

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

When I first heard about the anti semitic chants at universities I could not believe those who reported it were correct. I did not believe, did not want to believe, that in the year 2023, in the United States of America, there would be open calls for a repeat of the Holocaust. I did not believe it until I saw it for myself. It is one thing to chant against Israel if you believe that country is in the wrong. That is your free speech right. It is quite another to call for the death of all Jews in the world. That is straight out of Adolf Hitler's playbook. It is Class A hate speech. What I saw when I saw the videos brought to mind Kristallnacht, a massive pogrom in Nazi Germany. Kristallnacht was followed by death camps for people guilty only of having the wrong ancestry. Is it to be the same here in the United States? Already Jewish students have had to hide in fear while mobs sought to harm them at Cooperstown. We need to think long and hard about the road we may be walking down.

It is very cold today in Louisville. We are not alone in our suffering but it is very cold comfort to know that. This has been a rough year. I am going into this new year with three of my family gone, two of my father's first cousins and my mother's last sibling. She was one of the world's great people. I wish now I had called her more than I did.

— Lisa

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 Deadline is **February 10, 2024**

Reviewer's Notes

Christmas was a hassle. Not to mention that I had little energy. And I managed to end the holiday by falling down and having to be picked up. All of which cut into my time.

It looks like Chengdu was not going to pull an "Igor's Worldcon", changing the rules after the fact and taking over the worldcon. Looking at things, it seems they considered it as the official national con with a touch of foreigners; in effect, a Chinese Dragoncon.

At least the Jeddicon bid has aborted. They were worrisome for a variety of reasons. The impression seemed to be that the committee were experts at doing conventions, but not *science fiction* conventions.

The Alternate Worldcons book had a poem about a Worldcon in Zagreb — right in the middle of their civil war. It was not advisable for the congoers' health. The 2027 Tel Aviv bid may not be advisable for similar reasons.

A number of works face the compiler's definition. For example, Mark Whittington is not listed in the Internet Science Fiction Database (<https://www.isfdb.org/>). Yet Martin Caidin is. Though Caidin wrote tie-ins as well as alternative space programs.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



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

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/Joseph-T-Major/author/B01BMC4MU>

<https://www.AdventPub.com/1531>

Advent Publishers
P.O. Box 16143
Golden, CO 80402-6003

<https://reanimus.com/store>

— Advt.

The Ford Escape has a telephone system. I tried setting it up after I got the car, but it didn't work.

Then, one day when I was near the dealership and had some spare time, I went in and asked them. The man got it going in next to no time.

There was nothing wrong with the car. I had to have the Bluetooth on the phone turned on. Worked just fine then.

But the only person who would call me while I was driving . . . was Grant.

The Mission Spiritus Antarctica expedition has dispatched two retired Royal Marines, Alan Chambers, MBE and Dave Thomas, on a South Pole expedition. Startlingly, their combined ages total out at 122 years.

For those who like their belief exotic, it is now possible to get a Bible translated into Pirate:

<https://piratebible.com/>

For example, here is Genesis Chapter 1 Verse 2:

The land was a mess, nary a speck of shape, 'n all was shrouded in dark over the deep abyss. But then the spirit of

ol' God sailed across the waters.

On December 14 Judge Steven D. Wilson of the U.S. District Court shut down Demetrious Polychron. Polychron wrote *The Fellowship of the Kings*, his sequel to *The Lord of the Rings*. He then sued Amazon and the Tolkien Estate over Amazon's series *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*, claiming infringement of his books.

The court judgment forbade him from distributing or selling this book or his planned sequel *The Two Trees* and imposed a payment of \$134,637 to Amazon and the Estate for legal fees. Moreover, Polychron has to destroy all copies of his work.

Tarzan on Mars by "John Bloodstone", anyone?

(Thanks to Lloyd Daub for passing on the news.)

Incidentally, it is now possible to get an Adobe pdf file of *Tarzan on Mars* on the ERBzine website:

http://www.erbzine.com/mag19/novel/Tarzan_On_Mars.pdf

MONARCHISM

On **January 14, 2024**, Tolkien artist and Queen of Denmark Ingahild Grathmer, that is **Margarethe II** abdicated in favor of her oldest son, who became King **Frederik X**.

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Marilyn Joyce "Fuzzy Pink" Wisowaty Niven**, wife of write Larry Niven, on **December 3, 2023**. She herself was a long-term LASFS member (since 1968).

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Review by Joseph T Major of
SURVEYOR:

A Corps of Discovery Novel
(2018; ISBN 978-0999609309;
Geo-Mar Publishing; \$15.71;
Geo-Mar Publishing (Kindle); \$3.99);

TREKKER:

A Corps of Discovery Novel
(2018; ISBN 978-0999609323;
Bowker; \$14.99;
Bowker (Kindle); \$4.99); and

EXPLORER:

A Corps of Discovery Novel
(2020; ISBN 978-0999609347;
James S. Peet; \$15.99;
James S. Peet (Kindle); \$4.99)
by James S. Peet

One thing I liked about Harry Turtledove's "Curious Notions" books, about adventures on alternative timelines, was that the timeline people made mistakes. I could imagine the early days of the Paratime Patrol.

