

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This will be a seventeen year cicada year. The cicadas will emerge in hordes and take over for a few weeks.

Today is April 14, year 109 to the day since the *Titanic* sank.

— Lisa

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Pascha is **May 2**.

The 147th Running of the Kentucky Derby will be **May 1, 2021**.
 Admissions will be limited to 30% — 50% of maximum capacity.
 The 146th Running of the Preakness Stakes will be **May 15, 2021**.
 The 152nd Running of the Belmont Stakes will be **June 5, 2021**.

Printed on April 20, 2021
 Deadline is **June 6, 2021**

Reviewer's Notes

We now have a Barsoomian flyer. That is, the *Ingenuity* drone probe has made its first flight on Mars. This may not be as useful as it is exciting; the drone had to be transported there, which meant it had to be light enough to not unduly burden the *Perseverance* rover. We may have to content ourselves with some low-altitude pictures.
 Some people are celebrating. Type "Ingenuity NASA" into Google and click the helicopter.

It was all very different sixty years ago. Then, we expected that nu 2021 the flying vehicles on Mars would be going from one human settlement to another. The probes would be landing on the surface of Pluto, which was a planet then.

Reality in its many facets bit back. The costs of such matters were greater than we had believed. The will to go had been less, outside of our bubble. The dreams were blown away, and died unmourned.

The committee has spoken, and the Worldcon will be in December. Weather will make getting there even more problematic. The Hugo voting will clash with the 2022 Hugo voting. The site selection will be cramped, with four months less for the winning bid to arrange affairs.

And in all this, the Good and the True are making sure that all their political views are considered. Newer and more virtuous views portend, and the former Good and True are destined to be unmasked as being repressive and bigoted.

In the middle of this, the hope of just getting together and seeing old friends, of mourning those who have gone and welcoming those who are new, is lost like tears in rain. Perhaps indeed it is time to die.

At least racing is beginning to return. The Kentucky Derby Festival has its differences, mostly to prevent crowds. But there will be a full racing program on Derby Day — and the Kentucky Oaks, the day before. (But that's Good Friday.)

The Kentucky Horse Park has continued operations. Can horses get coronavirus? Old Friends, the thoroughbred retirement facility, is still going, even though they have had to suspend operations. It turns out there is a new thoroughbred retirement facility near to Louisville.

Horses go on.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Buy my books. (All available on Amazon.com for quite reasonable prices, except the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, which can be bought directly from George Price for a reasonable sum, or from ReAnimus Press in electronic format.)

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

<https://reanimus.com/store>

— Adv.

1916: The War for America (Second American Civil War Book 3), the sequel to *1910: War in the Pacific* and *1912: War for the White House* (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 20 #1) is now available (2021; ISBN 979-8701223798; \$15.95; 2021; Amazon Digital Services (Kindle); \$2.99). Jeff Thomas recounts how the breakdown in American society led to fighting, rioting, starvation, and in the end a scene where President Davies should go into a flaming rant over General Steiner not being able to attack. And there are frightening parallels to other events and sinister connections to the future.

On **December 21, 2020**, 36 people from the Chilean Bernardo O'Higgins Riquelme Base in the Antarctic Peninsula tested positive for COVID-19 and were evacuated from Antarctica. So there's no escape even there.

The N3F people review animes and mangas. (The readership may be divided between people who have no idea what the National Fantasy Fan Federation — N3F — is, people who say, "What, they're still around?", and members.) James P. Nicoll reviews mangas.

One of the clichés of these is "truck-kun". It seems an anime girl can't cross the street without being run down by a truck which comes tearing around the corner and drives on without any consequences to the driver.

This requires, of course, empty streets. Which, I understand, are very rare there. How many people in Japan are killed by being run down by trucks, anyway?

But of course it's only cartoon clichés, on

the same level with having a stick of dynamite go off in your face, and emerging from a cloud with clothes torn, all smoke-blackened, with a startled look on your face.

The Heinlein Forum people have discovered that there is a writer named **Thorby Rudbek**. Really. And he seems to know his Heinlein. Pen name, or named by Heinlein fan parents? He's on Amazon.com so it might be possible to look.

A fire in the engine room has severely damaged the Australian Antarctic resupply ship MPV *Everest*. No one was killed or injured, but there was some damage to the fittings. The ship was bringing back Australian station members who were being relieved.

MONARCHICAL NEWS

We regret to report the death of **Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu**, King of the Zulus, on **March 12, 2021**. Born **July 14, 1948**, he succeeded his father Cyprian Bhekuzulu in 1968. The King ruled during the turbulent transition from Apartheid, and the still disturbed period now.

King Goodwill was descended from King Mpande ka Senzangakhona, the half-brother of Shaka, and from his son King Cetshwayo kaMpande (as in *Zulu* (1964; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #5))

The likely successor is his oldest surviving son **Misuzulu Zulu**, a son of his Great Wife. The prime minister, **Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi** (yes, him) announced that the king, who had been suffering from diabetes, had died of COVID-19.

Thanks to Martin Morse Wooster for bringing this to our attention.

Bayete!

SHOTS AND INJECTIONS

by Joe

I've had my first immunization shot for COVID-19. Now Grant had his, tested positive, and was quarantined for two weeks without developing symptoms. He suspected that Tim had died of COVID, but had no proof as the nursing home doesn't release that information. And we know about Lloyd and Yvonne Penney. Various of my relatives have tested positive for COVID, and one died of it. My niece got her shot but she works with children.

The state opened shots to the 1c class (people between 60 and 70) the second week in March and I signed up with the medical network. They passed me on to the state network, and I got an appointment to go to the mass immunization clinic on the State Fairgrounds on March 10.

You had to park and wait, moving forward in your line as those who had reached the front were called. Then my car wouldn't start. Fortunately, the volunteers were equipped; one man brought a jump-start battery pack and got

the car going. I left the engine running to recharge the battery.

Then we reached the front of the line, and I had to get into the line to be given an assignment. This required my driver's license (fortunately I had the new one that had a picture of me without glasses), my insurance card, and the letter giving me a reservation.

That done, we went into Broadbent Arena and got in another line. After a few minutes I got to the shot table, and they gave me a stick. I got the Pfizer vaccine.

Then I had to pull out and wait fifteen minutes to make sure I didn't faint, throw up, start having coronavirus-shaped tumors growing out of my arm, or anything of the sort. That done, we went off.

My next appointment is April 7.

Two days later, Lisa had her shot. The library would re-open on March 26, and we got called on the eleventh saying she **ABSOLUTELY HAD** to make an appointment for the next day. So we got there after work.

She got the Johnson & Johnson one-shot immunization. So far she's doing fine.

But I have many other medical appointments. I went to see the blood specialist. The tests showed I had iron-poor blood. There are supplements, but they wouldn't work, either, since the part of my intestine that absorbs iron is damaged.

The symptoms of iron deficiency include fatigue, shortness of breath, and eating non-food items. This latter is called "pica", which is not the typeface size "pica". Normally this pica is eating earth (which was referenced in "The Year of the Jackpot" (*Galaxy* 3/1952, 1959; NHOL G.097)) but it's also eating ice. That's the one I do.

(But then, back a while ago while at the vet's I noticed a listing of symptoms of arthritis in dogs. I had all of them except "Constantly licking a joint".)

So I have been having iron infusions. Five of them, one each subsequent Friday afternoon. I sit in the chair and read while red ferric sludge drains into my veins. The hardest part of the procedure seems to be finding a vein.

The last one this is going to cover had a striking accompaniment. There was a parade in the halls, with sound intended to be music, cheering, and other such whoop-jamboreehoo (as Mr. Finn would have put it). I enquired and was informed that it was a celebration for a patient's final round of chemotherapy. (It's the "Norton Cancer Clinic", bloodwork is a sideline of theirs.)

To Be Continued

USS BUSH (DD-529)

Launched 27 OCT 1942, Bethlehem Steel,
San Francisco
Sunk 06 APR 1945, Okinawa

April 6 marked the anniversary of the

sinking of my father's ship, the U.S.S. *Bush*. This issue is dedicated to the memory of those of her crew who did not get to come home.

Sailors lost April 6, 1945:

Akers, Elwood L.	Slc
Anderson, Harold	WT3c
Anderson, Richard P.	Lt. (Jg)
Baker, Joe D.	S1c
Baldwin, Jim R.	S2c
Barich, Joseph J.	S2c
Bartnick, Leo J.	F1c
Batchelor, Merrill R.	S2c
Baykowski, John J.	MM1c
Beals, Miller W.	F2c
Blair, James C.	TM2c
Bray, Wilbert T.	F1c
Bresnahan, Raymond J.	MM3c
Brody, Albert D.	PhM3c
Cechal, Clarence J.	F1c
Chaplinks, Alex	F1c
Copp, Hubert D.	Sm3c
Crenshaw, Edwin D.	S1c
Cross, "J" "M"	Fc2c
Davey, David S.	S2
Day, Richard R.	SoM2c
Dillard, Thomas E.	S2c
Dolgos, Frank G.	F2c
Drew, Harold R.	WT1c
Duncan, Keith L.	S1c
Eskola, Arvid	S1c
Foster, John Gordon	Lt.(jg)
Frankenberg, Justine R.	WT2c
Gerriets, Louis E.	Sc1c
Greenberg, Stanley B.	MoMM1c
Guinn, Billy J.	S1c
Hagerty, John R.	MM2c
Hall, George W.	S1c
Hay, George S.	RM3c
Huard, Wilfred L.	BM1c
Jackson, Solomon, Jr.	StM1c
Johnson, Norman H.	MM1c
Jones, Donald C.	MM3c
Jones, Oscar T.	RM1c
Kenner, Perry J.	F2c
Kirby, Robert W.	S2c
Koebbe, Clair E.	S1c
Kosty, Nicholas L.	F1c
Kowalski, Eugene V.	RM3c
Krygier, Stephen J.	CFC
Kulis, Edward A.	EM2c
Ladner, Gene O.	S1c
Leffler, George W.	S2c
Long, Harry W.	MM3c
Macknight, Roy T.	GM2c
Mart, John O.	BM2c
Martin, John D.	GM3c
Mccarty, Byron N.	RdM2c
Mcfarland, Richard C.	SkK1c
Meisetschlager, Joseph V.	SoM2c
Merrick George W.	F1c
Mills, Donnell D.	MM2c
Mocclair, Patrick A.	S1c
Moffit, Duane Wilson	Ensign
Montour, Frederick N.	S1c
Northey, Wesley G.	BM1c
Pace, Homer P.	MM1c

Parker, Albert J.	F2c
Parker, Harry A.	GM3c
Phillips, Coy W.	FCO1c
Pomerance, Sherman	Lt.(jg)
Rush, Jerome Michael	Ensign
Schwarzin, Frank B.	CEM
Scott, Marvin	TM2c
Sprague, Lloyd C.	EM3c
Stewart, Edward H.	RT2c
Swindell, Charles N.	RdM1c
Szczecz, Edward J.	EM1c
Tetak, Frank P.	S2c
Tillman, Carl G.	TM2c
Tinan, Donald R.	S1c
Trella, Paul P.	S2c
Vertz, Richard W.	S1c
Weithman, George C.	S2c
Welch, Jack	S1c
Wetherbee, Leo D.	Sc2c
Willis, James Sturgis	Comdr.
Wood, Glen E.	S2c
Woodhurst, Harry King	Lt.(jg)
Wysocki, Tony	S1c
Yates, Freeman W.	Cox.
Youtsey, Charles E.	CWT
Futrell, Robert C.	MM1c

and to the memory of Kunio Kanzaki, Hiroshi Matano, Noboru Yamakawa, Shinzo Tabata and Kazuo Tanio, who also died for their country on April 6, 1945. And no, they were not Nisei. They were kamikaze pilots who sacrificed themselves in a last-ditch defense of their country. Three of them were almost certainly the ones who sank the *Bush*.

