

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

I knew that there was a chance I might experience a pandemic someday but always thought of it as happening in some distant year. Unless you've been living in a Tibetan cave you know that year is now. One hundred and two years after the horrible 1918 flu, a new disease threatens.

Audible offers free books for children. I cheat and listen to them. *Screwtape Letters* by CS 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.

So far this new epidemic is not as bad as that of 1918. At least I have not yet seen trucks rolling through my neighborhood to collect the dead. I worry about my father, who at age 95 is in the high risk category.

Sister in law Julie is kind enough to send us face masks much more comfortable than the one 33Metro HR gave me before sending me home. I offer to buy the library terrarium but the boss tells me just to take it and bring it back when I can. It takes three of us to wrestle it into the car. We are very fortunate when we get to the house that a very strong UPS employee takes pity on us and carries it into the house for us.

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. Further research shows a promising company called Orbital Sciences, its stock going for 28.85 per share. I will have to think on this.

— Lisa

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Comments are by JTM or LTM

The 146th Running of the Kentucky Derby will be **September 5, 2020**. Authentic won in a race without spectators. No Triple Crown this year, among other bad things.

The 145th Running of the Preakness Stakes will be **October 3, 2020**.

The 152nd Running of the Belmont Stakes was **June 20, 2020**. The distance was shortened to a mile and one-eighth, and the race was run without spectators. Tiz the Law won by four lengths.

The 95th Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 8, 2020** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Ramona Hill won, one of eighteen fillies which have won the Hambletonian.

The 66th Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York was canceled.

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.

The 66th Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **August 8, 2020** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Tall Dark Stranger put on a blazing finish to win, while Captain Kirk came in third.

The 65th Running of the Messenger Stakes (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York was canceled.

The 75th Running of the Little Brown Jug (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) is **September 24, 2020** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio.

Trivia: . . . . . 15

Art:  
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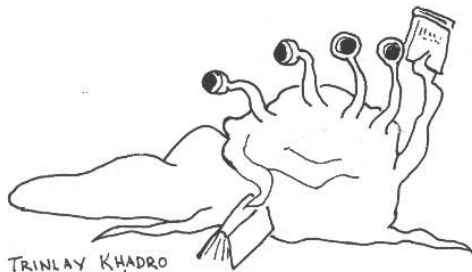
## Reviewer's Notes

I regret this issue is so late, but I had computer problems. Also car problems, which delayed getting the computer problems solved. And you don't want to hear about the front door doorknob!

— 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](https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B01BMIC4MU?ref=pe_1724030_132998070)

— Advt.

Australia is retiring its icebreaker, *Aurora Australis*. The ship was launched in 1989 and has been in regular service to the Australian Antarctic stations. There is some controversy over a proposed sale of the ship to Argentina, with people trying to get her designated a National Heritage museum.

The replacement ship, the *Nuyina* (the Aboriginal name for the *Aurora Australis*), built by a Dutch firm in Romania, has been launched but is having delays finishing.

Meanwhile, the icebreaker USCGC *Healy* (WAGB-20) has suffered a motor fire while operating off the coast of Alaska. (She has diesel-electric propulsion.) The *Healy* will be out of service for an undetermined time for repairs.

She was built at Avondale Shipyards on the Mississippi River north of New Orleans, traversing the Northwest Passage en route to her homeport of Seattle. On September 5, 2015, the *Healy* reached the North Pole.

The coronavirus epidemic is severely restricting British Antarctic research. This year's British Antarctic Survey summer stay-over group, instead of staging through Buenos Aires, will sail down directly on the RRS *James Clark Ross*. This will restrict their stayover to the Rothera base on Adelaide Island, off the coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. The Halley Bay Station, which is closed for the winter, will not be staffed. There will be an attempt to refuel the generators from the stock of fuel at the base.

A group of architects has launched a crowdfunding to build a full-size Minas Tirith in England. The leader, Jonathan Wilson, estimates the costs as £15 million for land,

£188 million for labor, and £1.4 billion for materials. Contributors can receive varying rewards up to being made a Lord or Lady of the City with the use of a horse-drawn carriage there, for a contribution of £100,000. At last report the fund has raised pledges of £52,786.

In response a group calling itself Destroy Minas Tirith is trying to raise £1 million to demolish the place, with contributors being labeled Orcs. Isn't it illegal to solicit vandalism? These days, probably not.

After far too long, the fifth book in the stories of Menandros and Sostratos, the Hellenistic Traders, is coming out. *Salamis* will be released on November 11, 2020 in paperback and Kindle. Chaire!

The *Daily Planet* is no longer being produced in Metropolis. Metropolis, Illinois, that is. And actually, it's been a weekly for a while. The paper will be printed in Paducah, Kentucky. The *Daily Planet* globe (yes, they actually had one, courtesy of the Super Museum) has been relocated to the park with the Lois Lane statue. Look! Up in the sky! No, it's not a frog!

## OBITS

This hasn't been a good year for survivors, as **Susan Ellison**, Harlan's widow, died on August 1, 2020. And **Roberta Pournelle**, Jerry's widow, died on August 2, 2020.

## MONARCHICAL NEWS

**King Juan Carlos I** of Spain has gone into exile over a tax matter. He was declared immune from ordinary prosecution after his move to Yuste (his version) but evidently the tax man gets everyone. He has allegedly been seen in the United Arab Emirates.

## HUMOR RISK

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**GIRAFFES ON HORSEBACK SALAD:**  
*Salvador Dalí, The Marx Brothers, and the Strangest Movie Never Made*

by Josh Frank, Tim Heidecker, and Maneula Pertega

Based on a treatment by Salvador Dalí  
(2019; Quirk Books;  
ISBN 978-1594749230; \$29.99;  
Quirk Books (Kindle); \$4.99)

Salvador Dominigo Felipe Jacinto Dalí i Doménech, Marqués de Dalí de Púbol, was well known for his strange attitudes. One of the more commonplace of them was his admiration for els Germans Marx. As when he gave a harp with barbed-wire strings to Harpo.

In this case, he also prepared a movie treatment for the Brothers. This is clearly the most eccentric (and of course surrealistic) proposed Marx Brothers work, and this category includes *Deputy Seraph*. Not that it could have been

filmed, any more than *A Day at the U.N.*, though this is nothing to do with Chico's health.

In the first introduction, Frank describes his quest for the movie treatment. He was surprised and pleased to finally get his hands on the forty pages of ideas. Then it had to be realized.

The story of the Spanish aristocrat Jimmy (Harpo) and his quest for the Surrealist Woman, never seen, yet capable of changing tawdry reality into surrealist wonder is exotic and wacky. And considering that the tawdry reality includes Groucho and Chico, that's an amazing thrilling wonder.

## ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE

Review by Joseph T Major of

**AFTER HASTINGS**

by Steven H Silver

(2020; 1632, Inc. (Kindle); \$5.99)

This is a novel of dynastic intrigue, the sort of thing that has been around for a while but has become more popular because of *Game of Thrones*. Except . . .

Except that it's set in the aftermath of Harold of England's victory over Duke William the Bastard. And Silver's great trick is that he assumes his point of departure, then works with its results against the established historical background.

Thus we have the struggle with the Pope for religious supremacy in Angle-land. To which Harold makes a surprising end-run, with interesting future consequences.

And the family struggle, for it was a wonderful thing to be a king, and often brothers loved each other like a brother, you know, Cain and Abel? (There's an observation set in amber.)

It's a familiar political struggle, but set in a different world, yet working according to the dynamics of the world outside the point of departure. Quite an interesting work.

(Some people may have trouble with the pure Old English names. And yet they endure the even more contorted names of David Weber's Safehold books.)

## PIGPILE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**GREAT WAR 1898 CRISIS TO QUAGMIRE**

by Jack Moore

(2020; Moore Art Ga;  
ISBN 978-1734618945; \$12.99  
Amazon.com Services LLC; \$3.99)

The last years of the nineteenth century saw several conflicts, not connected. In South Africa, the Boer republics fought the British Empire and in spite of victories, eventually lost. In China, the Righteous Fists of Harmony sought to expel the foreigner and restore the throne, only to discover that kung fu fighting is ineffective against people who have got the Maxim gun, and you do not. And in Cuba and

later the Philippines, the sun finally set on the Spanish empire, *Plus Ultra* becoming again *Non Plus Ultra*.

Now, bring these closer together, and stir in a couple more developments. In America, though Lee won the battle of Gettysburg, the Civil War Between the States stagnated for another year and a half, until Lincoln was voted out and George McClellan voted in; needing some time to rebuild the army (his field latrines were one-holers for reasons of his personal sanitation) he signed a peace treaty. Meanwhile in France, in 1889, the populist of the day General Georges Boulanger seems to have decided his mistress would do better in a bed in the Elysee Palace, and took power in France, bent on revanchisme and gloire.

And then, in 1898, Confederate President Joseph Wheeler decided to buy Cuba. Before long, the nations of the world had chosen up sides and begun fighting. And it was a *world war*, with conflict across the globe.

While this is written as a history, there are some striking points. For example, the Confederates built fortifications all along the northern border of Tennessee. Then they did a lousy Reb trick; they planted them in kudzu. "Will it grow?" Silly question! The invading Union army had to use weedcutters even before they got to the fortifications.

Or, when with a totally improvised Imperial force, Herbert Horatio Kitchener stages a raid on a Boer supply port — in Portuguese East Africa. The order of battle is enough to drive a bloke mad, what with all the peoples involved.

In Europe, by a strange alignment, along with a failure to invade Belgium, Germany finds itself allied with Britain. The nightmares of Capitane Danrit [Emile Driant], M. Boulanger's son-in-law, author of many novels about the brutal invasion of France by les anglo-saxons et/ou les boche, are now coming true.

The ensuing world war is reminiscent of the world war of *The Angel of the Revolution* (1893; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 15 #4) without The Terror to save the day. And what happens next? See *Great War 1898: Total War* (2020), the thrilling sequel.

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### INVASION

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**SEALION DROWNING**  
by Jon Zakon

(2020; Amazon.com Services LLC; \$2.99)

The trend seems to be swinging against Sealion-successful novels. The long progression of pointing out that the Germans did not have the transports, the escorts, or the air support, and could not get resupplied even if they did get there, have worked out.

But in this case we have a British Army expert noting this at the time. Which works its way up to Churchill, who proposes that they let the Germans land and *then* wipe out

the Kriegsmarine and supply barges. Result, hundreds of thousands of German prisoners, glorious victory for Old England, and humiliation for old Adolf.