And now, there's this, which is much the same, but with its own features. For example, the timeline travelers are careful about timelines that are occupied by human civilizations, or even uncivilized ones, unless taking precautions.

They prefer to seek out unoccupied ones. By humans, that is; there are ferocious predators to prepare for.

Bill Clark is interested in this different world, worlds. So when offered, he volunteers for the Corps of Exploration.

The training for those discoverers comes across as remarkably reminiscent of that in *Tunnel In the Sky* (1955; G.126). Except there is no program for setting up trainees for murder as a finale. Having invested in the training of a new staffer, they don't seem to want him or her blown away by someone with a love of killing.

Bill learns the ways and equipment of the Corps of Exploration. The organizers seem to have a certain — bias — since the district they have chosen to occupy has been named "Milton" and the town "Hayek". (Fortunately there is not a "Murray", much less a "Lew".)

And he meets a girl. This is what they call marrying well, as she is named Meri Lewis, and is the daughter of the boss. Not that she gets any special privileges and indeed she and Bill are sent out with two other Discoverers to investigate one empty planet's version of Europe.

Whereupon disaster strikes. All the electronics on the plane go out and they have to make an emergency landing. And here they are, across the Atlantic and the American continent from aid.

The next few chapters might be somewhat tedious, as they describe how Bill and his colleagues have to build an ocean-going boat, lay up provisions, and finally sail, first down the coast, then striking out west hoping to get to the Americas.

The journey is arduous and the efforts by the adventurers to try to get there alive are displayed in some detail. They do not quarrel with each other. Though one of them doesn't make it, due to an encounter with sharks. And Meri gets pregnant, which causes further concerns.

They make it, though.

The next trip is curiously reminiscent of the scene in *A Greater Infinity* (1980) where Duncan McElroy has to explain to his fellow timeline travelers what space suits are. The Corps of Discovery harvests advance technology from other timelines. In this case, someone has invented a flying car, and they want to show him what respect, freedom, and other advantages can do for a researcher. (Imagine them going after Doc Brown . . .)

A party sets out into a fractured America. Peet is realistic about human relations as he is about nature, and one of the party, who is Black, is painfully encountering racism in the Confederacy. It is both a personal and a group problem. And when they make their way to the

developer, he has an idea for a pseudonym that turns out to be rather disturbing for the party.

Peet seems to be writing rather a lot about this patrol gathering curious notions. It is very small press and is worth a look.

THE VALOR OF IGNORANCE

Review by Joseph T Major of

NIKIBEI-SEN MIRAKI

(Japanese War Fantasy 1933: An Edited and Annotated Translation of "Account of the Future US-Japan War")

(1933; 2022; ISBN 978-0764366468;

Schiffer Military History; \$19.99;

Schiffer Military History (Kindle); \$15.99)

by Kyosuke Fukunaga

edited and annotated by Jamue Bisher

This book contains a rare insight.

When the book was first published, it was banned in Hawaii, out of fear that it might provoke a Nisei uprising. Its course of events seems, in retrospect, to be a little off.

It begins with a Japanese lieutenant firing torpedos that sink the USS *Houston* in Shanghai Harbor. He is courtmartialed and sentenced to be shot — but every man in the firing squad misses three times. So he is reinstated.

The United States and Japan go to war. But problems occur when the USS *Oklahoma* blows up in Gatun Locks, making the Panama Canal unusable. It turns out the cause was a bomb planted by a Black naval steward, and upon finding more bombs planted by them, the President dismisses all Blacks from the Navy and Army.

The fleets mass for the Decisive Battle. A Japanese cruiser squadron sinks two of the American aircraft carriers. The Japanese engage the American battle line, and after heavy American losses the fleet surrenders.

Boy, this sure ain't Hector Bywater! Reading this one finds an understanding of the Japanese doctrine of Decisive Battle and the view of the superior moral power of the Japanese. This was why they did it that way.

HALF THE STORY IS GETTING THERE

Review by Joseph T Major of
A BROTHER ON THE MOON

(2018; \$1.99)

by Mark Whittington

In this brief story, Air Force pilot Robert Lawrence is not injured in an accident, and decides to enter the astronaut corps. The political and financial efforts needed to provide him with an Apollo mission are the source of much argument; but then, it is desirable that a Black astronaut go to the moon.

Lawrence flies on Apollo 18 as LM Pilot. (There is also an Apollo 19. Funding became available.) He flies a space shuttle mission before he retires.

But he becomes a hot political prospect.

He decides to run for the senate, then for the presidency. President Lawrence has several noteworthy accomplishments — including a visit to the Lunar Base.

More recent political events should not be mentioned. Whittington has already written of one Black astronaut, who conducts a Lunar rescue mission in a privately-built shuttle, in *Children of Apollo*.)

