

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This month was the fourteenth anniversary of 9/11. I remember that horrible day. I remember Joe calling me and telling me to turn the TV on that bright sunny morning. I remember the sirens and people jumping for a quick death instead of being burned alive. I remember the 343 firefighters killed trying to save lives. I remember the crew and passengers of United Flight 93 who died fighting back and all the other victims.

Of late I have found myself listening to late night talk radio such as a show called Ground Zero and another called Coast to Coast AM. Every time I think they cannot get any stranger they somehow manage to do so. I think Uncle Les, my mother's brother, would have enjoyed their strange quirkiness. Ground Zero comes on first, its theme song features a grumpy loudspeaker that apparently was awakened far too early for it demands surrender but never gives any reason why it is at war.

— Lisa

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Comments are by JTM or LTM

The 90th Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 8, 2015** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Pinkman won, defeating the favorite, Mission Brief.

The 61st Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **September 5, 2015** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. Habitat led wire-to-wire and beat Pinkman by 3½ lengths.

The 123rd Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) will be **October 10, 2015** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.

The 61st Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **August 8, 2015** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Dealt a Winner, who went off at 26 to 1, defeated the favorite.

The 60th Running of the Messenger Stakes (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 5, 2015** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. Revenge Shark won by a nose.

The 70th Running of the Little Brown Jug (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 24, 2015** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio. Wiggle It Jigglet won the finals after a bad start and a duel with Lost for Words right up to the wire.

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Deadline is **October 25, 2015**

Reviewer's Notes

I now have yet another health problem to add to my ailments. I have anemia. Which I found out back in June, after finding that going upstairs left me out of breath. Two nights in the hospital, three pints of blood, and two pints of iron solution later, I could at least go upstairs. And I have been back to the hematologist several more times.

In computer news, I am upgrading to Windows 10 here and there. It's better than Windows 8, but CP/M was better than Windows 8. (Ask your grandfather what CP/M was.) It solved, I hope permanently, a problem I had with my new laptop.

I made this comment: "It doesn't help to know that if I wrote a novel about female steampunk vampires fighting crosstime Nazi zombies, under a female pseudonym, it would sell." I could be in Robert Bloch's Eighth Stage of Fandom where, among other things, you don't read SF any longer. Did I leave it or did it leave me? In a genre where *The Skylark of Space* (1928) has more innovation and story than the previous three years' Hugo winners [I'm giving *The Three Body Problem* a pass] I have to wonder. There are more skilled writers now than then. Why can't they use those skills to *say* something?

A fam artist noted that the last few "Best Fan Artist" Hugo winners have been doing everything but fanzines; exhibits, dealers' room booths and even illustrating semiprozines. And yet there seems to be no shame on one side or outrage on the other.

Not that the elite Trusted Fans Awards will do any better in that regard. It's a clique, and one rule of my life is that if there's a clique, I'm not allowed in.

More of you will be getting this by email. I'm sorry, but my job problems just keep on being dragged out and I am unable to do anything about them.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



On a sailor's grave, no roses grow, no
grass, no stone to show
The resting place that will always be,
his billet in the sea.

— "The Sailor's Lament"

An expedition financed by Paul Allen has recovered the ship's bell of HMS *Hood*. The bell will be treated to preserve it and then placed in the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth.

And it turns out that Jon Pertwee (the Third Doctor) served on the *Hood* until the spring of 1941!

This hasn't been a good summer. **Allen Weinstein**, author of *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (1978, 1997) and *The Haunted Wood* (1999), died on **June 18**. Then, **Ann Rule**, the true crime writer who got started by personal experience (she worked at a help line with Ted Bundy), died on **July 26**.

The USCGC *Healy* (WAGB-20), the Coast Guard's newest icebreaker, reached the North Pole on September 5.

<http://www.uscg.mil/pacarea/cgchealy/>

The *Healy* was commissioned in 1999; the two other icebreakers, USCGC *Polar Star* (WAGB-10) and USCGC *Polar Sea* (WAGB-11) are even older and the *Polar Sea* is operational due to broken-down engines. A bipartisan proposal to build four new Polar-class icebreakers has not been met with success in Congress.

The *Fram* will leave for the Antarctic on October 30. For those who thought Nansen's and Amundsen's ship was safe in a Norwegian museum, you're right. This is MS *Fram*, a Polar cruise ship operated by the Norwegian

Hurtigruten Cruise Line that makes regular cruises to the ends of the world.

<http://www.cruisenorway.com/category/cruise-lines/hurtigruten/>

For those who are really into those things, and were intrigued by the review in lastish of *Red Moon* by Elizabeth Kelly, it is the first of five books. The successive ones are about the descendants of the lovers of the first one, so all that **Hot Sex™** had other results.

OBITS

Robert Conquest (George Robert Acworth Conquest), CMG, OBE, FBIS, died on **August 3, 2015**. Born **July 15, 1917**, Conquest attended Magdalen College at Oxford, served in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry during WWII, and began a political career of transition from left to right.

His first transgression was *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purges of the 1930s* (1968), reissued in 1990 as *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (instead of Sir Kingsley Amis's proposed title *I Told You So, You Fucking Fools*). This was followed by *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps* (1978), *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (1986), *Stalin and the Kirov Murder* (1989), *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (1991), and many more, including proposals for international realignment.

In the science-fiction field, he co-edited the five *Spectrum* anthologies (1961-1966) and wrote *A World of Difference* (1955). That "FBIS" means Fellow of the British Interplanetary Society.

Cuyler Warnell "Ned" Brooks, mainstay of Southern Fandom and editor of *It Goes on the Shelf*, that annual fanzine compilation of exotic works, died on **August 31, 2015**. Apparently, he went up on the roof to fix a leak, fell off, and was fatally injured.

MONARCHIST NEWS

Mihai I has announced that the Romanian Monarchy (or technically monarchical claim) will lapse upon the death of his daughter, Crown Princess Margarita. This means that the one-time second in line, the former Prince Nicolae, is now Nicholas Medforth-Mills again or still.

BLACK DESTROYER

Review by Joseph T Major of
**THE LOST FLEET: BEYOND THE
FRONTIER: LEVIATHAN**

by "Jack Campbell" [John G. Hemry]
(Ace; 2015; ISBN 978-0425260548; \$26.95;
Penguin Group (Kindle); \$10.99)

When you care enough to send the very best . . . the automated fleet busy trying to restart the war between the Alliance and the Syndicate is programmed to emulate the tactics of the most skilled commander the Alliance currently has. Which gives Admiral John Geary the unique and annoying problem of having to fight himself.

Geary is still leading a obsolescent, wearing-out fleet against drones. Why is this sounding familiar? For now, it's technical problems, or he has to change his way of fighting, and figure out what he would do as commander of the drone fleet, then how to counter it.

The Alliance seems to have become more security-conscious as the war progressed. The war was seeming perpetual, with no way off the treadmill, but they had to make preparations just in case their own capital was compromised. Which means Geary has to continue fighting his own government as well as the enemy.

