Time to get out.

Had anyone read (or seen) *Von Ryan's Express* (novel 1963, book 1965)? The Israelis snag a train of Jews being transferred and dispose of the guards. Then they have to get out of France. The effort required to escape is often very nerve-wracking, and they certainly

had to keep their equipment, particularly to fight off the *Fallschirmjäger* making a drop onto the town of Sete. Now that's desperate.

Ironically, their maritime escape (and the improvisation needed was considerable) is facilitated by Operation JUDGMENT, since Admiral Cunningham, set up for *un appuntamento che vivrà nell'infamia* at Taranto, can't spare the ships to stop the refugees.

And when they get to Palestine . . .

There seems to be an overwhelming preference for Sherman Weaver ("Aristotle and the Gun" (*Astounding*, February 1958)) over Martin Padway (*Lest Darkness Fall* (1939)) in the time-travelers amending history field. It's nice to see for a change someone come down on the side of Mysterious Martinus.

Lapse in research: The British agent sent to investigate meets with his boss, "Major-General right on top of the situation. This is a threat to Ralph Davison, Director of British Military Intelligence". Nope. That's Brigadier Stewart U.S. Marines landing (nowhere near the ICE facility, but that's life). Lacking Khadafy's nuclear deterrence, things do not go well for the defenders . . .

OSSIAN'S RIDE

Review by Joseph T Major of

DARK ROSE

by Mike Lunnon-Wood

(2018; Silvertail Books:

ISBN 978-1909269767; \$17.95;

Silvertail Books (Kindle); \$3.99)

The Irish economy was picking up. It didn't matter that the country was tightly and rigidly run, there was always enough in the pay packet for another pint at the pub. All this prosperity was the welcome gift of the Industrial Corporation of Eire (ICE), a technological and scientific powerhouse. But, it turned out, ICE had a secret within its top management . . .

This story does not have ICE. What it does have is a real-world antagonist, and one that in resistance. (Admittedly, there is a scene where the real world seems even more triumphant than here.)

Instead of a lone scorned man from the banks of the Cam, the question begins with the offices of an outfit that doesn't exist wondering why there is unearned money coming in to their neighbouring country. And why so much of that unearned money comes from building useless car parks.

Slowly, inexorably, in a detailed effort that seems to have been borrowed from Frederick Forsyth, the meaning of all this becomes apparent. The Palestinians, with Libyan assistance, are attempting to take over Ireland.

They have neutralized the Irish government, and in a masterstroke, do as much for the Irish Army. However, that the plan is out, if not apparent, a retaliation is in train.

Nothing as directly threatening as

Dominique Lapierre's *The Fifth Horseman* (1987) or the real-life counterstrike Operation EL DORADO CANYON, which took place in 1986, presumably while the book was in press and made it seem a little behind the times. Being tipped off, the British organize beforehand an Irish Resistance.

There is a sham Irish government that authorizes internment and retaliation, and the conflict is brutal. However, some antiquarian has figured out a startling counterstrike.

In a ceremony laden with historic Irish ritual and imagery, the resisters, domestic and foreign, revive the Irish High Kingship (or, in this case Queenship), in the person of a heir of the Ua Domhnaill, Queen Maeve, formerly Maeve O'Donnell. (And not The O'Donnell, who is a priest?)

Then the fighting begins. The British are right on top of the situation. This is a threat to a NATO member, and as a result, you have U.S. Marines landing (nowhere near the ICE facility, but that's life). Lacking Khadafy's nuclear deterrence, things do not go well for the defenders . . .



I have to wonder. Surely Irish intellectuals would eagerly defend an action against Zionism, and leap at the opportunity to set up a revolutionary socialist government. And you'd have Irish resistance to this English-backed group of IRA paramilitaries in the North warned that intervening in the war might be fatal.) As for the new monarchy, you would have people saying, "Listen, strange women lyin' in ponds distributin' swords is no basis for a system of government. Supreme executive power derives from a mandate from the masses, not from some farcical aquatic ceremony. Oh, but you can't expect to wield supreme executive power just because some watery tart threw a sword at you." Or something of the sort.

There would likely be an oil embargo, 1973 all over again. International activists would be defending the necessary effort of the oppressed Palestinian people, and denouncing imperialism. Not to mention those like the invaders, living in Britain. You'd have Questions in Parliament (the book is set in 1995, so the P.M.

is Mr John Ball) and a delegation from the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp weighing in.

Lunnon-Wood knew military technology, and the descriptions of the small unit actions are precise and meticulous. This isn't the sort of wanton slaughter of faceless mooks by gender-integrated mercenaries that is so common in MilSF.

The British alternate war tradition is so often that of *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) not to mention *The War of the Worlds* (1898), a land unprepared and defeated. But when they are prepared, it seems to be a different order of events. (At least it's not *The Swoop!* (1909), the ultimate satire of invasion novels.)

GREAT KINGS' WAR

Review by Joseph T Major of

MAMELUKES:

A Janissaries Novel

by David Weber and Philip Pournelle

Based on characters and situations created

by Jerry Pournelle

(2020; Baen Books;

ISBN 978-1982124625; \$25.00;

Baen Books (Kindle); \$9.99)

The ending of the previous book, *Storms of Victory* (1987) was on a sort of cliffhanger, as the Five Kingdoms Alliance was sort of on a roll, even though they had lost a great muddled battle (the huge detail and general confusion being typical of the real writer of the book, Roland Green), they were absolutely sure that their Prince would come and win the day. Unfortunately, all unbeknownst to anyone near the field of conflict, the Prince had been ambushed and was sort of dead.

Rick Galloway had reconciled with his wife, Lady Tylara, after the little difference of opinion having to do with her corps of assassins. His technological advancement measures were beginning to kick in, he was the triumphant war leader of the alliance, and it looked like things were going his way.

Well, of course it didn't. That's why they have sequels. The first half of this is some intricate political maneuvering between Rick and his heretofore chief ally the Wanax of Drantos, who seems to be wanting to strike out on his own, but doesn't dare have his Warlord Rick dragged before a court for trial and execution. This requires a lot of intrigue and even an ambush before it gets settled.

Meanwhile, two more drafts of less-than-willing but desperate people are sent to the planet Tran, the setting of this affair, for various ends. Admittedly this was implied by the availability of resupply from the Galactics, so it isn't quite the usual new group of supporters who join in the next volume affair. One bunch is a group of Gurkhas who had been riffed and were being sent home, another is the overseers of a new batch of supplies. The Gurkhas join without demur, the supplies have been sent to someplace else.

The someplace else is a new not heretofore

encountered nation, a sort-of-Venetian republic, and it's about to be attacked by an alliance of pirates and other maritime lands. This entails a response from the sort-of-Rome and Rick bringing his troops.

The ensuing battle is in Weber style, with heavy casualties on both sides (and in a storm, which indicates absolute desperation on the attackers' part, since most real fleets would claw off if trapped between an enemy and a storm). Then, when all is done the secret message the newcomers have is revealed, and Rick becomes John Carter.

Some other problems have been mentioned but walked away from. Even Rick's family responsibilities. Is this a setup for a sequel?

bizarre in the tradition of Lovecraft you might find this worth reading. The lines that got me to

swore an oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution. I was educated at Whittier College in Whittier, California, and I have seen the devil walk."

YOU ONLY LIVE UNTIL YOU DIE

Review by Joseph T Major of
**HOLLYWOOD DOUBLE AGENT:
The True Tale of Boris Morros, Film Producer Turned Cold War Spy**

by Jonathan Gill

(2020; Harry N. Abrams;
ISBN 978-1419740091; \$27.00;
Abrams Press (Kindle); \$9.99)

Morros twirled the beads frantically. "How are you liking my rosary?" he said, his accent thicker than trifle. "It was given me by Rezzputin, in the days of the Tsar!" Then he lost control and the beads draped themselves over his bald head.

B*nd winced. He had already winced once, at the man's atrocious taste in clothing, which had made the late Lacertius Alligator look discretely dressed. This man had the worst colour sense in the world.

That he was the top man SMERSH had in Hollywood only added to the pain . . .

— Not from *You Only Live Until You Die*, a "J*mes B*nd Novel" by I*n Fl*m*ng

Boris Morros is a strange figure in spy history, and never mind that he was the epitome of tasteless flashy dressing. For ten years he was the Soviet State Security's man in Hollywood. In fact, he was the State Security's man in Hollywood for *twenty* years, but for the last ten he was a double agent for the FBI. Never met Dusko Popov, who had a worse experience with the G-Men, or Morris Childs, who had a better one.

But how did Boris Morros become Agent FROST? The Russian for "frost" is " ["moroz"], so they pretty obviously felt their cipher communications were secure. Hell-o, VENONA!

The problem with trying to trace Morros's life is that he never let the truth stand in the way of a good story. He seems to have escaped the restrictions of being in the Pale of Settlement by being a good musician, being brought up to the Tsar's own orchestras. (Hence his story about meeting Rasputin, where as I said he never let the truth stand in the way of a good story.)