THE ALICE NETWORK

by Kate Quinn

(2017; William Morrow Paperbacks;

ISBN 978-0062654199; \$10.31;

2017; William Morrow Paperbacks (Kindle);

\$10.99)

Review by Tom Feller

There have been a lot of books and movies about the German occupation of France during World War II, but relatively little about the occupation during World War I. The Germans held significant portions of France for more than four years and still held much of the country when the Armistice was signed. This led to the “stab in the back” conspiracy theory utilized by the Nazis in their rise to power. This novel has two story lines: the first, set in 1915, is a spy story set in occupied France, and the second, set in 1947, is a detective story about the search for a young French woman who disappeared in 1943. By the end, the stories come together, although the 1915 one tends to overpower the other, especially early on.

The one character who participates in both story lines is Eve Gardiner. The daughter of an English father and a French mother, she grew up in France close to the German border so she also speaks fluent German. She is working as a file clerk in a London law office when she is recruited to become a spy by a Captain Cameron, aka “Uncle Edward”, based on a real person. Gardiner joins the Alice Network, which actually existed, and her handler is Lilli, aka Alice Dubois, aka Louise de Bettignies, also based on a real person. Gardiner works as a waitress in a restaurant that caters to the Germans, pretends to not understand their language, and overhears useful information. She is eventually captured and both hands are permanently damaged while she is being questioned and tortured. Gardiner spent the remainder of the war in a prison in Germany. She is living on a pension in London in 1947 and drinking heavily when Charlotte “Charlie” St. Clair comes into her life.

St. Clair is a pregnant, unmarried 19 year old American woman and former Bennington student from a rich family. She is traveling with her French-born mother to Switzerland to get an abortion when she takes a detour to London to look up Gardiner. The latter was identified to St. Clair as someone who might have information on her French cousin Rose Fournier. Rose disappeared in occupied France during World War II, and Gardiner had worked as a volunteer with refugees right after the war. Charlie persuades her to join the quest to learn Rose’s fate, and they are accompanied by Finn Kilgore, a

Scottish ex-soldier who now serves as Gardiner’s driver. His car, a second-hand Aston-Martin Lagonda, is a character in the story in its own right. This is an engrossing story that seamlessly mixes fact and fiction, the only problem being that the plot relies heavily on coincidence.

WORLDCON BIDS

2026

Los Angeles

August 27-31, 2026

<https://lain2026.org/>

2027

Tel Aviv

August 2027

2028

Brisbane, Australia

Mid-August 2028

<https://australia2025.com/>

Kampala, Uganda

Kampcon: The 86th World Science Fiction Convention

August 23-27, 2028

<https://kampcon.org/>

2029

Dublin

<http://dublin2029.ie>

2031

Texas

<https://alamo-sf.org/>

WORLDCON

2024

Glasgow

August 8-12, 2024

<http://glasgow2024.org/>

2025

Seattle

Worldcon Seattle 2025

August 13-17, 2025

<https://www.seattlein2025.org/>

NASFiC

2024

Buffalo, NY

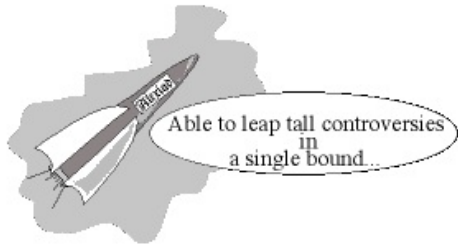
July 18-21, 2024

<https://buffalonasfic2024.org/>

HUGO RECOMMENDATION

I’d like to recommend *Hurry Up Living* by Nicholas Vic Dupont, a brilliant and engaging riff on *Lest Darkness Fall*, with detailed alternative action and a protagonist who is troubled and determined.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Dale Speirs** October 29, 2023
opuntia57@hotmail.com

Regarding the comments about an annual NASFiC or Worldcon distribution, there is no reason why there must only be one. Stamp collectors have been hosting international conventions since the early 1900s. The FIP is the international organization which sanctions world philatelic conventions, of which there are two or three per year. If you can't make the Asian convention, then there will be one in Europe or the Americas. They are all equal and no one fusses.

That Americans were smoked out by Canadian forest fires had nothing to do with climate change, but the mass media will never explain why. Canada is now blanketed with spruce forests as a result of a century of Smokey the Bear fire suppression. Before that, the forests were patchworks of open meadows, deciduous trees, and conifers. Now they are old-growth spruce forests that burn and burn.

Calgary's annual readercon When Words Collide, which is actually Canada's readercon, is going forward under new leadership. The Old Guard retired after 2023 and handed over to the Alexandra Writers Group. WWC 2024 details are available at:

<https://www.alexandrawriters.org/when-words-collide-2024.html>

The event has a limit of 1,000 plus volunteers and guests, and was 80% sold by middle October.

When Words Collide attracts a large contingent of Canadian publishers, editors, and pro writers, and not just a few Americans. No teenaged Darth Vaders roaming the hotel corridors, just them that reads a book. What gladdens my heart is that a sizeable percentage are aged from their 20s to 40s, not just us pensioners.

In particular, the dealer bourse is a joy. Only books can be sold. Most of the tables are taken by small-press publishers who do very well. I always drop several hundred dollars on an armload of books that I would not have noticed otherwise.

So at least one convention has had a proper succession.