And so it works out. This is an interesting variation on the plan. But recall, one of the very first Sealion stories was "If Hitler Had Invaded England" by "C. S. Forester", which showed the same weaknesses in the German plan. Too late for our expert, who noticing a similar German redeployment to the east is sent to Moscow to make a final appeal to Stalin to prepare for a German invasion. Only to find out that Stalin doesn't like people who disagree with him, even if they are right . . .

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### HORTEN HEARS A WHO

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**MY ENEMY'S ENEMY**  
by Robert Buettner  
(2019; Baen; ISBN 978-1982124816;  
\$8.99; Baen (Kindle); \$6.99)

One of the plagues of discussing WWII history is the Napkinwaffe. German arms designers spent the final years of the war working up plans for exotic superweapons. The design staffs, not wanting to become icicles on the Russian Front (thus General Albert Hans Burkhalter), worked enthusiastically, and the more workers they had the more designers got status. This was how we got the weapon designs described in *My Tank Is Fight!* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #4).

Among these was the Horten Ho-229, a jet-powered flying wing fighter-bomber designed by the brothers Reiman and Walther Horten. It had a maximum speed of 600 miles per hour. The one surviving Ho-229 is at the National Aviation and Space Museum, under restoration. After the Horten brothers were taken off this project, they went on to design a strategic bomber, the Horten H.XVIII.

This is mixed news to German physicist Peter Winter. He is granted an interview with the Reichsführer-SS, and not to explain why he is engaged in illegal race-mixing. It seems that besides the Ahnenerbe, Himmler has ideas about "Jewish physics", and wanting to beat the Reichspost, wants to set up a nuclear weapons project of his own. Winter, reluctantly, agrees.

An era later and a ocean away, aviation historian Cassidy Gooding follows the story of a strange flight of a Horten H.XVIII. There is competition, as an austere religious scholar sends an expert off to follow up the story too, just moments before he gets blasted into the waiting arms of 72 black-eyed virgins by a precision guided munition.

And so the three tracks develop. The secret *Kernwaffe* is developed, the developer figuring out just the right way to do it, while the Hortens' *Amerikabomber* proceeds to being operational. In the present, the historian and the cowboy who knows the area try to find out what is in that lake. And the activist knows; his problem is getting to it.

But it turns out that there are diverse and

complicated links in this situation, and as the action develops to a climax, some dreadful sacrifice (anyone remember the train tunnel in *Atlas Shrugged?*).

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### THEY CALL ME TRINITY

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**TRINITY:**  
**The Treachery and Pursuit of the Most  
Dangerous Spy in History**  
by Frank Close  
(2019; Allen Lane; ISBN 978-0241309834;  
Penguin (Kindle); \$16.49)

Robert J. Sawyer does not have Klaus Fuchs in his *The Oppenheimer Alternative* (2020; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 19 #3). Yet, from the presentation of him in this book, he would seem to have been a prime recruit for their desperate quest, a man of deep and notable scientific skill. There were, however, *issues* . . .

Emil Klaus Julius Fuchs was born in Leipzig in 1911, to a very strict Lutheran pastor. He studied physics and joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany, along with its paramilitary wing the *Reichsbanner*. In 1932 he was expelled from the SPD and joined the Communist Party. Somewhat sensibly, shortly thereafter he went to Britain, where he earned both a Ph.D. and a Sc.D. However, he did not become a British subject — which proved embarrassing when war broke out. He was interned.

However, his physics degree and connections (including Rudolf Peierls) got him released, then sent to work on Tube Alloys. Which in turn got him sent to the States.

He met there a guy who just wanted to be helpful. This was Harry Gold, who just wanted to be helpful to the Soviet Union. Fuchs did his best to fulfill party doctrine, sending information to the Socialist Motherland.

Then the project ended and Fuchs went back to Britain, where he got involved in the development of a British atom bomb. There were issues.

The Security Service had information about an Agent CHARLZ in the ENORMOZ Manhattan Engineering District. By process of elimination they settled of Fuchs, and then set out to get his activity proved by some method which was not classified.

At this point in the book the author seems to go off the rails. He downgrades the MI5 interrogator Jim Skardon who got Fuchs to confess. He repeats unverified rumors about J. Edgar Hoover being a homosexual. And worst of all, he gives a portrayal of Lord Justice Goddard, the judge who sentenced Fuchs, which is based on someone who had a vindictive denunciation, not quite in accordance with other observations.

Worse yet, he says that Fuchs's spying was over and done and he should have been left in British weapons research, since he was so important. (Other sources discount Fuchs's importance in the organization.)

After doing time, Fuchs went to East Germany, got an academic position there, and died in 1988, just too soon to have them come and get him again.

This is a partly informative, seriously flawed book about a very real spy who on the MICE scale of reasons for spying came in at 1 for Ideology (MICE: Money Ideology Compromise Ego).

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### OVER THE ICE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE IMPOSSIBLE FIRST:**

**From Fire to Ice — Crossing Antarctica Alone**

by Colin O'Brady

(2020; Scribner; ISBN 978-19821333115; \$28.00; Scribner (Kindle); \$14.99)

One could say that O'Brady was cheating. He crossed over the land part of the Antarctic, ending his trip at the foot of a glacier that emptied into the Ross Ice Shelf. And people have accused him of being a publicity hog (as when he participated with five rowers in a row from South America to Antarctica, though he was apparently no good at rowing). Or when he decided to climb Denali in the hundred hours after he summited Everest, in his quest to climb eight of the Seven Summits (actually there are nine of them) in the shortest time.

Even given these issues, the journey was difficult enough. O'Brady recounts the results of his decisions, most of which seem to have been close to catastrophic. The effort required to make the trip was extreme. This seems to be the point of most such journeys these days; since all the places have been reached, the way to get notice is to do it in a more extreme fashion. In this case, man-hauling across the (land) of the continent.

But before travel comes paying for it all. Now sponsorship is a deep-seated part of expeditions, as anyone who has seen the map of Northern Greenland with the names of the capes written in by their namesakes, nomenclature courtesy of Robert E. Peary, will attest. (Strangely enough, the capes have not been renamed, though I wonder how long that will last.) O'Brady went all out in soliciting sponsorship, and got one with deep pockets.

Then he had to prepare. Man-hauling may be more macho, as the late Henry Robertson Bowers believed, but it is also extremely hard on the body. The hauler has to consume enough calories to get through the day; a figure cited is 10,000 calories, about five times what a normal day's meals should be. Some explorers have gone so far as to eat sticks of butter; O'Brady had homemade energy bars.

And then he set out. One little problem. On the plane down to Antarctica he had a fellow passenger, Kevin Rudd, who had the same idea. Perforce, thanks to the wonders of modern communications technology, it became a race.

O'Brady at least had the advantage that he

could march through blizzards, though the prospect of falling down a crevasse always awaited. His equipment broke down under pressure, he had eaten two days' energy bars in one go, and he was always worrying about Rudd. Nevertheless, he managed to beat Rudd to the edge of the Ross Ice Shelf, called for pickup, and they went back north together.

Nowadays such treks are journeys of self-fulfillment and endurance. It seems amazing that men can do that much and live. (But some, like Henry Worsley, don't.)

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### ROCKS AND FOSSILS

By Lisa

I am waiting for Joe in the Verizon parking lot. It is hot and I get bored so I begin inspecting the rocks in their parking lot. I see several interesting one before my gaze falls on a startling one. I think it cannot possibly be what it looks like. Curious, I bend over and pick it up. It is exactly what my glance said it was, one of the best fossils if not the best I have ever seen lying loose in a pile of rocks. I show a Verizon staff member what I have found in the Verizon rocks and he tells me to hang on to it, so I do. I think it is a crinoid but time spent with a library book on fossils proves me wrong about that. It is not a crinoid, it is a fossilized coral. And get this, fellow fans, it is known as rugose coral. The one I found matches the picture in the book perfectly so what I have is just about textbook perfect.

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### CAT WATCHING

by Lisa

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 then relax. 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.

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### BACK TO WORK

by Lisa

On June 1 I get called back to Southwest,

one of the big regional libraries. It is a long, scenic drive out there. Southwest is an impressive library. It is incredibly light and airy and very modern. Plants here would need no grow lights. Just park them along one of the long rows of glass and water them whenever they needed it. The other staff members are nice and if not for the cost of gas I could be sorely tempted to stay. It is good to be useful again and to be able to serve patrons again even though we are limited to curbside pickup.

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The Joy of High Tech  
by Rodford Edmiston



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

Please note that while I am an engineer (BSCE) and do my research, I am not a professional in this field. Do not take anything here as gospel; check the facts I give. If you find a mistake, please let me know about it.

### Slow Progress

Glaciologists sometimes place a line of poles across a glacier and photograph (and these days even keep track of the positions using GPS) their movement through time. This is largely to show how the center of the ice flow moves more quickly than the edges. Is there a place on Earth where zones of tectonic plates moving with respect to each other could have poles driven into the bedrock to directly and visibly demonstrate the movement?

We would need a location with little overlying debris. This requirement eliminates the Mariana Trench, which has arguably the fastest subduction zone on Earth; it has a thick layer of sludge and a vastly thicker layer of water. That's a shame, in some ways, because the area is very interesting due to far more than its depth. The Trench is crescent-shaped and measures about 2,550 kilometers in length and 69 kilometers in width. The maximum known depth is 10,984 meters at the southern end of a small slot-shaped valley in its floor, a place known as the Challenger Deep. This entire Trench is caused by the Pacific Plate sliding under the Mariana Plate. The rate of subduction in the Trench is 39 to 51 millimeters per year.

This speed is due to the material at the western edge of the Pacific Plate being some of the oldest oceanic crust on earth (up to 170 million years old). It is, therefore, cooler and denser than the higher-riding (and younger) Mariana Plate. Its greater density literally pulls the Pacific Plate under the Mariana Plate. This geologic activity has been going on for over fifty million years. However, the location is not easy to visit.

No, for our purposes the location must be easily to reach and clearly visible. It must also be a place where the subduction is proceeding quickly enough to produce an observable result in a few years (a typical rate of plate boundary movement is measured in millimeters per year with a large spread of variation, so finding a place which is fast and visible enough shouldn't be a major problem) and the movement be at least somewhat steady on this time scale.

I doubt there would be a scientific justification for this, but it would be cool to watch in time-lapse. As it turns out, there may be just such a place.

The Beaufort Range thrust fault is in the upper part of the Cascadia Thrust System. There's a nicely-exposed section of the fault in a cut through a hill on highway BC-4, east-northeast of Alberni, Cascadia. There are even concrete subduction-survey markers already in place on either side. (I haven't heard if there is any time-lapse photography of these.) The eastern, overthrust, side is rising at around 11 millimeters per year. Now, this is, indeed, an active fault, and around 300 years have lapsed since the last big rupture, with 58 years since the last significant aftershock. So the strain is definitely accumulating. Which means there could be a sudden movement at any time. For now, though, the movement is fairly smooth.

