

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Yesterday morning I picked up the pants I had put aside to wear earlier that morning and found myself staring at them, wondering how they would fit. I was not worried about squeezing into them. That was most definitely not an issue. No, what worried me was whether or not they would stay up. I slid into them and decided that they would stay up. I reflected that ten years ago someone had told me there would come a day when I would be wondering if my pants were too big I would have collapsed into helpless laughter and rolled about on the floor laughing.

The other day I was outside at work when this big bird came flying towards me. For a few seconds I wondered if I were about to become an extra in a remake of Hitchcock's *The Birds*. Then the bird tucked its wings and went into the overhang. I let out the breath I had been holding, for this bird's size I judged to be midway between crow and Canada goose. Its cry sounded something like "chee wit" (close as I can come.) I am pretty sure it was a bird of prey. I've looked on the net some and not found a precise match to my impressions of the bird. It is quite possible I did find a match but not recognize the bird because I only had a few seconds to actually study the bird.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of:

- Michael J. Smith
- Dick Scobee
- Ronald E. McNair
- Ellison Onizuka
- Christa McAuliffe
- Gregory Jarvis
- Judith Resnik

— Lisa

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## Reviewer's Notes

Grant gave me a book titled *All My Friends Are Dead*. It seemed to appeal to something in his life. The title is not completely true, but so many of the people he knew, people we knew, have died.

There is a decided lack of Howard Family Members, elves, and other long-lived sorts in fandom, so this sort of thing is sadly inevitable. What is more bothersome is not that old fans are dying, but that there are no new ones. At least not the new ones we know.

There is a certain attitude that is becoming prevalent among congoers. The conrunners of ConGlomeration held a meeting. They were getting to be old fans and tired. Could there be any new people who would step in?

It turned out that the answer was no. People enjoyed the convention but seemed to think they lacked the skills to run it.

And a different attitude is becoming evident, if not prevalent. A few years ago I read a plaint by a con-goer who was unhappy that WorldCon did not have his favorite activities. A brief search on the WorldCon webpage will uncover a feature called "volunteering". I wonder why he never encountered that?

This assumes that cons will survive the current lockdown.

A fan complained that Baen's Bar was promoting a toxic environment with advocacy of violence. In response, Toni Weiskopf shut the board down. Then, DisCon III disinvented her as Editor GoH.

The older fans, whether liberal or conservative, have deplored this action; Guy Lillian and Darrell Schweitzer, for example. The younger praise it.

DisCon may be in trouble. Toni is trapped by cancel culture, which has become even more virulent and destructive. How much will it drag down with it?

As for getting on the list of "all my friends are dead", my health problems continue. Nevertheless, they continue — health problems tend to terminate once you die.

— Joe

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## 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.

Robert M. Bryce, author of *Cook & Peary: The Polar Controversy, Resolved* (1997) was doing additional research, and found a photocopy of Cook's lost journal for that period (or at least what Cook was saying was his journal). Bryce found hints that explained an unusual source for Cook's attitudes: *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras [The Adventures of Captain Hatteras]* (1864, 1866), a *Voyage Extraordinaire* by Jules Verne. Bryce started out by noticing how much Cook was like Professor Liedenbrock of *Voyage au centre de la Terre [Journey to the Center of the Earth]* (1864, 1867) and went on from there.

<http://pubs.aina.ucalgary.ca/arctic/Arctic56-2-207.pdf>

Incidentally, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* is available from Amazon, in a modern (i.e. correct) translation:

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01096GBSE/>

## OBITS

**James Gunn**, the Senior Science Fiction Writer, has died, on **December 23, 2020**. James Edwin Gunn was born on **July 12, 1923** in Kansas City, Missouri. After writing plays, newspaper articles, and radio scripts, he began writing SF in 1949, selling to *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. His novel *The Listeners* (1972) was first runner-up for the John W. Campbell Memorial Award (and is now obsolete, since the Arecibo radio telescope is being demolished). He also wrote about the field, having published several scholarly works, one of which, *Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of Science Fiction* (1982) received the Best Non-Fiction Book Hugo Award. In 2007 he was

named a Grand Master by SFFWA.

## MONARCHICAL NEWS

The Romanian government tried to arrest Paul Lambrino to serve a sentence for influence buying, money-laundering, and complicity to abuse of office, but when the police showed up, his wife Lia said her husband was out of the country. Paul Lambrino is also known, particularly by himself, as **Prince Paul of Romania**. Unlike other pretenders (e.g. Michel Roger Lafosse, "Prince Michael of Albany" the spurious Stuart heir) Paul is indeed descended from the family he claims heirdom from, the Romanian royal family. More precisely, from then Crown Prince Carol (later King Carol II) and his illegal morganatic wife Maria Johana "Zizi" Lambrino. Carol and Zizi had a son, Mircea Carol, who had Paul, who has a son Carol Ferdinand.

Grand Duke Georgi of Russia chose to celebrate his betrothal at the Ipatievskii Monastery at Kostroma, Russia, on January 24, 2021. The Ipatievskii Monastery was where his ancestor Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov was living when he was proclaimed Tsar on March 14, 1613. (It seems to have no connection to the Ipatiev House in Yekaterinburg, which was demolished in 1977.)

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## YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There was a solar eclipse on **December 14, 2020**. It was visible in Arucania Region, Los Rios Region, and Bío Bío Region of Chile and the Northern Patagonia Region of Argentina. The maximum totality was 130 seconds, visible at 40° 18' S. 67° 54' W. in Argentina. The eclipse was part of Saros 142, which began April 17, 1624 and will end June 5, 2904.

There will be two solar eclipses in 2021. The first will be an annular eclipse, on **June 10, 2021**, visible in Ontario, Quebec, the Canadian Northern territories, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), and the Far Eastern Province of Russia. The path will also pass over the North Pole. Maximum annularity will be in Greenland, and will last 3 minutes 51 seconds. The eclipse is part of Saros 147, which began October 12, 1624 and will end February 24, 3049.

The second will be a total eclipse, on **December 4, 2021**, visible in East Antarctica, from the Ronne Ice Shelf to Marie Byrd Land. The path will be passing above the Pole and thus will run from East to West, instead of from West to East as most eclipses do. The maximum totality will be 1 minute 54 seconds, visible at 76° 46' S 46° 12' W, on the Ronne Ice Shelf. The eclipse is part of Saros 152, which began on July 26, 1805 and will end on August 20, 3049.

NASA Eclipse website:

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

Other useful eclipse websites:

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

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

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## WISHFUL THINKING

by Joe

A problem with Amazon's suggestion algorithm is that it gets stuck. For example, I once got curious about a particular JFK assassination theory book, and for six months had dozens of them, all peddling contradictory theories, clogging my feed.

Now it's "Harem fantasies". The covers feature buxom, faerie, underdressed females. Within, the story seems to be (I look at the previews, okay?) that a rough tough guy finds himself inexplicably transported to a district of fantasyland inhabited by buxom, faerie, underdressed females who all passionately desire his embraces. After fighting ugly scaly monsters, he retires to a bed but not rest, until more ugly scaly monsters appear . . .

I suppose they are really pitched to incels. As you know, Bob, incels are fat pale neck-bearded unemployed man-boys living in their mothers' basements, who are perpetually aggrieved that hot models are not granted to them on a regular basis.

It's an example of the second-tier expansion of publishing. These don't go to the major publishers, since they don't feature Angrygirl Unlikeliness (hint: this is the *character*, not the author) in a world without gender roles smashing another glass ceiling, or whatever. But they can be distributed on demand, as it were.

In a field where gay dinosaur romances can proliferate, it's not surprising.

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## GROUNDHOG DAY

by Lisa

February 2 was Groundhog Day. Punxsutawney Phil was dragged out of his lair early this morning. His handler's name was announced along with the claim he was Phil's friend. Yeah, right, I thought and then I noticed he was handling Phil without any protective gloves. It is possible Phil is declawed and toothless but he makes no attempt to bite. He seems alert, not drugged. I saw no bindings on his mouth. Without further evidence I have to conclude Phil is quite tame.

I spend a few minutes researching Groundhog Day and learn the custom was imported from Europe with one change. Badgers were the meteorologists in Europe but they were not here so groundhogs became the meteorologists of early America.

I find internet evidence that Phil is a tame zoo groundhog. That makes sense to me. He only gets upset when there is sudden crowd noise. Even then he does not try to hurt his

handler, just to try to escape. It is proclaimed that the groundhog prophesies six more weeks of winter. It was a cold snowy day.

I check Phil's accuracy rate. Low estimate found — 39%. High — 47%. I think I will put more faith in the big Canadian geese returning to the church area and the robins I have already seen.

### AFTER THE PIG WAR

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**1910: WAR IN THE PACIFIC**  
 (2020: ISBN 979-8635433768; \$15.95;  
 2020; Amazon Kindle Services: \$2.99) and  
**1912: WAR FOR THE WHITE HOUSE**  
 (2020: ISBN 979-8674187066; \$15.95;  
 2020; Amazon Kindle Services: \$2.99)  
 By Jeff Thomas

Jeffrey A. Thomas is author of an essay on the Pig War of 1859, where the United States so nearly challenged the might of the British Empire in a war for truth, justice, the American Way, and a Large Black Pig that was eating American potatoes. He was born in Cooperstown, New York, and went to Washington State University.

By a curious coincidence, the narrator of *1912* was born in Cooperstown, went to Washington State University, and writes a paper on the Pig War. Write what you know, I guess.