PSYCHONETOLOGY

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

PSYCHOBABBLE:

Fast Talk and Quick Cure in the Era of Feeling (1977)
by R. D. Rosen

... Dr. Samuel P. Shovel, M.D., a jovial, red-cheeked, white-haired man who was the high priest of psychonatology, "the New Science of the Id"...

— James Blish, *A Case of Conscience* (1953, 1958)

One of the more carefully researched parts of Mary Robinette Kowal's *Lady Astronaut* series is the attention paid to the tranquilizer of the day. Nowadays, it's Xanax; in the fifties, when Nicole Wargin wants relief from her stress she takes Miltown. Every era seems to have its magic pill which frees the patient of the pains and inconveniences of life. (And then they wonder why their children take crystal meths and fentanyl.)

Similarly, the original therapy of which psychonatology is a cautious evocation was not alone, no matter how ashamed science fiction fans may be of that science of modern mental health. It was just one of many therapies which were proposed to relieve troubled people of

their burdensome beliefs.

Indeed, to some extent, Freudian psychiatry was one. While James Blish might scorn a novel having a reference to a psychiatrist's appointment as a valid reason for an afternoon off work, psychiatry was considered a wonder procedure which would expunge mental problems.

Other therapies came into being as people with ideas wanted to strike off on their own. Richard D. Rosen was too careful to cover the original of psychonatology; they did things to critics. Snakes, for example (L. Sprague de Camp, "A Sending of Serpents", *F&SF* August 1979).

Rosen coined the term "psychobabble". In the book with that title, he discussed a number of fringe therapies. Some were mostly harmless, such as co-counseling. This encouraged patients to pair off and counsel each other, which was at worst annoying when they got stressed out at public engagements and dashed off to a corner to co-counsel each other.

One he found to have particularly destructive effects. Robert Jastrow's *Primal Scream* depended on leading the patient to relive a traumatic experience in extreme youth and let it all hang out, which was called "Primaling". (Not quite from before birth, Jastrow presumably not wanting to find snakes in his mailbox.)

Rosen gives an extreme example, from a group which he characterizes as a derivative group and not one of Jastrow's. (Wanting to dodge legal trouble?)

The patient was a young woman who began *Primaling*. She apparently had a vast number of traumatic memories and relived them with great energy and anguish. Her therapy, however, seemed to have less than ideal effects, for the more she *Primaling* the worse she got.

Perhaps implausibly, Rosen described her as having to be *Primaling* every moment she was awake. And her memories grew darker. She eventually got to explicit and brutal memories of being assaulted, molested, and raped by her brother. It seems hard to believe that the brother escaped prosecution, but apparently the police did not believe the patient. She continued her downward spiral until she committed suicide.

Most of these therapies can be categorized as "charismatic"; they were invented by a single thinker, who subsequently dominated the use of the therapy. Freud was somewhat like that, albeit less domineering. They had periods of being in fashion.

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE FATED SKY:

A Lady Astronaut Novel

by Mary Robinette Kowal

(2018: Tor; ISBN 978-0765398949; \$17.99; 2018; Tor (Kindle): \$11.99)

When they began building their spaceship for the evacuation of Earth, Cole Hendron and his building crew faced a terrible problem.

Their maximum passenger payload was one hundred; they had a thousand people working on the ship. The prospect of the final choice was not the most comforting.

(Then the Bronson free planets made their first pass by Earth, and in the subsequent chaos, while about half the personnel didn't make it, they found enough high-resistance metal to make enough engine linings to be able to build ships large enough to evacuate everyone *When Worlds Collide* (1933).)

Elma York, the Lady Astronaut of *Mr. Wizard*, wants to go to Mars. So when she is taken hostage by Earth First terrorists, she is a little concerned. And when freed, she is shoehorned into the first mission, replacing an already-training crew member. Surprisingly, this works. (Meanwhile, John Leonard Swigert, Jr., a test pilot for Pratt & Whitney, is available.)

They have to go to Mars to terraform the planet so humanity can survive the forthcoming global warming caused by the long-term effects of the meteor that wiped out Washington, D.C. So this mission is important.

The two ships sent to Mars, the *Nina* and the *Pinta* (you'll recall that the *Santa Maria* ran aground and was wrecked, so that was a bad omen) set off on their three-year mission without incident. Except, in the progress of the mission, two astronauts die, and Earth falls out of communication for two months.

(That last had to do with the Earth First people. Lew Jacobson (*Children of Apollo*, Mark R. Whittington (2001)) would have been disgusted at this and Mark Watney (*The Martian*, Andy Weir (2011, 2014)) saddened.)

In short, it's an ordinary novel of the future. The Astounding Unperson would have approved. Kowal is doing what a SF writer should do, write a normal story about a futuristic turn of events.

And of course Elma got back so she could feature in *The Relentless Moon*, volume three of the series. Kowal builds for her an entire life, backstory, beliefs, and connections. Not to mention giving the Black Chamber, or National Security Agency, some work reading her private communications to her husband.

THE MOON IS HELL

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE RELENTLESS MOON:

A Lady Astronaut Novel

by Mary Robinette Kowal

(2020: Tor; ISBN 978-1250236951; \$30.99; 2020; Tor (Kindle): \$11.99)

The first Lunar expedition had problems. Particularly when their relief ship crashed on landing — and since the relief was supposed to stay for a month, there was no other ship, and they were on the far side of the Moon, they were sort of on their own where “The Moon Is Hell!” (1950). The Astounding Unperson wrote of their struggles to survive and to communicate to Earth that they were in trouble, keeping up with what scientific know-

ledge there was about lunar conditions then.

Nicole Wargin at least was going to a base on the near side. However, her problems, both getting there and once she got there, were just as difficult. Or even worse, since there were “Trends” (by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding*, July 1939)) that took action to make matters worse. And having to take time off to be the Devoted Spouse of the Governor of Kansas didn't help. Not to mention that humanity has to get off earth in order to survive.

Getting to the Moon is the easy part. Things start to go pear-shaped once Nicole gets there. The base intermittently falls out of communication with Earth. There are various dangerous objects found in the base. Back on Earth, Nicole's husband, working on his campaign for President, is assassinated. As if it couldn't get worse, for a change, Earth falls out of communication with the base; and they can see that all Kansas is blacked out.

They have to do what they can. The resolution turns out to be burdensome for Nicole, but at least she can do *something*.

The Earth First of this universe is Christian fundamentalists. I have mixed feelings about this; while Christian religiosity was high at the time in our time line and likely would be higher under the circumstances, their attitudes seem taken from contemporary disdain. It's rather like the Contra Darwin of Alexis Gilliland's Rosinante series.

HIGH FLIGHT

Review by Joseph T Major of

OR EVEN EAGLE FLEW

by Harry Turtledove

(2021: Prince of Cats Literary Productions;

ISBN 979-1952825121; \$16.99;

2021; Prince of Cats Literary Productions (Kindle); \$6.99)

We begin with Mrs. Amelia E. Putnam going to Montreal to visit friends. The friends are recruiters for the *Armée de l'air*, and Mrs. Putnam is, of course, better known as Miss Amelia Earhart.

Her round the world flight is elided, and evidently her marriage to GPP has broken up. With nothing else to do, she resolves to get into the fighting. Yes, she wants to be a combat pilot.

The Germans have a say in the matter, and she and the other American recruits arrive in France just in time to get out before the country collapses. Not good.

And she has trouble getting into the RAF. Air Marshal Leigh-Mallory in particular (go to the top) is not very helpful. (Perhaps she should have asked him, “Whatever would George have said?”) Nevertheless, she persisted, and finally, with various accommodations, Pilot Officer Putnam, A.E. is installed in a squadron. Eventually it gets planes and they go to work.

The story of losing friends, of passionate flings to shut out the horrors of war, of fighting and winning, is in a sense no different from other stories of the Few; yet having a distin-

guished pilot from another field, with a different person, gives it an additional fillip of interest.

I checked and Turtledove does get the equipment right. So when things happen . . .

THE BORGIA PANZERS

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE MALICE OF FORTUNE

by Steve White

(2021: Baen (Kindle); \$6.99)

The opening of this work describes a formidable teamup in Renaissance Italy. The absolute ruler of Italy and the Holy Roman Empire, Cesare Borgia, is assisted by his astoundingly skilled and innovative High Engineer, Leonardo da Vinci, and the profoundly clever Principal Secretary Niccolò Machiavelli.

This combination would seem to be quite lethal and the story of Borgia's rise to power could make for quite a thrilling story. Yet it is in a way only the side-line.

The principal character is the English mercenary Giovanni Negrocampo, or John Blackfield, who came to Italy to fight in the wars, and ended up meeting a very strange lady. (Now if it had been Edomondo Negro-sommatore and his servant S. Balteo . . .)

The lady, Caterina, is it seems a time-traveler, from White's Temporal Regulatory Authority. And she is here to investigate the rise of Borgia to power.

Blackfield has to go through some observations, mental transformations, and learning experiences (also known as, “Oh God, not *this again!!!*) before it all becomes clear. And Caterina has the risks of being a woman in her past.

But Leonardo now has more opportunities for innovation and more money with which to realize them. Which means that, for example, his rolling gun tower gets deployed on the field of battle . . .

However, it seems that Caterina is here to watch the mysterious cloistered Councilor who among other things cured Cesare of the Pox. This has freed him to make some very radical changes of career, even into the Church again, while edging towards the Orthodox in some ways.

White wants to make a point about innovation and how it falters under the Universal State. These have some merit, but I have to wonder if Cesare's revived Holy Roman Empire (which is what he seems to be aiming at) would be quite universal.

Now if they can only deal with the matter of the Councilor . . .

It's an interesting story, albeit tied to another series, and perhaps wasting a good idea.

IDENTITY THEFT

Review by Joseph T Major of
DOC SAVAGE: THE SINISTER SHADOW:

(*The Wild Adventures of Doc Savage Book 14*)

by Kenneth Robeson and Will Murray
(2015: Altus Press; ISBN 978-1618271983;
\$20.95; 2015; Altus Press (Kindle); \$5.99)

The Shadow was not Lamont Cranston.

For the past few years, Altus Press has been issuing new pulp adventures of familiar heroes. They seem to have an audience, unlike Byron Preiss (*Weird Heroes*) and are not obsessed with breaking character and continuity, unlike Philip José Farmer.

This book, however, edges into Farmer territory. It begins with Lamont Cranston, wealthy world adventurer, consulting the distinguished lawyer Theodore Marley Brooks regarding a small problem. It seems that when he's out of the country, someone is living in his house, pretending to be him.

Meanwhile, a sinister figure known only as the Funeral Director is blackmailing rich men and killing many, while the police are baffled. And kidnapping — such as the above-mentioned Brooks.