Eleven millimeters per year is far from a record speed for a fault, even on solid ground. The San Andreas slip-strike fault moves at more than 20 millimeters per year (about as fast as your fingernails grow) and as much as 25 millimeters per year in some places. Neither of those is anywhere near as fast as the fastest glaciers, of course. The middle parts of some of those move in multiple kilometers per year! However, that slow creep on some active faults is still fast enough to observe the relative movement in a human lifetime. Think about that. These faults move fast enough that humans can notice the change in the ground, and they sometimes need to take that movement into account. There are roads and buildings in California — including the storage warehouse for a winery — which need frequent repairs because they are built across a fault. There are even faster faults on land than those mentioned above, in various parts of the world. During an actual earthquake, when parts of a fault which have been hung catch up with the rest, movements can be tens of meters for a single event.

Though they're slower, faults can move across distances which dwarf typical glaciers. Which can cause problems when part of a long fault is moving smoothly and another part is hung on something. Which is the situation on the San Andreas Fault, as well as many others.

The Afar Triangle is a geologically active area in eastern Africa (in an area known as the Horn of Africa). It is the result of three tectonic plate junctions. It is a depression, a low spot in the terrain, and contains the lowest point in Africa. Lake Assal is 155 meters below sea level and one of the saltiest bodies of water on Earth. (The water is described as 'syrupy.') This depression is caused by the relative movements of the trio of plates. The area has long been very volcanic, and the floor of the depression is old lava, largely basalt. The ground is moving at about 20 millimeters a year on all three faults. The motion on the faults is mostly horizontal, but the whole area is also sinking.

In 2005, a giant rift opened during an eruption of the Dabbahu volcano. This volcano is on the rift which is part of the fault between the Arabian and African plates, and is caused by them moving apart. This new crack, 500 meters long and 60 meters deep, opened when magma from the erupting volcano flowed underground then cooled. It left a 60 kilometer long, 8 meter wide underground magma dike which formed within days. By the way, the Afar Depression is one of just two places on Earth where a mid-ocean ridge can be studied on land (the other being Iceland).

Probably coincidentally, the Afar Triangle was also home to some of our earliest ancestors and many distant cousins. Fossil bones of multiple species of early hominins are found there, as well as many early stone tools. Some paleontologists think the Afar area was the cradle of human evolution. Part of the reason the paleontological and archeological pickings are so rich there is that the geologic activity of the Afar Triangle has exposed ancient layers of rocks through much of the area.

The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden run along the northeast edge of the Triangle. Given that the land in the Triangle is slowly pulling apart and growing lower, it will soon (in geologic time) become filled with salt water and become an inland sea off the Indian ocean. There are already lakes in the area, as implied above. Dry salt beds are also found in some parts of the Triangle, indicating the area may have been flooded by oceans in the past. However, volcanos rising along the eastern part of the depression have blocked that access. Most of the water in the triangle subsequently dried, leaving the salt beds. The water in streams running into the area today tends to evaporate — on the ground or after entering one of the bodies of water there — adding to the mineral deposits. The Red Sea is expected to eventually wear another path through those eastern volcanos, and the depressed area will subsequently be flooded again in about 10 million years. (Note that the nearby Dead Sea is also in a depressed area caused by a fault system. So are many other bodies of

water around the world.)

One of the fastest moving faults is the Denali, in Alaska. Some parts of this are moving at about 50 millimeters a year. New Zealand's Alpine Fault moves as much as 38 millimeters a year. In some places the Pacific Plate is moving at up to 110 millimeters a year, but I believe that movement is in the center, well away from the faults at the plate boundaries.

The Teton fault in Yellowstone only moves about 1.3 millimeters per year. However, this movement is almost entirely vertical. Estimates of the age of the fault range from 2 million years to 13 million years. Whatever the actual age of the fault, it has raised the Teton Range, with most of that rise occurring over the past 2 million years. That's long enough for glaciers to have repeatedly impacted the movement of the fault. Note that while this entire area is prone to earthquakes, the Teton Fault — perhaps because its movement is vertical — contributes very little to this activity.

By the way, though Yellowstone is one of the most seismically active places in the continental US, this is mostly due to brittle failures of deep rocks from fault movement, with some being due to moving magma plumes and ground water flows. Not only are there no signs of the sort of seismic activity associated with the magma chamber deep under the park inflating, there's considerable evidence it is actually, if slowly, emptying. So for now there's no sign that the Yellowstone Caldera is heading for another eruption.

There is a long string of extinct volcanoes stretching across the US, with Yellowstone at the northeast end of the string and the only one still active. This has been going on for more than fifteen million years. Because the continent is moving with respect to the magma plume which causes these volcanoes, there is a good chance that — as with the Hawaiian Islands mentioned below — the plume is finished with Yellowstone and will soon (in geological time) surface somewhere else.

The very complicated geology of Yellowstone — of, in fact, the entire continent — is largely due to what we think of as the unified landmass of North America actually being the result of multiple tectonic plates jamming together. None of these plates — which come in a wide variety of sizes and ages — are moving in the exactly the same direction. In fact, we now know that the entire crust of the Earth — every piece of land and the bottoms of the oceans — is made of segments which are all moving with respect to the each other, and with respect to the Earth as a whole. In the long term, what we think of as solid ground is an illusion, as are fixed positions on the surface of the planet. Something which required the development of sensitive equipment to detect, and years of analysis to confirm.

Other worlds are or may be geologically active. Even the Moon may still have a molten core which occasionally burps gasses. However, the Earth is currently the only rocky body

we know of which has active plate tectonics. One reason Olympus Mons on Mars is so large is that the lack of active tectonic plate movement on that planet means that huge volcano is stuck over a magma plume. The Hawaiian Islands on Earth have some huge volcanoes (including the tallest mountain on Earth, if you measure from the seabed) but they aren't nearly that big. Plate tectonics is slowly moving the ocean floor across the magma plume which is responsible for the volcanos which make up the islands in this chain. The Hawaiian volcanoes grow for a while, then move too far from the plume, the volcanoes go extinct, and others form.

Some of the solid bodies in the outer solar system — including Pluto — may have similar heat-driven processes. However, those involve water ice — and maybe nitrogen ice — rather than what we think of as rock. Remember, on Pluto water ice is effectively rock, and is far more solid there than it is even at the south pole on Earth.

Shakespeare wrote of an inconstant Moon. As it turns out, much of the Earth is also inconstant. As may be many other supposedly solid bodies in the universe.

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#### WHAT ISOBEL DESERVES

Commentary on *Between Planets*  
(1951; NHOL G.095)  
by David M. Shea

I have read Heinlein's *Between Planets* many times over the years. It has become, in a phrase I borrowed previously, a "comfort book". And yet, there's something about it that bothers me.

Consider Isobel Costello. Admittedly she's a secondary character — though the only meaningful female character in the book — but bear with me. By the standards of colonial Venus, Isobel is from an upper class family. Her father is the local manager for an influential corporation. Isobel herself holds down a responsible position in the front office, dealing with customers. It's how she met the central character, Don Harvey.

Don is younger than Isobel; in fact his first impression is to think of her as "young lady" (chapter 8). At the time, Don is homeless, nearly penniless, of doubtful loyalty to the new government. Local security turned him loose in New London, to make his own way or starve as the case might be, only because it was less effort than locking him up.

All right, Don's parents are scholars of some note — two planets away. And he knows the prestigious dragon "Sir Isaac". But Isobel is not aware of these things. So lowly is his situation that finding a job washing dishes in a cheap diner, and sleeping on the floor there, is a considerable step up in lifestyle.

From time to time Don takes a couple hours off from the cafe and walks uptown. If sometimes he stops to see Isobel, it's largely because, aside from Old Charlie, she's the only person in town he knows. If her schedule

and his paltry funds permit, occasionally they go across the street and have a Coca-Cola. (There's a local bottling plant. Interesting assumption by the author.)

If Don trusted her with the ring, whom else could he have trusted? He saw it clearly as a friendly giving her a ring for personal purposes. He was just asking her to safeguard it, although neither had any idea how important it was. Isobel was certainly bright enough, though, not to have read anything more into it.

Even after SPOILER ALERT the invasion (chapter 11) when the Federation troops shove the population into a crowded detention center, Don looks for Isobel — but he still thinks of her as an "impetuous friend".

All this hardly fits the pattern of a romantic, boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. There's no indication Don thinks of it that way until the very last pages of the book (chapter 18). Yet it's pretty clear that Isobel is much more interested in him as a potential romantic/sexual partner. Why? By any normal standard he's not exactly a "catch". Nothing suggests he's strikingly good looking. He's not the proverbial "bad boy" that girls are supposed to find exciting; Don is actually rather a boring good boy. Hormones run amok? In bustling New London before the attack, there were surely plenty of young men from whom Isobel could pick and choose.

So why is Isobel so attracted to Don? "The heart wants what it wants"? Spare me the cliché. As a romantic relationship, the only person for whom it makes sense is the author. It's just a convenient plot subtext to make the story more appealing to the target (young white male) audience.

It's too pat, too predictable, too obvious. Dare call it a disservice to the character? Isobel deserves better. Long ago, I once asked a friend, an established writer, if she was not embarrassed to pry into the personal lives of her characters. She laughed and replied, "My characters are galley slaves. They do what I tell them to do." Even at the time I felt there was something profoundly wrong with that.

Characters have lives of their own. Captain Nemo and Frodo Baggins and Susan Calvin have long outlived their authors, and we still care about them. So, Isobel is a secondary character. Should we as readers not care about her, even a little?

[[Subscript: Certainly this was a familiar pattern in Heinlein stories of the time, within usual publishing standards. Thorby in *Citizen of the Galaxy* was taken aback when he learned that a member of the family into which he had been "adopted" wanted to marry him, even if Mata was no actual genetic relationship to him. Rod Walker in *Tunnel in the Sky* failed even to recognize Jackie Daudet as a girl! Boy characters were supposed to like girls, but also to lack sexual awareness . . . Times have changed. Our relation to characters has changed. We should treat them with respect. Even fictional people have rights.]]

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#### THE LAST SITCOM?

Review by Taral Wayne of  
**THE BIG BANG THEORY**  
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0898266/>

I was a very late convert to *The Big Bang Theory*. After several years of increasingly disappointing television fare, I had given up my cable access, and had no means to watch the few new programs that might appeal to me. Word of *The Big Bang Theory* reached me, somehow or other, but I hadn't watched any episodes until only three or four years ago. Someone eventually took pity on me, and sent me a couple of seasons on CDROM. Half of those wouldn't play on my DVD player. Nevertheless, I became intrigued ... even hooked.