But Thomas begins his story well after his Point of Departure, though he explains it well enough. The Confederacy managed to survive the Civil War of the Rebellion Between the States. However, they quickly found that their independence just was not working out. The two Presidents, McClellan and Lee, met secretly to work out a compromise that ended up with the seceded states being readmitted. Presumably slavery being abolished was part of the package.

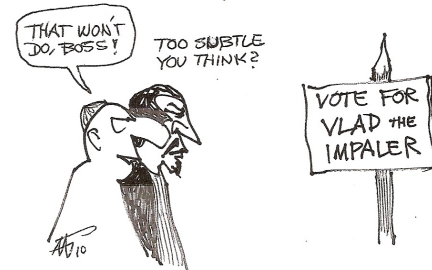
In all this maneuvering, other matters have to be put to one side. Like, say buying the Russian Alaska Territory. And as *1910* begins, the Japanese have bought the place; but the Reunited States, with a mind to the large number of American prospectors and their hangers-on there, think they should have had first refusal, even though they could have and Congress didn't bother to put up the money.

Thomas tells a story of gross unpreparedness; ships that have never exercised at sea, defective powder charges and not enough of them, admirals promoted because of their political connections, and the like. Similarly, the poor damned infantry gets dragged through the mire. The description of the campaign where an exhausted Japanese garrison occupies one end of Prince of Wales Island, an exhausted American garrison occupies the other, and they starve and suffer in the mud while the First Nations people there just wish the strangers would go away and let them start eating again is a curious amalgamation of the Attu campaign and the South Pacific campaign of another world's war.

The next book, *1912*, tells of the aftermath of this not very splendid little war. After the last war and the reunification, the American political scene reconfigured itself into the Union Party and the Constitutionalist Party, the former favoring a more powerful central government and the latter more powerful states rights. Oh, and there is a Socialist Party.

Injected into this gilded situation is a new organization, the Rationalist Party. They favor various scientific panaceas common in that era (including, big and horrid surprise, racism). We follow the campaign of their 1912 nominee, a voluble and not quite coherent university professor become a state governor. (He is opposed to women's suffrage, and is dominated by his wife; there may be a connection here.)

The economy has gone into a slump as a result of the peace and the country has been humiliated. The resulting campaign is often violent. Particularly when the votes are counted, and no one wins. The result is adjudicated in Congress, where after a prolonged deadlock, the Union Party candidate, who won the fewest states, is chosen as a compromise. Except the Rationalist Party won the House of Representatives — and elects their presidential candidate as Speaker of the House. (Thomas is aware that the Congress in 1912 was not quite like the Congress today.)



That bargain, and other typical Gilded Age chicaneries, lead to the President and Vice-President being impeached. Having achieved the office he desired, the new President begins a reorganization of America. This does not go over well, and riots and other civil unrest ensue . . .

The narrator, that copy of the author, gives the reader a chance to see the decline and turmoil in the country. The university itself has riots between different political factions, and others take place in the area. He sees these while researching his paper on the Pig War, meeting people who featured in the previous book.

Not that all is bad, as he meets a young lady; love and marriage follow. And Thomas describes several other "little people" who have happy lives . . . until the turmoil came.

Faced with a deadlock, the President takes drastic steps, beginning by declaring martial law throughout the country, and then suspending the 1916 elections. This doesn't seem to work.

Volume Three, *1916: The War for America* is in preparation. It should be interesting.

### PARATIME FOR FLINGERS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE PARATIME WARS**  
 by John F. Carr  
 (2020: Pequod Press;  
 ISBN 978-0-937912-76-8; \$34.00;  
 Pequod Press (Kindle); \$7.99)

This is a mixed bag of Paratime stories by Carr. Some are very interesting, such as "The Alexander Affair", about a man who discovers that being a God is not quite as advantageous as expected. He gets a double-comeuppance.

Some are interesting, such as "Sea of Grass", about how the nomads of what in our time-line are the Great Plains react to the developments of *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*. Knowing about the usefulness of horse marauders against muskets, it isn't a good ending.

Some are plain depressing, as with "The Wizard Trader War", where Hadron Dalla's brother (hence brother-in-law of Verkan Vall, the featured character of the series) takes intrigues to a very destructive end. In fact, the story almost seems to be a coda for the whole series.

And some are just stuck with Carr's out-of-character and background decisions of *Great Kings' War* and its sequels. Carr introduced a lot of dissonant elements and these double down on it. His career choice for Verkan Vall, in particular, seems to be a typology of Outtime Identification that a professional of authority just wouldn't do.

So this is very much a mixed bag of stories, and some might find them to be not quite what Piper would have wanted to do. It's a problem of continuations by other hands in general.

(And it also seems that except for "The Wizard Trader War", all the stories are reprints. It's as bad as the Retief collections.)

### THE TOUGH GUIDE TO FANTASYLAND

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**POLITICAL PILGRIMS:**  
*Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society*

by Paul Hollander  
 (1981, 1982, 1990, 1998, 2017;  
 Transaction Publishers;  
 ISBN 1-56000-954-3; \$52.95;  
 Routledge (Kindle); \$39.99)

I'd gone to Nicaragua with the head of the National Forum Foundation, Jim Denton. Forum has been sponsoring interns from newly de-communized Eastern Europe, bringing them to the United States so that they can see how democratic institutions work and can learn to avoid making terrible mistakes like electing Jimmy Carter. Denton took two of these interns, Slawek Gorecki from Poland and Martin Weiss

from Czechoslovakia, to Managua. Jim and I thought the *sandalistas* were funny. Martin and Slawek did not. They were sickened and enraged that citizens of a free country would go somewhere to promote dictatorship.

— P. J. O'Rourke, "Return of the Death of Communism"

It is somewhat surprising that even in the latest edition Hollander only quotes P. J. O'Rourke once. This work recounts how citizens of free countries went somewhere to promote dictatorship and were fooled and amazed.

Hollander describes all the ways in which these political pilgrims were misled and bamboozled, from spurious "ordinary proletarians" to artificial enterprises to lavish dinners. One strikingly pathetic case was a Finn who had traveled to the Soviet Union. Then he went back with a labor delegation, telling them that the food was better on the other side. Then he was introduced to rotten cabbage soup.

Or the story of Dr. Anthony Daniels ("Theodore Darymple") who somehow got on a tour to North Korea. He went to a North Korean department store and did something no one else there did; he bought something.

The narrative is a reiteration of how generations of political pilgrims went to one socialist paradise after another, being misled each time in *the exact same way*. The methods never varied; why experiment when the marks always fall for them? You get few Eugene Lyonses.

It might have been worthwhile to include comparisons of political pilgrims to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Those have been discredited, though, and the others weren't at the time.

Deception is a welcoming trap. There are few enough like Lyons, O'Rourke, and Daniels. This book is a reminder.

### INDIANA JONES AND THE PROVENANCE PROBLEM

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*ANCIENT TREASURES:*

*The Discovery of Lost Hoards, Sunken Ships, Buried Vaults, and Other Long-For-gotten Artifacts*

by Brian Haughton

(2013; Weiser;

ISBN 978-1-601463-2494; \$16.99;

RWW New Page Books; \$11.99)

At one point in their excavation of *The Treasure of the Great Reef* (1964), Arthur C. Clarke ruefully observed that they might have had to return the Mogul rupees to the sea floor. And yet that was one of the more settled hoards, compared to what is described here.

Haughton tells the complicated stories of famous buried treasures. There was a great deal of deceit, greed, hypocrisy, and lying involved, not to mention often dreadful legal considerations. Every claimant wanted a

piece of the action,

Some of the stories recounted here are disillusioning. One of the lesser problems with Heinrich Schliemann was that "Priam's Treasure" may have been three separate sets of items which he claimed were one. And yet when he had his wife pose wearing them it was clear what a masterwork they were.

Others had even worse fates. The story of the Amber Room, for example, which has been the topic of many History Channel stories, all about pursuing obscure claims in an attempt to find this granted and looted spectacle of decoration. After being given by Friedrich Wilhelm I to Peter the Great (for tall soldiers) and stolen (or saved from the Bolsheviks) by the German Army, only to disappear in the ruins of Königsberg before it became Kaliningrad, there have been many and vain searches for it.

Other hoards tell stories of warfare and raiding in Britannia become Angel-land, as people put saved coins and precious items away and then could not retrieve them.

So many of these treasures have been pried from their location, ripped from their context. Others suffer from legal controversies, greedy claims, and political strife. It degrades the beauty and the value.

### LE DÉSERT DE GLACE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*A WRETCHED AND PRECARIOUS SITUATION:*

*In Search of the Last Arctic Frontier*

by David Welky

(2016; W. W. Norton & Company;

ISBN 978-0393254419; \$28.95;

W. W. Norton (Kindle); \$9.99)

On June 24, 1906, Robert E. Peary stood upon the shores of Cape Colgate on Ellesmere Island. He looked north and beheld a rugged shore off the coast (or so he said later) and christened it "Crocker Land". In Verne's *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* [*The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*] the captain and the survivors of his expeditionary shipwreck and mutiny struggle north across land there, until they reach the North Pole, which is in the caldera of an active volcano. Hatteras wanted to go volcano-diving. Peary would have wanted to go back south.

With the looming war, the departure of the *Endurance* on the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, and the crushing of the *Karluk* on the Canadian Arctic Expedition, the Crocker Land Expedition had its troubles. Two of Peary's polar companions, George Borup and Donald B. MacMillan, had resolved to go north and find Crocker Land. Raising money for such an expedition was a problem, since the coffers of the Peary Arctic Club's patrons were not available. Did they know something the expeditioners didn't?

Worse yet, Borup went out in a small boat and drowned. Nevertheless, MacMillan persevered.