When the system changed, he managed to get out of the newer world in birth, coming to the Main Enemy to be, where with a shaky and self forward without limit, he managed to pull



I AM NOT A HORROR

Review by Lisa Major of

CROOKED

by Austin Grossman

(2015; Mullohand Books;

ISBN 978-0316198516; \$26.00;

2015; Hachette Book Group (Kindle); \$5.99)

I encountered this book at a Dollar Tree and hauled it home on impulse. It is very strange and bizarre. Its basic plot is Richard Nixon in a grasp of English and a willingness to put him-

self forward without limit, he managed to pull

off a career in the entertainment industry, climaxing with becoming a chief producer at Paramount.

And then . . . the musician, the organizer, the wheeler-dealer became an agent of the Soviet Union. Now people become spies because of MICE, Money, Ideology, Compromise, Ego. It wasn't for money, though at one point money was involved. It certainly wasn't because he was a Communist.

Morros felt his family back in the Socialist Motherland was threatened. (He was right.) And he liked being a big-shot spy. It made those stories about knowing Rezzputin in Ros-sya all the more piquant.

Gill argues that, unlike the ideological spies, who obediently went back to the Socialist Motherland to be unmasked as Trotskyites and revisionists, agents of foreign intelligence services working for the restoration of capitalism, to be given the supreme measure of punishment, Morros used the Soviet Union as another source of funds and adulation.

Not to mention other Communist agents. The story of his dealings with Martha and Alfred Stern, the Red Millionaires, has been told, but how Morros played them is now shown in a deeper relief.

Then, sometime in the late forties, Morros began to wonder. He had got his father out of the Soviet Union. His brothers had . . . disappeared. And the FBI was closing in. So, unable to beat the G-Men, he joined them.

For ten years, Morros was a double agent. Perhaps they had learned something from mishandling Dusko Popov, and didn't want to face another Pearl Harbor. Morros fed the State Security apparatus useful misinformation.

Then, one day, on the way to a meeting with his by then it was KGB handlers, he got a message. Somehow, the FBI had found out that the chekists suspected their agent was not quite on the up and up.

Morros retired to a new career as a public ex-spy. He published his memoirs, *My Ten Years as a Counter-Spy* (1959), presumably with some editing. He limped on from deal to deal, dying in 1963.

Now as said Morros never let the truth stand in the way of a good story. However, there was in independent verification of his efforts. KGB archivist and defector Alexander Vassilev had devoted an entire notebook of his copied records to the Morros case, and this provides confirmation and disproof of his claims.

The Soviet State Security, from OGPU to KGB, was diverse in its agent selection. Or desperate. Boris Morros played them, and got away with it.

(2015; Quercus; ISBN 978-1784293871; ISBN 978-1419740091; Amazon.com Services; \$2.99)

She said, pointing toward the sanctuary, 'In there is the curse upon the Labyrinth! I call all gods to witness, he has murdered Minos! There is the killer, in the holy place, uncleansed of blood-guilt, standing before the Mother. And you speak of sacrilege!' There was a dead hush, but for the rush and crackle of fire. She stretched both hands out over the earth and cried aloud, 'May the Mother curse him and all gods below, and may Night's Daughters hunt him down into the ground! And on the hand that sheds his blood let there be a blessing.'

— Mary Renault, *The King Must Die*

As auxiliary to the invasion of Europe, the Special Air Service Group took a flier into what would become the task of the American fighting soldiers from the sky, being parachuted into various bits of France to organize and mobilize the Resistance. One such effort, Operation LOYTON, took place in the Vosges Mountains, in Alsace (which had been unilaterally annexed by the Reich).

Men from the 2nd Regiment, SAS Group, were sent in to join the Maquis there. However, there was a small problem. Or rather, a large and persistent SS presence. Operating out of the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp were several units of SS picking off resistants, and later British soldiers. (And considering what was going on at Natzweiler, they needed security; see Christopher Hale's *Himmler's Crusade* (2003, 2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #4) and Heather Pringle's *The Master Plan* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #5) for the horrifying details.)

The mission was only supposed to last two weeks, and the men would then be relieved when the US Third Army got there. As you know, Bob, the Third Army ran out of gas, and what should have been a two-week mission ran for more than two months.

Brian Franks, the commander of the unit (he had replaced David Stirling's brother Bill, whose son Archie would later marry Diana Rigg) had joined the fight, and had to lead the survivors out of the mountains. There were several grim and bloody battles, with many killed — or taken prisoner.

Then the war ended. And an investigation turned up that none of the prisoners had survived. Moreover, officialdom was busy organizing for the Cold War, and had no time for petty Nazi War criminals. So, Colonel Franks covertly authorized several of the SAS survivors to continue in the unit after it had been officially disbanded. Their mission was to hunt down the SS officers and men who had committed these killings — and bring them to justice.

The effort was burdened with indifference and a lack of concern. However, there were significant backers. One was a former officer of 2nd Regiment SAS, the other was his father.

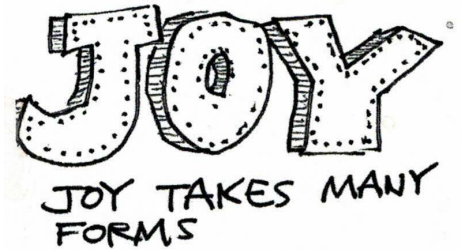
That is to say, Randolph Churchill and Winston Churchill. Neither held power; both held authority. And they were willing to help.

The Nazi hunters were, surprisingly, very successful. The killers were found, turned over to justice (instead of being assassinated on the spot), and punished, if often trivially. Yet . . .

The SS commanding officer got clean away. He lived out a long and successful life as a lawyer in northern Germany, unmolested. And one of his more brutal subordinates was executed by the French, and turned up working for the German BND, their intelligence service.

Lewis spares nothing in describing the brutalities of the SS. Cremating people alive was one of their nicer tactics. Their depredations were horrifying and cruel. And yet people write novels where heroic rejuvenated SS men fight alien invaders.

The Joy of High Tech
by Rodford Edmiston



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

What is Technology?

Yes, after all these installments I am finally getting around to defining what they're about.

This particular column was inspired by a pet peeve of mine. I am very tired of SF stories — whether print, audio, small screen or big screen — having someone from a starfaring society (people usually representing our supposed descendants) finding intelligent aliens living in what to the visitors are primitive conditions and declaring that they have no technology.

This is due to a confusion between the sophistication of the technology used and how well it is applied by a society, and the society's level of scientific development. The ancient Romans had viaducts to bring fresh water into Rome and the *cloaca maxima* to take waste water out. These systems were impressively sophisticated, well developed and well maintained. The water supply, in particular, transported its precious cargo across valleys and through tunnels in the hills, all the while maintaining a specific angle of decline. This angle produced a precisely determined rate of flow,

MAY THE MOTHER CURSE HIM

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE NAZI HUNTERS:

The Ultra-Secret SAS Unit and the Hunt for Hitler's War Criminals

by Damien Lewis

one fast enough to reduce sediment buildup and slow enough to easily handle curves. The water came from clean springs and pools in the surrounding hills, and there was plenty of it delivered to the city. In fact, for most of the Twentieth Century Rome had less and poorer quality water coming in than it did during the heyday of the Empire's existence.

Yes, the technology of the Roman Empire was primitive by our standards, but they used it well to improve the quality of their lives. The sophistication of application was there, even if the scientific knowledge of our own era was not.

In one of the STAR TREK films the crew of the *Enterprise E* discover what they think is a primitive humanoid civilization, and make disparaging remarks about them not having any technology. I was looking at the scenes of the village and thinking "They have pottery, with decorative glazes. They have weaving, with dyed threads. They have architecture, with flourishes in multiple materials. They have fountains with running water. That is all technology." Later it is shown that the villagers even have a dam which ensures they have a steady supply of water to drink and use in their fields. The writers must have actually had a similar viewpoint to mine. These people turn out to be well educated scientifically — they are even aware of interstellar society — and have sophisticated analytical thought processes. They *choose* to live this way. (The Original Series had a similar lesson for Kirk and Spock with the revelation of the true nature of the Organians. Of course, there the deception was deliberate on the part of the natives, to avoid upsetting their guests.)



DOBBIN THE WAGON-SLAYER

So, here comes the definition: Technology is the application of knowledge to the production of goods and services towards a useful purpose. (Is art a useful purpose? Every society has thought so, to at least some extent.

Artistic elaborations for pragmatic objects — China to South America. Archeological exploration such as designs on pottery — are universal. Art for its own sake is nearly universal. A point I Machu Picchu, are revealing how the builders have made before in these columns is that art went to great lengths to bring in water and often drives the development of technology, and carefully conserve it. Successful societies *vice versa*.) As a sound rule of thumb, if you always do a good job of handling their fresh water to get a good preliminary evaluation of how water coming in and waste going out. As well technologically sophisticated a society is, look at as performing other useful tasks.