Victorious commanders always pose a threat to oligarchies, and for all he has done — because of all he has done — Geary may find out that gratitude is alien to his government, and his victories threaten him when this . . . **To Be Continued.**

THE MAN WHO WAS WANTED

Review by Joseph T Major of

MULTIVERSE:

Exploring the Worlds of Poul Anderson
edited by Gardner Dozois and Greg Bear
(2015; Baen; ISBN 978-1476780597;
\$40.00; Baen eBooks)

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's biographer Hesketh Pearson energized the Sherlockian world in 1942 with the announcement that he had found an unpublished Sherlock Holmes story, "The Man Who Was Wanted". After far too long for most people, the story was finally published in 1948. Then, to the embarrassment of many, the real author, a solicitor named Arthur Whittaker, came forward with proof of his authorship. (See *Nova 57 Minor* by Jon Lellenberg (1990) for more on this dismal episode.)

There is always a desire to have more of the characters beyond what is on the original author's page. In media it is an entire industry. Authors, or their estates, will also even consent to such works.

The results are often uninspiring. For example, *Cradle* (1988) by Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee is very dull. Often, such works

sink the careers of writers, as the *Isaac Asimov's Robot City* series did to William F. Wu. Or, the other writer becomes assimilated to the predecessor, as Adrienne Martine-Barnes had become Marion Zimmer Bradley.

Poul Anderson was one of the bright lights of post WWII SF; he entertained both at conventions and in his work, producing a stream of inimitable works too numerous to mention or even list here. (Fortunately the Internet Speculative Fiction Database will take care of that problem.) Perhaps not surprisingly, even after his death his readers wanted more.

Thus this; a collection of stories by prominent authors, sequels to beloved Anderson tales. Wherein problems.

The writer will have his own "take" on the story. This may differ from the reader's, or even from the author's. (There is a story about a scholar sending James Joyce a long analysis of the deep psychosexual meanings of a passage in, I believe, *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce patiently thanked him and explained that there had been a typo in that edition, the correction of which invalidated the thesis.)

Secondly, in a large and varied and often interconnected body of work, the ending of one story may be resolved in another. If the other writer isn't aware of this, it can be embarrassing. Edgar Rice Burroughs was very good at making subtle links between his series, so taking off from the ending of *Tarzan and the "Foreign Legion"* (1947) to write about a pseudonymous John Clayton in a bright future London would run into the problem that Tarzan is linked to Pellucidar which is linked to Barsoom which is linked to *The Moon Men* (1926) so that bright future London would be a part of the impoverished and oppressed communist Kalkar world-state. (On the other hand, that's how we got *The Martian Legion*, not to mention *Time's Last Gift* (1972).) And sadly, the Turtledove story, about how you can't go home again, is one of the best.

There are also two sequels to "The Queen of Air and Darkness", two Time Patrol works, a Flandry story, another Polesotechnic League story, and a lot of essays and afterwords. In discussing such works, Darrell Schweitzer finds it relevant to quote his friend Henry Spencer to the intent that he only reads such works if he is interested in the *minor* works of the *junior* writer. So be warned. Or perhaps they should have taken the advice that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave his pastiche Arthur Whittaker: "Write about your own characters."

Except that maybe even Anderson couldn't do it any more. He tried redoing Flandry with *The Game of Empire* (1985), featuring Flandry's daughter Diana Crowfoot Flandry

and a similar supporting cast and plot. It didn't work. Then he did *Operation Luna* (1999), a sequel to *Operation Chaos* (1975), where a spunky band of private entrepreneurs including the Matucheks of the first book launch a successful moon mission after the government fails. It didn't work, in spite of the cover showing a bosomy Mrs. Matuchek riding Mr. Matuchek (he was in wolf-form and she was clothed and on his back, *SIGH*).

"The Man Who Was Wanted"

<http://www.diogenes-club.com/wanted.htm>

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO RIDE

Review by Joseph T Major of

CINQ SEMAINES EN BALLON

[*Five Weeks in a Balloon*, or:

Journeys and Discoveries in Africa by Three Englishmen]

by Jules Verne

Translated by Frederick Paul Walter

Edited by Arthur B. Evans

Introduction by Volker Dehs

(Wesleyan University Press; 1863, 2015;

ISBN 978-0-8195-7547-0; \$35.00;

Kindle; \$27.99)

"*Une Voyage Extraordinaire*"

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/wespress>

"... a tres belle mademoiselle has a encounter romantique with un grande negre, but he falls and injures his tete, enrage he ravishes her away to a balloon, and they spend five weeks in passion totale until three hommes Anglais rescue her, send the negre to a hospital mental, and she becomes their lover! It will be tres magnifique!"

"Non, M. Verne. Just non."

"But M. Huxley himself suggested it to me!"

This is not quite *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*, the megablockbuster of the feelies in *Brave New World*, and thank le bon Dieu for that. It is Verne's first Extraordinary Voyage, a trip into the land of Allan Quatermain, though his adventurers never quite find She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed.

In many ways, this first novel set a template for the ones that were to follow. There would be a great stress on engineering and science, with long lists of the equipment acquired for the extraordinary voyage, and detailed descriptions of the scientific principles involved or observed. The description of the balloon, for example, which is constructed using a dual-envelope principle. In the real world, David Hempleman-Adams used a similar principle for

his polar-flight balloon the *Brittanic Challenger* (see *At the Mercy of the Winds* by David Hempleman-Adams and Robert Uhlig (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #3) for how this worked). The stock characters of Verne stories — the scientist, the adventurer, and the skilled assistant — are introduced here.

As for the plot, there's little enough to discuss; the balloon takes off from Zanzibar, drifts across Africa while the explorers have various encounters with natives and make observations of the geography, and finally, completely worn out, flops into the Senegal River to the applause of a French garrison. There are "novelistic" means used in the writing, but it might well be the story of a real balloon expedition across Africa, written by a precursor to Hempleman-Adams.

Verne was writing in, and contributing to the creation of, the tradition of speculative fiction as a means of scientific instruction. So here we have descriptions of how the balloon works, what the geography of the land is, the customs of the natives, the kinds of animals . . . a tradition later picked up by Hugo Gernsback and T. O'Connor Sloane in the pulp era. Consider, as it were, Verne's riposte to Wells over *The First Men In the Moon* (1901) that while M. Wells had invented a fantastic substance for his moon journey, *he* had scrupulously adhered to known and recognized features of science, technology, and engineering in *De la terre à la lune* (1865) [and included it all, too]. Here, as there, Verne tried to stick to what was known and what was observable. (Though Captain Nicoll would have won his final bet, since the air pressure in the bore of the Columbiad would have melted the shell, and him along with Barbicane and Ardan.)

Though he was also more anticipating of the general run of pulp, where writers wrote Westerns one day, hard-boiled detective stories the next, and scientification (as it was called then) on weekends. This is a straightforward mundane adventure novel, with no lost cities (they wouldn't get out of Opar, never mind Kôr) or other exotica.

As usual, this is the first faithful translation. Verne was more popular than respected, and earlier translations hurried, if not downright sloppy. Add to this the copious notes and careful commentary, and what we have here is another service from the Wesleyan University Press presented for the understanding and enlightenment of the readers of *Voyages Extraordinaires* from then until now.