It can be noted that the loading of stores for

the expedition was remarkably innovative. The stores were placed in crates of a pre-determined size, to make storing and moving them easier. They were color-coded, to indicate the contents, and so that the Inuit, who did not read English, would know what was what.

The expedition ship set out for the frozen North on July 2, 1913. The ice was bad that year and they had to take too much time getting to their base, due to among other things the first ship being damaged. Yet their expedition hut at Etah was well-built and quite warm — and indeed presented a hazard of carbon monoxide poisoning.

That done, MacMillan settled in and began preparing for the journey to Crocker Land. Strangely enough, one of the Inuit on the expedition was Ittukisuk, Dr. Cook's companion on his Arctic trip. Another was Minik Wallace, one of a group of Inuit who had been brought to New York. His father, Qisuk, had died and Theodore Krober, Ursula LeGuin's father, had staged an elaborate funeral — with a dummy; the body was defleshed and put in the museum's collection. (He did something of the sort with Ishi's body later; nice family legacy there.)

MacMillan set forth over the ice to Ellesmere Island, and crossed it to get to Cape Colgate, from which Peary had seen Crocker Land. As he progressed, the expedition members and Inuit turned back for one reason or another. Having reached the cape, he set out across the ice.

At least they got back alive. Crocker Land always seemed to be just over the horizon. After a while MacMillan began to get the sneaking suspicion that maybe there wasn't any Crocker Land.

As for that other qualifier, one of the expedition members, Fitzhugh Green, had been sent off to break a new trail. His Inuk companion, Piugaattoq ("Pewahto" in earlier accounts; trying to tell who's who is often difficult since different explorers would render Inuit names different ways), who had realized that the island was a mirage, had a difference of opinion with Green. Green had shot him in the back.

After that journey things seemed to go downhill. The expedition broke up, with several members going south, while MacMillan remained at Etah. Finally, in the summer of 1918, fresh off the sinking of the *Karluk* and rescue of the crew, his and Peary's polar companion Robert Bartlett came and got him.

The expedition still owed money and most of the debt was paid off over the next few years. MacMillan kept on going back to the Arctic, most notoriously in 1925 with Eugene McDonald (the founder of Zenith) and Richard E. Byrd. There was a little problem in that each of them thought he was in charge and as they were all Lieutenant-Commanders in the U. S. Navy no one could pull rank. (See *Dangerous Crossings: The First Modern Polar Expedition 1925* by John H. Bryant and Harold N. Cones (2000; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #2) for

this little lashup.)

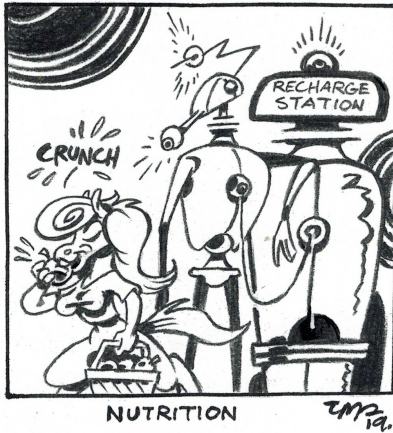
MacMillan continued to conduct expeditions and was eventually promoted to Rear-Admiral. He died in 1970, two years after Ralph Plaisted reached the North Pole, making a link between the heroic age of polar exploration and the modern one.

**PRETTY WOMAN**

Commentary by Joseph T Major on **RUINED CITY**

(American title: *Kindling*)

by "Nevil Shute" [Nevil Shute Norway] (1938)



*Pretty Woman* (1990) is about Edward Lewis (Richard Gere), a distressed-assets specialist. He purchases defunct (or nearly so) companies and breaks them up, selling the useful parts. As the story begins, his personal life has come apart, as both his wife and his mistress have left him. You don't think?

His latest asset is a closed-down shipyard. But before he can finalize the deal, he decides on a whim to get some relief. Said relief is a \$200/night streetwalker, Vivian Ward (Julia Roberts). She gets curious and asks him what he does for a living. He can't explain it! This leads to a reconsideration for him and good fortune for her . . .

Henry Warren, of the merchant bank of Warren Sons and Mortimer, is too respectable to kerb-crawl for a £5 streetwalker. But he too is facing a disintegrating marriage. His wife is seeing a Saudi prince. This might not be the best choice for her, but it is humiliating for him.

Henry has finished a stupendous burst of business, making deals all over Europe. With this work and his personal life, he decides a massive change is in order. So he closes down the house, lays off the staff, and asks his chauffeur to drive him north, so he can go for a long walk and try to sort out his life.

Problems ensue. The chauffeur is the only person who knows where Henry is, which makes things inconvenient when he is killed

in a collision. And then Henry get peritonitis and collapses.

The doctor he is taken to saves his life, which is remarkable in those pre-antibiotic days. And as Henry lies in the hospital ward recovering he notices two or three things. The ward is overcrowded. And the death rate is substantial.

This can be explained easily enough. The people there in Sharples have been living on the dole — government assistance payments for the unemployed. Financially, and physically, they have no reserves.

As Henry recovers, he begins to tour the town. All the little shops are closed; no one has any money to buy anything. And so is the chief industry of the town, Barlow's shipyard. (It makes one think of the similar scene in *Atlas Shrugged*.)

It was a flourishing firm once. (In a running gag, several people proudly inform Henry that seven destroyers built in the Barlow yard fought at Jutland.) But the owners took all the money out of the firm, and didn't accumulate any cash. When the Depression hit, the company, like the people there, had no reserves.

He gets some help, Alice McMahon, the almoner of the hospital. They had thought he was a charity case (he'd lost his wallet with all his money) and the lady wants to help. She tells him about the sad history of Sharples.

Henry gets back in touch with his firm. He makes some donations to the hospital, and pays for his surgical treatment. But he also has something bigger in mind. And he ends up buying the Barlow's yard for £5500 — a pittance.

But now that he owns the place, he has to do something with it. Finding workers is a problem. The discussion of the issues having to do with finding staff is a significant part of the story, even though it may seem too intricate and dull. The idea is to show how the collapse of the firm debilitated the town.

Having hired workers, he needs to find business. He's already issued a prospectus claiming he has work, but he has to fulfill it. This involves traveling to the grubby land of Laevatia, where he already has commercial connections. They have oil and are in need of tankers, but there are other suppliers.

This involves the good old Third World business of bribery. This is a dilemma even today, where at every corner there is a bureaucrat wanting to wet his beak; yet businessmen are prosecuted back home for bribery. Henry is no better (or worse) than others.

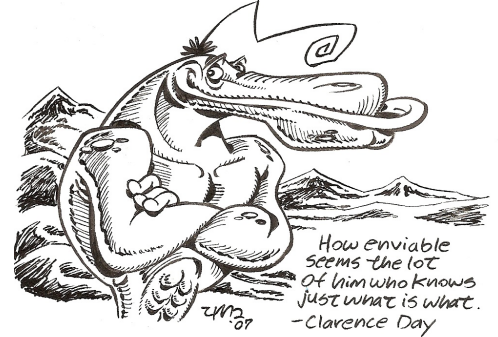
One person he searches for is a "good-time girl" who can lead him to the person he needs to make connections. She is neither a sordid greedy whore nor a hooker with a heart of gold; just a sad unfortunate woman who is trying to make a living and has but one skill. (This seems like Vivian.)

With the Laevatian order to hand, Henry returns to Sharples, and work begins. Other orders come in and then . . .

A disgruntled former employee gets her revenge for having been fired for incompetence

by going to the police. Henry is arrested and indicted. It's a fair cop, and he resigns himself to going to prison. This takes some arrangement and he discusses how to put his disgrace to the best for the company.

*How strong and steadfast those without the least uncertainty or doubt.*



The prison seems curiously pacific by modern standards. There are no gangs, shankings, tattoos, etc., and he does not have to become someone's bitch. Indeed, the prison sentence seems almost monastic; Henry learns the art of reading slowly for deep meaning. He gives advice to his deputy at the shipyard, and is occasionally visited by Alice.

Then his sentence is abruptly ended. He takes the train north to Sharples. The town has changed; the shops are reopened, people are looking healthier. But then he notices something in particular. There is a bronze plaque at the station. A plaque with a picture of him, and the inscription, "He gave us work."

As he looks at it, a couple of children fall into an argument about whether that man is the man on the plaque, and somewhat befuddled, Henry confirms the claim.

The news spreads almost instantaneously. Shopkeepers close up shop, workers abandon their projects, and everyone else it seems runs out into the street to see their hero. Finally, as Alice stands in her office, dazed and confused, another worker asks her if she wants to go see her man. She joins the throng.

Norway based his description of the effort required to get the shipyard up and functioning on the efforts required to build the dirigible R100. (There was a private-enterprise one, the R100, and a government-built one, the R101. While the R100 worked well, the R101 crashed due to structural defects and the British gave up on dirigibles.)

Norway would return to this theme in *A Town Like Alice* (1950). Write what you know; he had moved to Australia by then, and observed the place. (Then he did *On the Beach* (1957), but that's another story.)

Henry makes a great sacrifice to save the ruined city, giving up his reputation for it. (One can't imagine Dagny Taggart going to

prison to restart a town in decline.) Amazingly, he is recognized and admired for this.

**HOW TO GET CENSORED BY ROTTEN TOMATOES**

by Taras Wolansky

Earlier this month, I submitted a couple of brief movie reviews in the "audience reviews" section of RottenTomatoes, the entertainment site.

One of the reviews was posted, the other rejected without comment. See if you can guess which is which.