Which last provokes his boss, the famed adventurer, inventor, medical researcher, and mighty fighter Dr. Clark Savage, M.D. (and probably a bunch of other degrees). You don't want to get Doc Savage mad at you. He does lobotomies.

However, the guy posing as Lamont Cranston *also* gets involved. And, unlike with Doc's "mercy bullets", he shoots to kill. (How he manages to change magazines on those two Colt M1911 .45 caliber automatics with both hands full is an exercise left for the reader.) Doc and his loyal followers the apish chemist "Monk" Mayfair and the weedy electrical engineer "Long Tom" Roberts (the others are off doing other work), aren't sure which is worse, the Funeral Director or this shadowy figure who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men.

There ensues much two-fisted adventure, scientific gadgetry, and investigation, building to a shocking conclusion when the Funeral Director takes Lamont Cranston's niece hostage and the two investigators have to combine their efforts . . .

Murray has done his homework, so to speak, bringing in The Shadow's associates and delineating the vaster network of Doc Savage's organization. He avoids the excesses of other writers. It seems plausible that Doc Savage and The Shadow would encounter each other and he has chosen to have them have to find out each others' ways, instead of instantly knowing each other.

The books seem to be selling. Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of Orson Welles, er men . . .

THE TOUGH GUIDE TO AH

Review by Joseph T Major of
*THE BEST OF SPACE BATS AND
BUTTERFLIES* —

Volume 1: Alternate History & Time Travel
(2020: Amazon Digital Services; \$5.99) and
THE BEST OF SPACE BATS AND

BUTTERFLIES — Book Two

(2020: Amazon Digital Services; \$5.99)
by Dale Cozort

Dale Cozort is a noted figure in Alternate History. He is known primarily for Native American AH, but covers the field generally.

These books are a collection of various essays by him on the theory and practice of AH, along with a scenario of his own.

He explains the Butterfly Effect, and described the creation and employment of Alien Space Bats. The latter were first used in a discussion of Operation Sealion, but have been applied to a vast number of other proposals.

His scenario has to do with a proposed change in the operational-level maneuvers of Operation Barbarossa, leading to Moscow falling to the Nazis and then some even stranger things. Interestingly, he calls this *The Moscow Option*, the same title as a book by British thriller and history writer David Downing (1979, 2001). (Like Robert Sobel's *For Want of a Nail* (1973) it is a history of its timeline instead of a novel set there.)

These books are extremely useful for anyone wanting to write an alternative history work, and interesting to those who just read it.

AND NOT SPILL YOUR DRINK

Review by Joseph T Major of

HOW TO:

Absurd Scientific Advice for Common Real-World Problems

by Randall Munroe

(2019: Riverhead Books;

ISBN 978-0525537090; \$28.00;

2019; Penguin Group (Kindle); \$4.99)

<https://xkcd.com/>

This is a collection of various scientific answers to various problems that the ordinary person may encounter in the course of human affairs. Whether it is warming a house, commuting to work, shooting down an annoying surveillance drone, or whatever, Munroe gives firmly based scientific answers to these mundane problems.

The items are illuminated by his idiosyncratic stick figure drawings, often commenting in his wry fashion on the absurdly commonplace situations they are thrust into. The main text has that detached look at the utter preposterousness of ordinary life and the situations described therein.

Who knows, the reader may even learn something worthwhile about science. The book is intensely researched and follows the details of human knowledge in the various ways of the world.

It does however lack some of the more arcane events that make up human existence. I for one would like to see Munroe's answer to P. J. O'Rourke's question of "How to Drive Fast on Drugs While Getting Your Wing-Wang Squeezed and Not Spill Your Drink".

LOOK AT ME, MA!

Review by Joseph T Major of

TRUE SUMMIT:

What Really Happened on the Legendary Ascent of Annapurna

by David Roberts

(2000: Simon & Schuster;

ISBN 978-0684867571; \$26.00;

2013; Simon & Schuster (Kindle); \$11.99)

There are fourteen mountains in the world that reach more than 8000 meters above sea level. In a period of fourteen years, they were all climbed. This string of accomplishments began in 1950, when a French expedition climbed Annapurna (8091 m).

The official story of this triumph, *Annapurna, premier 8000* (1951; in English as *Annapurna: First Conquest of an 8000-meter Peak* (1952)), written by the expedition leader and summiter Maurice Herzog, was a best-seller. It is estimated that between eleven and fourteen million copies of that book have been sold. And yet . . .

David Roberts has been there and done that. One of his early inspirations had been Herzog's *Annapurna*. And yet, there were stories that some of the things he had said in the book were not quite on the level.

Roberts has been there and done that. He set about researching. Since all the climbers except for Herzog himself had died since then, he had a lot of contact with heirs and assigns. The picture that emerged was a lot more nuanced and muddled than Herzog's inspiring story of a heroic triumph.

He gives short biographies of all the climbers. Perhaps not surprisingly, several died in climbing accidents, some quite ghastly (the one whose head was squashed by a perfectly targeted rock that fell off, for example).

The organization of the expedition also had its moments. As when Herzog assembled the climbers before the expedition set out and had them swear absolute and unquestioned loyalty to him personally. And not surprisingly, there was a ban on writing other accounts. Some of them started writing, but none published.

The expedition had its own problems. For example, they had set out to climb Dhaulagiri (which is 8167 meters) but couldn't find it. The maps of the area were wretched and they seem to have found the route to Annapurna by happenstance. (But this is in Herzog's book.)

While Roberts does have the understanding of the situation, due to his own experience in climbing, some may find his divergences into descriptions of his own personal climbs to be distracting, annoying, or useless. Some of them don't quite seem relevant.

Still, Roberts has been fighting cancer for the past few years. As of this writing, he is still alive. That deserves some consideration.

PROOFS OF A CONSPIRACY

Review by Joseph T Major of
ON THE TRAIL OF DELUSION:
Jim Garrison: The Great Accuser

by Fred Litwin
(2020; NorthernBlues Books;
ISBN 978-0994863041; \$17.99;
2020; NorthernBlues Books (Kindle);
\$2.99)

The full title of the book is *Proofs of a Conspiracy: Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* (1797); the sort of book that hardly needs an introduction with a subtitle like that. The author, Scots physicist John Robison, was totally unfazed by the fact that the Order of the Illuminati had completely collapsed in 1785 due to the management style of Adam Weishaupt.

Two centuries later, a man with management skills even worse than Weishaupt's and conspiracy-seeing even farther out than Robison was to add to the structure of a conspiracy against the government of America, a conspiracy so immense and in infamy so black that when it is finally exposed, its principals shall be forever deserving of the maledictions of all honest men. Oh, and they were preverts, too.

Garrison wanted to make a name for himself. And he set out to do so on a case built on speculation, theorizing, malice, and even gay-bashing. When you realize that one of his principal proofs of a conspiracy was "propinquity", where if any two accused conspirators lived anywhere near each other, they had to be working together, you may see his methods. Or if either of the two accused knew somebody who lived near the other. Or so on in chains.

Somehow, Garrison continued to attract people who found him credible, in spite of a devastating defeat in the first Clay Shaw trial (the jury was out for forty-five minutes, most of which was the queue for the restroom), the banning of his prosecution of Shaw after the second trial for perjury, and so on. Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991) was only the beginning; Litwin lists *three* books since then that have attempted to rehabilitate Garrison, each as sloppy as the man's own case.

Some people wonder what is the point of going over this, since it's been nearly sixty years and all the people involved must be dead. Which shows that they think their opponents think they way they need to, not the way their opponents actually think. The thesis now is that the assassination of Kennedy was the coup by the Deep State that destroyed democracy in America.

But Garrison destroyed lives. Not just Clay Shaw's, but others. They deserve amends, but in this culture will not get them.

THE BLUE AND THE SCARLET: THE PIG WAR

By Taral Wayne

Lyman Cutler shouldn't have shot the pig in the first place.

The beast was rooting up his potato patch. And back in 1859, on a remote island in a far corner of Creation, a man's spuds might be a major part of the winter's grub.

Still, the pig belonged to the mighty Hudson's Bay Company, a power to reckon with in the thinly-settled Pacific Northwest – especially here in the San Juan Island, a disputed region between Vancouver Island and what would one day be called Washington State. And before the year was out, that deceased hog would bring Great Britain and the United States to be brink of war.

Armed troops were landed, forts built, and warships dispatched to San Juan, a timbered speck of land fifteen miles long. Pugnacious military officers issues threats and ultimatums, negotiators wrangled, and the government of the United States – already foreseeing the outbreak of the Civil War – had to worry about an armed conflict with a world power on the remote fire side of the country.

All because a squatter named Lyman Cutler shot a pig in his potato patch on June 15th, 1859.

Certainly the treaty with Great Britain, by which the boundary between the British and America territories had been set at the 49th parallel in 1818, had been intended to forestall hostilities. A statesmanlike compromise bent the boundary south at the straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca, to leave all of Vancouver Island in British hands. Unfortunately, the San Juan Islands were in the middle of the straits. In that day of sailing ships, whoever controlled the island could control access to Puget Sound, and the entrance to the northwestern hinterland: so both Britain and America claimed the islands. This made no difference so long as they were populated mainly by sheep, owned by the Hudson's Bay Company. But when American squatters began moving in, the seeds of conflict were planted. As the population increased, both Britain and the United States sent magistrates and tax collectors to the island. Since each refused to recognize the others authority, this did little to clarify the uneasy situation. By 1858 there were 19 Americans and 16 British citizens on San Juan Island – not to mention the aforesaid sheep.

And, of course, the hogs, soon to be reduced by one.

It wasn't as if Lyman hadn't given fair warning. He had complained repeatedly to the Hugson's Bay Company about their hogs ravaging his garden patch. They had chosen to ignore him as a mere foreign interloper on British property. Then came the final straw – or spud – and one unlucky swine paid the price.

Lyman too was willing to pay the price; he offered to recompense the Company for their late pig. He was astonished when the Company demanded \$100. As much as an able-bodied man made in six months, and he flatly refused to pay such extortion. The Company threatened to prosecute. Prosecute away, Lyman dared them. He was an American citizen on American soil, and he defied their foreign law. The local

British magistrate seemed ready to have Lyman dragged bodily to Victoria, to stand trial in a British court, but the cooler head of Victoria's governor prevailed. Lyman Cutler was left in peace to hurl his defiance at the British Empire.

The pig remained dead, but even so continues to influence international relations.

Brigadier-General William S. Harney of the United States Army found his duty station in the hinterlands of Washington to be sadly remote for any chance for military glory. He wanted a nice little patriotic conflict to advance his career. So Harney took up the cause of Lyman Cutler, trumpeting that an America citizen was threatened with unlawful arrest and duration vile by a foreign power. Moreover, that other Americans – all 18 of them – were threatened by hostile Indians egged on by the British.

None of which was true, but the US Capitol was thousands of miles and weeks of travel away, so it made a good excuse for Harney to dispatch 400 US soldiers to the island. They landed on July 27th at Griffin Bay, on the opposite end of San Juan from the Company farm. The British warship *Tribune*, loaded with Royal Marines, promptly arrived to counter the threat. Harney retaliated by putting 400 troops in reserve at Fort Steilacoom, on the mainland, and sending to the island another 150 troops commanded by Captain George E. Pickett – who boasted, "We'll make a Bunker Hill of it," perhaps forgetting that Americans had ultimately lost that battle. The British counter moved by sending in Admiral Lambert Baynes with the 84 gun man-of-war *Ganges*, which gave them a total of five ships, 167 cannon and 1,940 soldiers and sailors. All in all, it was proving to be a remarkable expensive pig.