THE WAR WE DO NOT WANT

Review by Joseph T Major of

BOMBS AWAY:

The Hot War

by Harry Turtledove

(2015; Del Rey;

ISBN 978-0553390704; \$28.00;

Random House (Kindle); \$11.28)

The October 27, 1951 issue of *Collier's Weekly* was compiled by Cornelius Ryan (later author of *The Longest Day* (1959), *The Last Battle* (1966), and *A Bridge Too Far* (1974)), and contained contributions by, among others, Edward R. Murrow, Hanson W. Baldwin, Lowell Thomas, Arthur Koestler, Walter Reuther, J. B. Priestley, Walter Winchell, Margaret Chase Smith, and Philip Wylie, author of *The Smuggled Atom Bomb* (1949) and *Tomorrow!* (1951). It was a work in the spirit of Sir George Tomkyns Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), and its topic was "The War We Do Not Want", a war between the Soviet Union and the United States and its allies. A low-level nuclear war, that is; most of the planet was still habitable afterwards.

Now nuclear war books would get even "darker" in the years to come, with tales of increasing destruction such as *On the Beach* (1957; movie 1959) by "Nevil Shute" (N. S. Norway), Peter George's *Red Alert* (1958) and its movie adaptation *Doctor Strangelove* (1964), Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959), Mordecai Roshwald's *Level 7* (1959), Eugene Burdick's and Harvey Wheeler's *Fail-Safe* (1962; movie, 1964), and Wylie's own *Triumph* (1963), not to mention *Farnham's Freehold* (1965; NHOL G.154). "The War We Do Not Want" was more of a cautionary tale, with a not entirely bleak ending.

But Harry S Truman and Douglas MacArthur don't have access to these works. The Chinese counteroffensive into Korea has the UN troops in a desperate state. Concerned, Truman releases several atom bombs to MacArthur to use on Chinese targets. And then retaliation begins.

The Soviets seem to have the edge, as they pound targets all across the U.S. West Coast (and Bangor, Maine, trying to forestall Stephen King) and in Europe, although the U.S. hits back in eastern and western Russia. One mission with a very lucky Tu-4 crew solves the range problem, or as Khrushchev put it, "Is Mexico our mother-in-law?" when it was suggested they land there. Other means are available, albeit hazardous.

In the usual Turtledove fashion, we have people at all levels, from the high command down to the grunts in the trenches and the homemakers trying to get by (cf. *Shadow on the Hearth* by Judith Merrill (1950)). And they all have to put up with privations, losses, and a

Soviet deception capacity with echoes of *The Great Pacific War* (1925).

The Soviets seem well ahead and there'll not doubt be more atomic destruction when this story is . . . **To Be Continued**

DOWNFALL REPORTING

Review by Joseph T Major of

X-DAY: JAPAN:

Front Line Reporting at the Greatest Invasion and the Dawn of Nuclear Warfare

by Shawn D. Mahaney

(2015; Stone Lake Historical;

ISBN 978-0996310109; \$10.99;

Stone Lake Press (Kindle); \$2.99)

This is an interesting conceit; a work that is a collection of news reports by a journalist on the progress of Operation OLYMPIC, the invasion of Kyushu. There have been works on this, beginning with *Lighter Than a Feather* (1971), but this takes the more contemporary approach (aside from one incredibly grating clinker early on, saying "gender".)

Seeing daily journalistic dispatches from the front takes one back to then. The embedded journalist narrating the events goes from unit to unit, describing the grueling, bloody, and grating conflict and the massive deaths it entails. Including the dropping of the Atomic Bomb — a half-dozen dropped on Japanese positions followed by an American offensive through Ground Zero. Radiation sickness? What's that?

Mahoney has striven to create, as it were, an ordinary work of his alternate time line, a book of journalistic reportage from a world that never was, and just as well.

TORA BORA

Review by Joseph T Major of

GERMANICA

by Robert Conroy

(2015; Baen: ISBN 978-1476780566; \$25.00;

Baen Digital (Kindle); \$9.99)

Josef Goebbels, Dr. Phil. doesn't have an iron heart. He does look after his wife and children.

It's well to remember that in 1945 as the war in Europe ground to its end there was a fear of a glorious Nazi last stand in the mountains of southern Bavaria, the *Alpenfestung*. Just as there were lurid reports that Usama bin Laden's millions had paid for the building of a great underground fortress in the Afghani mountains, a base worthy of a Bond villain. In the real world, whatever that is, the fortress of Tora Bora turned out to be a house in a suburb of Abbottabad. The place here is a bit more

substantial.

The Herr Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda realizes that some sort of last refuge is called for, and enlists the aid of the Herr Minister of Armaments and War Production to build a few tunnels in the south. The collapse of the German war effort continues, and Goebbels prepares to flee to his rathole.

This places the Allies in a predicament. The *Alpenfestung* is too entrenched to be taken easily; yet taken it must be. From desperate generals frustrated by this last defiance to poor dogfaces sent up into the meat-grinder, the U.S. Army is tasked with going in and cleaning them out. (And no allies, either, for various reasons. I'd think that at least they'd send the Gurkhas.)

And covertly, too, as OSS people operating in Switzerland deal with SD men operating in Switzerland. They don't use the radio much, so codebreaking is more of an amusement.

But Germanica, the alpine redoubt, is not covered under the general surrender of the German forces at Flensburg. However, it can't hold out forever, and as doggies and *Landers* strive to survive, the pocket shrinks until . . .

Conroy seemed to have a habit of expanding British war-weariness. At the time, the British had an army in the Far East and a fleet in the Pacific, as well as occupation forces. Now the French might demur, or they might decide that the honor of France requires a participation.

As his last Alternate History novel, Conroy has left a sad and interesting tale of a war that might have been.

SETTLING ACCOUNTS

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE GRASSHOPPER LIES HEAVY
by Chandler Duke

(2015; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

You have to admit that someone who uses the title of Hawthorne Abendsen's Alternate History novel in *The Man In the High Castle* (1962) has a certain impudence about him. (Well, it's a Biblical quote, Ecclesiastes 12:5 "*hehagab wuyistabbel*", so he might have got it independently.) As with both Abendsen and his creator alike, the alternativens of this history has some foundational problems.

Which is a pity, because the book is a gripping tale of a man discovering the meaningless of his successful life. Marshall is a slave in the Confederacy, Roy is a member of the secret police. Marshall is looking for a way to get out, Roy is just trying to get by.

Their lives meet in the context of a plot to destroy the capital of the Confederacy, not Richmond now, but Atlanta. The factors

involve smuggled nuclear weapons, a cold war between the Soviet Union, Britain, and the Confederacy, and desperate hopes for escape. As we see Marshall's desperation and Roy's disillusionment progress, the chance of war becomes more grave . . .

The historical background seems to be more "cool" than plausible. I mean, Lee defeating the Union, burning down Washington, and being murdered by John Wilkes Booth (!) on April 15, 1865? The remnant Union returning to British domination, while the Russians and then Soviets take over everything west of the Mississippi? The confederate secret police being the KKK and their slave opponents the Black Panthers, the latter led by people with the same names as Black Panther leaders in our time-line? Compared to this, even Hawthorne Abendsen's time line is plausible.