- 1. *Ammonite* (2020), starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan. (This concerns a — probably imaginary — affair between pioneering 19th Century paleontologist Mary Anning and the wife of geologist Sir Roderick Murchison.)

\* [out of 5]

If Mary Anning had a T-shirt, it would read, "I helped create a scientific revolution that upended thousands of years of beliefs about the creation of life on Earth, and all I got was this lousy movie!"

Even on its own terms — that is, mostly disregarding Anning's scientific contributions — the film is dismal and slow moving. Indeed, my companion tells me I dozed off (something I never do in theaters) and had the good fortune to miss at least some of the pointless sex scenes.

I hope they used body doubles, instead of humiliating the actresses to no purpose. It never fails to astonish me, how often male directors conclude that their films absolutely require attractive women to take off their clothes!

- 2. *A Promising Young Woman* (2020), starring Carey Mulligan.

\* [out of 5]

Poorly directed (by a first-timer), sadly predictable wish-fulfillment revenge fantasy.

A woman pretends to be drunk in bars, so sexual predators can take her home, and she can then upbraid them for sexually molesting her. Astonishingly, this does not result in her being beaten up, raped, or killed by, say, the third such date.

Be wary: whenever the RT summary says "timely" and "provocative", this actually means "heavy-handed propaganda".

Correct! RottenTomatoes posted the first review but not the second.

I got the impression that somebody at RT was protecting the anti-male fantasy, *APYM*, from negative reviews as, for a long time, there were no negative audience reviews at all.

Confronting evildoers on their home turf, like the heroine of *APYM*, is considered very dangerous even for trained policewomen with heavily armed backup seconds away. That's why I call the film a fantasy. I just hope no naïve young woman, raised on a steady diet of tiny actresses taking down hulking stuntmen, ever tries to emulate the film's protagonist.

*Ammonite*, by contrast, is unlikely to get anyone killed. However, as a bio flick, it is in its own way a crime, too.

It skips over all the drama of how a little-educated young woman made herself notable in the scientific world, choosing instead to go straight to her declining years.

Not to mention that it turns Sir Roderick Murchison, the man who delineated the Devonian, Silurian, and Permian periods (which still stand today) into little more than a cuckolded husband; and his wife, a geologist in her own right, into a bored hausfrau in search of diversion.

**ON THE PROSPED REMAKE OF THE WIZARD OF OZ**

by Wade Major

It's hard to fathom the level of cultural detachment and artistic arrogance required to even consider a remake of *The Wizard of Oz*. The year 1939 is widely acknowledged as the single most legendary year in movie history, with *Oz* undeniably the most legendary of them all. Even *Gone with the Wind*, which swept that year's Oscars and remains the most popular movie of all time in terms of tickets sold, hasn't stood the test of time in terms of perennial popularity. Nearly a century's worth of children, however, have grown up with *The Wizard of Oz* and grown to treasure it so much that they share it with their children. That's the kind of high bar that inspires awe and reverence. The blinkered belief that there's something there to be improved upon is like thinking you can improve on the Mona Lisa. It's sheer madness.

See more of Wade's criticism at:

<https://www.scpr.org/programs/filmweek/>

<http://digigods.ign.libsynpro.com/>

**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, 2014  
<http://glasgow2024.org/>

2025

Seattle  
Mid-August 2025

Brisbane, Australia  
Mid-August 2025  
<https://australia2025.com/>

2026

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

Los Angeles

Nice, France  
August 12-16, 2026  
<http://nice2023.com/en/home/>

Orlando  
Early to Mid-August 2026

2027

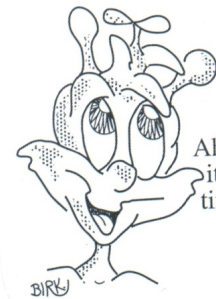
Tel Aviv  
August 2027

**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. They are doing a poll to choose between a virtual con in August and a physical one in December.

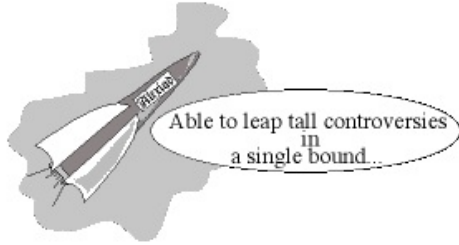


Ah... it's Hugo nominating time in fandom!!

2022

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

## Letters, we get letters



From: **John Hertz** December 1, 2020  
236 S. Coronado St., No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057

Why should you be surprised *Animal Farm* and *That Hideous Strength* weren't on the Retro-Hugo ballot? We don't nominate. Things that don't get nominated don't get on. What would surprise me — and it would be a pleasant surprise — would be seeing *Forced Perspectives*, *Glorious*, *Starborn* and *Godsons* on the Hugo ballot.

All right, does anyone else have any Hugo recommendations?  
—JTM

It's a bitter example of "Those who know, don't speak; those who speak, don't know."

Speaking of which, it was sad that when I'd carefully written Jerry Pournelle could slip a Nuclear Fizz in the Insurgent manner you changed it to "slip".

Extensive searches, I'm reliably informed, have yet to find anyone who actually wrote "My parents, Ayn Rand and God" except to say someone else had who shouldn't have. Maybe that isn't sad.

I so far haven't remembered who supposedly moved from the U.S. to Canada, then died of alcohol-related cirrhosis, because he'd seen a sign "Drink Canada Dry".

January 29, 2021

Thanks for a good appreciation and for sending it to *File 770*. Tim well earned his seven times a Hugo finalist (as we are now to call it), My companions on the left are very careless about extending tolerance to folks on the right. You reproved so mildly.

From: **Timothy Lane** December 12, 2020  
[timothylane51@gmail.com](mailto:timothylane51@gmail.com)

"The Hildebrand Rarity" was never used for the title or plot of a Bond movie, but in *Licence to Kill* the chief ally of the villain is Milton Krest, who runs a research institute and boat both named *WaveKrest*. His fate is different from the original Krest's, but similarly grisly.

Note that Krest is portrayed as a typical Hun even though he was a German-American. Fleming wasn't very forgiving, perhaps because a girlfriend during the war (a dispatch rider) was killed by a bomb.

"Quantum of Solace" is the least Bondian Bond story. Amis called it a "Maughmish anecdote" and it's just the Jamaican governor telling Bond about the woman he was next to at a dinner party, and the psychological theory he had developed from her case.

I take it *Salamis* is a new book. It's been a while since the last one I recall.

Yes it is.

I don't remember the religious aspects of Tevis's novel *The Queen's Gambit*. There's the usual link to alcohol and drugs. In this case, the girl was raised in an orphanage where they used a lot of tranquilizers, to which she became addicted.

George W. Price's proposal for Wuhan fever relief is an interesting idea. The Behemoth certainly owes relief to those whose incomes it takes. I note those imposing the shutdowns never risk their own incomes in any way. Others have noticed, and someone started a petition at [change.org](http://change.org) to make politicians devote half their salaries to relieving their victims. Sounds reasonable to me.

I did read *Practice to Deceive* by Ann Rule. I notice the woman who incited the murder is probably out of prison now.

That is going to happen. Remember, John Huntington Story the serial rapist of "Doc": *The Rape of the Town of Lovell* (2000, 2014; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 18 #2) is not only still alive, he is back in Lovell.

Tim died on January 15, 2020. We will miss him.

—JTM

From: **Nic Farey** December 18, 2020  
[fareynic@gmail.com](mailto:fareynic@gmail.com)

Thanks as always Joe — very much enjoyed your James Bond commentary (as I always do). I wish Taras Wolansky had spent more words on *Away* (which I agreed with him on) than *The Queen's Gambit* (which I didn't)...

Good arrers!

Nic reported he had an attack of cellulitis. I hope he gets a thorough treatment for it. My first attack was bad . . . particularly when the wound treatment specialist said he was glad varicose veins weren't involved, because he would have had to operate, and he wasn't sure I would survive the surgery.

—JTM

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Dec. 22, 2020

2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA  
[RichD22426@aol.com](mailto:RichD22426@aol.com)

This zine is in response to *Alexiad* December, 2020.

To Lisa. My wife likes animals too. Unfortunately, circumstances mean she can't travel as much as she used to. However, she likes feeding the birds and discerning their calls. Also, she likes feeding squirrels. They are pickier than the birds. Not as picky now as in the Summer, though.

In Reviewer's Notes, you complain about the vicissitudes of publishing. I gather, for new writers, agents have gone out like high button shoes. These days, don't authors start out in smaller presses, if not small presses? And when their works prove relatively successful, they get sold to major publishers. I remember checking the bios on books and finding that to be the case. For instance, Tom Clancy started out in a smaller press. I believe it was the U.S. Naval Institute. Yes.

Ultimately, of course, it's all a matter of striking the readers in the right place.

In your review of "The Hildebrand Rarity," there is an example one of the James Bond women being assertive. Off the cuff, I remember these assertive Bond women: Pussy Galore who attacked from the air, and fighting Turkish women. The important thing is that they are beautiful. It's not a surprise: in general, given beauty, both submissive women and assertive women can be sexy.

In your review of *Salamis*, the novel did not have technology progress by leaps and bounds in Ancient Greece. If it did, that would be Greekpunk, right? I guess the closest you would get to it would be Conan Doyle's *Mara-cot Deep*. However, Plato's Atlantis might be considered the Greekpunk of its time.

No, it's a historical swashbuckler, similar to L. Sprague de Camp's *The Bronze God of Rhodes* (1961; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 13 #6), for which Turtledove wrote an introduction.