Rome wasn't the only ancient city to do a good job of transporting and distributing water. end Rome lost the ability or perhaps the will to One of the more famous is what today is known maintain the aqueducts — generally there is as Petra; the building complex erroneously if least maintenance of ancestral projects, and poetically described by John William Burgon in usually progress. Though there are valid wor-his 1845 poem (he did visit the area, but 17 years ries about losing what we as a worldwide later) as "A rose-red city, half as old as time." civilization now have. Modern technology use The city actually was only at its peak for about a would be difficult to restart if something thousand years, though the area is known to have caused a worldwide interruption. Something been inhabited for at least 7000 years. (There are like a nuclear war.

a few people living there now, mostly those who During the Cold War there were frequent work as tour guides and their families. Likely, it references about the prospect of bombing was never completely abandoned.) Petra was someone — maybe the entire world — back to built to take advantage of traders on one route of the stone age. However, even during the old the old Silk Road, as well as other desert travel- stone age, people had some sophisticated ers. Eventually it faded away, due to a combina- technology. Most of it hasn't survived, at least tion of events which included Roman conquest, earthquakes and shifting trade routes.

"Petra" is not the city's original name. The stone artifacts from that era and earlier have presumably original inhabitants of the city — survived. Keep in mind that purpose-made who were Nabateans — knew it as *Raqmu*. The tools and a lot of skill are needed to produce ancient Greeks called it a name which meant good flint knives, spear tips, axes and arrow- "Stone." The Romans called it *Arabia Petraea*. heads. They aren't the tech we're used to, but The Nabateans started building the city in the they are definitely tech.

Even an apparently simple spear needs to produce. First the maker must decide what the spear will be used for. Is it to scratch once a need was seen. Either way, those be a thrusting weapon, a throwing weapon, or who built the city started as nomads. They lived something in-between? Then they must make in the desert and knew how precious water could an appropriate — and straight, regardless of type — shaft. Then comes the spearhead, be. As well as how to handle it.

Many people who learned of Petra in modern history wondered how such a large metropolis which is, again, tailored to the particular use. Finally, the two main parts are joined. This last (the population may have exceeded 20,000 at its process is actually quite complicated, because peak) could endure in that arid environment. you don't want to lose the business end of the Turns out that later visitors, who arrived after the spear you're using against a cave bear. There city had mostly been abandoned and the major are multiple different methods, but most in- features were no longer being maintained, were volve mounting the stone point in a groove or literally walking by and in some cases on the split at the business end of the shaft. The spear- answers. There are channels cut into the rock to head is then secured by animal sinew or some- direct water from springs and the infrequent rains thing similar. This shrinks as it dries, making into hillside reservoirs and from there into the for a tight join. Many of these joins would then city, most of which is in a steep-walled valley. have pine tar or some other sticky, imperme- There was a huge, central pool there, which was able agent applied. This both further secured the main water supply, plus other storage facili- the head by acting as glue, and helped make ties. In antiquity, the city actually earned part of the mount water resistant.

A few of the more-fugitive artifacts have survived and been found at archeological sites, such as bits of string, woven from tree bark area, and the major features of the water manage- fibers. Some of these are over 40,000 years old. The famous "Lion Man" ivory carving (there's sive archeological excavations were performed The art, again) is between 35,000 and 40,000 much later. The water directing channels were years old, making it a product of the culture of "discovered" by people noticing that during the Upper Paleolithic. There are fragments of heavy rains water still flowed through some of what has been identified as a hand loom, dated them, to vanish into the sand covering the floor to about 35,000 years ago. The technologies these items represent must be taught and dili- gently practiced. This starts with making them.

You see this recognition of the importance of water over and over, around the world, from As noted above, that is a project in itself. Then

the person using them — which may be someone other than the person who made them — must learn how. Both stages require intelligent, active decisions about what to do and how to do it.

Compare this with the purely instinctive behavior of sea otters using a rock to open a shellfish. Now, compare *that* to chimpanzees making a “termite fishing tool” by stripping leaves from a flexible stem. While this requires teaching from an older ape, the production and use appear to be strictly rote, and there are generally no elaborations or individual flourishes. Occasionally — by accident or deliberate experiment — a change occurs in the form of the tool. Sometimes that change is an improvement, which may be noted and included in future versions of the tool. By far, however, the normal situation is for members of each troop of chimpanzees to have their own method and style of termite fishing tool, passed down unchanged through the generations.

Note that some birds also make insect fishing tools, but these appear to be produced purely by instinct.

Deliberate use of fire by our ancestors may be even older than the manufacture of stone tools. (Both natural fire and found sharp stones were likely used by our ancestors before they learned to produce them deliberately.) Fire can be used to stay warm, to provide light, to cook food, to clear land, to drive game to a killing field and even to attack other humans.

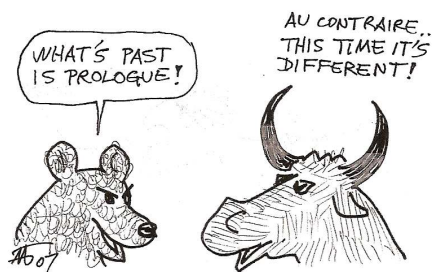
The usual reason for a technology being abandoned is that something better comes along. Anthropologists in Europe working on a project to build a late stone age village were asked to compare the flint axes they were already using with a copper axe based on the one found with Ötzi, the Iceman. The people who made the request figured that the copper axe would be less useful, because knapped stone axes were much harder, sharper and more durable. An additional, period concern favoring the stone tools was that good-quality flint is easier to find than copper ore. The prevailing thought was that copper objects were used more as status symbols than practical tools, at least for most jobs. However, after making the comparison the reenactors preferred the copper axe head. The reason they gave was very simple: Flint blades have little variation in the angle of the edge, which is determined by the physical characteristics of the rock. The copper axe could be sharpened to whatever angle worked best for the job at hand. It was also much easier to renew the edge in the soft metal than in the hard stone. Finally, while flint blades would usually wear through small chips coming off, occasionally a larger flake would detach; sometimes the blade would split entirely. Both of those were potentially dangerous. The copper blade, by comparison, wore more quickly, but did so at a fairly constant rate with no chipping.

Of course, faddism does play a large part

in what technology is used and how. As does a reluctance to learn some new way of doing something. This is often due to a suspicion that the new method simply won't do the job. (“Why should I try those new ‘book’ things when scrolls have worked fine for thousands of years?”) Still, this column is about recognizing technology in unfamiliar settings; not in how some way of doing things gets adopted or dropped.

Sometimes, a technology survives long beyond the task it was originally developed for. I think I mentioned in a previous ~~rant~~ article about encountering a young and computer savvy person who refused to believe that spreadsheets had been around for thousands of years. He simply would not accept that someone could fill the blanks by hand and perform the repetitive mathematical operations without computer help. I wonder how he would have reacted to the fact that Hollerith punch cards (if he even knew what they were) had been around for decades before computers were anything other than people good at math. In fact, punch cards — usually of wood — strung together were used to control looms, pianos, organs and other mechanical devices for several centuries. There were even punched paper tapes, though of a different form than those used in the second half of the Twentieth Century. (What do you think the rolls used in player pianos are?) Both of these technologies — which store information as holes in an otherwise solid material — store data and instructions in a medium which found uses far beyond their original purpose, and well into the digital age.

I am a futurist, but I am also a pragmatist. I rarely early-adopt a new technology, instead waiting to see if it is going to last. I also want to see if it is reliable and maybe for it to become cheaper and more standardized. There's usually no rush. The odds are that if the new tech does something I need doing, I already have something for the job. No matter how primitive or “pre-technological” it might appear to faddists.



This material is Copyright 2020 Rodford E. Smith. Anyone wishing to reprint it may contact the author for permission at stickmaker@usa.net

STAR TREK AND COSMOS AND HOMELAND — AND THEN IT GETS REALLY WORSE!

Reviews by Taras Wolansky

During the quarantine, I took advantage of the 30-day free trial of the CBS streaming service to catch up with the new *Star Trek* shows. One conclusion I came to was that, where the original *Star Trek* was, for better or worse, a science fiction show, *Star Trek: Discovery* is a “*Star Trek*” show. That is, it's a science fantasy using a particular set of tropes in a shared universe.

Of course, you could argue that, with innovations like space fungi and space water bears, it no longer qualifies even as science fantasy. Between things like that and plot holes, a guide to *Discovery* would have to include “stupidity notes” for each episode. Evidently the show runners don't care about such a hackneyed notion as plausibility, scientific or otherwise.

The goofy redheaded girl cadet (possibly the show runners' idea of a typical *Star Trek* fan) who becomes the heroine's best friend doesn't help. Their first meeting is one of the most excruciating *Star Trek* scenes I've ever encountered.

The first season, with the great Jason Isaacs, works better than the second, with Michelle Yeoh. She's very good, my word yes, but she doesn't get enough screen time to carry the whole season. I think they intend to spin her off on yet another new *Star Trek* show, however.

About the star of the show, I will only say that she is less lackluster in the second season than in the first.

Speaking of old pros carrying new *Star Trek* shows, Patrick Stewart's aged *Picard* makes that show more satisfying on the whole than *Discovery*, YMMV.