About that time the news finally reached Washington DC. President James Buchanan, already distracted by the impossible task of holding the country together, realized that the war-happy Harney was trying to pick a fight with England on his own hook. The President promptly dispatched Lieutenant-General Winfield Scott to relieve Harney and to cool down the situation.

Scott and Admiral Lambert reached a gentleman's understanding quickly, since neither of them wanted hostilities. The matter of who owned the islands could be referred to negotiation, (which would done on for years to come). Meanwhile, the islands would be jointly occupied – which meant that neither American nor British law prevailed – and the two sides settled down for a long wait.

It proved to be a fairly amicable one. The British built a blockhouse at Garrison Bay, a parade ground on which the Royal Marines drilled daily, wooden barracks for the men and comfortable houses for officers, and an elegant commander's quarters with ballroom, billiard table, croquet lawn and flower beds.

The Americans, at the other end of the island at Griffin Bay, built a camp of clapboard cabins surrounded by a log stockade, with a

flagpole bearing Old Glory in the middle of it.

As the tension eased, the soldiers – like frontline soldiers everywhere, not particularly fond of war – began to fraternize. The officers paid social calls. Gradually, a sense of community grew among the island's troops. Horse races and picnics on the beach helped pass the time, while negotiations over the islands' ownership plodded along.

In 1861, as the Civil War blazed, the irrepressible Pickett resigned his US Army commission to join the Confederate cause. Presumably he got all the fighting he wanted, since he was eventually to lead the tragic charge at Gettysburg which sealed the fate of the South. And as the Civil War ended, the polite dispute at the other side of the continent, touched off by the death of a pig, still dragged on.

It was not until 1871, after 25 years of fruitless negotiation and furtive schemes, that the dispute was turned over to an impartial arbitrator, Kaiser Wilhelm, Emperor of Germany. His Imperial Highness finally awarded the San Juan Island to the United States.

The pig would probably have been dead by then, anyhow.

ΦΙΣΕ ΠΛΑΨ (ΦΑΝ ΣΕΡΣΙΟΝ)

By Taral Wayne

Walking down Yonge Street, I obeyed a sudden impulse to turn off The Strip into a video arcade. This wasn't normal. I had never been an arcade addict, preferring to spend my quarters on Queen Street in the paperback parlors. But just then I was feeling nostalgic for the '70s, and hadn't been in an old-fashioned video arcade for as long as I could remember. In fact, I don't think I had seen one for what might have been decades. Home video games had long since done away with them all!

The '70s were the waning days of the counterculture. In those Halcyon, *New Derelicts* and I were wont to surge up and down The Strip like a tide of four or five or six, jostling each other to speak, and flooding suddenly into whichever gaudy establishment caught our notice. For we band of brothers, the video arcades exerted a powerful attraction ... for all but I. But at that moment while walking down Yonge Street again, I felt some small sympathetic pull from outside that anachronistic video arcade – just like it had felt in the old days.

The members of our now largely forgotten group of buddies were scattered – gone now to separate lives and fates. As though by magic, the video arcades that once lined Yonge Street from the Eaton Center to the Bloor Subway had been transformed into computer shops and cell-phone boutiques. How had *this* lone arcade survived the transformation?

Like all video arcades I had seen in the past, this one was a long, activity-filled hole in the wall of respectable businesses to either

side. Noise poured from it like the blare of a diesel horn. One moment I was outside, on the sidewalk – the next moment I was inside, sucked into the narrow space between the rows of games. To either side of me played raucous, cheerful tunes. Machine gunfire rattled, blasters blasted, mighty 450-cubic-inch supercharged engines roared down back stretches, star gates opened, castle walls crumbled with the grinding of stone on stone, and golf balls bounced on simulated greens. The electronic pandemonium other electronic was indescribable.

Almost at the end of the arcade, so far back from the street that I thought I glimpsed an actual, antique pin-ball game, I came to a halt. Before a rather unprepossessing display was a game I'd never seen before. I should have moved on.

Why had I stopped at *this* game, I asked myself? Most games were played around violent, blood-curdling concepts such as thermonuclear war, rampaging mobs of kungfu fighters, invasions of space creatures and tag-team matches. But *this* game, I immediately saw, was different. Instead of a labyrinth or battlefield, the screen projected an innocent-looking pedestrian shopping mall.

The detail was intriguing. So far as I could tell, the simulacrum could have been modeled from a real street, in a real place anywhere in the known world. In fact, one of the names depicted on a corner street sign rang familiar. I could have been on a street with that same name once, but if I had, it could only have been coincidence. For the sake of that familiar-but-unknown street sign, I dropped a quarter in.

The game came abruptly to life. No introductory presentation, no instructions, no name. From an empty, frozen street, pedestrians and cars appeared in sudden motion all over the screen. In the midst of all the bustling activity and busy traffic, a tall, somber-looking man wearing a fedora appeared, glancing nervously around, apparently looking for safety. He looked exactly like William Powell in *The Thin Man*. The graphics were impressive! I instinctively knew that the Thin Man had at least three pairs of old-fashioned boxer shorts and carefully starched shirts in his dresser at home.

In the upper part of the screen were three counters – one began to count the seconds. The second counter told me that I had five Players. So far I had zero Points. I began to play in earnest.

Moving the joystick did nothing until I thumbed the button on top. That brought a second figure onto the screen – a nondescript young woman with a shopping bag. Apparently, I was playing her role in the game. I was apparently playing her part. The Thin Man began walking away from "me" at a brisk pace, apparently heading for the laundromat on the other side of the street. Moving the stick moved my pedestrian counterpart – forward, backward, left or right, faster or slower, depending on how far I pushed the stick. It seemed as though every other pedestrian made a point of getting between me and The Thin Man as he crossed...

I was sure I had seen that street's name before. Was it in LA, or Phoenix? No, I was sure it was somewhere farther east. Maybe Baltimore or Philly. Oh, well...

Evidently, chasing The Thin Man was the thing to do in this game. As I crossed after him, a cobalt-blue van whizzed past, narrowly missing my shopper. I squeezed between a Mazda and a punk rocker, shot ahead much too quickly and cut across The Thin Man's path. He swerved, unexpectedly, and I was rewarded with a musical tone, and a thousand points against the running time.

I brought my shopper around in a high-gee turn that ought to have spilled the tuna helper out of the bottom of her bag, and had another go at The Thin Man. Contact!

"Boop," went the game. My shopper disappeared, along with 500 points.. A number changed from five to four in the same instant that my next player appeared. This time I was a black rapper with a ghetto blaster this time. He responded to the joystick as before, but I had to move fast since The Thin Man was almost halfway across the street!

A name popped into my head – a street I thought I should know, but where was it? Sumner Street? No, Summack ... in Pittsburg? Somewhere near that part of the world.

Fortunately, The Thin Man was moving obliquely, headed toward the 7-11 convenience store on the corner. It was easy to cut him off and get between him and the laundromat, forcing him to circle around his goal while I took the inside path. This simple tactic immediately netted me 5,000 additional points.

Suddenly, a cop stepped up and halted me. While he wrote me a ticket for jay-walking, The Thin Man shot straight as an arrow for the laundromat. As soon as I could, I ran full tilt after him ... but it was too late. The Thin Man disappeared inside. The door closed in my face, and wouldn't allow me in. While I stood in the street, wondering what to do next, a parked hatch-back suddenly pulled out and ran me over. My second player disappeared, too. I was down to three.

Now I was a fat man with a beard, carrying a submarine sandwich. The Thin Man came out of the laundromat in a rush, likely hoping to catch me off-guard. But this time the advantage was mine. His only way back was across the street, and I was already between him and the far sidewalk. I was determined to block every step he took.

The next few minutes were a blur of moving vehicles, ambient pedestrians, cops, barking dogs, panhandlers, skateboards and burst water mains. Skillfully, I maneuvered The Thin Man through looping curves, figure-eights and several dosie-does, never letting him get closer than half-way to the other side of the street. I had racked up 500,000 points!

That must have been the magic number. Without any warning, The Thin Man turned around and began to pursue *me*!

We collided, and with a "boop," my player disappeared.

My next player was a teeny-bopper with a pretty nice build. The Thin Man ran her down almost before I could experimentally wiggle her butt for three steps.

I vowed I wouldn't be suckered again. In my final life I was a Japanese tourist, bedecked with expensive cameras and a Hawaiian shirt. The Thin Man chased me to the very doors of the ancient A&P down the street, and bowled me over. "Boop."

Game over. Believe it or not, the machine chuckled at me, treating me to a close-up of The Thin Man's sepulchral features as he gave me a thin little smirk of triumph.

Now I recognized that address – it was Summit Avenue, in Hagerstown. I remembered that I knew the face of The Thin Man. It was a fellow I knew who was once well known for writing astonishing numbers of letters to fanzines! So far as I knew he had been dead for several years ... yet this was unmistakably his face looking back at me from the screen of this video game!

I go out of that video arcade as fast as I could, and I planned never to look for it again!

But the street was strange outside. Where was Sam the Record Man's and Pizza-Pizza? When had that that A&P grocery replaced the No-Frills, and who has last seen a Becker's Milk? I felt a strange compulsion come over me, then. At all odds, I had to cross the street to reach the unfamiliar laundromat ahead, and launder my wash. Then without a sound, a young woman with a shopping bag detached herself from the milling crowd and speeding traffic to zero in on me.

She too *only had five plays to catch me!*

Afterword

This article was written in 1990, as a sequel to another bit of fanwriting by an uncertain fan writer, possibly Harry Warner Jr. Unfortunately, I remember very little about it except that it was probably called "Now You See It." and had something to do trouble crossing the street. It was published in a fanzine whose name I no longer remember, but I have an acute memory of the editor burning the story down flat. I persisted, and "...And Now You Don't" was published by Charlotte Proctor in *Anvil* 53 instead, in April 1991.

Given that the title makes little sense unless published in tandem with the original piece that I presume was written by Harry Warner, I have retitled it.

HOW I LEARNED THINKING FOR MYSELF

by Taras Wolansky

I sent this letter to Kendrick Frazier, editor of *The Skeptical Inquirer*.

Dear Mr. Frazier,

I'm one of those Americans who take

scientific experts with a grain of salt ("In Science We Trust? Twenty-Country Pew Survey Shows Trust in Scientists—with Major Caveats", Jan.-Feb. 2021).

In the mid-1970s, the experts at the Stanford Research Institute, and other scientists elsewhere, validated the E.S.P. abilities of Israeli psychic Uri Geller. Barbara Walters, at the time one of the leading journalists in the U.S., was completely convinced Geller was real.

And so was I, until I read a modest little paperback with the title, *The Magic of Uri Geller*. After reading the book, I concluded that, no matter how many scientists he convinced, Geller was a fraud.

By the way, the book was written, not by a scientist, but by a high school dropout from Canada who called himself James "The Amazing" Randi.