— JTM holds up quite well.

From: **Taras Wolansky** November 1, 2023
twolansky@yahoo.com

Thanks for the August issue of *Alexiad*. Since my last letter I attended Pemmi-Con, the NASFiC in Winnipeg. It took me three days to get home to upstate New York.

The first day, the second leg of my flight was canceled due to equipment problems with the plane, leaving me stranded in Montreal. The second day, my flight was canceled due to weather at the destination, Newark Airport. Finally, on the third day, Air Canada had to fly me first from Montreal to Toronto — I had to get up at the ungodly hour of 4 AM to make the 7 AM flight — and then from Toronto to Newark.

My suitcase, however, was still in Canada. I had a good laugh with the lost baggage clerk at Newark Airport. I was so glad to be home, I didn't care my suitcase was missing! It took several more days for it to arrive via FedEx.

This was the first time I was ever stranded at an airport. One of the lessons I took from it was to avoid connecting flights through minor hubs, like Montreal. If your flight is canceled, there are too few alternatives.

Actually, I had previously come close to being stranded; on my return from another NASFiC, in Puerto Rico. The airline representative at the San Juan airport informed me that my flight was delayed, so I would miss my connection in Fort Lauderdale and might as well go back to my hotel. But I decided I'd rather be stranded in Florida than in Puerto Rico. And when I got to Fort Lauderdale, I discovered that my flight to upstate New York had also been delayed, so if I ran I could still make it.

Interestingly, when my suitcase appeared on the baggage carousel at Stewart Airport in upstate New York, it was covered in condensation. Evidently it had been last in/first out, and hadn't had a chance to warm up before I picked it up.

Joe: I at least partially recollect the process whereby I was introduced to science fiction.

It started when I explored the attic of an old house we had moved into, and found a copy of *Tom Swift and His Giant Cannon*, by "Victor Appleton", already about a half century old at that point. This piqued my interest enough so that, when my parents were looking for something to bribe me with to do my piano lessons, they bought me the "Tom Swift, Jr." series, by "Victor Appleton III".

"This is my Giant Cannon," Tom said bombastically.

Inevitably, my piano lessons outran the appearance of new entries in the series; so I was permitted to select a real science fiction paperback. I'm pretty sure the first one was A.E. Van Vogt's *Mission to the Stars* (a.k.a. *The Mixed Men*). The last time I reread it was when part of it was nominated for a Retro Hugo. It still

In parallel with all this, I discovered that public libraries had SF, including Golden Age anthologies by Groff Conklin. I picked up the Heinlein juveniles there, but Andre Norton (a former librarian) had a whole shelf of books, which discouraged me from even starting on them.

And from the Heinlein juveniles, I graduated to the Signet editions of his adult work, which were on the paperback rack of every drugstore, or so it seemed. At one point, I owned 25 paperbacks, and 13 were by Heinlein.

Review of *Joyleg*, by Ward Moore and Avram Davidson: "Joyleg gives the two [land] grants to the United Nations and world peace follows." This sounds like they're ripping off *The Mouse That Roared*. Though the preposterous plot device there is actually more plausible than the one here.

**Thou hast an embassy from
Grand Fenwick:
Our words art backed by
NUCLEAR WEAPONS!**

Hugo Award Finalists: Whatever else you might say about the list, it doesn't look like it's been taken over by Chinese entries.

Darrell Schweitzer: It's not men who are afraid of (relatively small and weak) "trans men".

A liberal writer, Jonathan Kay, describes trans ideology this way in Quillette: "forcing women to share prisons, rape-crisis centres, athletic leagues, locker rooms, and other vulnerable spaces with men". Who are generally bigger, and stronger, and more aggressive (read: more rapey) than women. There are, after all, reasons why female-only sanctuaries were created in the first place.

A female swimmer explained that it takes a long time to put on the skin-tight suits used in competition. I think they have the right not to be ogled by a biological male who claims to be lesbian with an erection.

I agree with Caitlin (nee Bruce) Jenner, that it is unfair to force women athletes to compete against "transgender women" whose bodies were formed on the male plan.

Of course, the worst case scenario is contact sports. The case of the two top women MMA athletes, whose careers were ended by matches with a transgender woman, is well known. One of them had her skull broken. They said fighting a biological male was like nothing they had ever experienced before.

The root of the disagreement may lie in the fact that progressives are indoctrinated to minimize physical differences between men and women. For example, I have encountered progressive women who think Serena Williams, the strongest woman tennis player of all time, is competitive with the top men. Even by her own, over-optimistic estimate, the top 300 men in tennis could beat her. (Others estimate it's more like the top 700.)

Or they've been reading S. M. Stirling's essay "The Woman Warrior" in *New Destinies*, about how women can be front-line combat soldiers.

Lloyd Penney: I must confess I've been to only one World Fantasy Convention. A convention without science programming is not really to my taste. But maybe I'll give it another shot.

George Price: "The big question was whether Roosevelt was morally justified in using such backhanded tactics to get into war with Germany." Many years ago I saw Clare Boothe Luce interviewed by Dick Cavett. He tweeted her for having said during the Forties that FDR had lied us into war. She still holds the same opinion, she said, except that in retrospect she now thinks FDR did the right thing.