In Rod Edmiston's "The Joy of High Tech," he talks about zeppelins, in particular, and also other lighter than air craft. I remember a period of time when zeppelins were not only cool but the transport of the future. I remember Philip José Farmer making a woman the captain of a zeppelin in the future. From what Rod says, with modern technology, the zeppelin might make a come back of sorts. In niches. He says it would be more fuel efficient for some purposes; and since its makers will avoid aluminum, safe.

After the reviews, we get the "Letters," I think I'll first reply to your reply to my letter. Yup, no bucks, no Buck Rogers. Until there's money to be made in outer space. Or patriotism for patriotism's sake.

Now I will reply to Tom Feller's letter. I

think George Price is an idealist. It's not practical to save enough of our income to support our current life style for a year. In fact, some people are living from pay check to pay check. But George is a idealist, and there is something good about that. It takes courage these days not to back one politician or another but to back ideals. To travel the road untrammelled.

Next also, I will reply to John Purcell. Maybe Her Royal Highness Princess Delphine van Saksen-Coburg/de Saxe-Coburg could be known as 'Saxy.' That would certainly fit on a player's jersey.

Next still, I will reply to George Price. Another reason the Nazis didn't build an A-bomb is because a coterie of reactionary physicists rose to power with the Nazis. Most advocates of relativity and quantum mechanics were purged because these physicists considered them 'Jewish science.' They even threatened Heisenberg. Only in the mid-'40s, after Himmler heard the allies were building an atomic bomb, were these troglodytes stripped of their power..

Next, in addition, I will reply to Darrell Schweitzer. None of the Hugos have to meet any criteria at all, much less literary quality. They're what the crowd likes. The idea is I don't know anything about science fiction but I know what I like.

Next furthermore, I will reply to Timothy Lane. So you get those telephone calls too. Originally, I believed calls that said I owed someone something or someone owed me something. Not for quite a while. Now, if I don't recognize a caller or phone number, I let them leave a voice message. Also, I believe nothing by strangers over the phone. Forget about claims about my warranties and the condition of my computer

Next onward, I will reply to Taras Wolansky. He answered me with the word, "Groan!" The very reaction I wished to elicit. Of course, the lesson of the Iliad, in addition to other lessons, has been beware of gifts bearing Greeks.

Finally, I will reply to AL du Pisani's letter. For once, it wasn't just the South African government. A lot of nations sponsored lock downs, discouraged large crowds and stopped travel because of Covid-19. Did such precautions save lives? I suspect they did. Was it overkill? That's a matter of opinion. One thing I will agree with him about: these precautions have certainly been a pain in the drain.

I guess that's it.

From: **Lloyd Penney** December 26, 2020  
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON  
M9C 2B2 CANADA  
[penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)  
<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 114, and we hope your Christmas was memorable. Ours was small, but just right. We both got some good

gifts, and just what we wanted. We did treat ourselves to some Chinese food for Christmas, and the leftovers are sustaining us. Some end-of-year comments...

It's great to be able to see wildlife here and there. It's a reminder that we haven't killed everything around us. There are a lot of foxes around here, plus a few coyotes we have to be wary of. Otherwise, there's deer, cranes, crows, so many birds and small mammals. I gather it is worth the time to befriend a murder of crows...if you can provide them with food they like, they will try to repay you with shiny rocks or pieces of metal or even coins.

**We were driving to church the other day and had to brake when four deer ran across the road in front of us... in a suburban neighborhood.**

The year 2020 is the Year of the Cancellations. Basically, we haven't done anything since St. Patrick's Day here. There's nothing happening because of the pandemic. I hope there will be a fan-run event here and there, a convention would be nice, but we will have to meet with each other in order to keep our community going. Pro-run cons aren't there for that, although it's great if it happens. Maybe in the future, only fan-run relaxicons will be around to keep the interest and community alive. It might not be what we want, but it may be sufficient to keep our local communities going.

Publishers are leaving the field or consolidating, so as usual, I am late to the party, or a late bloomer. Yet, I am pleased. For the last two years now, I have had the chance to edit magazines (*Amazing Stories*) and books (*Amazing Selects*, plus other books), and now, those books are starting to arrive in the book stores, or through books-on-demand through Amazon. For Christmas this year, Yvonne got me copies of *Ambient Conditions* by Sharon Lee & Steve Miller, and *Lamia's Children* by Shirley Meier, and I had a hand in the editorial aspects of both. I knew my name would appear somewhere in the Lee & Miller, but didn't know it would appear in the Meier book. Yay! There's also a book coming up shortly in which I will be listed as an associate editor. I can't wait for more.

The RIP file looks horrible yet again... after the passing of Bova and Lupoff, we mourn Jeremy Bulloch and James Gunn, just to name a couple. As always, we are at the age where the big names we grew up with are departing.

Putting money away to live for a year without a job is just unrealistic. The price of just about everything has gone up far faster than our salaries, no matter what we do for a living, and while such an idea is good, it just can't be done any more, even if you are thrifty to the point of being cheap. After our flu shots, we are looking forward to our COVID-19 vaccines. We are still in a lockdown, and will be for another four weeks, so restaurant dining is still a no-no. We treated ourselves to Chinese food on Christmas Day, and we did the pick-up ourselves.

**Our restrictions opened up a little before Christmas. We had breakfast at IHOP and dinner at Denny's. The Denny's was chilly.**

—JTM

My thanks to Rich Dengrove on his good words. I have sold a couple of pairs of earrings lately, but I may have to use consignment shops at some point to move the merchandise along. Still, there are events coming up in 2021 we have tables at, and we hope we can get more sold in order to eventually liquidate all of our merchandise. We are looking towards the end of our little business, and it's been great fun, and a good business lesson.

Christmas is but a fond memory now, and 2021 will have to be a better year than 2020, but I hope it won't take that declaration as a challenge. See you next year in the next issue, I hope.



**SHAKE WELL BEFORE TAKING**

From: **Tom Feller** December 30, 2020  
[tommfeller@aol.com](mailto:tommfeller@aol.com)

Thanks for e-mailing the zine.

Small, fan-run conventions were already an endangered species before the pandemic, so I fear that not many are going to survive it. I agree that the big for-profit media cons will return. Anita and I can have a good time at them, because we have different expectations than we did for the ones like Kubla-Khan and Rivercon. I don't get upset if a con does not have what I want, I just don't attend it and spend my money elsewhere.

I had been a dues-paying member of N3F many years ago and came back when Robert Jennings was editor of *Tightbeam*. I thought



that since he was kind enough to publish my book reviews that I should financially support the organization.

I still try to read as many of the Hugo Award finalists as I can before the voting deadline and found several works worthy of consideration. My reviews for this last year can be found in *Tightbeam* issues 311 and 312. The only categories in which I agreed with the other voters were short story and young adult novel (technically not a Hugo). In response to Darrell Schweitzer, the difference between Dramatic Presentation Long-Form and Short-Form is that the former is for works longer than 90 minutes and the latter for those that are less. (I'm not sure what would happen if a film or television show clocked in at exactly 90 minutes.)

I'm not aware of any film or television adaptations of *The Man in the Iron Mask* that are faithful to the novel except for the basic premise. Of course, the book is such a downer that the changes are made to give it a happy ending.

I don't consider Diana Rigg's death to have been tragic, although I do wish she was still with us. She had a long and productive life. We should all be so lucky.

For her yes. She had a long and happy life. But it's another part of our youth gone. Like the *WorkingDaze* cartoon where Roy wishes he could have married her and Kathy (his wife) says she wished she could have been her, so it's all right.

—JTM

From: **John Purcell** January 4, 2021  
3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845 USA  
[askance73@gmail.com](mailto:askance73@gmail.com)

Good morning, Joseph. I hope this day finds you and Lisa well. In the spirit of "getting things done before serious things need to be done," here is a brief letter of comment on your latest issue.

Yes, I certainly agree that calendar year 2020 was "a year of cancellations." Now the question is predicting when things will begin to re-open so that conventions and such can return on a regular basis.

This is definitely a good question, and I have serious doubts about anything resembling life before the pandemic returning to what could be called "normal." In this modern, whackadoodle, "now what?" world, there is no "normal." If anything, normal is now the whackadoodle "now what?" world. Personally, I blame the advent of social media for this. It has always been the provenance of Those In Charge to shape and change things to whatever they want in order to persuade us common folks to do their bidding, but social media has, in my mind, accelerated and simplified this process. Couple that with the decline of

educational objectives and standards in American public schools that have resulted in young people not knowing how to be skeptical and use critical thinking skills, and you have discovered the recipe for creating a mindless blob willing to believe your every word, no matter how whackadoodle the message is. We live in a completely insane world, and if you want to blame something for it, my guess is the culprit is communication technology. What started out in the 1960s as a means of universities and research institutions sharing information as quickly and reliably as possible has been weaponized — as usual — by humans. Given half a chance, people will weaponize anything. Humanity's ability to screw things up is phenomenal, and that is the "normal" we have to recognize in order to challenge and change.

If we don't, I honestly cannot see the human race surviving past the middle of this century.



That was a pretty bleak paragraph. Feel free to disagree with me; I know many of your devoted readers will. Then again, I encourage them to work their wonders of persuasive argument to get me out of this existential funk. Now on to a couple other items of note in this issue.

The obituaries of Richard Lupoff and Ben Bova are sad, of course, and of the two I only had met Bova at numerous conventions over the years. Both were good writers, although Bova was quite prolific; I have over a dozen books of his in my collection.

Joe, your commentary on "The Hildebrand Rarity" is interesting reading. Now I want to find that story and read it. Where did you find this? I am sure it can be purchased/downloaded from some internet source or other, but I am curious as to your source.