I had not seen a great deal of *The Big Bang Theory* up to that point. When you consider that there have been twelve seasons, having the first couple of seasons, plus some of the last seasons, really didn't amount to being a dedicated watcher. Whether I wanted to become dedicated, however, was not an easy decision. It would cost good money to fill in the numerous blanks in my collection.

After a careful cost analysis, I finally bought the complete *The Big Bang Theory*. They were available at WalMart as either a single, compact boxed set, or two boxed sets of the individually packaged seasons. I chose the later for no particular reason. The alternative was to buy only those seasons I didn't have, but it didn't take advanced mathematical skills to discover that buying only the missing seasons would cost me just as much as buying the entire series at once. Buying the entire series would have the advantage of uniform packaging, and also leave me with a number of perfectly good duplicates that I could give to a friend. In fact, if I factored in taxes and Amazon's delivery charges, I might even save money.

So that's what I finally did. Whenever this lock-down is over, I'll give the five seasons I don't need to a friend for Christmas. Considering how long the lock-down may last, it may well be Christmas before I can do that.

In a way, *The Big Bang Theory* was the last, classical half-hour sitcom we will remember. The current fashion in television is not only pay-through-the nose, it is unrelievably serious, even grim. Murder and meth dealing. Corporate law. White House politics. The advertising game. Mob crime in turn-of-the century England. AIDS. Very funny stuff. . .

Oddly enough, I was not a fan of *Seinfeld*, though I thought of it as a spiritual predecessor to *Big Bang*. *Seinfeld* was famous as the sitcom that was about nothing. I watched it often enough to agree entirely. It was about nothing. Someone would be upset because they bought a matching sweater, or they didn't like a painting at an exhibition. The show was not altogether unfunny . . . but did they really need to pay writers for this sort of stream-of-consciousness nothing?

In every important way, *TBBT* was equally

lacking in any point you could put a finger on. For a show that lasted twelve years, there was remarkably little substance in it. Four geeks who work at the same university are friends. They play video games, Dungeons and Dragons, collect comic books and buy all kinds of *Star Trek* and other SF collectables that most grown men would probably have outgrown. I say “probably,” since most grown men have girlfriends who have likely forced them to give up their original juvenile passions. In the twelve seasons of *TBBT*, the geeks have largely resisted, but ... one by one Leonard, Howard, Raj and even Sheldon have had to compromise, and grow up at least enough to placate their better halves.

Originally, there was only one regular female character, Penny, who moved in next door to the apartment shared by Leonard and Sheldon. Unlike the boys, Penny is quite boringly normal. In the first show, Leonard is instantly smitten ... possibly because of two outstanding physical characteristics that can't summed up in a simple calculus.

The cast of characters expands, season by season, but invariably it follows one simple rule. Even when Amy turns out to be an even match for Sheldon's brains, and equally out of her depth in social encounters, she is still the more sensible and practical of the two. Every one of the boys is virtually is in a state of arrested development, and requires the guidance and superior wisdom of his girlfriend.

We have come to pretty much expect the popular sitcom platitude that all men are either hopelessly incompetent or stupidly evil, and all women are smart and practical mother-figures who are frustrated at every turn by their wayward charges. Gone are the Wicked Witches and poisoned apples. “A tad eccentric” is the worst that can be said of women in today's television fiction.

I have said that *TBBT* might as have been the *Friends* or *Seinfeld*, with some science gobbledegook added. At the end of the series, Sheldon Cooper finally won his Nobel prize in theoretical physics. But by no surprise, his breakthrough was only possible because of Amy, his partner in developing the theory. It was all the more remarkable in that Amy was a biologist, and not at all trained in string theory or cosmology. For that matter, the theory, as articulated on the show, was not just a little dodgy.

Of course, it would be an awful lot to expect a television show to produce a genuine scientific breakthrough.

While much was left wanting in the plots and writing in *The Big Bang Theory*, it was everything we could have wanted in legitimizing the geeks and nerds who make up so much of fandom. For once, it was cool to be uncool. If she show had no identifiable point most of the time, it was unfaillingly funny, and avoided smarminess.

A number of high-powered guests have shown eagerness to appear at least once on the show. Among them were Steven Hawking,

Kip Thorne and several other well known cosmologists, also science popularizers Neil De-Grasse Tyson and Bill Nye. William Shatner, Mark Hammil, Adam West, Stan Lee, Elon Musk, Brent Spiner, George Takei, Wil Wheaton, Bill Gates, Bob Newhart and Buzz Aldrin have all appeared on the show once or several times. If *TBBT* broke no theoretical ground among sitcoms, it certainly did so with the enthusiastic support of the world's most influential geeks!

In my opinion, the program may have gone on for too long. Even *Seinfeld* only lasted nine years, and *Star Trek the Next Generation* only lasted seven. In its day, the wildly acclaimed *Dick Van Dyke Show* was brought to a deliberate end after five seasons.

Still, now that *The Big Bang Theory* is only an echo of the original reverberation, we will always regard it as our last, real sitcom.

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#### RETRO-HUGO WINNERS

Courtesy of *File 770*

##### Best Novel

“Shadow Over Mars” [*The Nemesis from Terra*, by Leigh Brackett (*Startling Stories*, Fall 1941)]

##### Best Novella

“Killdozer!”, by Theodore Sturgeon (*Astounding Science Fiction*, November 1944)

##### Best Novelette

“City,” by Clifford D. Simak (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, May 1944)

##### Best Short Story

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

##### Best Series

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

##### Best Related Work

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

##### Best Graphic Story

*Superman: The Mysterious Mr. Mxyzptlk*, written by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, art by Ira Yarborough (Detective Comics, Inc.)

##### Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

*Heaven Can Wait*, written by Samson Raphaelson, directed by Ernst Lubitsch (20th Century Fox)

##### Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

*The Canterville Ghost*, screenplay by Edwin Harvey Blum from a story by Oscar Wilde, directed by Jules Dassin (MGM)

*The Curse of the Cat People*, screenplay by DeWitte Bodeen, directed by Gunther V. Fritsch and Robert Wise (RKO Radio Pictures)

##### Best Professional Editor, Short Form

John W. Campbell

##### Best Professional Artist

Margaret Brundage

##### Best Fanzine

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

##### Best Fan Writer

Fritz Leiber

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#### HUGO WINNERS

Courtesy of *File 770*

##### Best Novel

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

##### Best Novella

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

##### Best Novelette

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

##### Best Short Story

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

##### Best Series

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

##### “Best Related Work”

“2019 John W. Campbell Award Acceptance Speech”, by Jeannette Ng

Eastasia is at war with Oceania. Eastasia has always been at war with Oceania.

##### Best Graphic Story or Comic

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

#### Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

**Good Omens**, written by Neil Gaiman, directed by Douglas Mackinnon (Amazon Studios / BBC Studios/Narrativia/The Blank Corporation)

#### Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

**The Good Place: "The Answer"**, written by Daniel Schofield, directed by Valeria Migliassi Collins (Fremulon/3 Arts Entertainment/Universal Television)

#### Best Editor, Short Form

Ellen Datlow

#### Best Editor, Long Form

Navah Wolfe

#### Best Professional Artist

John Picacio

#### Best Semiprozine

*Uncanny Magazine*, editors-in-chief Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas, nonfiction/managing editor Michi Trota, managing editor Chimedum Ohaegbu, podcast producers Erika Ensign and Steven Schapansky

#### "Best Fanzine"

The Book Smugglers, editors Ana Grilo and Thea James

#### Best Fancast

**Our Opinions Are Correct**, presented by Annalee Newitz and Charlie Jane Anders

#### Best Fan Writer

Bogi Takács

#### Best Fan Artist

Elise Matthesen

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

*Catfishing on CatNet* by Naomi Kritzer (Tor Teen)

#### Astounding Award for Best New Writer,

sponsored by Dell Magazines (not a Hugo)

R.F. Kuang (2nd year of eligibility)

DRAGON AWARDS  
Courtesy of *File 770*

#### 1. Best Science Fiction Novel

*The Last Emperox* by John Scalzi

#### 2. Best Fantasy Novel (Including Paranormal)

*The Starless Sea* by Erin Morgenstern

#### 3. Best Young Adult / Middle Grade Novel

*Finch Merlin and the Fount of Youth* by Bella Forrest

#### 4. Best Military Science Fiction or Fantasy Novel

*Savage Wars* by Jason Anspach & Nick Cole

#### 5. Best Alternate History Novel

*Witchy Kingdom* by D. J. Butler

#### 6. Best Media Tie-In Novel

*Firefly – The Ghost Machine* by James Lovegrove

#### 7. Best Horror Novel

*The Twisted Ones* by T. Kingfisher

#### 8. Best Comic Book

*Avengers* by Jason Aaron, Ed McGuinness

#### 9. Best Graphic Novel

*Battlestar Galactica Counterstrike* by John Jackson Miller, Daniel HDR

#### 10. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy TV Series

*The Mandalorian* – Disney+

#### 11. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Movie

*Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* by J. J. Abrams

#### 12. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy PC / Console Game

*Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* – Respawn Entertainment & Electronic Arts

#### 13. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Mobile Game

*Minecraft Earth* – Mojang Studios & Xbox Game Studios

#### 14. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Board Game

*Tapestry* – Stonemaier Games

#### 15. Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Miniatures / Collectible Card / Role-Playing Game

**Magic: The Gathering: Throne of Eldraine** – Wizards of the Coast

WORLDCON BIDS

2023

Chengdu  
August, 2023

<http://www.worldconinchina.com/index-e.html>

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

New Orleans  
(On hiatus)

2024

Glasgow  
August 8-12, 2024  
<http://glasgow2024.org/>

2025

Seattle  
Mid-August 2025

Brisbane, Australia

2026

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia  
<https://jeddicon.com/>

WORLDCON

2021

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

And now it looks like the Washington Marriott Wardman park, the main convention hotel, may be closed.

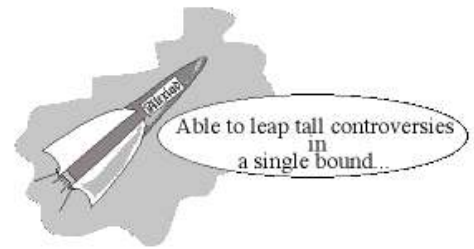
2022

Chicon 8  
Chicago  
September 1-5, 2022  
<http://www.chicon.org>

Chicago, 517 votes (94%)  
Jeddah, 33 votes (6%)  
Whew!