George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* while the war was still going on, but no publisher would touch it. It finally appeared shortly after the end of the war, belatedly warning the Free World what kind of animal Stalin was.

December 1, 2023

Thanks for the October *Alexiad*.

Review of *Superman versus the Ku Klux Klan*: Too bad Superman didn't get around to doing anything about that other, vastly more dangerous conspiracy, the one that gave the secret of the atom bomb to a genocidal monster.

Darrell Schweitzer: Climate activists tend to get a little vague about their projected dates. Melting all the ice would take several hundred years.

I've seen a world map online, which shows what the world would look like with all the ice melted. At first glance it seems unchanged, but then you notice the "missing bits".

Here's Bjorn Lomborg, who reads the scientific parts of the UN reports, not just the political summaries: "The cost of climate change by the end of the century, if we do nothing, will be around 3.6 percent of global GDP. ... This means that instead of seeing incomes rise to 450 percent by 2100, they might increase 'only' to 434 percent."

This is pretty typical of current political controversies. One side looks at more or less questionable anecdotes, the other side looks at the actual projections.

Lomborg also points out that weather-related deaths are down drastically. Hurricanes are more expensive than they used to be not because they are more severe, but because we're building more and more expensive stuff on coastlines.

Which is a funny thing to do, come to think of it, if we actually believe sea levels are rising.

A 95-pound woman prisoner, sharing a cell with a 200-pound "lesbian with an erec-

tion" is not likely to squeal to the authorities. However, there has been a spate of pregnancies in women's prisons. I strongly suspect that authorities are already beginning to provide contraceptives, hoping to keep what's happening as quiet as possible.

Given what Japan was doing in China in the Thirties, it's not hard to understand why American magazines were running stories about the "Y—w P—l". Indeed, on December 7, 1941, those stories must have seemed rather prophetic.

George W. Price: One reason progressives are casual about letting biological men compete with women in sports is it they've been subjected to an enormous amount of propaganda minimizing the physical differences between men and women. So they really don't understand how much of an injustice they are doing to women.

And, of course, in the popular entertainment progressives produce, like cop shows, women are always beating up men.

Part of the reason I think surgical transitioning should be an absolute last resort is just how bad the technology is right now. In *The Madness of Crowds*, by the brilliant gay writer, Douglas Murray, he tells of a friend who is a male-to-female transsexual. The friend's artificial vagina — I cringe even to think about this — has to be surgically reopened periodically. The brain may think it's female, but the body still thinks it's male; and we don't know how to tell it otherwise.

Yet, even so, the friend says — it was worth it.

Richard Dengrove: The camp counselor, who warned you that science fiction could drive you crazy, may have heard something about Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), about the evil influence of (unregulated) comic books.

In *Batman and Harley Quinn* (2017), having taken Nightwing prisoner, Harley says that at college she wrote a paper on a book that claimed that Batman and Robin weren't interested in girls. Then she proceeds to prove that Dr. Wertham was wrong.

—JTM

Water landings are inherently more dangerous than landing on a nice flat runway that doesn't move around.

Convention listings: Looks like far western New York State is the place to be, next year. You have NASFiC in Buffalo listed; also World Fantasy is just down the road in Niagara Falls, a few months later.

I'm definitely going to Buffalo, but a fantasy convention without a science program is maybe a little thin for me. We'll see.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** darrells@comcast.net Nov. 3, 2023

Contrary to George Price I actually know what the term 'Fascism' means. I agree it is misused almost to the point of meaninglessness. A friend of mine showed me a very bad dictionary which actually defined "fascist" and "a tyrannical ruler," to which I replied, "Oh, you mean like the emperor Justinian and Mao Zedong?" No, if the term is to mean anything we should stick to a traditional 5-part definition that I encountered somewhere, that runs like this: 1) Extreme nationalism 2) Extreme militarism 3) Contempt for democracy 4) the Fuhrer principle (i.e. personality cult of the glorious leader) and 5) The corporate state.

Credere Obbedire Combattere
("Believe, Obey, Fight")

This last is actually the most important. Many half-educated people don't even know there are Fascist ideas about economics, but the primary way that Fascism differs from Communism is that it is the tyranny of Old Money, not of rebels who have dispossessed the old ruling class. This was why so many conservative former supporters of Kaiser Wilhelm II ended up in the Nazi party. It would protect them from Communism, which, in Russia meant that the Old Money class would not only be dispossessed but exterminated. The Krupps and the like got to keep their factories as long as they cooperated with the regime. The wealthy business/corporate class merged with the government.