Because of the lockdown, the Showtime channels were also free for a few weeks. I took the opportunity to catch up on a few more seasons of *Homeland*.

I recommend people watch the first three seasons, then stop. That completes the story arc of the cat-and-mouse game between a paranoid CIA agent (Clare Danes in a super performance) and a Marine who may have turned his coat in Taliban captivity. Also, the fourth season is dismal and depressing.

The second season of the new *Cosmos* crept up on me unannounced, so I missed the first couple of episodes.

On the plus side, it is less politically correct than the previous season, with its Afrocentrism and a whole hour (!) spent on a tendentious account of leaded gasoline. A true account of the history of science has to admit it was mostly white guys. (I like to joke about “Carl Sagan, white supremacist”!)

Also the episode about Russian evolutionary biologist Nikolai Vavilov, persecuted to death by Marxists for denying Lamarckism, is valuable. I wonder if James Morrow saw the episode, and was reminded of when I told him the story, at Capclave last year.

On the other hand, the episode about the development of the atom bomb is very mis-

leading. The unquestionable truth that the atom bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended up saving hundreds of thousands of American — and probably millions of Japanese — lives is treated as no more than a speculation.

Soviet espionage is left out of the account entirely: the Soviets built their own bomb, period.

The Edward Teller-Robert Oppenheimer controversy is strictly the usual boilerplate. The real reason Oppenheimer lost his security clearance, because he lied to the authorities about Soviet espionage, is of course left out. Also left out is the fact that, if Oppenheimer had had his way and the U.S. did not develop a hydrogen bomb, then Stalin would have been left with a monopoly on thermonuclear weapons.

We know from Soviet archives that getting his own atomic bomb, merely matching the U.S., was enough for Stalin to greenlight the Korean War. With sole ownership of the hydrogen bomb to encourage the U.S. to mind its own business, Stalin might have taken the rest of Europe.

Was Oppenheimer a Soviet agent? The real question is, if he had been, would he have done anything differently?

Finally, I've been watching one of the strangest shows I've ever seen on commercial television — *Motherland: Fort Salem*.

It's a story about military cadets, except the cadets are all young women. Or, to be precise, young witches, in a strange alternate America that subjects witches to the military draft. Their West Point is Fort Salem, and the opening sequence gives us tantalizing glimpses of a radically different American history.

For example, it's not Washington crossing the Delaware in the famous painting, but a boatload of witches, on their way to harry the Hessian troops.

Or was it Hessian witches?

2019 NEBULA AWARDS

Novel

A Song for a New Day, Sarah Pinsker (Berkley)

Novella

This Is How You Lose the Time War, Amal El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone (Saga)

Novelette

Carpe Glitter, Cat Rambo (Meerkat)

Short Story

“Give the Family My Love”, A.T. Greenblatt (Clarkesworld 2/19)

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

Riverland, Fran Wilde (Amulet)

Game Writing

The Outer Worlds, Leonard Boyarsky, 2024
Megan Starks, Kate Dollarhyde, Chris L’Etoile (Obsidian Entertainment)

The Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation

Good Omens: “Hard Times”, Neil Gaiman (Amazon Studios/BBC Studios)

Other awards presented:

Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award

Lois McMaster Bujold

Kevin O’Donnell, Jr. Service Award

Julia Rios

Kate Wilhelm Solstic Award

John Picacio
David Gaughran

WORLDCON 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

ConNZealand is holding an on-line question and answer session on June 27-28 for those interested in learning about the bids for 2022:

<https://conzealand.grenadine.co/en/cnzpreconz/form/QT2022>

There have been questions raised about the Jeddicon bid, on such matters as how they intend to handle Hugo voting. I would be interested to hear how the discussion went.

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)

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

2025
Seattle
Mid-August 2025

Perth, Australia
(On hiatus)

WORLDCON

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/>



Ah... it's Hugo nominating time in fandom!!

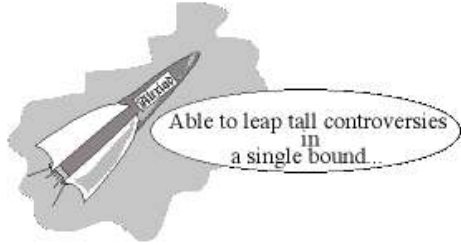
NASFiC

2020

Columbus, Ohio
August 20-23, 2020

Canceled. Another coronavirus casualty.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Joy V. Smith** April 11, 2020
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL
 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com
<http://www.joyvsmith.com/>

Thank you for the reviews; I haven't read any of them, but *Humble Pi* sounds good. I can see that names are important in keeping records, even though you'd think that input was easier now without punch cards. Rodford Edmiston's article about the development of photography for astronomical record keeping is thorough, as always. Those pioneers certainly persevered.

More interesting background on Asimov's nimble fingers and Algis Budry's novel, *Rogue Moon*. Thanks to Sue Burke for that review and the Nebula finalists reviews. I have not read most of those — past or present — except for "No Woman Born", which I recently reread when culling some of my books. It's in *The Best of C. L. Moore*, which I kept. Of the other retro works, I remember the Doc Savage series and some of the movies.

Thanks to all the other contributors too; I learn more and am reminded of all the material in the last issue. And I'm sorry about all the con and other cancellations — among other things.... I go out now and then to do errands and pick up takeout. All the best to everyone. Keep safe and entertained. (Maybe I'll pull some of those old board games out of the closet.)

The organizers have canceled
 Lisa's family reunion.

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** April 27, 2020
 236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los
 Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Dear friends,
 "Who are these people?" you ask.
 I know who they are and so do you.
 They're the choices of such folk as could
 be bothered to send in fan-category Hugo
 nominations. we aren't nominating. The num-
 bers show that.

We're like a man with a spade in his hand

(or if you'd rather, a woman) looking at the ground crying "Why doesn't that hole get dug?"
 Sound familiar? I said it in a fanzine EIGHT YEARS AGO.

It's true you need at least a Supporting Membership to nominate. It's true that costs money. A Supporting Membership in the 2020 Worldcon is Nz\$75 — about US\$45, €42, £37.

It's true that could be prohibitive for some. So compare the FAAN Awards, where you don't have to pay anything. There's just one round — no preliminary step of nominating finalists. This year there were TWENTY-THREE voters. To misquote the Beatles, 'were you one of them?'

I could complain about those who do nominate.

A woman I once worked for — she's gone now — used to groan over the arrogance of ignorance.

A couple of years ago I managed to look at a Weblog where a hundred folks had reported their Hugo nominations. With the host's help I listed a score of fanzines, four dozen fanwriters, a dozen fanartists, whose names, I said, leapt to my mind, conspicuously omitted by those folks. I even mentioned diversity. This drew a storm of nasty name-calling and non sequitur. Nor did any of my list arrive on the next year's ballot.

What sort of nominees did they prefer? Web-based people?

A book I've read says "Do not rebuke scorners, they will hate you." Never mind. The spade is still in our hand.

Meanwhile, may I respectfully call up "Jophan says, Pub your ish"?

Joe and I hear the words of
 Jophan and obey.

—LTM

I hear people have time weighing on them. They're not going out much. They're not feverishly — hmm, not *le mot juste* — frantically preparing for, scrambling at, recovering from SF cons. Our eager offspring the SCA has postponed a war.

Long ago we fanziners learned it was cheaper and easier to send our fanzines around than to send our bodies around. After a while this may have got lost in the bustle.

Paul Skelton said recently in *Raucous Caucus*, and I've been saying for years, that as Marshall McLuhan pointed out when a new communications medium arises — in which McLuhan included money, clothes, clocks — previous media are freed to become artforms.

For me this also resonates with something a bad girl said in a children's book — years later I realized I was supposed to consider her a bad girl, and sympathize with her parents — "I'll do it because I want to, and not because you tell me to."

Let's seize the moment! Write locs to people's fanzines! Send drawings! Publish our own next issue! Start that zine we've wanted to

begin!

And not, please, only about everything that's wrong. I think that's wrong.

I still remember the "No Award" ad.

—JTM

A word about drawings. They may have got neglected too. Now people have telephones in their pockets, and can snap pictures, so they snap everything. Is that art? Maybe.

I would certainly say that the
 great photographer Ansel Adams
 produced art.

— LTM

Anyway, the camera doesn't supersede the pen any more than rain supersedes sunshine.
 Let's do it.

From: **Lloyd Penney** May 2, 2020
 1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON
 M9C 2B2 CANADA
penneys@bell.net
<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 110. Like most other people who believe that this pandemic is not a hoax, we are self-isolating, and it does seem to be working. Those who demonstrate and believe it's a hoax, they are the ones catching the COVID-19 and some are dying. Evolution in action, I say. Time for a loc.

Yvonne and I are getting our exercise by going for short walks in our immediate neighbourhood, but also in the underground parking lot under our two-building complex. We seem to be the only ones to do it, which allows us to self-isolate and exercise at the same time. It's not easy, but we're trying our best. There may be light at the end of the tunnel, and we might be able to get out of all this, but I have also seen articles saying we may have to self-isolate for the next two years.