It is in the collection *For Your Eyes Only* (1960), which is available at bookstores and on Amazon.

—JTM

Rodford Edmiston's *Hindenburg* examination is also very interesting. Fascinating information, well researched and well written. Bravo, Rod! The radio broadcast of that disastrous crash is one of the most iconic and parodied moments

in broadcast history. My favorite version of it was Les Nesman's broadcast of the Turkey Drop "WKRP in Cincinnati" that was originally broadcast on October 30, 1978. What a brilliant parody.

I think George W. Price is over-reacting to what Joe Biden's presidency would be like, especially his comments that he is "a weak character whom they [the DNC] can dominate," and also that Biden would actively pursue the Green New Deal policies. Well, I disagree on both points because Biden is an old-school centrist Democrat, who will chip away at things through small steps in order to appease all factions within the two major political parties. I don't see Biden as a radical: he is too "politically correct" to turn off any major players in government. However, the probability of Kamala Harris becoming president is high, mainly given Biden's age and what the pressures of the presidency can do to a person. It is a very demanding position, and I honestly see Biden as a one-term transitional president, should he survive a full term. These next four years are crucial. What all American citizens should do is keep on voicing their concerns to their federal and state congresspersons as an attempt at curtailing all of this furious partisan gamesmanship that only serves to divide Americans than unite them.

Oh, by the way, I do not trust any politician. Democrat, Republican, Green, Bullmoose, Independent, or whatever: none of them can be trusted and all need to be closely monitored and constantly questioned by the people. Technically, we are their employers. When individuals are elected to public office in this country, they allegedly become public servants, meaning they serve the public — the public does not serve them. Methinks that's the key element that has been forgotten over the years.

There. That oughta get people nattering furiously at me and liven up your already excellent letter column. Have at it, gang. Or just ignore me. I'm used to that: I offer thirty-one years of marriage as proof.

From: **Lloyd Daub** January 11, 2021  
6535 W. English Meadows Drive  
D205, Greenfield, WI 53220-3995 USA  
[ldaub@wi.rr.com](mailto:ldaub@wi.rr.com)

Thanks for another Alexiad.  
Random Jottings:

"It now appears that one James Dutton has written and is trying to sell *Rudbek of Rudbek*, a sequel to *Citizen of the Galaxy* (NHOL G.134). Whatever will the Heinlein Estate say?" The first thing I did after making a good start on my Lensman sequels was to look up the Doc Smith estate information. I haven't contacted the estate, since I am not sure I will ever want to publish. But certainly I would add whatever notice they require in the files. Hopefully a copyright notice is all they would want ☺.

Lisa notes another Pearl Harbor Day anniversary. I have no family personal connection,

but as I write it's anniversary 76 for the Battle of the Bulge.

All my studies in History cannot make me complacent about the passage of time — the events of this battle discussed in something over there on my bookshelf are a human lifetime ago. Realizing this makes me ponder anew the events of my lifetime. And remember all the students I had in class at the college for whom ten years before was ancient history, and of no interest, much less anything further back. Being aware of the value of History has to be taught, just like culture and morality. America has failed at all three.

Speaking of time keeping on turning, turning, turning, into the future, I am told that someone checking your ID for being old enough to drink now only needs to see that your birth year starts with '1.' Anyone 1999 or earlier qualifies. SIGH.

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

AND DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT TRUTH!



Returning to the estate-copyright subject of above, I note that David Gerrold has had his lower court victory in a copyright infringement lawsuit overturned. He has for now lost the case.

Via *Reason Magazine's* Volokh Conspiracy <https://reason.com/volokh/> "The Ninth Circuit decides the copyright case of *Oh, the Places You'll Boldly Go!* in favor of Dr. Seuss: "The creators thought their *Star Trek* primer would be 'pretty well protected by parody,' but acknowledged that 'people in black robes' may disagree. Indeed, we do."

The entire opinion is here:

<https://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinion>

[ns/2020/12/18/19-55348.pdf](https://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinion/2020/12/18/19-55348.pdf)

Gerrold and his collaborators had been sued for both copyright and trademark infringement. The Circuit court found only copyright infringement.

I taught a brief introduction to copyright law as part of my information literacy class, as a warning to my students about using images they found online in their homework or other activities. This meant that the opinion's review of the law on the Four Factors of Fair Use, and Gerrold's actions in light of them, were familiar ground for me.

Gerrold's claim of being a Parody was rejected. The book is ruled to be an imitation of Seuss, not a mockery. His 'Purpose for using' claims failed because he intended to profit from Seuss' original as repurposed in his own work. Gerrold was not intending to be educational or do a review of the original. Being a book that imitated another book caused his 'Nature of the Work' claim to fail. Any claim to 'Transforming' the original into something new failed because, as the court noted, the graphic novel's artist bragged about his meticulous work in copying Seuss' artwork so closely as he had. Hence Gerrold also lost on 'Amount used,' since while not every image was copied, so much of certain ones were copied that there was scarcely a way to tell the two apart. Although the ears on a certain character helped. Examples of the original and 'transformed' art are given. See the opinion link.

The whole case allows for mirth, although I doubt Gerrold is laughing. Here's the boffo opening: "McKEOWN, Circuit Judge: In Dr. Seuss's classic book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* (AKA *Go!*), the narrator counsels the protagonist on a path of exploration and discovery. The book closes with this note of caution:

'I'm sorry to say so  
But, sadly it's true  
That Bang-ups And Hang-ups  
Can happen to you.'

If he were alive today, Dr. Seuss might have gone on to say that "mash-ups can happen to you."

Alas, after this, the judge fails to get into the spirit of Seuss and remain clever and amusing. The brevity of his pastiche of Seuss instead highlights how careful someone must be in imitating his source without permission.

Copyright is one of the few legal areas where the burden of proof is on the defendant. Or rather, on the work in question. Courts are guided by precedent to place the disputed work on trial against each of the Four Factors. The work must pass all four tests. Opinions in these cases tend to review all four even when it's clear the work fails at one. It can happen that the work in question need only be fixed as to one of the factors. In practice, this lends itself to settlements once the final decision is made in acquitting or convicting the work. The Seuss estate learned of the book via publicity for a fundraising effort in 2016. The estate sent cease-and-desist orders that were rejected, and so filed a

lawsuit. Initially, the estate lost, but appealed.

The Circuit court notes the book has yet to come into print. Which no doubt explains why I have never heard of it. I rather hope things can now be worked out between the parties as they return to District court. I'd be a customer.

It's a pity. If they had just asked beforehand...

SF also has a criminal law case ongoing, in China. It has been learned that Lin Qi, whose company had newly announced the production of Netflix's *Three-Body Problem*, has been killed by poison. I learned about this at Breitbart:

<https://preview.tinyurl.com/y3dswwk4>

The chief suspect is another executive of Yoozoo Group.

Other sources include *Variety*:

<https://preview.tinyurl.com/y4d2q5xz>

Pop Culture:

<https://preview.tinyurl.com/yygjz4oz>

and *International Business Times*:

<https://preview.tinyurl.com/y225o6r2>

The Chinese press remains silent.

Me too. In a web-based cancel culture, anything you once said can also be used against you. Ask Hong Kongers.

Wishing everyone the happiest 2021 possible.

We've had one loss already.

—JTM

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** January 21, 2021  
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I can assure you that book editors in our field — at least the ones who last long in their jobs — do not just publish literary novels like the ones they liked in college. The editor's job is not so much to acquire a book that he or she likes, but to acquire one which can be published profitably. If you're right then a lot of college kids a generation ago were into endless fantasy series, military SF series, and dystopias for the younger set. I don't think so.

I don't see the major publishers taking a lot of risks. If the "diversity" books have an audience, they will sell. If not, not. There will be a Darwinian selection in the marketplace in the end. It may indeed be that these books are opening up the field to a new audience that previously felt excluded and thus did not buy SF. Or not. We shall see. My guess is that N.K. Jemisin, for example, sells and publishers are looking for other books to pitch the same audience. Awards are pretty much irrelevant to this process. They can be bloc-voted. But the sales numbers are real.

Magazine editors have a bit more freedom.

You can get away with anything in ten pages. So if you have a weird and difficult story that some readers may not like, what you do is make sure the issue is front-loaded with something you are sure will be popular, then slip the more experimental stuff in somewhere deep in the issue. This is not a new technique. You can see Farnsworth Wright doing it with *Weird Tales* in the 1930s. If he had a particularly odd or terribly literary story by Clark Ashton Smith, he would make sure there was a Brundage nude on the cover, the issue led off with a Conan or a Jules de Grandin story, and there was an installment of a trashy serial. But what you can't do as readily is let the strange and possibly difficult item run to novella length where it dominates the issue.

A book editor can't do that. The entire project stands or falls on one work. So it has to be something that will sell, or else the publisher may be looking for a new editor before long.

The academic field has become immensely politicized. There are deadly arguments over "marginalized" groups. So they see what they want to. The publisher who does military SF is one firm, run in the old-fashioned way. And if there's nothing else to buy . . .

I would like to see your opinion of Sarah Hoyt's blog posting of February 9, where she claims that the publishers don't know what is selling:

<https://accordingtohoht.com/2021/02/09/corrupted-markets/>  
—JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Jan. 23, 2021  
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Thank for Vol. 19 No. 6 (December 2020, Whole Number 114).

Wearing a face mask protects other people from the wearer with a minor protection for the wearer being infected from others. So a refusal to wear a face mask means that the person does not give a shit about others.