Letters, we get letters



From: **Grant C. McCormick** June 16, 2020  
 Clifton Oaks Care Center, 446 Mount Holly Ave Unit 106-1, Louisville KY 40206-2125 USA  
[grantmccormick@gmail.com](mailto:grantmccormick@gmail.com)

Received *Alexiad* #111 today, and found it most enjoyable. I particularly liked Lisa's various comments on space programs, and "The Joy of High Tech" by Rodford Edmiston. His comments concerning what technology is were appropriate — I've been re-reading *Asimov's Guide to the Bible*, and had just hit Petra. My guess is that by 'no technology' the SF stories, shows, movies, etc., meant something on the order of 'no electronics' or the equivalent. This reminds me of Larry Niven's novella from the early 1970's, "The Fourth Profession," in which the aliens consider any species, country, etc., without space travel as sub-sapient.

Timothy Lane has one minor error in his letter concerning me — the convention where we met Asimov, and where he autographed my pocket computer (Asimov was doing commercials for Radio Shack at the time) was 1983's worldcon in Baltimore, Constellation. In 1989, I was trapped in Pensacola, Florida, on the Pacer Automotive project, while Timothy went wafting off to the worldcon.

Life in a time of Covid-19 here at Clifton Oaks Care Center has been isolating. We've been in a bubble here since before St. Conan's Day (March 8 — I never found out which St. Conan I was named after, so I chose the one whose feast day was my mother's birthday). No one allowed in except staff, and properly screened medical personnel. I imagine it's the same at Timothy's facility, St. Matthews Care Center, since they share common ownership and management. It's been confining, but we have no patients test positive, and only one staff member (who was caught before exposing residents). So far we've avoided the atrocities that Cuomo inflicted on New York State.

From: **Joy V. Smith** June 16, 2020  
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA  
[Pagadan@aol.com](mailto:Pagadan@aol.com)  
<http://www.joyvsmith.com/>

Thanks for all the reviews; they give me a

look at some of what's out there. (Impossible to keep up.)

I enjoyed watching the SpaceX launch. (I never thought that private companies could accomplish so much.)

Lisa, I'm sorry about your job at the library, but I'm glad you gave the terrarium a good home. Btw, I took some books to donate to our library the other day — it finally reopened — but they're not accepting books now, and to go inside, you need a mask and a temperature check. We dropped the books off at Salvation Army.



SHAKE WELL BEFORE TAKING

I enjoyed *The Joy of High Tech* and the differences between technology, knowledge, application, artifacts, punch cards, etc. (I'd forgotten about player piano rolls.) Interesting *Star Trek*, etc. reviews by Taras Wolansky also. More interesting info in the LOCs, and I was stunned to learn that "Uncle Hugo's Bookstore, and its companion store, Uncle Edgar's, were burned down in the [Minneapolis] rioting . . ." What a stupid waste! We had protests here — mostly peaceful, but sometimes violent . . .

I was never in lockdown personally; we shopped, and now that some of the restaurants are open for dine-in, we've eaten out a couple times. Before that it was pick-up and walking through the drive through lanes. (I'm glad I can go into the bank lobby again.)

We found that there were a number of places here in Louisville which delivered. But now they are open again, if on limited seating.

— JTM

Now everywhere I go there are changes and restrictions . . . It's interesting to read about

everyone's experiences at this point of history here.

From: **Ted Lapkin** June 25, 2020

I'll begin for expressing my appreciation for the review of *Righteous Kill*. Although I'm not quite familiar with 'Mysterious Martinus,' I interpreted the tenor of your review as largely positive. And for that I'm grateful. I'm glad you enjoyed the book.

Martin Padway of *Lest Darkness Fall* (*Unknown*, December 1939, 1941), a guy who sets out to save Gothic Italy from the ravages of Justinian's wars.

But as for my soi-disant lapse in research, the officer in question isn't "Ralph Davidson," but rather Major General Francis Davidson, Britain's Director of Military Intelligence from 1940 to 1944. Upon further investigation — post publication — I discovered that Davidson only assumed the post of DMI in mid-December 1940. So for the purposes of *Righteous Kill* I should have written in his predecessor, Major General Fredrick Beaumont-Nesbitt. My bad.

But Stewart Menzies was only a full colonel in 1940, reflecting the status of the SIS (later MI-6) as a subordinate department of the Directorate of Military Intelligence alongside MI5. As a major general post, the DMI (Beaumont-Nesbitt/Francis Davidson) was two ranks senior. Menzies and the SIS focused in Sigint (Ultra/Blechley Park) and a bit of humint (a role shared with the Special Operations Executive). By contrast, the DMI was responsible for collating and interpreting military intelligence and feeding it into the Joint Intelligence Committee that included naval, RAF and open source material.

For this he is not mentioned in any of the histories of intelligence, including Christopher Andrew's *Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1986). Or the various histories by "Nigel West".

— JTM

It's true that Menzies had a direct line to Churchill for transmission of decrypted Ultra traffic, something that generated his promotion to major general rank in 1944. But that's neither here nor there in relation to *Righteous Kill*.

Thanks again for the review.

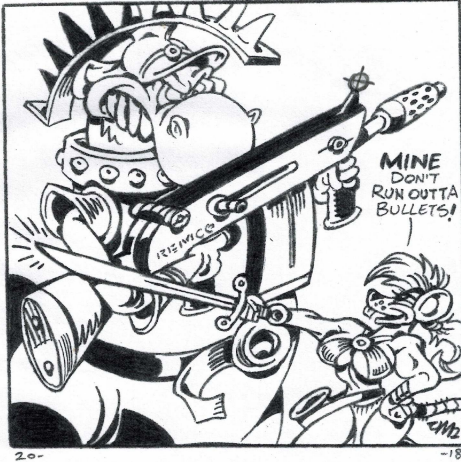
From: **Timothy Lane** July 7, 2020  
[timothylane51@gmail.com](mailto:timothylane51@gmail.com)

Noticing the lists of horse racing dates, I wondered how they compared to a normal year. The Kentucky Derby and Preakness obviously were delayed by months, and I think the Belmont might be about a week later than usual. But what about the other races listed?

I can well imagine that they recognize you

at Lee's Korean. I wonder if they ever wonder what happened to Grant, Elizabeth, and me.

I'm glad to read that your knees are better. I have a number of problems on my left side, especially the left shoulder. I try not to let it keep me from my normal exercises with a theraband.



*Captain Nice* was created by Buck Henry, also associated with *Get Smart* (and in fact, at least one catchphrase migrated between them). One of its episodes involved the city laying off half the police force, with the expected results. ("Despite half the police force being laid off, there were only four major bank robberies today.") I discussed this episode in more detail at another site I'm on. The Bigtown city council figured that with *Captain Nice* on the job, they didn't need so many police. It might have worked if his alter ego, police chemist Carter Nash, hadn't been one of those laid off.

It would be interesting to make a comparison of the investigation of the murder of Julia Wallace with the investigation of the murder of JonBenet Ramsey. Of course, the police in Colorado had several decades longer to learn what not to do and still did too much of it. I had encountered Parry's name in one or another crime reference, I think one of the collections by Gaute and Odell.

I'd like to see John Douglas take on the Julia Wallace case. He did Jack the Ripper, understand.

Well, I hope your terrarium works out well.

It seems that Wostyn's Chinese alternative history sounds like one of those in which he had a result in mind and didn't care how he got there. Who does he think he is, Harry Harrison?

Whittier, California, whence Richard Nixon came, is named after the abolitionist poet John Greenleaf Whittier. He's probably best known today for "Barbara Frietchie".

There's a statue to him in the town, or at least there was until the Iconoclasts struck (I call them, Wokeists after Chekists). I'm not sure what connection they thought he had to the Confederacy. Perhaps it was something like the connections U. S. Grant, Francis Scott Key, Junipero Serra, and Miguel de Cervantes (whose statues were targeted in Scat Francisco) had.

I wonder what *Star Trek* movie Rod Smith is referring to. I don't recall anything like that in the ones I've seen. I do remember that *ST:TNG* in its first season often had planets with "late 20th Century technology". Considering this included such things as a planet that executed people using disintegrator booths, this seemed more a signal that it was a target for mockery.

I wonder why none of these planets with late 20th century technology ever had late 20th century geopolitics.

One advantage to waiting a bit for new tech to prove itself is that at that stage it gets cheaper. This happened with TV, and quite often with computers.

While it obviously no longer directly matters to me, I think the bids for Jeddah and Chengdu sound like very bad ideas. One hopes fans are aware enough of world events to realize this.

My nursing home has had a couple of facility-wide tests for Wuhan fever, including patients and staff. Fortunately, very few turn up with it so far. But they now require masks for any patients leaving their room, such as to take a shower (the only reason I ever do).

They also apparently filled out the census forms for everyone. I asked about it, wondering if I should do something, such as getting on the census website.

Arthur Hlavaty once reported a most interesting example of what a missing comma can do: a woman dedicated a book to "my parents, Ayn Rand and God." I'd really like to see her family tree. But how could Rand be such a militant atheist if she had a daughter by God?

John Purcell's concern for events in Minneapolis aka New Mogadishu is very understandable. There's a sizable colony of SF writers there, and I hope they're all right.

I would note that I consider "womanizer" and "rapist" different concepts. A womanizer is, or can be, someone who has sexual encounters that are voluntary for both. A rapist is another matter.

One reason the Germans relied so heavily on Arthur Owens is that at one point he was about all they had. So they would have any spies who arrived in England link up with him. Masterman found that most convenient for him.

One place where one can get some idea of what women had to do in the household around 1900 is *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Taras's idea of why leftists never admit the failures of socialism is much like why the professional liberals (as Drury called them) were unable to see the dangers of the Help America Act (Ted Jason's equivalent of Hitler's Enabling Act) in *Come Nineveh, Come Tyre*. I just finished reading the last 4 books of the

*Advise and Consent* series, from *Capable of Honor* to the alternate endings. The media bias and political violence in them sounds very familiar today, even though they were written from the mid-60s to the mid-70s. Drury brilliantly predicted much of what is wrong today.

I think the first item in your parody at the end comes from Philip José Farmer and the second from the *Back to the Future* movies. The last is harder to tell, but I wonder if it's from Heinlein's *The Number of the Beast* — or its alternate version. The third I don't recognize at all.

No, he's Hugh Farnham. The third scene is the (First) Doctor and his granddaughter.

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** July 18, 2020  
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Thank for Vol. 19 No.3 (June 2020, Whole Number 111).

The lockdown here because of the Wuhan virus eased up a bit. Then because of an increase in infections it tightened up again. The dining room closed and our meals are again delivered to our apartments. At least the Fitness Center is still open even if only for one person at a time.