For the most part, I do not know who the Hugo nominees are, either. There are many of us who dreamed of the silver rocket, nominated and voted faithfully, and for me, I was on the final ballot once, a real thrill and even close friends chose to mock me and devalue that achievement. That year, we found out how easy it was to take control of a particular category, and give your choice the rocket. I will take that nomination as a real honour, but it was probably the first step in not caring any more. In some cases, we don't qualify any more, not even for the fan awards.

The focus has shifted to web-based content. But that disappears like tears in rain, as the man said. I was surprised that Archive Of Our Own didn't get nominated again.

I suppose I am lucky in that I have lost only

one friend to the COVID-19, Tom Barber of the Detroit area. The latest Ansible lists a huge RIP list with an asterisk beside those who have died from the coronavirus. On the other hand, there have been many seniors' homes here who have lost many residents to the coronavirus, and of those in Toronto heavily affected, I can see one from my balcony. It is far away, but still close by.

I am glad that the New Zealand Worldcon is going virtual rather than cancelling altogether, but I shall not "attend". Current "attending" membership is NZ\$300, and as I type, xe.com says that's Can\$256.59, or £145.61, or US\$181.89. Even virtual attendance is too much for me at this time. Let's hope something positive comes out of this.

I am not struggling with editing, for this is how I've made my living for some years. I am learning, though, how to apply it to SF novels and magazines. I have even sent a few questions to the folks behind the Chicago Manual of Style, and while their responses seem a little nebulous, they are helping me realign what I am most concerned with when it comes to the balance between correct grammar and usage, and style of the author. It will take a while, but as long as I can get more experience, I might yet make it a profession for my golden years.

My loc...it indicates the very beginning of the lockdown/pandemic/self-isolation. Our last in-restaurant meal was the day before St. Patrick's Day. We are still busy, getting things done, and in many ways, life hasn't changed all that much. All cities have homeless, and they have asked our city, how do you self-isolate when there's no home to lock down in? The city suddenly has 125 rooms to hand out to them. It takes this kind of emergency for money and resources to magically appear. I have applied to the federal government for assistance and I have received it, but they will check to see if I truly qualify for it afterwards. If I do, great, but if I do not, I will need to pay everything back, with interest, and there might be some level of prosecution, too. The World Vision work continues, which also helps me pay my share of the bills. Fanzines may be the last refuge of fandom, but will fandom survive this long period of isolation?

I think it will. We fans have always dealt with geographic isolation from each other.

— LTM

I find myself writing more and more pessimistic letters these days. Think I should put myself out to pasture in the Glades of Gafia? It does appeal after 42 years of fandom. I will lie down until that feeling passes. In the meantime, a letter for you to say thanks for putting it together.

From: **Timothy Lane** May 9, 2020
timothyane51@gmail.com

I'm curious if the *Baker Street Review* will trade for articles. There was a presentation I thought of doing once at Holmes-Doyle (on "junior Moriarty" such as James Calhoun, Grimesby Roylott, and Henry Stapleton), and perhaps I could revive the idea.

It never hurts to ask. I begged Mike Resnick to do his Sherlock Holmes piece at SH/ACD. He said they were experts and wouldn't want to hear him. He may have been declining politely.

I started *Pursuit of the Pankera* at the point where it separated from the original. It's not a great book, but I thought it was all right. Certainly it was a great improvement over the original. Partly this was because Lazarus Long was absent. Partly this was because the menace really was a menace, not just some sort of prank. And it was also because he didn't have that atrocious ending, in which the identification of Long and Heinlein became total. (Why would Long share Heinlein's loathing of critics to such a degree?)

The Man Whose Name Wouldn't Fit was `C a r t w r i g h t - C h i c k e r i n g`, not Carrington-Chickering. I confirmed this on Amazon. They have the same number of letters, which is what counted.

The only time I ever encountered Isaac Asimov was at Noreascon in 1989. Grant and I attended a panel, and then he joined the line for autographs to get his pocket computer signed. As for turning him into a pariah, I don't favor that. But then, I also don't favor it for H. P. Lovecraft or John W. Campbell, either.

As usual, the Nebula and Hugo nominees were unfamiliar — not just the books but the authors as well. This includes the fan nominees for the Hugo. By contrast, the Retro Hugos (as usual) are more likely to be familiar, though I don't think I've read all that many. If it were my vote, I'd probably choose "Arena" for Best Short Story and Gamow's Mr. Tompkins book (I encountered them in my high school physics class) for Best Related Work.

An episode of *Night Gallery* featured a magical doll sent to a British official at home from India, guaranteeing his death. His revenge is to send a similar doll to his murderer. Sue Burke's description of the Ramadan story sounds like that.

I notice some of the later respondents discussing the various effects of the Wuhan fever. It hasn't had much effect on my nursing home, though they take temperatures more often now and the personnel wear masks all the time.

I decided to read John M. Barry's *The Great Influenza*, about the Spanish flu (so named because it was more extensively reported in neutral Spain than in countries at war) of 1918. One finds so many similarities between then and now, both in the problems and in the methods of dealing with it. One the other hand, the estimated flu death rate was 675,000, most of it in a few months, in a country that had only a third

of the population. Barry thinks the worldwide toll may have exceeded the Black Death (in total dead, not percentage). But no one shut down the economy (perhaps partly because there was a war on).

John Purcell's discussion about culling books is something I've had to do by circumstances. When we moved out of our house, I brought a few boxes of books out of our humongous collection, leaving about 99% or so behind. The hope was that when we got an apartment, we'd be able to recover many of them. When it became clear that we would never get an apartment, that meant all the others were pretty much gone, along with so much else. Once the house was sold the culling was finalized.

Now, in a nursing home, I no longer even have most of those, and don't have very much space available anyway. Elizabeth is in a different nursing home (and Grant is in a third, so we never see each other), and I have no idea what she may have. (She has no computer and I have no phone, so we no longer have direct contact.)

I recall getting a little paper cube, about a one-inch cube, that was handed out by the Democrat who represented the Hanford nuclear power plant. This was the volume of space needed, I think, for the nuclear waste generated in a year for one person. I also remember reading Jerry Pournelle's interesting suggestion.

Hitler was an admirer of Mussolini (who initially didn't return the favor) and no doubt saw a similarity between their regimes. But I think they each considered Fascism and Nazism as specific philosophies, not generic. Thus, fascistic groups such as the Arrow Cross in Hungary, the Falange in Spain, and the Iron Guard in Romania would have been considered similar but not related, and they were generally friendly with each other.

In time fascist became the generic term for these groups, probably initially from leftists who used it as a generic smear (as Orwell complained at one point). But it still can be used to refer to an economic system marked by private ownership but government control. It also generally included a considerable welfare state. And, of course, it was strongly nationalist and ethnocentric.

Per contra Lloyd Daub, even counting excess deaths over last year (a standard Allahpundit of Hot Air uses) is uncertain in counting deaths from the Wuhan fever. Since some causes of death (such as car accidents) are less common, it would underrate Wuhan fever deaths. But there are also various deaths resulting from the stress of the economic shutdown, not to mention deaths from elective operations being canceled to make room for Wuhan virus patients (which in most of the country were never needed).

Besides *The Odyssey*, "returns" literature includes some plays (no doubt based on older works), perhaps most notably *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus. The *Aeneid* can be considered a

related work. I will also note that there was a later sequel to *The Iliad* covering the actual fall of Troy. Odysseus became a lot more important there, winning the armor of Achilles after he fell (to the extreme disappointment of Ajax the son of Telamon, who went violently insane as a result). And of course he thought up the Trojan Horse and commanded the men in it.

Richard Powell, in the author's note to his Trojan War novel *Whom the Gods Would Destroy*, argued that the social conditions in the two epics of Homer were very different, with *The Odyssey* showing a more primitive society in some ways.

Oooh, that "conspicuous consumption" pun. As it happens, Michael Kurland used it over 50 years in his *Mission: Tank War*. ("Perhaps he tired of conspicuous consumption." "He was never sick a day in his life.") There is nothing new under the sun.

I got it from *Hawaii*, by James A. Michener.

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** May 29, 2020
The Terraces of Boise, 5301 East Warm Springs Ave., Apt. B306, Boise, ID 83716-6205
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank for Vol. 19 No.2 (April 2020, Whole Number 110).

Being that today is my birthday, Happy Birthday to me.

Well, here I am still on virtual lockdown because of the Wuhan virus. The company that owns this facility, and a number of other facilities, is taking very good care of us old people. People in some of their other facilities have the virus. We had one here; but they are now clear. We old farts are still in lockdown until the end of June. If we go anywhere other than a quick trip to a store or a medical appointment (should be postponed if possible) we will be confined to our apartments for two weeks. I'm not complaining because so far the rules have kept us safe. The lack of any human contact for a length of time is getting to me a bit. I miss the bridge games. Also, I really miss being able to work out in the Fitness Center. It is closed because keeping it wiped down is too time consuming.