A few years later nuclear physicist Stanton Friedman told us UFOs were, in fact, alien spacecraft. By then I had become a charter subscriber to *The Zettetic*, later called *The Skeptical Inquirer*. Writers like Joe Nickell and Philip J. Klass didn't have Friedman's scientific credentials, but they convinced me UFOs are a great many things, but alien spacecraft is not one of them.

Just last year, public health experts told us that using face masks against COVID-19 was useless, even dangerous. But forty years of James Randi and *TSI* had taught me to think for myself. I decided that an imperfect barrier to viral aerosols was better than no barrier at all; and eventually the experts came around to my view of the matter.

Sincerely,
Taras Wolansky

NEBULA AWARD NOMINEES

Courtesy of SFWA

NOVEL

Piranesi, Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury US; Bloomsbury UK)

The City We Became, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit US & UK)

Mexican Gothic, Silvia Moreno-Garcia (Del Rey; Jo Fletcher)

The Midnight Bargain, C.L. Polk (Erewhon)

Black Sun, Rebecca Roanhorse (Saga; Solaris)

Network Effect, Martha Wells (Tordotcom)

NOVELLA

"Tower of Mud and Straw", Yaroslav Barsukov (Metaphorosis)

Finna, Nino Cipri (Tordotcom)

Ring Shout, P. Djèli Clark (Tordotcom)

"Ife-Iyoku, the Tale of Imadeyunuagbon", Oghenechovwe Donald Ekepeki (*Dominion: An Anthology of Speculative Fiction from Africa and the African Diaspora*, Aurelia Leo)

The Four Profound Weaves, R.B. Lemberg (Tachyon)

Riot Baby, Tochi Onyebuchi (Tordotcom)

NOVELETTE

"Stepsister", Leah Cypess (*F&SF* 5-6/20)

"The Pill", Meg Elison (*Big Girl*, PM Press)

"Burn or the Episodic Life of Sam Wells as a Super", A.T. Greenblatt (*Uncanny* 5-6/20)

"Two Truths and a Lie", Sarah Pinsker (Tor.com 6/17/20)

"Where You Linger", Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam (*Uncanny* 1-2/20)

"Shadow Prisons", Caroline M. Yoachim (serialized in the *Dystopia Triptych* series as "The Shadow Prison Experiment", "Shadow Prisons of the Mind", and "The Shadow Prisoner's Dilemma", Broad Reach Publishing + Adamant Press)

SHORT STORY

"Badass Moms in the Zombie Apocalypse", Rae Carson (*Uncanny* 1-2/20)

"Advanced Word Problems in Portal Math", Aimee Picchi (Daily Science Fiction 1/3/20)

"A Guide for Working Breeds", Vina Jie-Min Prasad (*Made to Order: Robots and Revolution*, Solaris)

"The Eight-Thousanders", Jason Sanford (*Asimov's* 9-10/20)

"My Country Is a Ghost", Eugenia Triantafyllou (*Uncanny* 1-2/20)

"Open House on Haunted Hill", John Wiswell (Diabolical Plots 6/15/20)

THE ANDRE NORTON NEBULA AWARD FOR MIDDLE GRADE AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Raybearer, Jordan Ifueko (Amulet)

Elatsoe, Darcie Little Badger (Levine Querido)

A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking, T. Kingfisher (Argyll)

A Game of Fox & Squirrels, Jenn Reese (Holt)

Star Daughter, Shveta Thakrar (HarperTeen)

GAME WRITING

Blaseball, Stephen Bell, Joel Clark, Sam Rosenthal (The Game Band)

Hades, Greg Kasavin (Supergiant)

Kentucky Route Zero, Jake Elliott (Cardboard Computer)

The Luminous Underground, Phoebe Barton (Choice of Games)

Scents & Semiosis, Sam Kabo Ashwell, Cat Manning, Caleb Wilson, Yoon Ha Lee (Self)

Spiritfarer, Nicolas Guérin, Maxime Monast, Alex Tommi-Morin (Thunder Lotus Games)

THE RAY BRADBURY NEBULA AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING DRAMA PRESENTATION

Birds of Prey: And the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn, Christina Hodson, Warner Bros. Pictures (Clubhouse Pictures/DC Entertainment/Kroll & Co. Entertainment/LuckyChap Entertainment)

The Expanse: "Gaugamela", Dan Nowak, Amazon Prime (Alcon Entertainment/Alcon Television Group/Amazon Studios/Hivemind/Just So)

The Good Place: "Whenever You're Ready", Michael Schur, NBC (Fremulon/3 Arts Entertainment/Universal)

Lovecraft Country, Season 1, Misha Green, Shannon Houston, Kevin Lau, Wes Taylor, Ihuoma Oforidire, Jonathan I. Kidd, Sonya Winton-Odamtten, HBO Max (Bad Robot/Monkeypaw Productions/Warner Bros. Television)

The Mandalorian: "The Tragedy", Jon Favreau, Disney+ (Golem Creations/Lucasfilm)

The Old Guard, Greg Rucka, Netflix (Skydance Media/Denver and Delilah Productions/Marc Evans Productions)

HUGO AWARD FINALISTS

Courtesy of Tor.com



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

Best Novel

Black Sun, Rebecca Roanhorse (Gallery / Saga Press)

The City We Became, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit)

Harrow the Ninth, Tamsyn Muir (Tordotcom)

Network Effect, Martha Wells (Tordotcom)

Piranesi, Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury)

The Relentless Moon, Mary Robinette Kowal (Tor Books)

Best Novella

Come Tumbling Down, Seanan McGuire (Tordotcom)

The Empress of Salt and Fortune, Nghi Vo (Tordotcom)

Finna, Nino Cipri (Tordotcom)

Ring Shout, P. Djèli Clark (Tordotcom)

Riot Baby, Tochi Onyebuchi (Tordotcom)

Upright Women Wanted, Sarah Gailey

(Tordotcom)

Best Novelette

"Burn, or the Episodic Life of Sam Wells as a Super", A.T. Greenblatt (*Uncanny Magazine*, May/June 2020)

"Helicopter Story", Isabel Fall (*Clarkesworld*, January 2020)

"The Inaccessibility of Heaven", Aliette de Bodard (*Uncanny Magazine*, July/August 2020)

"Monster", Naomi Kritzer (*Clarkesworld*, January 2020)

"The Pill", Meg Elison (from *Big Girl*, (PM Press))

"Two Truths and a Lie", Sarah Pinsker (Tor.com)

Best Short Story

"Badass Moms in the Zombie Apocalypse", Rae Carson (*Uncanny Magazine*, January/February 2020)

"A Guide for Working Breeds", Vina Jie-Min Prasad (*Made to Order: Robots and Revolution*, ed. Jonathan Strahan (Solaris))

"Little Free Library", Naomi Kritzer (Tor.com)

"The Mermaid Astronaut", Yoon Ha Lee (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, February 2020)

"Metal Like Blood in the Dark", T. Kingfisher (*Uncanny Magazine*, September/October 2020)

"Open House on Haunted Hill", John Wiswell (*Diabolical Plots – 2020*, ed. David Steffen)

Best Series

The Daevabad Trilogy, S.A. Chakraborty

The Interdependency, John Scalzi

The Lady Astronaut Universe, Mary Robinette Kowal

The Murderbot Diaries, Martha Wells

October Daye, Seanan McGuire

The Poppy War, R.F. Kuang

Best Related Work

Beowulf: A New Translation, Maria Dahvana Headley (FSG)

CoNZeland Fringe, Claire Rousseau, C. Cassie Hart, Adri Joy, Marguerite Kenner, Cheryl Morgan, Alasdair Stuart.

FIYAHCON, L.D. Lewis, Brent Lambert, Iori Kusano, Vida Cruz, and the Incredible FIYAHCON team

"George R.R. Martin Can Fuck Off Into the Sun, Or: The 2020 Hugo Awards Ceremony (Rageblog Edition)", Natalie Luhrs (*Pretty Terrible*, August 2020)

A Handful of Earth, A Handful of Sky: The World of Octavia E. Butler, Lynell George (Angel City Press)

The Last Bronycon: a fandom autopsy, Jenny Nicholson (YouTube)

Best Graphic Story or Comic

DIE, Volume 2: Split the Party, written by

Kieron Gillen and Stephanie Hans, letters by Clayton Cowles (Image Comics)

Ghost-Spider vol. 1: Dog Days Are Over, Author: Seanan McGuire, Artist: Takeshi Miyazawa and Rosi Kämpe (Marvel)

Invisible Kingdom, vol 2: Edge of Everything, Author: G. Willow Wilson, Artist: Christian Ward (Dark Horse Comics)

Monstress, vol. 5: Warchild, Author: Marjorie Liu, Artist: Sana Takeda (Image Comics)

Once & Future vol. 1: The King Is Undead, written by Kieron Gillen, illustrated by Dan Mora, colored by Tamra Bonvillain, lettered by Ed Dukeshire (BOOM! Studios)

Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Novel Adaptation, written by Octavia Butler, adapted by Damian Duffy, illustrated by John Jennings (Harry N. Abrams)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

Birds of Prey (and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn), written by Christina Hodson, directed by Cathy Yan (Warner Bros.)

Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga, written by Will Ferrell, Andrew Steele, directed by David Dobkin (European Broadcasting Union/Netflix)

The Old Guard, written by Greg Rucka, directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood (Netflix / Skydance Media)

Palm Springs, written by Andy Siara, directed by Max Barbakow (Limelight / Sun Entertainment Culture / The Lonely Island / Culmination Productions / Neon / Hulu / Amazon Prime)

Soul, screenplay by Pete Docter, Mike Jones and Kemp Powers, directed by Pete Docter, co-directed by Kemp Powers, produced by Dana Murray (Pixar Animation Studios/ Walt Disney Pictures)

Tenet, written and directed by Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros./Syncopy)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

Doctor Who: Fugitive of the Judoon, written by Vinay Patel and Chris Chibnall, directed by Nida Manzoor (BBC)

The Expanse: Gaugamela, written by Dan Nowak, directed by Nick Gomez (Alcon Entertainment / Alcon Television Group / Amazon Studios / Hivemind / Just So)

She-Ra and the Princesses of Power: Heart (parts 1 and 2), written by Josie Campbell and Noelle Stevenson, directed by Jen Bennett and Kiki Manrique (DreamWorks Animation Television / Netflix)

The Mandalorian: Chapter 13: The Jedi,

written and directed by Dave Filoni (Golem Creations / Lucasfilm / Disney+)

The Mandalorian: Chapter 16: The Rescue, written by Jon Favreau, directed by Peyton Reed (Golem Creations / Lucasfilm / Disney+)

The Good Place: Whenever You're Ready, written and directed by Michael Schur (Fremulon / 3 Arts Entertainment / Universal Television, a division of Universal Studio Group)

Best Editor, Short Form

Neil Clarke
Ellen Datlow
C.C. Finlay
Mur Lafferty and S.B. Divya
Jonathan Strahan
Sheila Williams

Best Editor, Long Form

Nivia Evans
Sheila E. Gilbert
Sarah Guan
Brit Hvide
Diana M. Pho
Navah Wolfe

Best Professional Artist

Tommy Arnold
Rovina Cai
Galen Dara
Maurizio Manzieri
John Picacio
Alyssa Winans

Best Semiprozine

Beneath Ceaseless Skies, editor Scott H. Andrews

Escape Pod, editors Mur Lafferty and S.B. Divya

FIYAH Magazine of Black Speculative Fiction, publisher Troy L. Wiggins, executive editor DaVaun Sanders, managing editor Eboni Dunbar, poetry editor Brandon O'Brien.