Monday, July 20 is the 51<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon Landing. And here we are still stuck on Earth. No humans on Mars either. I consider this to be a tragedy.

On July 3 BBC America had *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. Even though it was produced in 1982 it is still a great movie and is my favorite Star Trek movie. Ricardo Montalban was a great actor. They also presented rebroadcasts of segments of *Deep Space 9* which was a great series and the rebroadcasts were very much appreciated.

In Monarchical News you make reference to Darrell Schweitzer commenting that if Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a child there would be thousands if not millions of descendants. Well, maybe. Or there could have been very low reproduction. Or the line could have died out. A number of years ago in a TV presentation of Rosslyn Castle and the possible blood line of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, a man who might be a possible decedent was interviewed. He didn't believe it. But he said if it were true the blood line would be much diluted by now.

In a comment to me involving my letter you make reference back to your review of *The Killing of Julia Wallace* on page 3. You head that review with THE MAN FROM THE PRU. Well, I worked for The Prudential Insurance Company of America for 30+ years. That makes me The Man From the PRU. Oops, thankfully the one referred to in the book is the Prudential Assurance Company and located in England, a different Prudential. In your review

you comment to Bob. How did I get in the review?

I went to Amazon to see if *The Man from the PRU* was available. It is available, but only in VHS. Several years ago I had a machine that could play both VHS and DVD. It could also convert VHS to DVD. It needed repair and I decided not to spend the money. Perhaps I should have as it might still come in handy. But too late now.

I have one of those myself, but haven't used it in years.

**Lisa Major:** I'm sorry to learn that your library closed and you are out of a job. Our library system here is basically closed and I would not have access to it even if it were open. I depend on the small library here in the CCRC and my niece, Sheilah, for books. Thankfully the library here has some books that interest me. But it does not have complete series and so I have to jump around.

**Rodford Edmiston:** Thank you for another very interesting *The Joy of High Tech*.

**Taras Wolansky:** Despite my respect for Neil deGrasse Tyson I have not been able to get onto his *Cosmos*. At one point he blamed the end of Neanderthals on their having been destroyed by us Homo sapiens. I am not aware of any proof to support this claim. The Neanderthals just died out. I tried to find *Motherland: Fort Salem* that was apparently on Freeform but with no luck.

Given how many people have Neanderthal DNA, I would at best think the "destruction" would have been by inter-marriage.

— JTM

**Timothy Lane:** My basic definition of Fascism is one party rule, suppression of contrary viewpoints, business left in private hands but controlled by the government, Sound familiar? I think that we are in basic agreement.

**Joe:** Thanks for another great issue.

From: **Lloyd Penney** July 22, 2020  
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M9C 2B2 CANADA  
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<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 111, and I may have to do this fast...I am just getting done some editing assignments, and my brain is mush. Let's see if that affects my writing any.

This pandemic has not kept us shut in, either, but we really have not much to go to. This past Monday, we picked up a couple of take-out dinners from our favourite pub, and took them to High Park (a big park in the west end of the city) to sit and chat with friends at a local pagan moot who are gathering there when they cannot go to their own pub. That's

been our first gathering with people in four months. Now that Yvonne is retired, and I am semi-retired (still looking), money continues to tighten up. We go for a take-out once a month; it's all we can afford. Soon, the Greater Toronto area will allow restaurants to re-open to inside dining, but not yet. The patios and take-out places are quite busy.

We were closed to inside dining for about a month and a half. I did a lot of ordering take-out.

Voting for Saudi Arabia? Not likely, given those who make up Worldcon fandom. Their human rights record is bad, but America at this point... I suspect Chicago will win, but the Saudis will get a share of the votes. Because of the coronavirus, and the fact some states refuse to handle this sickness (thoughts and prayers), we will not cross the border, and do not see us doing that for the next few years.

Travelling Trufen... We used to do the same, going to conventions as far away as Ottawa, Montreal, Detroit, Buffalo and Rochester. Not any more...by becoming vendors, we don't travel as much as we used to, and there have been a number of local lucrative shows. We remember those old days with fondness. Our local SF convention was cancelled for this year, as was everyone else's, so I expect that any conventions like that will become reunion cons for the older fan. So, when this pandemic is done, get together with your friends, dine or sup with them, and tell them you love them, and that you missed them. As our years progress, that may be all we have left.

I see so many harsh reviews of *Star Trek: Discovery*, *Star Trek: Picard*, and I even see some for the yet-to-be-broadcast *Star Trek: Lower Decks*...hard to believe, a cartoon. We are truly spoiled, and a 24/7 *Star Trek* channel must be in the offing. I have enjoyed *Discovery* and *Picard*...both are modern shows, and it is impossible to recreate *Trek* from the 60s, or even the 80s. Let's just enjoy what we get, and give the negativity as little publicity as possible.

It's the fan expectations. They want a show but it has to fit their prejudices desires. Given how the attitudes in some of those groups are getting so in-groupish, the result will be nasty.

Awards...I hope you have seen the list of Neffy Awards this year...the members of the N3F were good to me. I take John Hertz's rebuke; I have not voted in the FAAn Awards the past couple of years, and I plan to remedy that for the next session of awards.

My loc...I suspect those behind AO3 thought to see if they could vie for that particular Hugo, and with the people involved and participating in that website, they discovered that with sheer numbers, they got on the ballot and won. I guess they got their Hugo, and don't care to pursue more. Perhaps it wasn't much of

a challenge.

They had 106 nominations, and led the voting all the way from 770 in the initial count up to 985 votes out of 2025.

— JTM

I guess I am done for the day. I got some editorial work done for *Amazing Stories*, and now, there is 48 hours or so left in their kick-starter, and they are a distance away from the goal, unfortunately. I hope some will step forward to help get them there; I am biased, but I do think this is all worth it.

Many thanks for this issue, and see you when there's another.

A THEOCRATIC  
PLUTOCRACY



From: **George W. Price** July 26, 2020  
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June *Alexiad*:

Lisa's page 1 note considers the possibility that if she starts feeding her neighbor's cat, she might end up having to take over responsibility for him, including making sure he is "fixed" and licensed. I'm reminded of the story about an elderly lady who found the magic lamp,

summoned the genie, and was given the traditional three wishes.

First, she wished to be rich. Poof! She was knee-deep in bags of gold and silver coins (genies don't believe in paper money). Second, she asked to become young and beautiful again. Poof! It was done.

Then, unexpectedly, her newly young body began to have certain stirrings and urges that she had not felt in many years. So for her third and last wish, she asked that her beloved cat be transformed into a handsome prince who would be madly in love with her. Poof! It was done.

The prince gathered her into his loving arms — and then said, "Now aren't you sorry you had me fixed?"



HOOCHIE-COOCHIE

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Rodford Edmiston's "Joy of High Tech" mentions old calculating methods and tools, such as Hollerith punch cards, and how mysterious they can seem to youngsters who have grown up with modern equipment. I wonder what they would think of the Friden electro-mechanical calculators that I encountered in 1959 at the Institute of Gas Technology when I hired on as a junior chemist.

Before digital pocket calculators were invented, machines like the Friden were what we used for addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division when a slide rule was not accurate enough but the job was not big enough to justify programming our mainframe computer.

The Friden looked like a cross between a cash register and a typewriter. The keyboard had eight or so (I don't remember exactly) vertical columns of ten number keys from 1 to 0, like those of old-style cash registers. Above the keyboard was a movable carriage like an

old typewriter. The machine was electric, but not electronic; the motor drove an array of gears and cogwheels.

We punched in the numbers, then started it, and as it calculated each place — units, tens, hundreds, etc. — the carriage would jog sideways one place. When it stopped, the result was displayed in little windows on the carriage, one window for each column of input keys. I don't recall clearly, but I don't think it showed the decimal point; you just had to know where it fell. If the numbers were large, like six digits, the machine could take maybe ten or fifteen seconds of clicking and whirring to do the job and then return the carriage to the starting position.

I never saw a Friden opened up for servicing, but the interior must have been a maze of gears, rods, rarthets, escapements, and the Lord knows what else.

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AL du Pisani, speaking of the pandemic lockdown in South Africa, mentions "a curfew between 20h00 and 05h00." I believe that's the first time I have ever seen that form of time notation. I assume it means 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. It does seem slightly more compact than the U.S. military time system I had to learn, in which it would be "2000 hr and 0500 hr."

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Mr. Trump has drawn ample criticism for his belated and lackadaisical initial response to the coronavirus. He has since spun around to claim that he has total power over lockdowns.

Fortunately he hasn't really tried to actually control the entire economy. He came closest to being right when he described himself as a "cheerleader." I'd say we are much better off leaving most of the details to the governors and mayors.

In fact, the Constitution gives the president no emergency powers at all. Also, unlike many countries, we have no provision allowing the Constitution to be suspended in emergencies. Under our federal system the national government has only the powers explicitly delegated to it by the Constitution, and the states have all the powers not explicitly forbidden to them by the Constitution.

So it's the governors — and maybe the mayors — who have all those broad police powers. And I think it's better that way. In a mess like this, it is absurd to suppose that there could be any one-size-fits-all policy that would be right for the whole nation. Better to let each state or city try its own ideas, tailored to local conditions, and see what works. We can learn from both the successes and the failures. So far there seem to be plenty of both.

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I am sorry to see in the WAHF section that Sue Burke will no longer be one of us. I have always enjoyed what she had to say, even though I frequently disagreed with her. She has the priceless knack of being able "to disagree without being disagreeable." Too bad we can't inoculate our political class with strong doses of that.

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The way the election is shaping up, it won't be a choice between good and bad, or even between bad and worse. It will be between worse and worser.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** July 28, 2020  
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Long time no contact. In response to your email, I'm back with my opinions such as they are.

My first comment is a free association. You and Lisa had a favorite Korean Restaurant. That reminded me I and my wife Heidi, when we were dating many decades ago, had a favorite Chinese place. As far as I can tell, the name was Ginny and Joseph's. Joseph did the cooking and Ginny handled the public. Their parents had a much larger Chinese restaurant, but we preferred Joseph's cooking and Ginny's friendliness. However, their restaurant was in New Jersey and I had to move to the DC area and my job. The last thing we heard about them is Ginny had run away. Without knowing the situation, my inclination is to hope they got back together again.

For something less personal, I have a comment about your Monarchical News column. You say that millions must be related to Confucius; and if Jesus had a wife and kids a la *The Da Vinci Code*, maybe we all would be related to him. Others have not been so logical. Somehow I remember a character in an old novel who boasted of his Norman ancestry. Didn't William the Conqueror bring a whole slough of Normans to England? I hate to think of how many people are related to them.