THE VICTORY OF THE PROTOBARBS

Review by Joseph T Major of
1177 B.C.:

The Year Civilization Collapsed
by Eric H. Cline

(2014; Princeton University Press;
ISBN 97778-0-691-14089-6; \$29.95;
Amazon Digital Services; \$16.95)

A "Turning Points In Ancient History" Book

If you, or I, or Professor Cline (Professor of classics and anthropology at George Washington University), had asked the young Count Steven of Ravary from Marduk how the Terran Federation had fallen, he would have said, enthusiastically, that the Neobarbs had come from — somewhere — and smashed everything up. The Professor might smile and quote Pharaoh Ramses III:

The foreign countries made a conspiracy in their islands. All at once the lands were removed and scattered in the fray. No land could stand before their arms, from Khatte, Qode, Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alashiya on, being cut off [at one time]. A camp [was set up] in one place in Amurru. They desolated its people, and its land was like that which has never come into being. They were coming forward towards Egypt, while the flame was prepared before them. Their confederation was the Peleset, Tjekken, Shekelesh, Danuma, and Weshesh, lands united. They laid their hands upon the lands as far as the circuit of the earth, their hearts confident and trusting. — Mortuary Temple inscription,

quoted Pages 2-3

Fortunately for Egypt, Ramses (in full Usermaatre-meryamun Ramesse-hekaiunu, "The Ma'at of Ra is strong, Beloved of Amun, Born of Ra, Ruler of Heliopolis") thoroughly defeated them, utterly destroying the invaders. Steven would ask his escort Count Otto Harkaman from Tanith what "1177 B.C." was and after explaining that it was 3118 Pre-Atomic, they would send Steven off to play soccer while Otto settled down with Cline for a long and informational discussion about the parallels of history.

The Sea Peoples are one of the great voids of history; it's not quite sure where they came from, they left no written records and no archaeological sites of their own, and they pretty much vanished from history after their day in the sun. Not completely, the "Peleset" are the Philistines. Nevertheless, before this time there had been a flourishing international community reaching from the mouths of the Tigris-Euphrates to the shores of Greece, from the bounds of Anatolia to the cataracts of the Nile. There were wars, but there was also trade, diplomacy, and the other appurtenances of a world civilization. (As I recall, there was an essay in George Scithers's *Amra* about how this would have been a perfect time for Conan to go venturing.) And afterwards . . . ruins.

To tell the story of this collapse, Cline goes back three centuries, describing and trying to place in this context a number of colorful and intriguing events, both well-known and obscure. Whether it be the rise and fall of the Hittite Empire (they didn't call themselves "Hittites") or the religious turmoil of Akhenaten and his successors, all these events play a part.

His attitude towards the Exodus seems inclined to disappoint everyone. There are many skeptical types who automatically declare that every event in the Bible is a lie. Their opposite numbers in the faith-based community hold an equal and opposite opinion. Cline points out that while the events of (for example) the Ten Plagues are not recorded, there is no need to assume that there were no Habiru wanderers in the Sinai, since their camps wouldn't leave much in the way of evidence. He lists a number of possibilities for their origin, and says that we just don't know.

His style is colorful and while factual, shows that history need not be dull. For example, the Hittite king Mursuli I marched an army to Babylon, a thousand-mile march, took the city, sacked it — and left. Cline describes this as "the longest drive-by shooting in history" [Page 35] Other such items include the

diplomatic mission from the king of Mari to King Hammurabi, bearing gifts including a pair of shoes made in Crete, which Hammurabi returned [Page 19] (no matching handbag?).

Trade was more entrenched than that. Cline describes the excavation of a shipwreck off the coast of Turkey. The wreck was 170 feet down, which is really beyond the limit of scuba diving, so the divers could only work twenty minutes a dive. In spite of this, they found an amazing variety of goods from a number of places. Sostratos and Menedemos (of the Harry "H. N. Turteltaub" Turtledove "Hellenic Traders" series) would have understood.

The political dynamics of the era were that there were a number of nation-states, based in ethnic groups, but communicating and having relations good and bad. Basically, there were the Egyptians (and their rule reached far north into the Levant), the Mycenans and Minoans in Greece, the Hittites in Anatolia, the Mitanni in upper Mesopotamia, and the Babylonians and Kassites in lower Mesopotamia. (The Kassites came to power after the above-mentioned sacking of Babylon.)

Excavations of stored records have revealed a network of relations between the various rulers. There are records of lists of gifts — gift-giving, of more than nice shoes, was a symbol of relations, even though as Cline points out this was just the recorded visible part of the real commonplace commerce that went on at the same time. There would be exchanges of princesses for lesser wives. And, in one dramatic case, an Egyptian queen who wrote to Suppiluliuma the Hittite king:

My husband is dead. I have no son. But they say you have many sons. If you would give me one of your sons, he would become my husband. I will never take a servant of mine and make him my husband!

— *Deeds of Suppiluliuma*, quoted Page 68

After some enquiries, Suppiluliuma decided to take up the offer, and dispatched one of his younger sons to Egypt. Unfortunately, the man never got there, being murdered on the way. And the begging queen? Ankhnesamen, widow of Tutankhamen, is the only one who fits the period and description.

As for her late hubby, Cline also advances an explanation as to why Tutankhamen's tomb was so well-furnished. The priesthoods of the various gods suppressed by Tutankhamen's father Akhenaten were grateful that the new pharaoh had restored their authority. As a side note Cline explains how German archaeologists managed to get the bust of

Nefertiti. The Egyptians were supposed to have equal pick of the excavated materials, so the Germans didn't clean the bust, and the Egyptians passed over that dirty old thing. It wasn't all Ahnenerbe, see?

But all this is the prelude. What is the conclusion? What Cline says is that while there wasn't one cause, it was a whole lot of bad things all happening at once. Fire and brimstone coming down from the skies! Rivers and seas boiling! Forty years of darkness! Earthquakes, volcanoes! The dead rising from the grave! Human sacrifice, dogs and cats living together — mass hysteria! Well maybe not all that, but there were earthquakes. There were droughts. Trade had declined. There was political unrest. It all came together — and the Sea Peoples were as much the result as they were the cause.

History need not be dull. Indeed, it had better not be, for a study of history would help people to at least learn the mistakes made before, so they can make interesting new mistakes, instead of the tired same old ones.

APPALOOSAS

by Lisa Major

When I began researching Appaloosas I was surprised at how far back their origins went. Prehistoric cave art shows spotted horses with coats very like today's Appaloosas. When the Spanish reintroduced horses to this continent the Nez Perce tribe of Native Americans became accomplished horsemen. Their horses got the name Appaloosa from the Palouse river in Idaho. When Meriwether Lewis encountered them in 1806 he was impressed with their horses. While the Nez Perce flourished, so did their marvelous horses. But in 1877 the Appaloosa future looked grim indeed after Chief Joseph's final defeat. Many fine horses were killed. Captured stallions were gelded. A few survived among white ranchers.

ON EBOOKS

by Lisa Major

I find myself with an increasing electronic book collection. Most are freebies, of which there are a surprising number of good books. I have discovered many long out of print books by such noted authors as Leigh Brackett available for as little as a dollar.

Critics of the electronic books point out that the readers must be kept charged. That is so. Critics also talk of the vulnerability to EMPs. Again, this is true. But physical books can also be destroyed in such things as fires and floods. I love paper books. I hope they never

disappear. But the electronic books have one great advantage over physical books that has led me to buy more of them than paper books. They take up much less space. It is now possible to carry a good classic library collection in my purse. I have several thousand electronic books which I can access either through cell phone or iPad either of which are quite portable. It is simply not possible to take five thousand paper books wherever you go unless you can afford a really big trailer and the semi to pull said trailer. I no longer worry about running out of things to read in doctor's offices. It was a little strange reading on a screen but once I got used to it I realized reading was reading, whether done on a computer screen or with pages of a physical book.