I will also point out to Mr. Price that the public washroom issue is still a scare tactic rather than a real issue. Unless one uses a urinal in a very stand-back way, one exposes nothing. That is also why there are stalls. Unless there is a peephole and you are a pervert, you should not be able to see anything of the person in the stall next to you, so nothing is exposed. Of course other societies may have different standards. In some there are no gender-specific restrooms. Sprague de Camp once told me that he knew how to ask where the men's room was in something like 25 languages, but in some places the terminology did not make sense. I believe he said Russia was one of them. I have not been to Russia, so I would not know. In ancient Rome there were no stalls. One was supposed to engage in pleasant conversation with one's neighbors while doing one's business. But this was for men only. In a place like Pompeii at least, the ladies were supposed to do it at home. It was the men who hung out all day in the forum or the markets. Things are changing in the United States. I was just at a hotel in Kansas City (for the World Fantasy Con) where there was an all-gender restroom. This was not indicated by a temporary sign put up by a woke con committee, but a metal, engraved, permanent sign put there by the hotel. Being old-fashioned myself, I did not use that one. But it was there for those that might have preferred to.

As for pronoun usage, I do not think that what the Politically Correct elite does really

matters. Listen to how people actually talk. To use the example given, people have for some centuries now said, "If someone cheats you, make them return your money." I think the use of "them" in that context dates back to Elizabethan times. It is not recent.

To Richard Dengrove I will comment that as far as I can tell, if trans is a choice, it is not my choice or my business, and it should not be a choice for the government to make. Such intimate and personal matters should be decided between the patient, medical professionals, and, if the subject is a minor, the parents. I will agree that it's likely that some people are being pressured into this frivolously. I cannot say how many, any more than I can know how many people are gay, but when (as was recently reported) 40% of the student body at Brown University claim to be other than heterosexual, I am skeptical. (The only science fiction writer who came close to predicting such a trend was Thomas Disch, in *On Wings of Song*.) I still do not feel that I have any business telling another person how to live their life on that level.

As for worldcons in faraway places, how often are Americans going to vote for cons in places where they will not be able to attend? I don't really think that Egypt, Uganda, or even Israel are feasible right now. Of course in a few years I will probably be too old to go anyway, so it does not concern me directly. My first loyalty is to World Fantasy anyway. I will probably make Brighton in 2025 (WFC) but not Glasgow in 2024 (Worldcon). I did not even attend Discon III when hotel rooms proved hard to get and the convention made it clear they did not want me on the program. I am less certain I would even be welcome at a worldcon anymore, or part of the community. Recent worldcons have done their best to alienate the older pros and the older fans. I've never been to a Dragon Con. It sounds entirely too huge, although many colleagues have recommended it. My schedule for next summer looks like NECon, Confluence, Pulpfest, and Necronomicon Providence. This last is the worldcon of the Lovecraft world, about 2-3000 people. I always get a table there and make an outrageous fortune. Lovecraftians spend money like water if you have the right material, and I do. I also expect to attend Boskone in February (a convention of the older model, genuinely welcoming to all, programmed with a clear awareness that science fiction existed more than ten years ago) and Heliosphere, which is very small, but I'd like to help it grow, and World Fantasy in Niagara Falls, of course. That's an easy one. I can drive to it. I don't have to worry about how many books I can carry on an airplane. Next autumn, Capclave, then Philcon. That is still a pretty full convention schedule.

Did Necronomicon ever have Leeman Kessler as GoH?

<https://www.leemankessler.com/>

—JTM

From: **Garth Spencer** November 5, 2023
[outlook_0A35E3E23BA37CD6@outlook.com](mailto:0A35E3E23BA37CD6@outlook.com)

I am startled that you wrote Pemmi-con had a budget of over a million dollars. Clearly the cost of a hotel and conference centre has risen incredibly, or the Canadian dollar is devalued more than I realized.

But I am not surprised that conventions as we knew them may be priced out of reality. That seems to be the trend for fan-run conventions in my city, to say nothing of Worldcons.

Just to give you a laugh: someone said there were no Worldcon bids yet for 2030, apparently in tones of shock and horror, so I have conceived the Worldcon 2030 bid for Port Alberni, BC. If you can find it on the map, you may gather this is not a thriving hub of commerce, much less fanactivity. More on this another time.

Your reviews of *Round the Bend* and *Superman Versus the Ku Klux Klan* commanded my attention. I think it's time I started patronizing the library again, just on the off chance I can find *Round the Bend*.

I noticed a couple of comment hooks in George Price's loc. For one thing: He mentions the "woke political correctness" of Seattle's Museum of Popular Culture removing mentions of J.K. Rowling from its Harry Potter collection. I should say "woke" and "political correctness" are two different things, and rather opposed. I think of Mr. Samuel L. Jackson when I think of "woke," calling out contemporary hypocrisy and exploitation in four-letter words; and I think of prim-mouthed effete academics and bureaucrats when I think of "political correctness," as a pretense that anything uncivilized will go away if we just don't name it, nor offend anyone. (A very Canadian practice, that.) It appears, though, there are people who don't recognize the difference.

For another thing, Price opines that airships haven't been revived, not only because people take airplanes when they don't want to take their time, but also because airships can't avoid storms and can't withstand them. I'm not an engineer, for all I know that's correct. But I thought another reason was that airplanes are convertible to military craft, if a military crisis comes up. Not having a military background either, I don't know if that's just a paranoid urban legend. Onward.