Like me. And I didn't say there were millions of people related to Kung Fu-tze; the Confucius Genealogy Compilation Committee says there are *at least* two million descendants. The senior descendant of Confucius, Kung Tsui-chang, is a (Nationalist) Chinese government official.

In addition, I read your review of *The Killing of Julia Wallace* (2017). It has a lot of similarities with the controversy over Jack the Ripper. Like Jack the Ripper's murders, it is people having strong views about a case that had been cold for many years. I wonder whether Aaron Kosminski, whom the police

had institutionalized, was the murderer all along; and has been ignored because he wasn't a famous person.

Next, I wish to comment collectively about your reviews on military and spy, alternate history. Many of those books approach fantasy more closely than science fiction. Unlike you in your book on the Red Baron. Come to think of it, the only events I had a problem with was how often, as chancellor, the Red Baron invited the Marx brothers to Germany.

They were making movies there. It made the country look more liberal. By the way, have you looked into reading my other books?

Finally, I get to Rodford Edmiston's column on technology and joy. The fellow who couldn't conceive of spreadsheets without a computer was, as Rod put it, young and more savvy about the present than the past. I remember very well being in numbers crunching in the '70s; and sitting down to a spreadsheet. I'm glad that work has been computerized. If the powers in my agency hadn't decided my punishment time was up and hadn't transferred me to letter writing, spreadsheets, it would have driven me mad. The only thing I enjoyed was when somebody in a State agency had made a ridiculous mistake. For instance, the time the Rhode Island State agency reported the number of children eating the School Breakfast and the number of breakfasts served separately. Comparing the two numbers, it meant the State served each kid twelve breakfasts every day.

Somebody was pocketing a lot of breakfast money.

From articles and columns, we go to letters. Lloyd Penney deserved to be on the first ballot for letters. He is entitled to some award for his heroic letter writing. I hate to think of how many letters he writes. And good letters too. I welcome them in my zines *JOMP* and *JOMP, JR.* Keep on plugging Lloyd and don't mind what people say. They're just jealous.

Then we go to Tim Lane's more distressing situation. I don't know what to say about him not being able to contact his wife in another nursing home. I know he was very close to her. However, to replace the books that had to be scuttled, are you using a e-reader? A friend claimed he had 1,200 books on his Kindle. Also, I hear there are ways of putting a PDF on Kindle.

He is and you can.

— JTM

Anyway I'll catch you next ish, Joe.

From: **Taras Wolansky** August 1, 2020  
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Thanks for the June 2020 issue.

Joe (review of Robert Sawyer's *The Oppenheimer Alternative*): **"It's almost as if he [Sawyer] doesn't want to admit that the Soviet Union had spies in the [Manhattan] project."** Perhaps because admitting that there were Soviet spies would give aid and comfort to people whom Sawyer considers the real enemy!

In fact, in spite of it being a world-important mission, even in the post-McCarthyite era they don't reach out to Soviet space scientists; no Korolev, Glushko, Chelomei, etc.

Lisa (review of *Crooked* by Austin Grossman): Grossman is the twin brother of Lev "Magicians" Grossman. I greatly enjoyed Austin's original superhero novel, *Soon I Will Be Invincible*, so I will definitely look for this.

Joe (review of *Hollywood Double Agent* by Jonathan Gill): **"[Boris] Morros felt his family back in the socialist motherland was threatened. (He was right.)"** Ominously, today nearly every immigrant from China or Hong Kong or Taiwan has relatives back home which the Chinese Communist Party can threaten.

Rodford Edmiston: I enjoyed "The Joy of High Tech" — or should we call it "The Joy of Low Tech"? An additional use of fire by early man would be scaring away predators, BTW.

Great story about the subtle advantage of copper over flint.

Joe: Ouch! The typo in the title of my TV review article, from "and then it gets really weird" to "and then it gets really worse", didn't help the sense. After all, I was praising the strange new show, *Motherland: Fort Salem*.

Lloyd G. Daub: I'm just guessing here, but I don't think Isaac Asimov would have been interested in your nipples.

Tim Lane: **"Hitler was an admirer of Mussolini"**. I imagine that was in earlier days, when many people, including FDR, were admirers.

I've always thought that the Trojan Horse of legend is actually the garbled recollection of a siege engine, in a society that had regressed and could no longer build such things.

Lloyd Penney: I still have my conZealand membership so, in theory, I could attend the virtual con. Whether I will, I'm not sure. One of the reasons I go to conventions is to get away from all the distractions at home, including my family.

John Purcell: A number of Hugo nominees usually come from Tor.com every year, which is, I think, still free.

No question works available online have an advantage: take a look at the third-rate schlock serial that beat Robert Graves and Olaf Stapledon for the Retro Hugo Best novel this year!

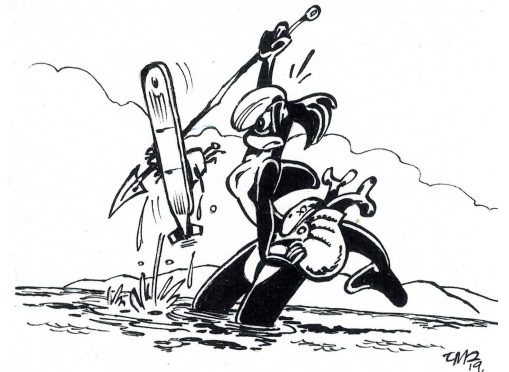
Memphis will not be awarding

Retros and they are soliciting discussion of What To Do About That.

—JTM

Maybe we need a print SF award.

Joy V. Smith: A curious thing about C.L. Moore's Retro Hugo nominated "No Woman Born". It's been anthologized and collected so often, that I figure I must have read it half a dozen times. Yet the ending still caught me by surprise when I was reading the nominees. Evidently Moore withstood a powerful cultural undertow that expects a particular ending to that kind of story.



From: **AL du Pisani** August 2, 2020  
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It has been the coldest winter in at least 4 years. Not helped a lot by the Wuhan Pneumonia lockdown regulations still in force. (Down from Level 5, now at Level 3 revision 3.)

Tobacco sales are still banned, but freely available on the black market — My mother is livid about some of the farm workers who is willing to spend R200 — 300 on a packet of Boxer — normally priced at R20, and then ask her for food, as they did not bother to buy some.

Alcohol got banned again — apparently because of a pick up of alcohol related hospital and emergency room cases, including drunk men beating up their (often also drunk) women.

There is another late night curfew in effect — That does not prevent me from hearing heavy trucks moving past my house very late at night. (There is a construction site about a km down the road, where they are rebuilding a bridge.)

Still not allowed to meet up with friends and go to meetings, including church.

There are a couple of lists out of various activities that are classified in grades of riskiness — usually between level 1 (lowest) and 8 (highest). It is always surprising to me which low risk activities are banned, and which medium-high risks are allowed.

My domestic worker returned for her weekly visit as soon as it became allowed. I would not say that she jumped on my washing and ironed it with cries of glee, but I definitely got the idea that she was glad to be back at work. As far as I have been able to gather, some of her other regulars did not pay her during the heavy lockdown phase, nor have asked her to come back.

I read an article earlier this year that a lot of domestic workers and gardeners in South Africa were being kept employed by middle class people out of a sense of loyalty, as it was already getting to be unaffordable, and government have been doing a lot to try and kill off that kind of jobs. (Out of a sense that it is better for people to be paid welfare to not work, than to do demeaning work.) The article stated that as soon as it would become too expensive, a lot of domestic workers and gardeners would lose their jobs. That have happened as a result of the lockdowns – enough people lost their income, or had it placed under serious strain, and they have been economising.

My mechanic was glad to see me – stated that he had no income and full expenses during the lockdown. And that he had difficulty in getting the announced government assistance in getting unemployment pay.

If the announced government aid is like the drought aid my mother got, it would be a splashy announcement (in April), a minuscule amount of aid significantly later (R3500's worth of fodder in December), and a quiet announcement after about a year that the aid is no longer needed. A lie – Although my mother had more rain so far this year than in all of last year, is it still dry.

And after the initial rain there was a lot of caterpillars eating up the new growth, until killed by a second set of rain. Unfortunately, the drought has not killed off the jackals and the crows, so they have been eating some of the newborn lambs – the government does not feel they need to support farmers in dealing with predators.

It is always colder in the Northern Cape during Winter – so this winter has been harsh on my mother. She has not had much chance to leave the farm. During lockdown she had a dental issue – Had to make an appointment with the nearest dentist (about 200 km away), get him to send a fax confirming the appointment, and then get police permission to leave the district and visit the neighbouring town.

Nearest dentist 125 miles away? Ouch!

I miss meeting with my friends. I even miss going in to work. I do not miss sitting in traffic for at least an hour and a half to two and a half hours total every day. I actually had to go into the office once during this time – Was surprised at how much traffic there was on my way there. But it was a ghost town at work. Got my issue resolved, and have been

continuing to work from home.

When Lisa was working at the Southwest Regional Library, I had to drive an hour every day to take her and another to pick her up.

– JTM

ANYBODY CAN JUGGLE THREE LIGHTBULBS. THE TRICK IS TO MAKE THEM TURN ON AND OFF!



I have been very lucky that way – I have been fully employed and able to work from home, for normal pay. My sister the teacher have not been so lucky. In some ways it was lucky that she was at our holiday home when the lockdown started, as it was a much more convivial place. Had to return home and start work, with the government changing their minds every week as to who are allowed to go to school, and for how long.

She did mention that she was able to teach more and get through more with the kids in pre-primary, with two classes of about ten pupils, on alternate days. Until the government closed the schools again.

At least it looks as if the death and infection rate is going down. But the news coverage has been terrible. For instance, it was about two weeks after I heard that there was a lot of infections in the Western Cape, before I got an article that stated that infections in the Western Cape was running about 10% higher per thousand tested than in the rest of the country, and that one of the reasons for this may be that they were testing likely people rather than a more shotgun approach to testing people in squatter camps, which is what the rest of the country was doing. There was a lot of political hay being made of the Western Cape situation, as it still is the only province run by the DA. Since then the rate of

infection there seems to have drastically lowered, with Gauteng and the Eastern Cape catching up and in the process of exceeding statistically.

A friend of mine in an old age home stated that he has lost too many people he knew, and that COVID got into the place with the workers. Do not know if that is something that the press will ever cover. And that is bad – because when you stop trusting the press to cover the news, you will rely on gossip and rumour.

I have managed to keep reading and watching some stuff. Finding myself cutting down on a lot which is not Japanese animation – The Japanese seem to be still willing to tell gripping stories.