I recently discovered an author named Stanley John Weyman due to a book entitled *Abbess of Vlaye*. I think fans of Rafael Sabatini would enjoy this one. Amazon offers an electronic copy for the highly reasonable price of \$0.00. I had never before heard of this author but the price was certainly right enough that if I didn't like the book I had no cause for complaint. I liked it enough to research Weyman. When I did I discovered there was a reason his work reminded me of Sabatini's. Weyman was a strong influence on Sabatini.

SIDELINE AWARDS

Short Form

Ken Liu, "**The Long Haul: From the Annals of Transportation, The Pacific Monthly, May 2009**" (*Clarkesworld Magazine*, 11/14)

Long Form

Kristine Kathryn Rusch, *The Enemy Within* (WMG Publishing)

WORLDCON 2017

The 2017 WorldCon will be held in Helsinki, Finland, **August 9-13, 2017**. The con is called Worldcon 75.

<http://www.worldcon.fi>

Nightvale got three votes; Minneapolis in '73 got two votes; Gallifrey, Gndevaz (Armenia), Mariehamn, Marseille (France), and Boston in '89 each got one.

HUGO RESULTS

BEST NOVEL:

Three Body Problem by Cixin Liu, translation by Ken Liu (Tor Books).

BEST NOVELLA:

No Award

BEST NOVELETTE:

"**The Day The World Turned Upside Down**", by Thomas Olde Heuvelt, translation by Lia Belt in *Lightspeed Magazine*, April 2014

BEST SHORT STORY:

No Award

BEST RELATED WORK:

No Award

BEST GRAPHIC STORY:

Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal written by G. Willow Wilson, illustrated by Adrian Alphona and Jake Wyatt (Publisher).

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, LONG FORM:

Guardians of the Galaxy written by James Gunn and Nicole Perlman, directed by James Gunn (Marvel Studios, Moving Picture Company)

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, SHORT FORM:

Orphan Black "By Means Which Have Never Been Tried" written by Graham Manson, directed by John Fawcett [Space/BBC America] (Temple Street Productions)

BEST EDITOR, SHORT FORM:

No Award

BEST EDITOR, LONG FORM:

No Award

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST:

Julie Dillon

BEST SEMIPROZINE:

Lightspeed Magazine, edited by John Joseph Adams, Wendy N. Wagner, Stefan Rudnicki, Rich Horton and Christie Yant

BEST FANZINE:

Journey Planet, edited by James Bacon, Chris Garcia, Alissa McKersie, Colin Harris, and Helen Montgomery

BEST FANCAST:

Galactic Suburbia Podcast, Alisa Krasnostein, Alexandra Pierce, Tansy Rayner Roberts (Presenters) and Andrew Finch (Producer)

"BEST FAN WRITER":

Laura J. Mixon

"BEST FAN ARTIST":

Elizabeth Legget

The John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer:

Wesley Chu

Congratulations to Chris, who wasn't there to be among the acceptors due to his having produced a different issue. No amazing acceptance speech this year, sorry to say. And to Vox Day and all the denizens of his kennel, and all those who went over the top because of that, profound shooms of lip-music brrrrrr. And they can kiss my sharries. But you, O my brothers, remember sometimes thy little Hugo that was. Amen. And all that cal.

WORLDCON REPORT

by Robert S. Kennedy

I left on August 18 for Spokane, Washington and returned on the 24th for the 73rd World Science Fiction Convention. I flew from Burbank and had to change planes in Seattle. Larry Niven was on the same flights. As we were flying into Spokane a large fire was visible. It reminded me of home in very dry Southern California. I stayed in The Davenport Grand. It's a brand new hotel only a few months old and is excellent. Just a few problems at the Convention. The Convention Center seems to have been designed by someone on drugs. The Center had people spaced throughout who could direct you to rooms and they were badly needed. There was no Voodoo Board. There was not those large sheets with each day's programs and room numbers. The book had to be used and it was a pain. Other than these it was quite enjoyable. The food courts offered a good variety and were better than I remember from past World Cons attended. Smoke from fire(s) covered the city on many days. One late afternoon crossing the bridge to the hotel a large red disk was noticed in the sky. It was the Sun and the smoke from fire(s) was so great that it could be looked at directly with no problem to the eyes. My niece's husband and her son showed up on Wednesday. My niece was not there until Saturday. She is a school teacher (1st Grade)

and had to be in school the previous week and back on Monday. So, the three of them left on Sunday. We all got to the Hugo awards. I'm not going to get in to the controversy and the No Award in several categories since most of you probably know more about it than do I. Two years ago I voted for Helsinki, Finland in 2015. It led on the first ballot, but eventually lost to Spokane. This year it appeared for 2017 and I voted for it again and it won on the first ballot. My attitude is that it is a World Convention. Oh, Dublin, Ireland is going to bid for 2019 and I PreSupported.

WORLDCON BIDS

2018

New Orleans
<http://neworleansin2018.org>

San José
<http://www.sjin2018.org/>
Proposed Dates: August 16-20

2019

Dublin
<http://dublin2019.com/>

2020

New Zealand
<http://nzin2020.org/>

2021

Fort Worth

2022

Chicago
Doha, Qatar

2023

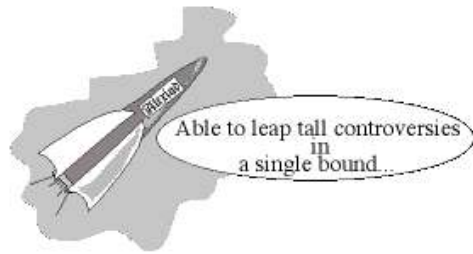
Paris
<https://sites.google.com/site/parisin2019/>

2025

Perth, Australia

No NASFiC bids yet.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Jerry Kaufman** June 27, 2015
JAKaufman@aol.com

Somewhere, somewhen along the way, you've explained what your troubles have been — but either my memory has grown too sieve-like, or I haven't read the right issues or other sources. In any case, I hope the troubles get resolved in your favor, and that your friend Grant recovers. I have a friend who lost a leg to diabetes, and who has learned to walk again with a prosthetic. So I am aware (at second hand and at a distance) of some of the difficulties Grant will encounter.

Printed fanzines are beginning to reflect and comment on the Sad Puppies, with *Alexiad* in the lead. But it's not a surprise that we're taking longer to talk about it. We don't jump up and instantly print up a zine these days, and controversies run through many twists and turns online before we start the mimeos cranking (entirely metaphorically speaking, as I'm sure none of us uses a mimeo anymore).

Mike Glycer was publishing excerpts from the various blogs that discussed the matter for a while, but it eventually became clear that it was still a case of closed self-verifying communities colliding.

— JTM

Your listing of the Hugo nominees became obsolete almost as soon as the toner touched the paper. I've now read *Ancillary Sword* and *The Three-Body Problem* (which replaced *Lines of Departure*) but I probably won't get around to reading the other novels before the voting deadline. I downloaded the short fiction nominees, read four of the short stories and one of the novelettes, "Ashes to Ashes, etc." but bogged down in "Championship B'Tok" and

couldn't bring myself to continue through the others or the novellas.