To respond to Mr. Dengrove's comment to me: the story of your surname is rather amazing. I bow to your superior amazingness. My surname is much duller, having come from the Norman French word for a dispenser (human, that is). I am not sure the Normans had much imagination when it came to names for their landed aristocracy.

My surname comes from the Anglization of an Archbishop's name. He was a Norman but he was assimilated and had a

girlfriend.

—JTM

To respond to your worried inquiry – At last report, from Lee Gilliland, Alexis Gilliland is alive and more or less well. (I came into correspondence with Ms. Gilliland via Facebook, about the time she wondered aloud why she and her husband were being shunned by fandom in their area. As expected, the reasons turn out to be trivial and interpersonal and, come to think of it, rather like political correctness.)

From: **George W. Price** November 22, 2023
4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL
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First – of course – Have a good Thanksgiving!

October *Alexiad* (#131)

Darrell Schweitzer has no doubts at all that climate change is happening already, and rapidly. He's right. The real question is, what should we do about it? More precisely, what really can we do?

As I have said before, I think the war on fossil fuels is futile because big chunks of the world – notably China and India – have no interest in giving them up and switching to "green energy." And there is also the practically religious resistance to nuclear power, which might actually make a realistic replacement for fossil fuels.

Schweitzer says, "I wonder if I will ever see wild alligators in New Jersey." He will, if he lives long enough, and if the gators don't see him first.

Mr. Schweitzer also notes that Heinlein's *Sixth Column* is in the extensive tradition of "Yellow Peril" stories before World War II. The editor inserts a long note on similar stories not limited to Oriental conquest of the West. Let me add one more: "Lightning in the Night," by Fred Allhoff, which ran as a 12-part serial in the weekly magazine *Liberty*, Aug. 24 to Nov. 16, 1940. It ended shortly before "Sixth Column" started running in *Astounding*. Prentice-Hall reprinted it as a book in 1979.

It appeared while it was still uncertain if Hitler would invade Britain, and there was great controversy over whether the U.S. should enter the war against the Nazis. It now seems obvious that it was intended as pro-intervention propaganda, but at the time – I was twelve years old – I swallowed it avidly simply as a rattling good suspense story.

"Lightning in the Night" opens in 1945 with Germany having completed the conquest of Great Britain, including seizing the British Navy and occupying British, Dutch, and French colonies in the Americas. However, Canada has broken away and allied itself with the U.S.A.

The next phase is an alliance between Greater Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union. (The story appeared almost a year before Hitler attacked the U.S.S.R.) Then they are ready to tackle the United States.

The opening blow is a surprise Japanese air raid on Hawaii – specifically including Pearl Harbor – as well as Honolulu and Army bases, using bombs and poison gas.

Then comes a coordinated invasion of the U.S. – the Germans attack the East Coast, the Japanese land on the southern West Coast and drive north, and the Russians invade through Alaska and drive south. German paratroops capture the Panama Canal.

The war goes badly for us. The invaders soon hold both coasts, and our forces are squeezed between the Appalachians and the Rockies. The U.S. agrees to a peace conference in Cincinnati.

Big surprise! Hitler announces that Germany has mastered production of U-235, and in one month will be ready to use atomic bombs if the U.S. has not surrendered.

Even bigger surprise! The President of the U.S. does not, as expected, ask for terms. Instead, he offers terms. He announces that the U.S. has already developed and built a number of atomic bombs – and even as he speaks, our stratospheric bombers flying undetectably high are positioning to annihilate German cities! A 500-pound demonstration bomb dropped on “the deserted Russian steppes” makes a crater 15 miles wide. Hitler commits suicide (or so say his top marshals), and the war is over. What a difference a month makes!

The story gets the start and finish of the war eerily accurate – a Japanese air raid on Hawaii to begin, and atomic bombs at the end. It is of course wildly different everywhere in between.

Notably, it puts all the monstrous tyrannies neatly on the same side. It also has practically no atrocities – no Holocaust and no Bataan Death March. That demonstration atomic bomb purposely kills no one and wipes out no cities. And of course there is no Communist takeover of Eastern Europe (and later China). All in all, it seems like a far nicer world than what we really got.

But is it? The “Afterword” at the end of the 1979 book (but not the magazine original) observes that the ending is not really a permanent peaceful resolution, but only a stalemate. All the monstrous tyrannies are still there and undamaged, so at best the outcome is just setting the stage for what we might call a “Cold War.”

This seems unduly pessimistic. The “Afterword” ignores that the President’s Cincinnati peace terms include temporary but strict and worldwide American control over development of atomic energy; and concludes, “When the world is restored and made free, a Council of Nations shall take over the task we inaugurate now.” That sure sounds to me like dismantling the dictatorships.

Richard Dengrove, commenting on “The Joy of High Tech,” says that Edmiston has explained something he had wondered about: why some airliners in the 1940s “were built to float on water” – it was because there were fewer airports.

Yes – the prime example was Pan American Airways. Its China Clipper “flying boats” crossed the Pacific by island hopping. And apparently some of the islands between Hawaii and Manila – such as Wake and Midway – were too small to have airstrips with runways long enough for big passenger planes. Now, of course, jetliners have the range to cross oceans in one hop.