I hope you stay sane, and can meet up with friends soon.

From: **David Herrington** August 4, 2020  
[david2419ad@yahoo.com](mailto:david2419ad@yahoo.com)

Things have been going well at the R.T. Dept at the hospital. The Census was way down during the Covid surge. We had 3 therapists per shift, two working with covid patients, one not working with covid pts. The low census was a blessing. Covid patients required more care, double the time usually needed. Being placed on a ventilator was a bad sign. There was about a 80% chance of dying. We had plenty of reusable isolation gowns. N-95 masks were and still are in short supply. Covid cases requiring hospitalization have been going down. Last week we had one, the week before that none.

I got my car totaled in June while visiting my parents. I sideswiped the guardrail after the car in front of me braked hard to make a turn while trying to keep the three takeout meals from sliding off the seat and hitting the floor.

Did you hear about the SJW complaints of George R.R. Martin's Hugo Award M.C. ing? Mispronouncing names? Calling the Astounding Award the John W. Campbell award? George has refused to apologize so far. The SJW's need to practice tolerance not bigotry.

They wanted to hear about the SF they knew and George Railroad talked about the SF he knew.

– JTM

From: **John Hertz** August 4, 2020  
236 S. Coronado St., No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057

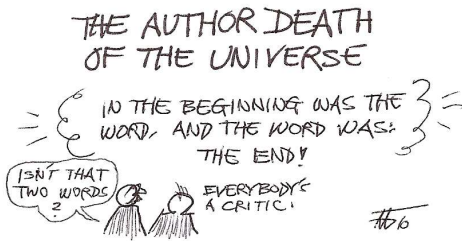
Indeed to "Jophan says, Pub your ish" you answer "We hear the words of Jophan and obey." Bless you.

Of course photography can be art, as shown by Ansel Adams (great, as you well call him) and many. Nor are snapshots bad because of being quick. What I bemoan is failing to make or get good fanart and instead throwing in bad photos. Good photos are better than bad drawings. The 2019 Rotsler Award went to Alison Scott who has with photos and computer wiz-

ardry done fine things.

Voting for exotic con bids isn't — to engage in one of those understatements — very wise. The criterion is "Do I think Bid X will put on a good Ycon?" Not "Ooh, let's go to Xtown." Or "It's their turn." Even if "I've always wanted to visit Xtown". Even if "I can't get to Xtown unless for a con there."

Thus the Boat Bid. And New Zealand 2020 started out as a joke.



"I think we should put on .a con here". and hoping everything will come into place, isn't very wise. It takes judgment, brains, and maturity to score in a balk-line game — oops, wrong musical. But if you go on with no more than that wish you'll have trouble.

Particularly for regional cons, the NASFiC, the Worldcon, the next thing after that wish had better be seeing whether one has, and if not, then building, a strong local fandom that can produce the con.

Cheap air travel, the soaring wealth we gained in the computer revolution when it emerged that our strange fannish minds made swell software engineers, and more recently electronic communications media that were not only cheap and fast but were promoted with the sheep-bleat IT'S E-E-E-EASY, have — for all their merits — which nobody can deny — not even I, that's never been my argument — distracted us. Largely staffing the con with people from everywhere else is possible — barely — but not very wise.

The Jeddicon committee explained their organizing credentials. But they had never put on a SF con! If they had only put on a local con there, they might have had a little more credibility.

Starting with what the late great Harry Warner so well called eekmail, yes you can send E-messages to, or talk by Skype with, people hundreds or thousands of miles away. But what if — I must say it — they don't answer, or in some other way make it necessary for you to go bang on their door and look in their face?

I'll change the subject. What do you MEAN "*Fallen Angels* is Jerry Pournelle's wish-fulfillment dream that everybody would

be like him"?? Nope-nope-nope is right. It's a story. He and Niven and Flynn made it up. It's mundane to blather how artists can't do that. Look at Beethoven, some of whose, sunniest music came from his pen while his life was a wreck. As it happens I knew Pournielle. But that shouldn't matter.

It's a story where everyone in Fandom is like Pournelle. Nope-nope-nope.

—JTM

I can't end like that. I have to find something good. Edmiston. He's right about tech. Technology is how you do things. It might be an inkjet printer. It might be making ink from soot and a pen from a feather.

**WAHF:**  
**Martin Morse Wooster**, with various items of interest.  
**Cathy Palmer-Lister**, with thanks.

WHAT HAPPENED TO MILO

... The driver dropped me off at the gate of the prison. I went up to the sentry and said, "Wiesenthal. I'm from the War Crimes bureau and I'm here to see Mr. Minderbinder."

The sentry seemed pleased to see me. "So you're letting him out! Good, he needs to go back to work. He made me a partner in the business. Here, I'll call for an escort and you can see the commander with your good news."

The escort took me to see Colonel Slocum. He seemed to be expecting me. "Mr. Wiesenthal? I'm glad they finally came to their senses. Mr. Minderbinder is a busy man. He needs to get out there to work. He even made me a partner in the business, that's how generous he is."

"Just have me taken to his cell."

The colonel made a telephone call. Another guard showed up and led me away.

The cell door was open! I stopped at it and looked. Minderbinder was dictating orders to a secretary from behind a desk, and it appeared they had cut a door into the adjoining cell. He was saying, "Those fifty thousand liters of fluorine are to be loaded on the *Stary Oskol* in New York harbor by tomorrow. The Soviet Ministry of Medium Machine Building requires them urgently.

"The payment will be loaded at Kolyma, the *Farflung Victory* has had the special safe installed for the gold. The Mexican mint is waiting for that shipment.

"Who are you?"

He was looking up at me. I said, "Szymon Wiesenthal, from the War Crimes bureau."

"Well, Dolly, looks like we have to pack up. It's taken them forever to dismiss this silly indictment." He got up from behind the desk.

"No."

Minderbinder smiled at me, looking like a salesman trying to sell bad goods. "Now Wiesenthal — did I get that right? — I'll make you a partner in the business. We'll be packed up and out of here by morning.

"I've got all the details here in my head." He tapped the side of his head. "But I can work quicker once I'm out of this place. Every deal I ever made is stored right here."

I sat down. "I see. Do you recall a shipment made on May 10, 1944?"

"Well, there were so many . . ."

"On that date, a U.S. Army Air Force C-47 under the control of M&M flew five hundred kilograms of Zyklon-B from Hamburg to Owi cm in what was then Germany and is now Poland."

"Are you sure about that? I mean, things were very confused then."

"We have the statement of the plant manager who had it loaded, the pilots, and one of the men who supervised the unloading crew. Furthermore, there was a similar flight every week for the next six weeks."

"We had a lot of business. They paid well and we were glad to get the work."

"The chemical you shipped was used to murder three hundred thousand Hungarian Jews during that period."

Minderbinder was shocked. He said after a moment, "You can't blame me for what a customer did. Is supposed to have done. There are a lot of wild atrocity stories out there."

"You are complicit in genocide. I came here to inform you that the indictment will go down in three weeks. You had better meet with your lawyers."

"I'll not only make you a partner in the business, I'll give you responsibility for Central European Affairs if you get them to drop this silly charge!"

"There are three hundred thousand reasons why not." I got up. "See you in court, Mr. Minderbinder."

Minderbinder's trial never got to completion. He continued to offer to make the prosecutors, the witnesses, and even the judges "partners in the business". The assets of M&M had been seized by the Americans, which failed to stop him.

Finally, he was returned to military duty, courtmartialed, and sentenced to twenty years for misuse of government property. Somehow he escaped from the prison within six months.

The American Federal Aviation Agency reported that an airplane bearing the M&M insignia, with a declared destination of Sweden, piloted by an American deserter named Yossarian, and presumably with Milo Minderbinder on board, was lost without trace in the Atlantic, about a week after his escape from prison.

— Not by Simon Wiesenthal or Joseph Heller

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ALPHA ORIONIS vs  
TOXICODENDRON RADICANS

“Dr. Quinzel, we’re so glad you could come on short notice to look after the house and get Lydia to school during our overseas seminar.”

Charles was very enthusiastic about the new house-sitter, but Delia had to wonder about her makeup. Her hair was red on one side and black on the other, with her eye makeup being the other way. And she was dressed after that style. But she said in her piercing voice, “I’m glad to get outa town. Things are getting hot in Gotham.”

And so the Deetzes began to pack for their symposium. Dr. Quinzel went to her room . . . and upstairs, young Lydia got in touch with a friend.

She stood there in her black outfit, raised her arms in invocation, and spoke:

“Though I know I should be wary,

“Still I venture someplace scary,

“Ghostly hauntings I turn loose:

“Beetlejuice! *Beetlejuice!!* **BEETLEJUICE!!!**”

There was an electrified sensation in the air, an eerie rupture in the fabric of reality, and the summoned one appeared, laughing maniacally. He was a sloppy spirit, in a baggy black and white striped suit, and his big yellow eyes twinkled with comical glee.

Lydia said, “My parents went off and left me here with a **babysitter!** Can you get rid of her?”

He grinned, showing his jagged yellow teeth. “I’ll frighten her off! **It’s showtime!**” And in a flash Beetlejuice transformed into a bat, which flapped out the window and downstairs.

A moment later there was the crack of a different sort of bat. A baseball bounced off a tree and through the window. Lydia ran to it.

The ball opened great yellow eyes and a mouth of jagged yellow teeth. “Ya didn’t tell me she was a baseball fiend,” Beetlejuice said, and then flowed back into his more customary (“normal” did not seem to be a word associated with him) form.

Down below Dr. Quinzel had put down the baseball bat and was on the telephone. “Red?” she said. “I gotta place but I had to drive off, like, a real bat.”

The telephone made a low sound. She said in reply, “Come on up, then.”

Delia said, “Where’s the house?”

There was a small forest on the lot. They stopped the car and Charles got out. “Lydia?” he said. “Dr. Quinzel?”

“Harley is inside. Want me to get her?”

They looked up at the woman in the tree. She had long red hair and was dressed somewhat like the Jolly Green Giant.

“Who are you?”

“I’m the apiarist and botanist. Dr. Pamela Isley. **HARLEY!** Some people here to see you and the little girl!”

“**COMIN’!**”

A moment later the house-sitter came out, in red shorts and a cut-off undershirt saying “Daddy’s Little Monster”. She said, “Mr. Deetz! Mrs. Deetz! Lydia’s upstairs reading! I thought Ivy could do something for your yard!”

Upstairs, Lydia was getting an explanation. “I can’t drive anyone crazy,” a strange black-and-white striped car with yellow eye headlights said. Then it turned into Beetlejuice. “Not if she already was.”

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

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