I suppose I'll find samples of work by the fan and pro artists (knowing I'll probably vote for Steve Stiles in first place and Brad Foster in second), maybe take a look at work by the fan writers (I know nothing about any of them, except Laura J. Mixon, and of her only that she's a published fiction writer), and at the fanzine sites for the various nominees (I'm already strongly biased toward Journey Planet because several of "us" edit it or write for it) and then decide if I'm actually going to vote No Award in any categories or just ignore most of them.

By the way, we'll have a Fanzine Lounge at Sasquan in one of the convention halls during the day and possibly a suite for parties and special gatherings in the evenings. It'll be called "The Lost World Fanzine Lounge," with dinosaurian decor by Stu Shiffman, Marc Schirmeister, and several others. I'm one of the Seattle fanzine fans on the staff for the lounge, and intend to bring zines printed from eFanzines as well as paper ones mailed to us — *Alexiad* included.

Alexiad is very educational this issue. Tim Lane's comments on the space elevator sounded wrong to me when he said the cable would be 22,000 miles long. Surely, I thought, that should be 22,000 feet? Nope — I had to look space elevators up in Google to convince myself. I've read a bit about the idea before and heard a little more from Jordan Kare, but apparently the magnitude of the thing never sank in. (Neither had the height of a geosynchronous orbit.) Now the idea sounds even more daft to me than it did before. Next, someone will tell me that rockets can move in a vacuum even though there's no air to push against!

I live in Seattle (that's self-evident), where we voted in a \$15 minimum wage. This will phase in over the course of 3 to 7 years, depending on the size of the employer. Right now, the minimum wage is \$11 an hour — smaller companies, with less than 500 employees, can pay \$10 if the employees get tips or if the employer pays towards the employees' medical benefits. I've wondered, ever since I first heard of the idea, how \$15 became the minimum of choice. I did a little math, and found that \$11 an hour, for a 40 hour week and 52 weeks a year (supposing there's two weeks of paid sick or personal leave), is \$22,880. At \$15 an hour, a worker would get \$31,200 a year. That puts a single person above the poverty line, and \$15 an hour even puts a family of four above that line. If you live in Seattle, though, you'll probably pay at least

\$14,000 for rent, so not much left for food, health, or fun.

I can see that it makes things more difficult for the smaller businesses, but on the other hand I can't figure out how anyone can live on minimum wages that are less than \$10, as they are in much of the US. But I know that George Price and many of your other regular correspondents will help me figure this out.

So thanks for continuing to send *Alexiad* to us despite my infrequent contributions.

From: **Rodney Leighton** June 6, 2015
 11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
 Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
 CANADA

Well, I just built a fire. Cause it is chilly, rainy, 50 on the glass, Fahrenheit it goes without saying. Joan Jett singing nasty songs. My old body has gone to hell.

Alexiad #80 appeared on Thursday along with the latest *The Hockey News*. Only small press related thing this week. I was happy to see it. Good to see that you can still afford cons and restaurant meals and digital gadgets. Not quite in the league of Mike Babcock who signed a contract to coach the abysmal Toronto Maple Leafs for 8 years for 50 million bucks. It's a strange old world, ain't it!

But how many printed fanzines are there any longer, hmmin? I got a loc from the master up there in the land of the Leafs which said that he writes half page locs for which he gets fanzines. Writes bocs to every fanzine in existence regardless of whether he gets them in the mail, in the email or off eFanzines. So I started playing with this idea: Lloyd gets paper zines in return for locs of half a page, sometimes longer. I wonder if a more verbose person wrote to some fanzine publishers and guaranteed a letter of at least one full page and possibly longer in return for printed copies of his/her/their fanzine mailed directly to said person, meaning me, of course, how many would appear.

Guess what? I couldn't think of any.

This is almost as ridiculous as making a damned fire in June. Yes, I know of paper zines I just shipped a 2 page letter to *The Reluctant Famulus* which went via email cause Chuck sent me a copy of issue 104 and I liked it and the loc was actually a for real lic, I shut it off at 2 pages although I could have added another, Tom was likely thrilled to death to have the thing pop up in his email.

It has been a cool summer here, too.

But...thought I would consult the latest *Zine Dump*. Haven't seen that as of yet. Got a copy of *Asked* #11 awhile ago. Think I wrote something, not a full page. Also got the other one via email, wrote something to that too. Damned Chuck has got me writing letters to every zine I see. Scanned the letters list in this issue. No potential publishers in there. Unless Tim publishes another issue of *FOSFAX* sometime before one of us dies.

Oh well, I am doing enough typing I think. Didn't I send you a letter on #79?

As it has evolved, *Rodney's Fanac* has become somewhat of a joint project of myself and Chuck Connor over in England. I write the things, he does editing, feeds them into a computer, adds a few bits, prints some copies, emails some, scatters the things to all corners of the world to various folks including some I have never heard of. There was, and still is, some confusion there. I didn't know that he was going to do paper copies. As far as I know you and some others got copies of 4 and 5 via email, Murray and some others on paper #6 is in progress. I don't have any sort of schedule for it and thus can't be lambasted for being late.

And mostly at his urging I have been writing something resembling a loc to every zine he sends me. Not to mention every one that comes via mail, all 3 or 4 of them.

But ... on page 1, which I read first for a change even before the letters, you wonder if anyone has gotten an actual Loc from some critter. But where do you get such things?

As of this writing there have been around 60 copies of *Rodney's Fanac* #4 distributed. I have seen 4 responses. Lloyd sent the half page bc. One was a note which included a couple of stamps which weren't much good to me since they were U S stamps. Couldn't tell for sure if that gentleman wanted future issues or not but we will discover that likely before long. And there was one 7 word email and one 5 word email.

Granted that there could still be some coming, some in transit, might be some emails in England, still, thing has been out for a couple of months. Makes one wonder if there is any point in doing it. But also and more so I know of a number of folks who consider the fanzine to be a substitute.

There are a bunch of churches for sale around here. One really fancy one was converted to a really fancy cottage or possibly house, sits on the shore of the strait. There is currently one for sale, typical old fashioned Baptist/United-church, 2 story building with nothing on the second level, seat about 100 folks. Listed at \$45,000 including all furnishings. Don't know if the pulpit is still

there but the photos show a lot of pews.

One of my cousins in Ohio lives
in a converted church.

— JTM

Given that my disposable income is lower than that of a mouse who is living in that building I probably should be fasia for real. Instead, I contemplate expanding the damned zine, or at least the distribution and silly projects like that one above.

As usual I read Tim's letter with interest of particular interest to me was the part about mail . . . "it might never be delivered or it might disappear into the large piles of mail on the dining room table." Which raises the question if someone, say me, took a notion to add Tim and Elizabeth to my mailing list for RF and sent off one of the left over printed off copies of #4 and never hear a word back, what would that mean? Or if I went another route and asked Chuck to email him a copy. Maybe the machine ate it? Sent #5 Send . . . where is the cut off point? More to the point, perhaps the thing is on efanzines, anyone who would like to read it can do so on there or ask for direct copies.

Ah, the matter of fanzines and response, what sort, etc, blah. . .

Hey, almost 2 pages! All about me!

Part of the loc to *TRF* stated that I am not .a fan of Sherlock Holmes.