PodCastle, editors, C.L. Clark and Jen R. Albert

Uncanny Magazine, editors in chief: Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas, managing editor: Chimedum Ohaegbu, non-fiction editor: Elsa Sjunneson, et al.

Strange Horizons, edited by many.

Best Fanzine

The Full Lid, written by Alasdair Stuart, edited by Marguerite Kenner

Journey Planet, edited by Michael Carroll, et al.

Lady Business, editors. Ira, Jodie, KJ, Renay, and Susan.

nerds of a feather, flock together, ed. Adri Joy, Joe Sherry, The G, and Vance Kotrla

Quick Sip Reviews, editor, Charles Payseur

Unofficial Hugo Book Club Blog, ed. Amanda Wakaruk and Olav Rokne

Best Fancast

Be The Serpent, presented by Alexandra Rowland, Freya Marske and Jennifer Mace

Claire Rousseau's YouTube channel, produced by Claire Rousseau

The Coode Street Podcast, presented by Jonathan Strahan and Gary K. Wolfe, Jonathan Strahan, producer

Kalanadi, produced and presented by Rachel

The Skiffy and Fanty show, produced by Shaun Duke and Jen Zink, presented by Shaun Duke, Jen Zink, Alex Acks, Paul Weimer, and David Annandale.

Worldbuilding for Masochists, presented by Rowenna Miller, Marshall Ryan Maresca and Cass Morris

Best Fan Writer

Cora Buhlert
Charles Payseur
Jason Sanford
Elsa Sjunneson
Alasdair Stuart
Paul Weimer

Best Fan Artist

Iain J. Clark
Cyan Daly
Sara Felix
Grace P. Fong
Maya Hahto
Laya Rose

Best Video Game

Animal Crossing: New Horizons (Publisher and Developer: Nintendo)

Blaseball (Publisher and Developer: The Game Band)

Final Fantasy VII Remake (Publisher Square Enix)

Hades (Publisher and Developer: Supergiant Games)

The Last of Us: Part II (Publisher: Sony Interactive Entertainment / Developer: Naughty Dog)

Spiritfarer (Publisher and Developer: Thunder Lotus)

Lodestar Award for Best Young Adult Book

Cemetery Boys, Aiden Thomas (Swoon Reads)

A Deadly Education, Naomi Novik (Del Rey)

Elatsoe, Darcie Little Badger (Levine Querido)

Legendborn, Tracy Deonn (Margaret K. McElderry/ Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing)

Raybearer, Jordan Ifueko (Amulet / Hot Key)

A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking, T. Kingfisher (Argyll Productions)

Astounding Award for Best New Writer

Lindsay Ellis (1st year of eligibility)
Simon Jimenez (1st year of eligibility)
Micaiah Johnson (1st year of eligibility)
A.K. Larkwood (1st year of eligibility)
Jenn Lyons (2nd year of eligibility)
Emily Tesh (2nd year of eligibility)

WORLDCON BIDS

2023

Chengdu
August, 2023
<http://www.worldconinchina.com/>

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

2024

Glasgow
August 8-12, 2024
<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

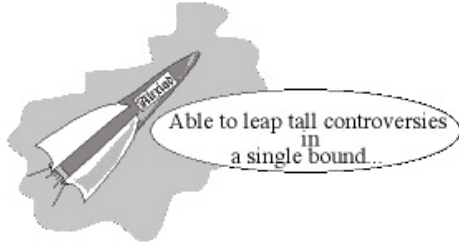
DisCon III
Washington, D.C.
December 15-19, 2021
<http://discon3.org/>

The shift in dates has caused problems. The Hugo voting date is now in November, for example.

2022

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

Letters, we get letters



From: **Darrell Schweitzer** Feb. 21, 2021
6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA
19149-2128
darrells@comcast.net

Yes, I think you're right that the Worldcon is in trouble over the Weisskopf affair. We still do not have all the information, so this is still developing and anything we say can only be tentative, but it seems that the Worldcon's mistake was acting too quickly. If they had merely asked Weisskopf to take Baen's Bar down, then done nothing, the controversy would not have involved the Worldcon and might even have gone away. My feeling is that it is not the mission of the Worldcon to correct society, so it is fair to sweep this under someone else's rug. There were comments quoted (in the Sanford article) that were extreme enough that they would be of interest to the FBI – indeed the FBI may well have been reading Baen's Bar and certainly should have been doing so – but in effect Weisskopf is being blamed for what someone else said at her party. Now she has shut the party down. What else can be expected of her? At the most she is guilty of poor (or no) moderation. I do not think she advocates assassinating public officials or blowing things up to make cities uninhabitable.

The reason Guy Lillian and I (not to mention David Gerrold and Moshe Feder, who have been public about this on Facebook) have some reservations is that we are old enough to remember a far more tolerant and gracious era of fandom, when liberals and conservatives could leave politics largely at the door. Yes, there was the famous Vietnam War ad in the prozines in 1968, but even this did not cause people to be disinvented from conventions. I think the attitude is best summed up by a comment by the late Milton A. Rothman, who said (in my presence) about a certain very Left-leaning colleague, "Sure we knew he was a Communist, but we didn't care about that. We were interested in science fiction." That should be the essence of the matter. We are drawn together by a mutual interest. That apparently isn't good enough anymore.

Admittedly back about 1970 a "conservative" was probably someone who had voted for Goldwater in 1964 and opposed income

tax rather than someone who wanted to overturn an election by force or kill public officials. Some of them opposed the Civil Rights Act, though many argued that it was unnecessary, suggesting instead that states be represented in Congress by the number of voters, not inhabitants. The late George Scithers took this position, pointing out that if such a thing were implemented the Southern states would suddenly discover that they had far fewer Congressmen. I countered that very likely some of those states would have decided they could live with this rather than let minorities vote. These were still things we could talk about. The extremists on the left were planting bombs, and a handful wanted a Communist revolution in the United States, but I don't think there was anybody like that in fandom. No fans at the Greenwich Village bomb factory. I doubt there were many in the KKK either.

So fandom was able to hold together, and was generally a warm and friendly place. The SF community included Ted Cogswell, who had fought on the Republican side in Spain, and Jerry Pournelle, who was, well, Jerry Pournelle. (Generally viewed as an amiable crackpot.) There is so much rancor these days that many people talk about quitting the convention scene altogether. There are conventions where, for the slightest ideological deviation, you are no longer welcome.

Now I read (on the internet) about people proposing to get "revenge" on the Worldcon by creating a slate of all Baen authors for the Hugos, and voting for No Award after that. Needless to say, I do not think this is a valid solution. If it becomes standard practice to bloc-vote whenever you have a cause, then the awards are indeed meaningless, and, as I have suggested before, Vox Day wins.

As for whether or not (according to Sarah Hoyt) publishers (or editors) even know what sells these days, maybe they don't, but their accountants do. This is where reality kicks in. All the award-campaigning or political posturing in the world, in any direction, won't help you when the money runs out. If you don't like the slant of a publisher, don't buy their books. That is the only vote that counts.

Just remember, you can never be woke enough. O'Brien told Winston Smith that someday he too would be vaporized, because the Party would need it. No matter how woke you are, being canceled is in your future.

On another matter entirely (page 6) I do not envy the director assigned to remake *The Wizard of Oz*. If he is stupid enough to think he can genuinely top the original, then he may deserve what he gets, but more likely this will be like the remake of *Psycho*. Remember that? No one does. Few saw it. It is a lose-lose situation. At best, your work will be compared to the original and seem unnecessary. At worst it will be a travesty. What it will not do is displace the original. It is true that many great films are

remakes. *The Maltese Falcon* is the third version, but the difference is that the other two were not all that good. The remakes of *King Kong* may have had some merits (at least the Peter Jackson version), but the original remains iconic. This sort of remake is a thankless job.

But they can insert up-to-date features. Do you remember what they did in the *Ghostbusters* remake?

— JTM

From: **Tom Feller** February 21, 2021
tomfeller@aol.com

Thank you for e-mailing the zine. Yes, we will all miss Timothy Lane. I had only recently re-established contact with him via e-mail.

Anita and I got our first dose of the Moderna vaccine on February 10 and are scheduled to receive our second on March 10.

A few months ago I got to the bottom of my stack of books to be read "real soon now". I had not been adding to the stack, because I have not been visiting bookstores or attending conventions. I started reading some of Anita's books like *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

From: **Thomas E. Simmons** Feb. 23, 2021
tom.e.simmons@usd.edu

February *Alexiad*:

Taras Wolansky's note "How to Get Censored by Rotten Tomatoes" relayed a review of the film *A Promising Young Woman* which Rotten Tomatoes declined to post. The rejected review described said film in these terms: "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." Wolansky speculated that Rotten Tomatoes took a pass on the review in order to protect "the anti-male fantasy, APYM, from negative reviews..."

Perhaps. But it occurred to me that an overly cautious Rotten Tomatoes editor may also have discerned the possibility of reading Wolansky's review as calling for the assault of any woman who appears to be drunk. Mind you, the review doesn't. It points out the flaws of the film.

Still, human beings tend to make their worst decisions out of fear – especially fears related to peer pressure and societal forces of conformity. I could see a Rotten Tomatoes editor uncomfortable with the possibility that the review could be read as a pro-rape missive (again, which it's clearly not).

So, I tried running a little experiment. I penned a Rotten Tomatoes audience review submission of my own – making the same points as Wolansky's review – but with revised wording. I submitted it to Rotten Tomatoes. Then I held my breath.

The result of the experiment? My review

went online. Rotten Tomatoes posted it. Now, I'm not sure we can say this proves anything. We'd need some wider sampling and a control group to be sure.

Here's my review, in which, by the way, I award APYM half-a-star less than Wolansky:

A Promising Young Woman (2020),
starring Carey Mulligan
½ * [out of 5]

The problem is not so much its predictability (although if there were an award for predictability, *A Promising Young Woman* would be a promising entry) nor its misandry (at least it's fashionably misandrous!) but rather its conspicuous lack of "Don't Try this at Home!" wrap-around warning labels.

The film is provocative only insofar as it dares to ask, "What if villains got a little taste of what they dish out?" The answer seems to be, "They'd squirm satisfactorily for the audience, right on cue."

Anyone who earnestly desires to diminish the alarmingly widespread violence against women in our society and who avers (as some critics have) that a decline can be predicted on account of those malefactors who view this film and — next time — think twice about committing a sexual assault has a thing or two to learn about criminality. This is no more an attack on rape culture than smut is an attack on degradation. This is no more good film making than the government venereal disease prevention films from the 1950's. And several degrees less effective in changing behavior.

If those critics actually believe that men will check their rape impulses because of what they see the protagonist doing on the screen, they ought to be even more concerned about what the film encourages young women to do to combat sexual assaults.

That sounds like the intent of the virtual reality process in Miriam Allen DeFord's "The Malley Process" (*Dangerous Visions*); making criminals revulsed by having to relive their criminal acts. As you know, Bob, it didn't work.