The origin of the virus in China is, of course, well known. It is also obvious that the rulers of China are involved in a cover-up. They have apparently claimed that it started with American soldiers at a military sports event. The virus began at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Scientists who visited the lab reported it did not have sufficient safeguards. It's reported that the doctor who first sounded the alarm was disciplined by the government. He died of the virus. The woman head of emergency at the Wuhan Central Hospital gave an interview rebuking the government. She has disappeared. The less said about the

World Health Organization the better.

I filled out the very basic Census form. It asks for virtually no information. It will be almost useless to future genealogists. In a box it asked for what appeared to be ethnic background. For people like me it suggested Irish, etc. Since my name is Irish that's what I entered even though I'm Irish/Scottish/English/Norwegian. After sealing the envelope, but before mailing, I opened the envelope. I then did a white-out of Irish and wrote in American. Oh, and if I remember correctly, it asked for Sex and not the ridiculous Gender. Words have Gender. People have Sex.

Once again interesting reviews. When I'm finally allowed to leave this facility and the libraries are again open, I'll have to try and find some of them.

Timothy Lane: You are, of course, correct about Richard Jewell and many police forces. They lock on to a person they believe is guilty and ignore other possible suspects. I am reminded of a case many years ago in Southern California. The police were so convinced that the brother of a girl had killed her they ignored another possible suspect. After the boy's life had been destroyed another police officer took over the case. He looked into the other possible suspect and proved that he was the murderer. Sadly, I don't remember the name of the boy. He was finally free. But what the police did to his life was horrible.

Read about the Julia Wallace murder case in Liverpool in 1931 sometime (*The Killing of Julia Wallace*, reviewed in this, for example.)

George W. Price: Good point that a punishment must be both cruel and unusual to be forbidden by the Constitution.

Taras Wolansky: Thank you for your comments regarding the *Skeptical Inquirer* and Richard Jewell.

Lloyd G. Daub: I think that you might be interested in this. In order to try and keep our spirits up the organization here puts out a sheet that, among other things, has a Get a Laugh section. A recent one was: "My three favorite things are eating my family and not using commas." That got a really big laugh out of me. Then I thought of the book by Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* that is a book on punctuation. So I went to my copy and opened it. Inside the front cover is a June 18, 2004, two page email from Lloyd Daub that is a Kelly Jane Torrance review of the book. There are also a couple of other reviews. But I have no doubt that the one forwarded by you was a big factor in my purchasing the book. For anyone not familiar with the book (which was a Best Seller in Great Britain and I believe here also), the title is based on the following. A panda goes into a restaurant and has lunch. On finishing it draws a gun, fires a couple of shots, and begins to leave. The waiter asks why it did it. The panda gives the waiter a booklet with panda marked.

The entry says: "Panda — Large black and white bear-like mammal. Native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves."

Obviously missing or incorrectly inserted commas completely change the meaning of a sentence.

I like this one: "By train, plane and sedan chair, Peter Ustinov retraces a journey made by Mark Twain a century ago. The highlights of his global tour include encounters with Nelson Mandela, an 800-year-old demigod and a dildo collector."

— JTM

If I have not correctly punctuation this letter, my apology. Perhaps I need to re-read Truss's book.

From: **John Purcell** May 30, 2020
3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845 USA
askance73@gmail.com

I must try and drag myself away from the news about what's happening in my hometown of Minneapolis, which has me worrying about my brother and all of my Minn-stf friends and their families this week. This morning I am sickened and drained by the news that Uncle Hugo's Bookstore, and its companion store, Uncle Edgar's, were burned down in the rioting last night, and even Dreamhaven Books had been broken into, so lots of shattered glass all over the place. This all hurts like hell, and even though I understand the anger and frustration where all this is coming from, I just cannot condone random rioting. All it does is provoke more violent retaliation, and this is simply going to get worse. I fear the end is rapidly approaching.

So perhaps a change of topic will help my mental state. It is worth a try.

Lisa, you are not the only one trying to nibble their weight down again. (Bad choice of words there? Possibly.) Valerie and I both lost between 15 and 20 pounds during my TAFF trip thanks to walking practically all over Western Europe. Sadly, now that weight has returned, so we bought an elliptical machine — which we actually use, just not often enough — and walk our 11 year old Labrador Duckie daily, weather permitting. We've also changed our diet, and that helps, but being holed up during this pandemic has not helped much. Still, the battle of our bulges continues, and we wish you good luck on your homefront.

Joe's musings about "Who the hell are these people?" on the Hugo ballot — and the Nebulas, too; as the nominee listings on pages 7 and 8 attest — hit me, as well. There are a few names I know on these listings, but the trend that really leaps out is noticing the publication sources of all the nominees. When you look at the shorter forms, every single nominee for both Hugos and Nebulas comes from online

sources that one needs to subscribe to. I don't mind subscribing to magazines either in print or online formats, but it seems that the major magazines — *Analog*, *Asimov's*, *F&SF*, and *Amazing* (making a comeback) — are being totally ignored. If anything, they're not garnering enough votes from readers. This almost sounds like the print magazines are being shoved back into the ghetto again, which is too bad. This year I have read some really fine stories in these print magazines; Nancy Kress's "Semper Augustus" in the March/April issue of *Asimov's* so far is the standout novella I have read so far this year. Will it make next year's major award nominee list? We shall see.

It's the triumph of one circle of readers over another.

— JTM

Thank you for noting the passing of Earl Kemp. At Corflu 37 he was fondly remembered during the "In Memoriam" program item on Friday night, along with Steve Stiles and Frank Lunney. Very fine gentlemen who are all missed.

Hey, Trinlay Khadro: Would you be kind enough to send a couple of those lino prints for me to use in *Askance* or *Askew*? That cat lino print on page 14 looks great! Thanking you in advance if you do send them.

Well, I have a bunch of fanzines to write letters to now that the latest issue of *Askance* is completed and posted/emailed. This will give me something to do while avoiding possibly infected neighbors or other people here in town as Texas "re-opens." Yeah, right. Already the COVID-19 infection rates are spiking in many states. *sigh* This is gonna be a long haul, that's for sure.

Take care of yourselves, Joe and Lisa.

From: **Lloyd G. Daub** May 30, 2020
6535 W. English Meadows Drive
D205, Greenfield, WI 53220-3995
USA
lداub@wi.rr.com

Thanks for another *Alexiad*. I hope all is well there and among all readers in this SpaceX Age of human flight. A beautiful takeoff and landing of the first stage. I expect the company is hard at work trying to figure out how to recover and reuse the second stage as well as they recover the first. While waiting out the rain delay from launch date 1, I thought of the movie *Marooned* and launching through the eye of a hurricane. I expect SpaceX is working on that, too. Meantime, this LOC will have arrived in your inbox long before the astronauts dock at ISS, and not be seen in "print" until well after they have returned to Earth. Wikipedia tells me the last Atlantic Ocean splashdown was March 1969 for Apollo 9. Thanks to retirement, Al Gore's internet and SpaceX's transparency, I get to watch more of this mission than all the others

ever flown.

As I mentioned last time, we are in the 'fog of war' part of the pandemic. It is a lesson for anyone involved in SF that 'Science' is sometime more fallible even than people. People are human, and prone to error. But computer models are prone to GIGO and politics. To rely on them is a blunder. To base health or economic policies on them can be a disaster. Unfortunately, our all-too-human politics often prevents us from learning from past blunders. Fortunately, Nature's God has allowed humans to evolve resiliency. We may yet survive anything she throws at us, and can always hope to survive that which we throw at ourselves.



Reviewer's Notes — I have to admit that sometimes I can't tell the parodies from the bad writing from the fiction and from the pastiche of non-fiction. And that's just the first two reviews. ... And there's the mention of *Marooned* that had stayed in my mind from my first reading of this *Alexiad* until today's launch. ... Late in your review of the third Blue Gemini book you mention the difficulty of keeping such secrets from those listening. USAF's X-37B, among other such 'secret' missions, has the problem of hiding from all of today's amateur astronomers. Of course, back in the real Gemini days, more people were willing to accept the government's word that it was all swamp gas and/or Venus. Oh, and congratulations to us — I guess the X-37B now belongs to the US Space Force.

There's quite a subgenre of alternative space flights — real tech, but fictional missions.

Joy of High Tech — I enjoy the history of nearly every subject, and this issue's review of recording what the telescope sees was especially interesting. I can't remember which cable TV show it was, but I remember the documentary's recreation of Edwin Hubble sitting at the Palomar focal point throughout a cold night's observing. Seeing an actor recreate an event brings to history to life in a way that enhances a text on the same topic, and vice-versa.