One of the things that has been bewildering me is the fact that I, a strong believer, in letter columns and lover of same has no interest in doing one in my zine, no plans on ever doing so and more to the point don't much care about getting any locs on the thing This is totally counter to the trouble I have with sending copies to people who never acknowledge receipt. Admittedly easier now that I am not paying for sending them out.

And I ponder, always and forever, apparently, dropping out of loccing. Or at least some of it. A terrible amount of what I write is egocentric. What good is that?

I dunno. I read the entire letters section with interest. Read the editorials and personal bits Found one book that looked interesting Don't care about Hugos or horses or cons although I did read some of most of that Probably read 94% or so of the zine. As you see, can't find a single thing to comment on Well, actually, some of this was prompted by your comments on page 1 and a bit by Tim's letter . . .

Well, I went and had a can of soup and watched the rain falling outside the window

That Penney loc has migrated to *Enter at Your Own Risk*, Chuck's personal fanzine. He runs letters. He's a true believer in "The Usual"

unlike me who hates the damned thing. Zine should be out, I haven't seen it yet, it is supposed to come out in conjunction with *RF#5*, end of May he said. Well, it will be out long before anyone reads this Lloyd is a tad snarky. Want to read it? The zine? Both zines? Fire a letter off to Chuck Connor, 85 The Paddocks, Stevenage, SG2 9UF, U K or email chuck.connor@gmx.co.uk.

Chuck is withholding *EAYOR* from efanzines for awhile. Strange how life works. A large part of the reason I started *The Life of Rodney* was that Chuck said he would put it on the web and that would give me a voice and generate mail and activity .A few years later I haven't seen anything that the web has done for me and Chuck is keeping his own zine off it. Come to think of it, I don't know if he is still putting *RF* on there.

Hopefully things are better for you now, Joe. Hope no more cats have died. Hope you have more money, a job or pension or something. Feel free to edit any or all of this thing. I was beginning to think I couldn't write anything that was not egocentric but the loc to *TRF* was almost entirely about things from the zine and I sent one to *For the Clerisy* which was all based on things I read in the zine.

From: **Sheryl A. Birkhead** June 12-27, 2015
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD
20882-3422 USA

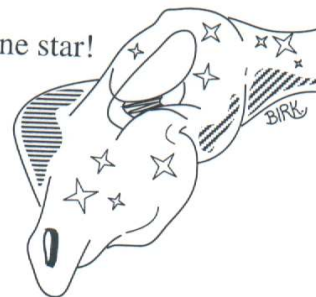
Well, I could say I was waiting until the Belmont was over, but that would still not explain the pitiful lag — so I won't even try! I'll just get one with re-reading and writing! Sheesh — haven't even commented on the Febuary ish! By the time I mail this I'll already be behind again!

The Hugo brouhaha will have a ripple effect. One of the side effects on me is that — hey I can't vote, so . . . I get to sit on the sidelines and watch what happens. In all honesty, I forgot I am not eligible to vote (nominate yes, and I did — but vote, no) and was dithering over what to do. I suddenly realized it makes no difference for me.

Sincere condolences on the loss of *Sarang*. When *Fudge* went to the Rainbow Bridge I vowed not to get another cat, or at least not until I found the perfect candidate. It was several (or more, I guess) years before I even gave it serious thought, but when Kam(ere) entered the house .I could not believe the difference that little light made. Yeah, but when that light goes out.... I hope you are recovering.

On to an up topic. *We have a Triple Crown winner!* Happy Dance!! That's it, says it all.

I'm a fanzine star!



Hispacon XXXII/MJRCin sounds a lot like cons over here . . . used to be. Maybe I missed it, but I did not see attendance numbers. Missing the stop because the train did not . . . stop sounds typically fannish (for me — attending PhilCon and going across a bridge twice when it should never have been crossed even once — because the "navigator" — I kid you not — had the map upside down!).

One of the freebie magazines I get for my "waiting room" is *Horse* (I am not at home so can't drag out the latest issue). The latest issue has an article on draft horse and I think (if my memory is correct) the winnah is 20 hands! ((Went back and here is the printed info — both of these are *Belgians* — **Big Jake** is 20 hands 2.75", 14 years old and weighs about 2,600 pounds. His barn mate is *The Almighty Bruce* and stands 20 hands 1.5 " — didn't give an age on him but said he outweighs Jake by 250 pounds making him about 2,850 pounds)) There. is another contender at the same barn — not quite as tall, but substantially heavier. I want to go back and re-read it when I have some spare time!

Brad — of course we spank a newborn to get him to yell and get those lungs expanded — hence, I am guessing, we have a spanking' new year . . . Well, it sounded good inside my head.

Time continues to move faster and faster — with less and less getting done. Still that stack of sketches and nothing done. Yeah, one of these days RSN.

I hope things have gotten more manageable for you. Yeah, life tends to get in the way. And more condolences on losing *Gemellus*. Might I ask if the lump over his hip was the right hip? Nothing I can say will make these two losses less difficult to live with — only time can help with that.

I have a rather naive question about fanzines online. Do faneds still have a distribution list or is an ish put online and it is up to the fen to know this and go find it? Just curious as I thought the former . . . but I might be wrong.

I try it both ways — there is an email list and then I send it to efanzines.com to be put there.

Hi *Dale (Speirs)* — really miss *Opuntia*, but I understand the impetus behind the change to electronic.

Brad — With about a month and a half to go before the Worldcon, I tend to think the two of you have things pretty much planned out. I have no idea how long you intend to stay in the area, but hope it can be a vacation with some relaxation as well as *GoH* duties and the rush of a convention. Who knows, maybe I'll get a small (very small) windfall one of these days and again be able to get a supporting membership — but still having "nothing" from LonCon to show for that supporting membership — except an email that they don't know when/if the convention book(let) will be sent makes it seem close to a permanent wait. If I remember correctly (way too much like real work to go and check) over the years of various membership categories for *Worldcons* only one actually put out a hardback program book(let) and supporting members did get it! Times change . . . ah well.

MidAmeriCon, thirty-nine years ago, with a Heinlein theme.

— JTM

Yesterday afternoon I am walking past stray cat house when one of the cats makes me slam to a stop. For a moment I think I am seeing C'Mell. And then reality steps in. This cat cannot possibly be C'Mell. A closer look shows this cat's face marking is paler than C'Mell's was. She was ivory where this cat is silver. Its eyes are a paler blue and it is taller and leaner than she was. It looks to be a combination of old style and new style Siamese. This one is truly tempting but surely this cat has an owner. I make myself walk away. It is pointless cruelty to give it hope when there is none.

— Lisa

Jim (Stumm) — there are free online sites that carry *The Murdoch Mysteries* — I just Google watch episodes of ____ (fill in whatever show you wish) free online — then sift through the results to find one that actually does that. I am not at a computer that has the current site I use but

might work for you . . . again, not sure on which one I finally settled.



July 18-24, 2015

For whatever reason, it would appear I overlooked the July ish sitting right here. Not sure how that happened, but I intend to remedy the oversight. Yeah-American Pharoah now has a place in the history books and is in some pretty amazing company. Once each race began, I held my breath and crossed my fingers — Just let none of them get hurt.

Fingers crossed for Joe's case. I hope you are both feeling a bit better.