I am scheduled to have my first Virus shot on February 1. There have not been any problems with employees here as a result of the shot. It is the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

Elizabeth Garrott had an attack of COVID. At last report she was recovering. She is in a care facility. Grant has tested positive and was in isolation, but did not develop the disease.

I watched the movie *Dick Tracy* (1990) a

few weeks ago. It was quite enjoyable. And there was the two-way wrist radio. Chester Gould was way ahead of his time.

To continue on Neanderthals, I highly recommend the book *Kindred: Neanderthal Life, Love, Death and Art* by Rebecca Wragg Sykes (Bloomsbury Sigma, 2020). Not only is the author a wonderful writer, she is also something of a poet and has a great sense of humor. As to the percentage of Neanderthal; DNA one might have, she indicates that it's between 1.8 and 2.6 per cent (p.324). Since 23andMe says mine is 2.8 per cent and I know of someone who says she has something like 3.0 per cent or close to it that has me a bit confused. In photos of bones there is one of girl with a Neanderthal mother and Denisovan father. Perhaps there are people alive today who have DNA from both. I do not have the ability to write a review of the book that does it justice. If anyone is interested it would be nice.

While I'm on the subject, there is a small book out on the Denisovans: *The Denisovans: The History of the Extinct Archaic Humans Who Spread Across Asia during the Paleolithic Era* (Charles River Editors, 08 January 2021). I haven't read it as yet.

"The Joy of High Tech" by Rodford Edmiston on why the *Hindenburg* burned was quite interesting.

**John Purcell:** You indicate that t we might be back on the Moon in five years and Mars in the mid 2030's. Since I am 87, there's a good probability that I sadly will not be here to see either.

**Richard A. Dengrove:** My comment about aliens being humanoid, breathing the same air, and speaking standard American English was meant to be funny. At least the last is necessary or we would not understand what's going on.

From: **George W. Price** Jan. 24, 2021  
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December *Alexiad*:

**The Capitol Hill Follies** — Well, so much for any notion that the Right has very much of a moral edge over the Left.

To be sure, the insurrection did demonstrate the truth of one fundamental tenet of conservatism: that human nature is basically flawed ("original sin" in religious terms) and needs to be kept tightly constrained by law and custom. Hence the emphasis on "law and order."

That's in contrast to the leftist view that humanity is basically good but our impulses are distorted by bad institutions, which therefore should be demolished and rebuilt from the ground up. This never works, of course, because the new society is being built with the same flawed timber as the old one. The usual result is chaos and tyranny.

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Lisa's "In Memory of Digger," about a Doberman she used to know, reminded me of

the urban legend of "the choking Doberman." Many years ago — around 1985 — I saw a newspaper article on urban legends. One example was about a man who lived alone with his Doberman. One day he came home and noticed that the front door was open and the furniture knocked around — obviously someone had broken in. Then he found the Doberman on the floor choking and near death. He rushed the dog to a veterinarian, who quickly discovered that what was stuck in its throat was a man's severed hand! The Doberman was saved, but the maimed burglar was never found. The article made clear that this dramatic tale had never really happened.

A few days after reading this, I was in the lunchroom at work. I was approached by another employee whom I knew only very casually — we did not work together. And he told me that story of the choking Doberman. Only he told it as something that had really happened to a friend of his. I manfully kept my mouth shut and did not call him out. But I made a mental note to never trust anything he might tell me.

\*\*\*\*\*

Here's an addendum to Rodford Edmiston's "Joy of High Tech" history of big airships, principally the German Zeppelins, culminating with the *Hindenburg* and its destruction in 1937.

In the early 1930s the U.S. Navy had several big airships, mainly for scouting. The *Macon* and *Akron* each carried a few small fighter planes. The Curtiss F9C was a biplane (like other fighters of the time). These were carried in a bay in the belly of the airship. Each plane had a hook on top of the upper wing that engaged a mechanism nicknamed "the flying trapeze." This lowered the plane out of the airship for mid-air launching. When a fighter returned it matched speeds with the airship, hooked onto the trapeze, and was drawn up into the belly hangar bay.

The Navy's big rigid airships were all gone before World War II broke out. However, the Navy extensively used smaller non-rigid blimps during the war, primarily for anti-submarine patrol. They were very well suited for that because they could fly slowly, hover, and stay on station a long time.

I learned about the "Macon fighter" from model airplane kit catalogs when I was about twelve. I never did build a model F9C, and I gave up model building entirely when I started high school in 1944.

\*\*\*\*\*

Richard Dengrove notes my fear that the huge deficits the federal government has been running will cause inflation that will undercut our savings. He wonders why it hasn't already happened. I too have wondered about that. My guess is that a lot of that newly-created money has been salted away as savings. I have seen reports that the savings rate has risen sharply, presumably because with the lockdowns cur-

tailoring economic activity and forcing people to stay home, there isn't all that much being produced that they want to spend the money on. If so, then when the economy opens up again we may see a burst of price and wage inflation. Or maybe not — economics is not an exact science.

Or perhaps they buy stuff online. We see Amazon Prime vans all the time.

—JTM

From: **Taras Wolansky** January 29, 2021  
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Thanks for *Alexiad* December 2020.

Darrell Schweitzer's LoC was so substantial, you could have edited it into an article.

On second thought, however, he expresses some opinions that may not be politically correct. So for his sake maybe it's better to keep it a little on the down low.

I have boxes of books to read next to my bed, to which I keep adding. I figured it was about time to start taking some books out — and what should I find but Darrell's *The Threshold of Forever: Essays and Reviews*, which I bought from Darrell at Balticon in 2017 (according to Darrell's inscription). Great stuff! I had intended just to dip into it, but ended up reading the whole thing. About which more later, when I respond to Darrell's aforementioned LoC.

**Joe ("Six Degrees of Cleopatra"):** "Is there some rule that the Serpent of the Nile has to be played by a good Jewish girl?" I guess it makes sense that they would go for Mediterranean types; but was another dark beauty, Claudette Colbert (*Cleopatra*, 1934), Jewish?

Her mother was Jeanne Marie Loew Colbert. Hm.

Incidentally, her Theda Bara number is 2, her Elizabeth Taylor number is 2, and her Gal Gadot number is 3.

**Commentary on "The Hildebrand Rarity" by Ian Fleming:** Curiously, the story you describe resembles last year's time travel spectacular, *Tenet*.

In that film, the wealthy yachtsman who abuses his beautiful wife is a Russian gangster/oligarch (a horribly miscast Kenneth Branagh). The stakes are a bit higher than in Fleming's story, however: the action hero actually risks the destruction of the Earth (or maybe the Universe) to save the woman's life.

The character of the hero (a watchable John David Washington) is too little developed to explain why he would take such a risk. Perhaps we should just lay it down to a Hollywood movie convention, that heroes do things like that (and always succeed, of course).

Review of *Agent Sonia* by Ben Macin-

**tyre:** When I read about espionage in the UK in the 1950s, the Soviet spies always seem to get away. Were there any that the British actually managed to catch — and hold on to? It seems like the US did a much better job of that; perhaps due to J. Edgar Hoover?

Klaus Fuchs. Morris & Lona Cohen. Ex-Sir Anthony Blunt. John Cairncross.

**Richard A. Dengrove:** Dumas' *The Man in the Iron Mask*, long as it is, is actually an excerpt from the much longer *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, which forms the last volume of the "Musketeers" trilogy. At the end, only one of the four still lives.

The reason the Moon landing was the end of manned space exploration was the Outer Space Treaty signed by Lyndon Johnson, which made it impossible for space traveling nations to claim territory outside the Earth's atmosphere. Otherwise, there would have been a claiming race, resulting in American and Russian and EU and UN bases all over the Solar System by now.

I recall that the design of the Vorlons in *Babylon 5* was based on a particular air freshener spray.

There are some excellent non-human aliens in an early black-and-white episode of the 60s TV series, *Lost in Space*. This was before the series deteriorated into farce, possibly seeking to imitate the wild popularity of the Batman series.

**George W. Price:** Given that they had driven away so many of their best nuclear physicists, I have to wonder how much the Nazis could have progressed toward an atomic bomb, even had their effort not been disorganized and half-hearted.

With the sexual misbehavior card unable to pass the laugh test, I figured the Democrats would play the race card — i.e., a racism accusation sans evidence — against Judge Amy Barrett. Of course, that's before I knew she had adopted two black children. Even that didn't stop them entirely: a radical academic accused her of colonizing her children, or something like that.

There was a creepily Orwellian moment when that daft Senator from Hawaii accused Judge Barrett of using what the Senator described as a pejorative term about gays: "sexual preference". As that had never been considered a pejorative term before, this baffled the Judge and the other Senators. However, at least one online dictionary immediately modified its definition of the phrase to mark it as a pejorative, according to the current IngSoc Party line.

"Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an

endless present in which the Party is always right."

This was not meant to be guidelines.

— JTM

**Darrell Schweitzer:** "An award-win merely tells us something about who the author is." I have the same attitude toward author blurbs on books. I figure it's the author's friends, or writers who owe the editor or publisher a favor. Now, a blurb from a published review is another matter.

The retro Hugos for dramatic presentation are indeed applying minute-counts, which were originally intended to distinguish TV episodes from motion pictures in the current Hugo categories. But, as you point out, applying these numbers to movies made in the 1940s leads to absurd results.

As I mentioned above, I read *The Threshold of Forever*. It was a lot of fun, especially for those of us nostalgic about science fiction and fantasy written before we were born. We are both of the generation that was lucky to come into SF when publishers were reprinting older work like mad. It was a terrible time to be a writer, but a good time to be a reader.