One China Clipper carried the last letters from the garrison of Wake to Hawaii.

Mechanical reliability may also matter. Planes now are less likely to have to make emergency landings.

Small planes using pontoon floats have been widely used in wilderness areas, such as Alaska, where there are very few airports – rivers and small lakes are much likelier to be handy. The pontoon planes may be largely replaced by helicopters with no need for runways.

Mr. Dengrove also comments on the internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II. As he notes, not all of those expelled from the West Coast were penned up in camps. Many were resettled in cities inland. Chicago had a sizeable number planted in the Kenwood neighborhood near where I grew up.

There was some prejudice against them at first, but that dissipated rather quickly as we got to know them. By the end of the war, most whites would concede that the Japanese were as civilized as whites, and made much better neighbors than the “hillbillies” (which meant any whites with a Southern accent) who had flocked north to work in the war industries. The Japanese were neater, cleaner, and better-behaved – that is, more middle-class.

An odd note – my brother and I discovered that we could usually tell if a woman walking ahead of us was Japanese without seeing her face. The clue was the shape of her legs below the knee. (Skirts were nearly all knee-length then.) Japanese legs had the widest part of the calf about halfway between ankle and knee, while white women had the widest part higher up, closer to the knee. Having made our guess, we would pass her and sneak a look to see if we were right. Most often we were.

“Dad’s Troopers” made me think of something that Heinlein may have overlooked in *Starship Troopers*. When he wrote that story,

circa 1958, feminism had not yet become a big deal, so it was not at all controversial that he made the Mobile Infantry all-male.

But he didn’t really have to. The power armor would completely compensate for differences in male and female strength. It could just as easily have been the story of Juanita Rico.

It is possible, if unlikely, that Heinlein did realize this – and deliberately ignored it for fear of igniting controversy that would distract from his big political point about what the price of citizenship should be. Perhaps having women as warship captains and pilots was the most he thought he could get away with.

I saw him at MidAmeriCon discussing the matter with two women. He said that the powered armor didn’t matter, that women just weren’t supposed to be in combat infantry. Obviously he could not sell to Baen now.

—JTM

From: **John Hertz** December 1, 2023

Thanks to George Price for applauding the Chicago Public Library, to and from whose main branch I took the bus for (among other things) science fiction. He mentions Conklin’s *Best of SF* and Healy & McComas’s *Adventures In Time and Space* (both 1946); they’re still among our best anthologies. I don’t know why he and others talk of being “hooked”. I ain’t. Mebbe you is.

Richard Dengrove’s “I suspect you don’t know you know something if you don’t know how you know it” shows again how right Theodore Sturgeon was with “Science fiction is knowledge fiction”. I’ve long been an amateur epistemologist, now, as a lawyer, I’m also a professional epistemologist.

WAHF:

C. D. Carson, Steve Green, Cathy Palmer-Lister, George Phillies, Heath Row, Lucy Thomas, Taral Wayne, with thanks.

Lloyd G. Daub, with various items of interest.

...faster than a speeding e-loc...
able to leap cyberspace
in a single keystroke...and who,
disguised as a mild mannered fan...



I AM, WHAT ARE YOU?

"Here you are," Norman said to the young woman, whose blonde hair stuck out in two great poofy pigtailed on either side of her head. "Your boss is in Room Two and you are in Room One."

"Thanks," she said in her high, girlish voice, stuffed the keys in her purse and turned, twitching her rounded, muscular figure as she left.

"She's a whore. Travelling with that boss."

"Yes, Mother."

There was a vague thump outside. She finished rinsing herself off, then turned the water off and pulled back the curtain. "Har-lee! Har-lee! Best put something on before you come out. We have visitors," she heard.

"Okay, Mr. J," she said, and wrapped herself in a towel. She had to be careful with her face, the makeup would dry it out so.

When she came out of the bathroom, there was a bit of a surprise for her. The motel clerk was tied to a chair, gagged, and the boss was tossing a long knife in one hand. He turned his pale, smiling face to her. "We seem to have a budding grammarian here," he said. "He was going to punctuate you!" And he laughed. "Right up your colon!"

"Gee, I guess I'm lucky you were looking after me," she said.

"I've been doing a survey of this place. Our host seems to be a monster movie fan. The place looks like a crypt, and there's a mummy in the house up on the hill. I guess mummy knows best!" He laughed again, and the clerk looked terrified, wild eyes over the gag.

"So what are we going to do?"

"Our friend here seems quite insane," the boss said, and laughed. "Not that there's anything wrong with that! It's done *wonders* for me.

"Tell you what, Norman, how about I let you go, and in return for that, you let us stay here for a while, safe from any marauding . . . bats. We're made for each other, my lad. Don't you think so?" Norman nodded, eyes wide and terrified at the blanched face thrust into his.

Gloved hands removed the gag, pinched the clerk's cheek playfully, and he said, "Norman, my dear fellow, this looks like the beginning of a beautiful friendship!"

— Not created by Bob Kane, Robert Bloch, or that fat guy who was an extra in all the flicks

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

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