Taras #MeToo Wolansky — A sardonic question for today's cancel society, indeed. My own response is somewhere in the area of 'I have no dog in that fight.' That is, I was not tweaked, and I don't know anyone who was. It

is up to the victim and witnesses to complain, and on the spot. On the other hand, there is the attitude of, "whoever shall tweaketh your left nipple, turn to him the other, also." You see, I have read in the olden days P.W. (Pre-Weinstein) of those who did not intend real harm by tweaking and pinching, and those who did not mind being tweaked or pinched. I recently read a review of the career of some long-dead French author or other whom the reviewer described as "a relentless womanizer." By which today we would read 'rapist.' He certainly found plenty of willing bedmates, regardless of his manners. Or personal hygiene. Seasons change and so do our manners, and then we change back again. Much like how butter or salt alternate between being good or bad for you, but always according to the professional commentariat. I try to stay out of melee range of others, and recommend the policy to the squeamish. Oh wait; we call that social distancing, now.

Remember, his many books included *The Sensuous Dirty Old Man* and *Lecherous Limericks*.

—JTM

LOC — I appreciated the nice comments on my reviews. I appreciated having something to review. I remember one of my old-time-gone professors talking about reviewing things for the sake of his C.V. But he got the books sent to him for free in hopes he would review them. Afterwards he sold them for fifty cents to students wanting to beef up their personal libraries. I had money in my pockets, then, and was a willing participant in the racket. Not now. I will continue instead to write my own for the most part, and not inflict them on anyone, even for free. (All said with a smile.)

From: **AL du Pisani** May 31, 2020
945 Grand Prix Street, Weltevredenpark 1709, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
du.pisani@kilos40.co.za

My government have gone in for restricting more rather than less, so we are still restricted. Full lockdown was supposed to be for 3 weeks — was extended for a further 2. Then we had a month of Level 4 lockdown, and tomorrow we will start Level 3. (With some expectation of restrictions for the next year or so.)

With full lockdown, one member per household was allowed to go shopping one a week. The rest were supposed to stay home. (As far as I could see, this was not enforced.) But you could only buy "essentials", as defined by the government. Mostly food, and general household groceries, such as toilet paper. No booze, no clothing — which became a minor problem when I found that some of my underwear had worn thin, and I could not legally buy more.

During this time I visited a nearby mall — it

was a ghost town – only 4 shops were open – 2 grocery stores, a pharmacy and a health food store. And the mall was only open from one side – The previous week I tried to enter from the wrong side, and thought the entire mall was closed. The Easter decorations and event fixings were up, but as far as I could see, never used as intended. The stores which planned to open in time for Easter never did.

Under lockdown level 4 more people were allowed to leave their homes, with huge restrictions on who can work when – for instance, live in domestic workers and gardeners was allowed to work. There was a curfew between 20h00 and 05h00. More shops were allowed to open – so I could replace my underwear. You were also allowed to get your car serviced – something that I will need in future, so glad it is available.

The mall had a lot more stores open. This however meant that I have to queue to enter every shop I intended to visit. Under these circumstances, it should not be surprising that I only shopped for needed stuff. The shops planning to open for Easter were still closed.

Under level 3, there is no more curfew. You are allowed to buy booze, Mondays to Thursdays, during office hours. You are not allowed to buy cigarettes or any type of tobacco related product, apart from nicotine patches. Air traffic is allowed for business purposes, but most airlines have currently no plan to open soon, as staying shut down will be cheaper than flying aircraft empty. Churches are allowed to reopen, but may not have meetings of more than 50 people, under fairly draconian restrictions. Some classes at schools have been allowed to reopen, with expectations that all pupils will be back to school by September.

The smoking ban – for Health Reasons, is the brainchild of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Now NDZ is an ex-wife of the much married precious President, Jacob Zuma. She is still associated with his camp of looters of South Africa, and a member of the Cabinet. Because the last ANC conference, where Cyril Ramaphosa won, became chief of the ANC, and later President of South Africa, was evenly split between the pro- and anti-Zuma factions, the ANC leadership top structure of 6 is split 3 – 3 between the factions. Which means that the emergency committee running the country is also split between the pro- and anti-Ramaphosa factions. And NDZ have been trying to ban cigarettes for a very long time, and it appears that the ban is the price of her co-operation.

Which has resulted in a black market for all tobacco products – I do not know the normal price of 500 grams of Boxer tobacco – would be surprised if it is more than R50, is currently going for R200 to R300. A carton of cigarettes normally costing R450 is going anything from R1200 for no name brands, to above R2000 for name brands.

Luckily not a problem for me, but a colleague at work mentioned that a cousin of his

has so far spent R25,000 on booze and cigarettes.

Infamous bad joke: An anti-smoking group had posters put up in French Army barracks saying "Smoking is Fatal!" In the Foreign Legion barracks this got marked, "But the Legionnaire does not fear death!"

A dirty little secret during this time, is that a lot of the people the government want to keep safe, has been ignoring the restrictions. When it is time to queue for social grants – there is no social distancing. And the payouts take a lot of time under normal circumstances. You have the idle walking up and down streets, to have something to do.

The people who are employed, formally or informally, desperately want to get back to work. The recipients of social grants want this to stretch out for as long as possible, because of additional grants given for the duration.

Since I am a hermit by nature, working from home has mostly not been a problem. But I miss meeting up with friends and going to church. Online meetings are not the same – can help.

I have no idea when I'll be allowed to go back to work. I have been employed and working from home throughout this entire period, and was part of a team that implemented a new web site, during this time.

So far the government had ruined two of my plans to take holidays during this year. I have no idea how much of the rest of my life they are going to ruin.

Our local convention has been canceled, Lisa's family reunion has been canceled, the Breyerfest model horse show has been canceled . . . our plans have been canceled.

– JTM

I hope that you have much more reasonable governments. And can still find something to read.

From: **George W. Price** June 1, 2020
4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL
60630-3333 USA
price4418@comcast.net

April *Alexiad*:

In the last issue I reminisced about Jerry Pournelle, in response to your obituary for him. Sadly, I must now do the same for Earl Kemp. Your obit mentioned his Hugo-winning fanzine *Who Killed Science Fiction?*, but not his founding of Advent Publishers.

I first met Earl Kemp when I came home from the Army and in 1954 joined the University of Chicago Science Fiction Club. I soon noticed that Earl was one of the club's principal driving forces.

Only about half the club members were

students; Earl and I were among the others. He worked at a job-printing company and knew a lot about preparing copy for offset printing. This came in very handy when he and several other club members founded Advent Publishers in, I believe, 1955. I joined Advent a couple of years later.

Earl's first book was Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder*, a collection of book reviews and critical commentaries that had originally appeared in science fiction magazines. (The Third Edition, greatly expanded from the First, is still in print from Advent.)

Several more books followed, notably James Blish's *The Issue at Hand*; the Proceedings books for the 1962 Worldcon in Chicago (which Earl chaired) and the 1963 Worldcon in Washington; and Alva Rogers' *A Requiem for Astounding* in 1964. (Earl's leadership of Chicon III is worth a long article by itself, but let that go.)

Then Earl withdrew from active participation in both Advent and the U of C club, and got into other ventures, including the pornographic book that, as you noted, got him a brief federal prison term.

I took over Advent (though Earl remained as an inactive partner). The first book that I did was *The Universes of E. E. Smith*, by Ron Ellik and Bill Evans, published in 1966. Some of the other partners remained active in Advent, notably in storing the books and mailing out orders; I did all the editing and copy preparation. In recent years I bought out the others, including Earl; I now own Advent as a sole proprietorship. Joe Major's *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles* in 2006 was Advent's latest – and last – book. I won't be publishing anything more; just selling off the inventory.

It was Earl who taught me how to use an IBM Executive office typewriter (with proportionally spaced type) to prepare justified pages as camera-ready copy for offset printing. That's all long obsolete now, of course, replaced by "desktop publishing" using home computers. It was a lot of fun while it lasted.

I don't remember when I last saw Earl – maybe twenty-five years ago. He lived his last years in Mexico, and occasionally gave me a phone call. But I never really knew what he was doing or how he made his living. And now he's gone. R.I.P.

The title should have warned me – but I was more than halfway through Lisa's "Evicting a Tenant" before I realized she was talking about capturing a mouse alive so it could be dumped somewhere else.

When I was a child in a crowded Chicago slum, mousetraps were for killing and nothing else. When the mouse jiggled the bait, it released a spring that drove a metal bar that swung over and broke the mouse's neck. One of my mother's morning duties was to drop the dead bodies out of the traps into the toilet for

flushing. We thought it a big improvement when we got a trap that had four separate baits and springs so it could kill four mice without resetting. The mice were not smart enough to be scared off by dead bodies already in the trap.

My family and neighbors would have been astonished — and probably disgusted — at the idea of capturing a mouse alive and then liberating it somewhere else. And they would have thought it a dirty trick to play on the people living at the “somewhere else.”

We dropped it off at an abandoned office building.

— JTM

When you are poor, and mice compete directly with you for food, and their gnawing and droppings spoil food even if they don't eat it, it is war to the hilt.

This reminds me of an anecdote about author George O. Smith, who was writing in the 1940's. He boasted that he had smuggled a dirty joke past Kay Tarrant, who was John W. Campbell's reputedly prudish editorial assistant at Astounding Science Fiction. He accomplished this feat in one of his stories by referring to “the original ball-bearing mouse-trap — a tomcat.” She missed the double meaning.