Reading your article on whether Randall Garrett's "The Queen Bee" is "the most sexist science fiction story ever published", my first thought was, it's perfect for my imaginary anthology of politically incorrect science fiction.

But on second thought it's not offensive enough. It reminded me of when I watched the John Wayne Western, *McClintock*, with a female companion. This was one of the forgettable potboilers Wayne made after he outlived the great directors he used to work with. Indeed, the only thing I remember about the movie, because I found it distasteful, was that at the end Wayne spansks (wife? ex-wife?) Maureen O'Hara on her admittedly well-bloomed behind.

However, my female companion was not offended. Maureen O'Hara's character was not a representative of womankind, but someone who had behaved badly and deserved worse than she got.

In the same way, the woman in Garrett's story does not represent all women. In fact, she is a homicidal psychopath who murders two women and expects to exploit a peculiarity of the law to get away scot-free. So when she gets her well-deserved comeuppance, it becomes a "biter bit" story, familiar enough to readers that it did not engender a great deal of comment.

The inspiration might have been John Campbell noting that human "queen bees" wouldn't much like living like real queen bees. Or a takeoff on the shipwrecked "Adam and Eve" scenario: Poul Anderson wrote a story about a male ship's officer who is stranded with four beautiful women. The canniest of the women figures out it's a scam: they've landed in an uninhabited area on an already-colonized

world.

The article on the early classic, "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" by David H. Keller, made me wonder if there had not been a bowdlerized version. Because I remember the story, but not the vampiric scene you describe.

Maybe we should look upon the story as a parody of the proletarian revolution narratives common during Keller's reading life.

From: **AL du Pisani** January 31, 2021  
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My government did not manage to ruin my holiday, but they tried hard.

They started by closing the beaches. This did not affect me as much as it could have, since it was both a cooler and wetter time than normal, and I had developed an aversion to sunburn due to too much sunburn as a boy. So it was not as bad as it could have been. This did mean that I did not walk on the beach, and rarely walked on the walking route next to the beach, as that got crowded.

You could legally walk on the beach if you had a fishing permit, which resulted in the local post office putting out chairs outside with details of which permits was available, and what it each would cost – I was amused when I walked past and saw what was going on. That was the day before heavier restrictions was passed.

They also closed down religious gatherings, except for funerals, and that with heavy restrictions. A friend of my stepfather died (of brain cancer) during the big days. He was beloved, and the funeral had a main service which 50 people could attend, an overflow location linked by camera, where another 50 people could attend, and then they streamed it to the people who could not make it.

The government clamped down hard on funerals, since the funerary traditions for some South African have resulted in spreader events.

This did mean that for the entire holiday there were no in person church services – and the normal holiday Christmas service is an outdoor service with 10 000 attendees.

There was a lot less people on holiday – and more cancelled their reservations once the beaches was closed.

To a large extent my family kept to ourselves – my mother had a hip replacement operation early in December, and we tried not to get exposed to Wuhan Pneumonia, hoping not to infect her. It seems to have worked, as she is still fine. My brother and his family did test positive for Wuhan Pneumonia over a period that started two days before Christmas and lasted until after I came back – so I only saw them once, a week before Christmas. My nieces were devastated – they had decorated their house in preparation for a Christmas get together on Christmas Eve, and that had to be

cancelled. Luckily they had very mild cases – I got tired of hearing about all the people I did not really know who died of the Wuhan Pneumonia.

I did not understand how much the previous year had taken from me until I had rested. And I needed to leave my house, be in the presence of my family, and rest a lot.

I managed to do some leisurely reading.

And then I had to come back. This year started off slowly, and my initial plans got scrambled. Stuff that I had to do got postponed – luckily only three weeks. But I did leave me in a bit of Limbo, as it is something that I have to complete before I can carry on with the rest of my year.

The government extended the heavy lockdown regulations. Among other things schools will only open towards mid February. The interesting thing for me watching the January announcement, was how vexed and unhappy the government is becoming with ordinary citizens who just do not want to do as they are told. There was a trace of petulance in our glorious President's voice when he announced the latest restrictions.

Couple that with how the government screwed up procurement of vaccines, and how many stories are coming to light about government waste. One was how the Army spent R200 million buying medicines of dubious effectiveness from Cuba, and then had to throw away a lot of the medicines unused because they forgot to close the cool room door, where they were storing the medicines.

**You're lucky. Up in Wisconsin a pharmacist threw away 500 doses of COVID vaccine. Worse yet, he's a flat-earther.**

—JTM

I do not know how much of the huge propaganda about how overwhelmed hospitals are, are to try and cover up government mismanagement. For instance, there is a story that government hospitals ran low on oxygen, three months after they were warned that oxygen levels are low and should be urgently replenished.

A couple of other things: I was taught in the late seventies to write the time in the format 10h00, with the h standing for the local time-zone. In the late eighties I did my military service, and there I learned the military way: 10B00, with the capital letter denoting the time zone – B for 2 hours east of UCT ( which uses the Z designation).

I recently watched some videos covering the battle of Rorke's Drift. Once again one of the features was lack of cultural understanding. The British soldiers were very unhappy with the Zulus mutilating the corpses of the dead. The Zulu were slitting the bellies of the dead, so that their spirits could leave, and not be tied to the place they have fallen as haunts.

I have been told a story, that white people in places like Kenya, who are very derisive of the abilities of the local black population, are often confronted by tourists, quite often from Scandi-

navia, and told off on how racist they are. And then the tourist would come back two weeks later, after exposure to the black guys in their native environments, and these tourists would be raving in extremely racist language about how utterly useless and terrible the local population are. The joke is Two weeks from zero to racist.



And to some extent that that is understandable – Once you have become used to certain antics, it is handled as these people being these people. I had in interesting experience at a church basaar one day – I saw somebody weird looking perusing some items, and wondered what he was doing there. Then I saw him with one of the band members, and he fell into the pigeon hole of friend of ..., one of the arty crowd. Thereafter I could safely ignore him, as he was in a predictable category.

I hope to contact you soon, and that at some stage that will be in person once again. Even though I do not expect it to happen anytime soon.

Good luck. May you always find something interesting in your life.

#### WAHF:

**Martin Morse Wooster**, with various items of interest.

**Trinlay Khadro**, with a nice letter and origami

**Marty Cantor, Jerry Kaufman, Kathy Palmer-Lister, Lee Muncy, George Phillies, R-Laurraine Tutihasi** with thanks.

**Gary & Cora Flispart, Guy & Rosy Lillian** with Christmas cards.

**R. Graeme Cameron, Bruce Gillespie, Tammi Harris, Arthur Hlavaty, Debra Hussey, Robert Kennedy, Tim Lane, Chuck Lipsig, Grant McCormick, James D. Nicoll, John Purcell, Steven H Silver, Richard H. E. Smith, Rod Smith, Garth Spencer, Lacy Thomas, R-Laurraine Tutihasi, Christopher Weuve, B. J. Willinger, Joel Zakem** with birthday greetings

**David Shea** — with a letter that promptly disappeared. Sorry.

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### **Fear and Loathing in Mos Eisley: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the Galactic Dream**

We were three parsecs out of Naboo on the edge of the Kessel Run when the drugs began to take hold. I remember saying something like “I feel a bit lightheaded, maybe you should pilot . . .” And suddenly space was full of what looked like large alien space bats, all swooping and pulsing and flying around the ship. And a voice was screaming, “*What are these goddamned animals!?*”

Then it was quiet again. My attorney had taken his shirt off and was pouring beer on his chest, to facilitate the tanning process. “What the hell are you yelling about?” he muttered, staring up at the sunlamp with his eyes closed and covered with wraparound Jakkunian sunglasses. “Never mind,” I said. “It’s your turn to pilot.” I hit the autopilot switch and began to unstrap. *No point mentioning those bats*, I thought. The poor bastard will see them soon enough.

We still had more than a dozen parsecs to go. They would be tough parsecs. Very soon, I knew, we would both be completely twisted. But there was no going back, and no time to rest. We would have to ride it out. Press registration for the fabulous Mint 400 pod race was already underway, and we had to get there by four to claim our sound-proof suite. A fashionable sporting magazine in Coruscant had taken care of the reservations . . . and I was, after all, a professional journalist; so I had an obligation to *cover the story*, for good or ill.

The sporting editors had also given me three hundred credits in cash, most of which was already spent on extremely dangerous drugs. The cargo hold of the ship looked like a mobile clone trooper narcotics lab. We had two bags of bentlam, seventy-five pellets of glitterstim, five sheets of high-powered slo-mo, a salt shaker half full of soma, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers . . . and also a quart of moloko plus, a quart of scumble, a case of Bor’Kaan, a pint of raw knives, and two dozen thionite tabs.

All this had been rounded up the night before, in a frenzy of high-speed driving all over Naboo — we picked up everything we could get our hands on. Not that we *needed* all that for the trip, but once you get locked into a serious drug collection, the tendency is to push it as far as you can.

The only thing that really worried me was the thionite. There is nothing in the galaxy more helpless and irresponsible and depraved than a man in the depths of a thionite binge. And I knew we’d get into that rotten stuff pretty soon. Probably at the next space station. We had sampled almost everything else, and now — yes, it was time for a long dose of thionite. And then do the next dozen parsecs in a horrible, slobbering sort of spastic stupor. The only way to keep alert on thionite is to do up a lot of knives — not all at once, but steadily, just enough to maintain the focus.

— Not by Dr. Raoul Duke

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

This is issue **Whole Number One Hundred and Fifteen (115)**.

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

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

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