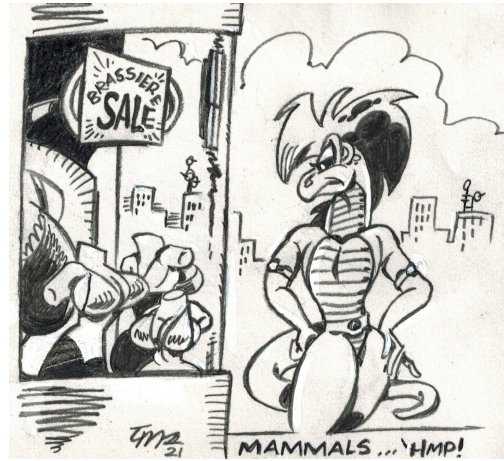
—JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** March 6, 2021
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON
M9C 2B2 CANADA
penneys@bell.net
<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Thank you for *Alexiad* WN 115, and with luck, some comments will follow. Our biggest news goes first...Yvonne and I were both

diagnosed with COVID-19 at the end of January/beginning of February. We figure we caught it because so many idiots in our building will not wear masks, or self-isolate, or stand six feet away, or even wash their hands. I'm to the point that I will be goddamned if I am going to risk my life because these people can't do even the very least to protect themselves and others.

I have been fortunate in that COVID-19 has taken only a couple of friends so far. I believe Grant is gone, and I am reminded that Tim Lane is gone, too. Our condolences. I hope conventions and other events will survive the pandemic. I have some vendor's tables coming up at some shows and conventions, and I would like to see them happen, and make some sales. I will say nothing about Discon . . . my blood pressure medication is only so good.



Grant tested positive and was quarantined, but did not develop COVID. Unlike far too many of our friends from the old days, he's still alive. I don't know what happened to Tim. Grant thinks it might have been COVID, but the nursing home doesn't release cause of death. I had my first immunization shot on March 10.

Remaking *The Wizard of Oz*? Why? Why do we have to remake everything? This is just one of the reasons why we don't see any movies these days (besides the pandemic), or watch much television. Let's change everything. I guess original ideas are too chancy when it comes to making money.

Why remake *The Wizard of Oz*?
So they can update it.

— JTM

My letter . . . I have gotten a couple more books worked on and edited/proofed, but I have since run out of editorial work. I will see what I can do for more . . . I might offer my services, or check with current magazines to see if they need any help. Yes, we did have COVID-19, but we

are still looking forward to our vaccines. So many Republican politicians are failing to recognize that these vaccinations and precautions are necessary for saving lives. The lockdown continues on here, with a few changes as of Monday, but I still won't be able to visit the barber, and I sure could use more than just a trim.

Time to go . . . I have a hospital visit coming up soon, and I am hoping for maximum effect and minimum pain. Please stay well and safe, and we will see you with the next issue.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** March 8, 2021
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

Some comments on *Alexiad*, February 2021

A comment to Lisa on her pants. Mine too won't stay up. While I may still be overweight for the medical profession, I am too thin as far as my pants are concerned. .

Onto Reviewer's Notes. You're very right that Toni Weiskopf, the chief editor and publisher of Baen Books, should be better treated by Worldcon. Their decision to deny her Guest of Honor is a travesty. At least from my perspective. For me, it is not about politics. I know her personally. I won't say she's my favorite fan, and I can't conceive she would say I'm her favorite fan either. However, whatever her politics, she's done a lot for fandom, hands down. I even got a book once from attending a presentation of hers on Baen. Also, I'm not the only Liberal who sings her praises either. I know a number who do.

Now we go to the first book review. Or book reviews since it is a series of books: *1910 The War in the Pacific* and *1912: War for the White House*. *1916. The War for America* is to come next. They all are part of the same alternate history: one where the Democrats succeeded in throwing the Republicans out during the Civil Wars, and making peace with the South. In the second book, Congress makes the Union Party candidate, in effect the Republican candidate, President. However, the Rationalist Party, based on the science of the time, disagrees. I was trying to figure out whether there was something that wasn't historical; and I think I found it. I don't believe science would ever be so popular that it would win the House of Representatives. Not even pop science would do that.

The next book review I would like to discuss is *A Wretched and Precarious Situation*. It is about the search for Crocker Land. Some of the biggest Arctic explorers, including Robert Peary, were involved with that. In fact, Peary claimed to have seen it Eventually, almost all explorers decided it was a mirage. It wouldn't be the first time that people have been fooled that way.

In fact, I wonder if most of my life is a mirage.

The next review I would like to comment on is the one on your contributions to Rotten

Tomatoes. Rotten Tomatoes has a good reason to eschew any hint about sexual harassment on the movie set. It is owned by Comcast, which is dependent on movie makers, and Warner Brothers, which makes movies. In short, to some extent the movie making fox is guarding the chicken coop.

Now we get to letters. By answering me, you ironically left yourself open to me most logical reaction: namely, that I agree that the book *Salamis* wasn't Greekpunk. On the other hand, if it was a swashbuckler, it would be closer to Greekpunk than other genres. Swashbucklers are not noted for historical accuracy and are beset with anachronisms. Thus, you might find some advanced technology in them. Future technology, like Greekpunk, would be another thing.

It's done in the method of de Camp. They both adhered to the history.

Another letter I wish to comment on is Tim's. You commented at the end that he died. Too bad. Especially since he had gotten over justifiable doldrums and written a great letter. On the other hand, that may constitute dying with your boots on.

Another letter still is Lloyd's. It's good that you're selling home-made jewelry. One of my nieces was going to sell hers. However, when push came to shove, she couldn't part with her pieces. Too bad, she needed a source of money at the time. I would not worry about her too much, though. As a food scientist, she loses well-paying jobs but gains them.

Another letter yet is Tom Feller's. Whether most *Man in the Iron Mask* films are faithful to the basic premise of the novel depends on the basic premise. If it is that the arrogant king is replaced by his twin, then yes. If the premise includes that the twin is a puppet of the 'evil' Jesuits, which the novel does, no.

A fourth other letter is Robert Kennedy's. He may have been joking when he said that, in the media, aliens speak standard American English and breath the same air we do. However, it's true for the most part. While *Babylon 5* has the Vorlons, usually aliens are made by covering their hair with straw or giving them Halloween monster costumes. Whatever is cheap enough.

The same reason that the hero always finds a parking space in front of where he has to go.

A fifth letter is George Price's. What can I say? Despite advocating pay-as-we-go, you admit that we've been deficit spending without punishment. That's pretty honest for any discussion of politics, and rarer than hen's teeth.

A sixth letter is Taras Wolansky's. He's very right that *The Man in the Iron Mask* was the end of a series that appeared to go on

forever. In fact, *Iron Mask* wasn't broken out into a novel until some English publishers decided to do that. In addition, I think French readers in the mid-19th Century saw things differently from us. They would agree that the Musketeers had lived long enough. Also, they would feel the Musketeers died in a fitting way. Two musketeers died in battle. Another died because he felt his time had come. Only the bad Musketeer was sentenced to live on.

What do you have against Aramis?

— JTM

That's about it

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Mar. 11, 2021
laurraine@mac.com

Regarding Sue Burke's Wiscon 41 report, if anyone is still interested, it was recently discovered that narwhals use their tusks to stun fish to eat.

From: **David M. Shea** March 5, 2021
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive, Unit 506, Ellicott City, MD 21042-5988 USA

I was sorry to hear about the death of Tim Lane. I did not know Tim well, mainly via LOCs to *FOSFAX*. We did meet once at a Worldcon, I believe it was in Chicago. I attended the *FOSFAX* dinner. As Tim was having people in his room to watch the Hugo awards on closed circuit, I asked if I could join that also; to which he agreed. I appreciated his contributions to faridom even when we didn't entirely agree.

Forgive me for saying: Even as a child I never liked *The Wizard of Oz* much, now it would bore me to tears. There is such a thing as terminal cutesiness. On a related but not identical note, I watched the "James Bond" movies once or twice but quickly lost interest in the concept. Now I would put "Bond" on the long list of items concerning which NO ONE should ever again make another film. He joins Sherlock Holmes, the *Titanic* (the ship sank, get over it), Tarzan, and Superman. Of the "Jurassic Park" films, I root for the dinosaurs.

This was an averagely miserable winter. So far there has not been a major power outage in my area. Snow, sleet, cold, wind: I dislike the wind most.

We have had one bad week of cold and snow. The cold wind seems to blow through me.

—JTM

So far I have avoided Covid. My doctor's office, the hospital, and the county health department all denied they were doing testing. (False on two counts, actually.) When I found a place that did testing, it took six days to get an appointment, and then nine more days to get a result. "Oh yeah, you're negative."

An interest in science fiction appears to be a

vanishing aspect of fandom. That's what I most want to talk about. More or less SF-specific articles available if anyone wants one

We see deer around here regularly. Foxes occasionally. I saw the first mockingbird of the season in February, unusually early. The bank swallows only appear in summer.



DÉVORER QUELQU'UN DES YEUX

From: **John Hertz** March 23, 2021
236 S. Coronado St., No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057

So I reproached you for changing "Jerry Pournelle could silp a Nuclear Fizz in the Insurgent manner" to "slip". So you in printing my letter changed it to "sip". What is this, a teat to see if I actually read your zine? Even *Fancylopedia III* has "silp".

I scanned it. So you say scanners live in vain?

For a while I broke fast once a week with a man in his eighties. At his insurance firm the person who'd been with him the shortest time just celebrated her twenty-fifth year there. He'd gone to night school, earned a Ph.D. in Economics, and was teaching it in night school. His wristwatch bore the brand name "Guess". Pretty good for a man selling insurance and teaching Economics. One morning he said "All my friends are dead." I asked "When was the last time you made any new friends?"

A re-made *Wizard of Oz* film is no encouraging prospect. Last I heard, the person in charge of it was the woman who did *Watchmen* for Home Box Office. Would you buy communion wafers from the President of American Atheists? Of course there are things about the 1939 *Wizard* that in principle could be improved. The it-was-all-a-dream ending is a flat insult to the book. But —

The good news is that science is advancing by leaps and bounds. Pocket telephones. Food coming from a thousand miles away. A vaccine against a nasty coronavirus developed and into distribution eleven months after the virus

appears. The technology is amazing astounding thrilling wonderful.

That's a noteworthy analog.

—JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 27, 2021
The Terraces of Boise, 5301 East Warm Springs Ave., Apt. B306, Boise, ID 83716-6205
robertk@cipcug.org

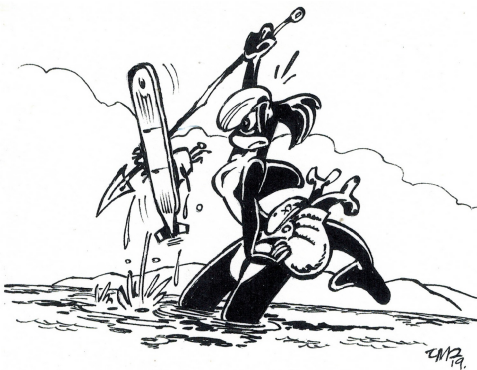
Thank for Vol. 20 No. 1 (December 2020, Whole Number 114).

I am sorry to learn that your health problems continue. As to your saying: "Health problems tend to terminate once you die."—You are forbidden to go before me because receiving *Alexiad* is one of the bright spots in my life.