Taras Wolansky, in “Isaac Asimov Signs an Autograph,” tells how Asimov would sneakily cop a feel on women. Taras asks, “Because, like Harvey Weinstein, Asimov would occasionally make the appropriate feminist noises, are we to give him a pass on his actual behavior toward women. What do you think?” Since Asimov can no longer be held to account, I don't worry about that — although I suppose we could demand that his name be stricken from the magazine.

Apropos, I've heard that Karl Marx, when speaking English, would refer to black people by the “N-word.” But I have never noticed any present-day Marxists saying that he and all his works should therefore be cast into outer darkness. Apparently political correctness can stretch enough to excuse malefactors if they are on the right — that is, the Left — side. So I will let Asimov's memory pass unscathed.

Lloyd Daub and Taras Wolansky offer answers to my question as to why humans are sexually dimorphic, with men generally being substantially bigger and stronger than women. Mr. Daub notes that “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.” As to why this trait still persists, “Women seem to like it that way.”

Mr. Wolansky has quite a different take.

He suggests that smaller women have had a breeding advantage over bigger women because they need less food for themselves, and so can spare more to pass on to their children. Now that's something I would never have thought of — but it could be! Evolution can work in mysterious ways.

From: **Taras Wolansky** April 1, 2020
Post Office Box 698, Kerhonkson, NY
12446-0698 USA
twolansky@yahoo.com

Thanks for the April 2020 issue.

Next to my shelf of Read-Once Heinlein, I'm starting a shelf of Read-Never Heinlein.

Lisa: “There were two kinds there, fancy companion rats which behaved in entertaining ways and feeder rats.” Um, good eatin'?

Rodford Edmiston: I enjoyed your latest installment.

Timothy Lane: Why didn't the Germans adopt the Soviet practice of having separate spy networks that don't know about each other? While that occasionally led to embarrassments like Alger Hiss and Noel Field trying to recruit each other, it's still good practice in case of one of the networks being betrayed.

Yes: “SNOW'S [Arthur Owens] organisation was used to pay SUMMER [Goesta Caroli], thus suggesting that it was in German eyes the safest, if not the only, source for such payments. TRICYCLE [Dusko Popov], in order to prove his bona fides, told us he had been given the name of the best and most secret of German agents here. He then produced the name and address of GIRAFFE [Georges Graf]!” J. C. Masterman, *The Double-Cross System*

Robert S. Kennedy: One major flaw in the ending of *The Good Place* was the idea that people take the exit “when they're ready”. The question is, are the people who love them ready for them to go as well?

Of course, it's impossible to depict what people would be like after living an indefinite number of years. I'm not sure they would seem human any more.

John Purcell: “a place where everybody could sit, enjoy, sip, eat, and kibbutz to their hearts' content”. Isn't that what we call, “Israel”?

George W. Price: I think you're right. Before the industrial revolution, women worked just as hard, but they weren't paid anything. When they were young it was duty to their parents, and then duty to their husbands.

“Did Hitler think of himself as a ‘fascist’?” Definitely not. The fascists were the junior partners.

Lloyd G. Daub: “The FDA, alas, is of the ‘prove it works’ school.” A while back, *Discover Magazine* told the story of how the FDA

got additional power in the wake of the thalidomide panic. US regulations actually worked correctly; that is, the drug was never approved for use. It's just that people coming back from Europe brought it back with them, and a few deformed babies were born as a result.

But in any case, if the point was to make safety regulations more strict, why did the FDA get additional power to override your doctors' judgment?

Joe: “It seems to me they believe that it was all Gorbachev and besides the Soviet Union wasn't *really* socialist.” And that's not all. After the fall of the Soviet Union, I remember the *New York Times* would frequently run articles about how some particular people were better off before!

I've figured out why socialism is a doctrine invulnerable to refutation. For its adherents, “nice people doing good things” is part of the *definition* of socialism. As a result, when they would belatedly learn that a particular country they had always accepted as socialist (e.g., the USSR) wasn't as much “nice people doing good things” as they had thought, they would instantly come to the obvious conclusion: “that's not socialism”.

That's the “No True Scotsman” fallacy.

— JTM

At the conclusion of *Earth Abides* (1949), George R. Stewart posits that a steep decline in population density will — magically! — result in an illiterate, hunter gatherer society. Of course, if that were true, then the survivors of the Plymouth Colony should have forgotten how to read and write.

Stewart may have been overly enamored of the naive, utopian view of pre-Columbian North America, leaving out all the mass murder, genocide, torture, cannibalism, gang rape, and enslavement.

BTW, I started reading Leigh Brackett's Retro-Hugo nominated novel. Perhaps not surprisingly — it's her first novel, and it's published in one of the inferior pulps — the writing is sub-literate.

What I found interesting, though, was the thumbnail bio she provided, published at the back of the same magazine. It struck me, we're supposed to think of women in 1944 as victims, but she didn't come across that way in her own account.

WAHF:

Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.

Cathy Palmer-Lister, who only recognized two names on the Hugo list.

Sue Burke, who doesn't want to get it any more.

ON THE PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE

... The car was by the road, with the hood up and the driver fumbling around with the engine. Calvin pulled to a stop behind the car and got out.

"Officer Morrison, Pennsylvania State Police," he said. "Do I need to call a wrecker?"

The man looked up at him. He seemed normal enough, but there was a sly look of adventure in his eyes. Long trip? But he only said, "I'm nursing it along. Is there a garage at the next exit?"

"Yeah." Morrison paused. There was something about him.

"You a vet?" he said.

"Korea."

"I drove a tank across the Rhine, in the big war. Oh, Paul Finnegan. Thanks, officer. You going to patrol along this stretch? If this thing breaks down for good, I may have to take you up on that offer."

Calvin looked into the car. The dark-haired woman there in the passenger seat was beautiful, but she looked put out. "I ought to call one anyway. Looks like the lady is tired."

"Oh, she's not tired! I can take care of her!"

Calvin went back to his cruiser, called in the stop, and drove off.

... It was about a month later. There was another car by the road, a strange futuristic one of unpainted steel. An older man was standing behind the car, tending to something.

Calvin pulled up in front of them, got out and went back. A young man sitting in the passenger seat said, "Doc! It's a cop!"

The older man went forward to meet him. "Officer?" he said. "Is there a problem?"

"Officer Morrison, Pennsylvania State Police. You're the one who'd know. Is there?"

The man shrugged. "It's an experimental engine. I think it's all right, but it has been overheating. Marty, the man is trying to help us. And I'm Emmett Brown. Need to see my I.D., Officer Morrison?"

"Not unless you're doing something illegal." He wondered why the boy laughed.

... towards the end of the summer, Calvin saw two people walking besides the turnpike. They might be hit, so he pulled up ahead of them and waited for them to catch up.

One was an older man, rather formally dressed — perhaps overdressed for walking by the highway. The other was a young woman.

When they came up to his cruiser he got out. "Officer Morrison, Pennsylvania State Police. Has your vehicle broken down?"

The old man said, "No. We're just taking a walk around, constable, my granddaughter and I." He sounded very British.

"Better be careful. You might be hit by a car."

"I'll keep an eye out. Thank you, sir."

The granddaughter was looking into the woods. Calvin got into his cruiser, but before he did, he looked in that direction. Odd. There was a flash of blue among the trees. He drove away as the two of them stood by the road, watching him go.

... the car's registration had almost expired, so Calvin pulled them over. There was an older man, a young woman, and two babies. The man was muttering, "I've got to get away from them, I've got to get away from them, I've got to get away from them," over and over again.

"Officer Morrison, Pennsylvania State Police. Are you aware your registration is about to expire?"

"We don't care," the woman said. Calvin was about to respond when the babies woke up and started crying.

"I'll escort you to the rest stop," he said. "Get some rest, something to eat, and do something about that licence plate."

"It won't matter," the man said. But he put the car in gear and followed Calvin to the rest stop.

Curious, Calvin checked in the next morning. The clerk remembered them. "They paid with silver dollars, two big rolls of them. Said something about not wanting to be eaten. They slept in the car, and took off at sunrise."

For the next few days Calvin wondered if they had run into trouble. Then he got called off road patrol duty to hunt down an escaped killer, and the whole matter became irrelevant.

— Not by H. Beam Piper and others.
(Can you guess?)

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

This is issue **Whole Number One Hundred and Eleven (111)**.

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

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

Material in *Alexiad* is copyright © 2020. All rights reserved. Upon publication, all rights revert to the original contributor, but we reserve the right to use any item more than once, unless otherwise specified by the contributor. All letters sent to *Alexiad* become the property of the publishers. Any material by the editors is available to other fanzines if they provide proper credit and send a copy.

Available for The Usual (letter of comment, trade, contribution). Sample issue available upon request. Back issues \$1; subscription \$10/year. *Alexiad* is also available by email in Adobe Acrobat .pdf format.

ALEXIAD

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major

1409 Christy Avenue

Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA

jtmajor@iglou.com

<http://efanzines.com/Alexiad/index.htm>