Learning via email that Timothy Lane had died was a shock. In his letters he seemed to be doing ok. I remember first meeting you and Tim many years ago at a Worldcon in, if I remember correctly, San Antonio.

We had no idea it had happened until Elizabeth's sister casually mentioned it in a Facebook posting.

—JTM



All of us here in the CCRC are doing rather well although I now have to use a walker. We have had our second Wuhan Virus shots and there have not been any deaths related to the virus.

A couple of Saturday's ago seven of us plus the driver went up in the mountains to Idaho City and had lunch. The restaurant was full and obviously no face masks since one cannot eat with a face mask. Hopefully, all the other diners had also received their shots. Anyway it was a great trip and a good lunch.

Your comment about Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman* reminded me that I didn't buy it. Julia Roberts was/is much too good looking to be a streetwalker.

John Purcell: I agree with you concerning politicians.

That's about it. Lots of *Futurama* and *The Twilight Zone* reruns to watch on TV.

From: **George W. Price** March 28, 2021
4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL 60630-3333 USA
price4418@comcast.net

February *Alexiad*:

I was saddened to see the notice of Timothy Lane's passing. While I never really knew him — meeting him only a couple of times at conventions — I greatly enjoyed the massive fanzine *FOSFAX* which he produced for the Louisville fan club until 2011. He was kind enough to print a number of my letters. Much more important, he ran the original versions of Joe's essays on the Heinlein juveniles which *Advent* published in 2006 as *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles*. To our sorrow, he died too soon.

Lately there has been much discussion as to what extent social media operators should be allowed to censor what gets posted on their platforms. Should Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act be amended to make outfits like Facebook and Twitter be either more or less legally liable for what they allow users to post?

Perhaps what we need is a website specializing in user posts which are forthrightly controversial, and for which the site operators specifically disclaim any responsibility for truth or accuracy. One possibility is for each post to have running at the bottom of the screen an endless-loop crawler saying: "This post has not been checked for truth, accuracy, relevance, or caloric content — read at your own risk!"

I will not speculate on how Section 230 would have to be modified to permit this, or whether it could be made compatible with the traditional laws against libel, slander, and defamation. However, I will offer a fitting name for such a site: It should be, obviously, "Bull Site."

Richard Dengrove thinks I am an "idealist" for suggesting that we should each save a year's income to fall back on in times of prolonged unemployment, such as the current pandemic crisis. He finds this "not practical." Lloyd Penney agrees that the idea is "unrealistic."

Well, of course, they are right, at least in terms of what is common practice in our present society. My point is that our society needs to change what is accepted practice. My long lifetime has seen huge changes in what is socially practical and acceptable. The rise of the welfare state has made it much more acceptable to live hand-to-mouth and depend on the government in times of unexpected need. Until the Great Depression (which I can remember as a child), a "safety net" was found only in circuses; the expression had not become a social metaphor.

For another example, it used to be that a two-income family with the children in daycare was almost unheard of. Even among very poor people, only the husband worked. There was no "daycare industry" — there wasn't enough demand for such a thing. The wife stayed home to take care of the children. And usually there were several children; families were bigger then. "A woman's place is in the home" was not just a demeaning put-down, it was a literal description of a very practical division of labor.

There were plenty of exceptions, of course, such as widows and divorced women (not very many of the latter) with children. They were customarily helped out by relatives or by private charities (especially churches). Never-married women of course did not have children (another big difference from today), or if they did it was kept quiet.

I was still a small child when my father suffered a disability and could no longer work, and my mother had to take over supporting the family. That almost destroyed my father and left him deeply embittered, because in his eyes a real man supported his family.

Well, these social attitudes change, sometimes for the better, but not always. I suspect that we might be better off psychologically if more women stayed home and raised their children, and accepted that the family would live on a lower scale. It would almost certainly be better for the children.

But now children have to have the latest electronic implements. And they have to get tutoring, special athletics, interning in a Significant Cause, all to increase their chances of getting into an Ivy League university and making connections. And they hate the whole thing from beginning to end.

— JTM

In the same way, my idea of saving up a year's income would require us to live at a lower economic level for a few years. Is that too big a change for modern people to accept?

The events of the last few years convince me of one thing: there is no "historical inevitability." Marxists are not the only ones who prate learnedly about historical inevitability, and many of them seem to really believe it. (For others, the idea is simply a tool to discourage opposition — if something is inevitable, why try to fight it?)

I conclude the obvious: that history is the record (more or less accurate) of what has happened, and nothing else. It is not a process that has a goal or destination. It has no rules or limits except those imposed by the laws of physics and chemistry. History does show many regularities and repetitions, since human nature apparently does not change over the centuries. And the study of history is marvel-

ously useful in estimating the possible and likely consequences of our political policies. But anybody who talks about the "arc of history" is talking twaddle. Just about everything is contingent.

One recent example should suffice:

As I recall, in the run-up to 2016 I saw the obvious Republican choice for presidential nominee as being Congressman Paul Ryan, the new Speaker of the House and a rising star in the party. He was eminently qualified, widely respected, and ideologically acceptable to both conservatives and moderates. In short, the nomination seemed to be his for the taking — few Republicans would have opposed him in the primaries, and those few he would have defeated easily. Hillary Clinton was not the most attractive of candidates for the Democrats, and so we would now most probably be in the early days of Ryan's second term.

And then — the utterly unforeseen happened. Paul Ryan chose not to run for President and stayed in the House. There was then a flood of lesser Republicans into the primaries. Mr. Trump, as the only populist, was able to prevail over the widely divided establishment opposition. I don't believe he would have stood a chance against Ryan as his only opponent in the primaries.

I wonder — Does Paul Ryan ever think of what his decision to not run has led to? If so, I hope he doesn't feel guilty, since there was no way he could possibly have foreseen it. Which is my point: the irruption of Mr. Trump cannot be accounted for by any "tides of history" nonsense.

Let's imagine that Ryan had run and won. Now, at the start of Ryan's second term, Harry Turtledove publishes an alternate-history novel in which a character closely based on Donald Trump does what in our world Trump really has done. The reviewers would shake their heads sadly and say, "Turtledove has lost it. An author can base his alternate history on unlikely events — but having a brash television showman do all this is just plain absurd!"

From: **Taras Wolansky** March 29, 2021
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Thank you for the February 2021 *Alexiad* (tho' you did leave AL du Pisani & me off the list of letterhacks).

Maybe the only hope for freedom of speech and toleration of dissent at future Worldcons is — if they're held in Communist China. At least there the list of forbidden ideas is relatively short and well-defined!

I'm torn between boycotting wokecons, and attending precisely to uphold truth, justice, and the American way. Until I get canceled myself.

While we're on the subject of suppressing freedom of speech, I don't shop at Amazon any more. Are your books available elsewhere?

Heinlein's Children is available directly from ReAnimus Press. — JTM

Review of Paul Hollander's *Political Pilgrims*: As I recall, the North Korean "department store" was filled with people ordered to play the role of customer, but of course not permitted to purchase the goods "for sale"; i.e., the set decorations.



Review of David Welky's *A Wretched and Precarious Situation*: "As they were all Lieutenant-Commanders in the U.S. Navy no one could pull rank." I thought that would have been resolved by seniority; i.e., date of commission.

Richard Dengrove: The WHO official who said that lockdowns should be a last resort pointed out that they are hardest on the poor, and on students who were struggling already. Rich people — and good students — are doing fine.

Darrell Schweitzer: "I don't see any of 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."

In today's environment, major publishers not taking risks implies that they will apply racial and gender quotas to the books they publish. They will police the books they publish for politically incorrect content.

Barnes and Noble is still stocking some politically incorrect books, I note, but how many and how much longer I'm not sure. In any case, they stock only a small percentage of all the genre books out there. In the meantime, Amazon has been caught suppressing books disliked by the Twitter mob.

Books that are not published and not distributed are unlikely to find their audience.

George W. Price: One riot vs. 500 riots. Nope, the Right still has the moral edge.

Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Glenn Greenwald says the media held on to the fake story about the Capitol cop being beaten to death so long because they needed the rioters to

be guilty of at least one intentional killing.

Wade Major: The purpose of the proposed remake of *The Wizard of Oz* is not to try to equal it but correct it. As in the novel and musical, *Wicked*, the Witch of the West, being non-white, necessarily becomes a sympathetic character, with all blame attached to white characters like the Witch of the North — and the Wizard himself, who is not only white but male. Whether Dorothy herself will be reimagined as non-white, or simply a white "ally", I hesitate to predict.

Robert S. Kennedy: "Perhaps there are people alive today who have DNA from both [Neanderthals and Denisovans]." Yes; they are called Asians.

The African diaspora from which whites and Asians both descend first interbred with Neanderthals, and then the future Asians turned east and encountered the Denisovans.

Finally, I had more trouble nominating Hugo movies than I ever had in any previous year. Maybe too many films were being held over for 2021. I ended up voting for Millie Bobby Brown's *Enola Holmes* (based on the YA novels by Nancy Springer) and Vince Vaughn's supernatural slasher comedy, *Freaky*.

WAHF:
Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.
Lloyd Daub, the same
Lee Muncy, James D. Nicoll, George Phillies, with thanks,

There is a great deal of misinformation going around. The antivaxxers are spreading it, and the various "natural health" and QAnon types are joining in. It's a bipartisan effort, in other words.

It's the sort of argument that goes all the way back to Edward Jenner. There is a James Gillray cartoon showing the cowpox inoculation giving people cow-shaped tumors or even turning them into cows. What can I say?

"Got Polio?"

THE LAST MAN IN EUROPE by Ernest Hemingway

(In the spirit of *Fighters from Mars* (1897, 1898) an American publisher asked Papa to do his version of this Limey's novel. So . . .)

It was a bright cold day. It was a day in April. All the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith was walking. He had his chin nuzzled into his coat. The wind was cold. He slipped through the door. Victory Mansions had a glass door. The wind blew in after him.

The hallway smelled. It was a smell of boiled cabbage. There was also a smell of old rag mats. There was a poster on the wall. The poster was of an enormous face. The face was of a man in his forties.

Winston went for the stairs. It was no use trying the elevator. The elevator never worked. The power was off. It was turned off now for economy. They were preparing for Hate Week. That was good.

Winston had an apartment. It was on the seventh floor. He went upstairs slowly. His ankle hurt. He had an ulcer on it. He had to rest often.

There was another poster on the wall. The eyes of the poster followed him. It was of the same man. It said BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU.

He entered his apartment. The telescreen was on. It never went off. The report was on the production of pig-iron. Iron made for strong things.

They could hear him on the telescreen. Winston was careful about what he said and did. The Ministry of Love watched all the time.

Winston went to the window. He was a frail man. He wore blue coveralls. Blue coveralls were the uniform of the Party. They made him look like a working man. That was good.

He looked out of the window. The sun was shining. The sky was blue. The world looked cold. The world looked colorless. There were spirals of wind. The spirals had dust and torn paper.

There were posters everywhere. The posters had pictures of Big Brother. The posters read BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU.

One poster was torn. It was flapping in the breeze. It said INGSOC.

There was a helicopter flying by. The Thought Police flew them. They looked into people's windows.

Winston Smith went to the cupboard. He took out the bottle. He had six stiff drinks of Victory Gin . . .

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Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa

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

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

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