I am a bit disappointed that not more people declined a Hugo nomination once they realized it was a group slate vote that got them to that place. I can understand riding the high of a nomination, but... Since I can't vote this year, what I think does not make any difference. Yeah, winners this year may be tainted by a broad brush and deserving or otherwise. Sigh.

Congrats to Lloyd on a year's anniversary of continuous employment! Once the thrill of actually getting the job has worn off, that consistent paycheck has a lot to say for itself. I hope the trip across the Pond next year materializes!

I just got a look at the latest (only?) MidAmeriCon II PR 1. I enjoyed the photos but would have appreciated a list of who's who for each one to see if those I think I recognize are correct. Maybe I'll try again — asking if they want fillos. I have given up on Sasquan since there was no response to my contacts — and so far the same is true of Mid-AmeriCon II. The further I get from contributing, the less excited I get about the convention in general. Ali well, I tried.

About technology changing "things" — the UPS deliveyman happened to mention that his wife was a school teacher and that they no longer (I had heard this, but never verified it) teach cursive beyond actually signing your signature. Guess I really don't want to comment further on that.

Taral pice came a bit late for me. I actually watched (via Netflix) *Rio 2*. I did not have as strong a reaction to it as Taral, but I also did not

enjoy it very much. The other two movies I have not seen and they are not on my Netflix list.

Milt (Stevens) — I have sort of lost track of the um ... er discussion about the Hugo ballot. At this point I figure the next "logical" step is the actual outcome. For that, we'll have to wait a while and see how it resolves (if that is the right word).

I have several of the old Hugo Awards packets on my computer--planning on someday going back and reading them. At the tune(s) I picked and chose what items I could realistically read in time to vote. I simply did not vote in any category for which I could not read the nominations. I will admit that I could see things changing — close to what Eric Mayer was saying . . . Each time I can vote, I have to ask myself — am I voting on the best of the slate or for something I feel is of Hugo quality. Each time I make that decision since it seems to be dynamic and not a static definition for me.

When I was teaching I had a student, Teddy Chen, who was as smart as they come. He was also profoundly deaf. I hated having to tap him on the shoulder and ask him to stop reading (SF of course!) and pay attention. He got everything he needed by reading his text but it was a bad precedent to have one student totally ignoring . . . but if I happened to be speaking while facing the board, he couldn't be expected to pick up anything. He was a terrific student-- in all his subjects.

With any luck I can get this printed and out before the weekend. At least I am going to try!

From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** July 8, 2015
Ste. Julie, Quebec, CANADA
cathypl@sympatico.ca
<http://www.monsiffa.com/>

I read all but one of the novels on the Hugo short list. I think you gave away too much of the plot of *The Goblin Emperor*, which I loved reading. I might not have picked it up had it not been nominated. The elves and goblins idea didn't appeal, but in fact it didn't matter what label you stuck on the characters, they were real people. I do hope it is part of a series.

The Three Body Problem sounded promising, but I was disappointed. The characters were made of cardboard. I couldn't identify with any of them. Are there really that many people on earth so disillusioned with life here that they would want humanity either extinct or under an alien overlord? And why would they move the ship through the Panama? The earth rotates; I can't see that there would be any advantage gained by moving from one

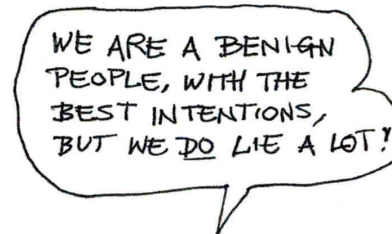
ocean to the other, but the risk is obviously enormous.

Sure they want humanity under an alien overlord, as long as they're the people passing on the aliens' orders. And there is so much space in the Pacific to get lost in.

— JTM

Ancillary Sword was fantastic, I loved *Ancillary Justice* as well. A fascinating world populated with the most interesting, evolving, characters. A ship with a human crew comfortable acting like ancillaries was intriguing.

Skin Game was loads of fun, with a surprising plot twist. It's not up to the literary standards of *The Goblin Emperor* or *Ancillary Sword*, but it was a good romp, and made me laugh. *The Three Body Problem* just didn't do anything for me, good or bad.



From: **Milt Stevens** July 14, 2015
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA
93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* #81, Joseph mentions the prediction that reading would become a lost

practice. That sort of prediction has been made about many things. They are never more than "sort of" right. Television seems to have eliminated short fiction magazines. However, it hasn't eliminated novels. The widespread use of smokable drugs has not eliminated the use of alcohol. Movies haven't eliminated live theater, and television hasn't eliminated movies. Computer games haven't eliminated chess or bridge. I suspect that any activity people think is fun will continue to have a following even in the face of competition.

On the other hand, reading dull books and listening to dull lecturers probably isn't the most effective way of getting an education. We know how to make good documentaries. We could use that technology to present information in an easier and more palatable form.

Then there is the idea of having a data port behind your left ear. That should level the educational playing field. Everybody would know everything. Of course, most people would understand very little of it. I find it difficult to imagine the consequences of this situation.

Dave Barry once described the hilarity that would ensue when a user, instead of the chip of a business proposal, inserted a porn chip. You know the latter would be the predominant use.

Taral is certainly right. There are many things man was not meant to watch. That doesn't mean that none of us ever watch such things. Watching bad movies gives us a cheap sense of superiority. Recently, I subscribed to Netflix. I had no idea how many wretched Sci-fi and fantasy movies there were. I watched one that had an IMDB rating of 2.5. It really earned every point it didn't get. Netflix also has many more realistic films that feature people being shot, stabbed, and bludgeoned. And that's just the comedies.

At conventions, I've seen people soliciting money to produce some new bit of sci-fi cinema. While I can't be absolutely sure that the be awful, I can suspect it strongly. We really don't need any more bad sci-fi movies than we already have.

There is a worldcon bid for Doha, Qatar in 2022. Either that is a joke, or somebody's reality checker must be off line. We should hold a convention in Hell first.

To paraphrase an infamous arsonist, we should rent out Doha and hold the con in Hell. On the

other hand, after Smokane, it might not be thought so bad.

— JTM

From: **Tom Feller** July 15, 2015
TomFeller@aol.com

Thanks for sending the zine.

Our local Sherlock Holmes club boasts two members of the Baker Street Irregulars. Marino Alvarez and Bill Mason have each written a book about the Great Detective.

Maybe they ought to come up to Holmes, Doyle, and Friends in Dayton. (April 15-16, 2016)

— JTM

I have read four of the Hugo short story nominees, four of the novelettes, all five of the novellas, and two of the novels. I am currently reading a third novel and should have it finished by the voting deadline. My overall impression is that the short story nominees are actually better than they were last year, although I admit I thought last year's field was an unusually weak one. There was a definite drop-off in quality in the novelette and novella categories, but not a great one. I have only read one of last year's nominees, so I can't comment on that category.

From: **Joy V. Smith** July 17, 2015
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

I enjoyed your review of *The Martian*, Joe. I haven't read it yet, but it's on my wish list. I've seen parts of *The Flight of the Phoenix* over the years. (I've seen parts of lots of movies and TV series, and it's interesting watching *The Artful Detective* all out of sequence.)

Thanks for the other reviews; and I enjoyed Rodford Edmiston's high tech history. Btw, I enjoy all the inventions that Murdoch comes up with in *The Artful Detective/Murdoch Mysteries*, and Dr. Grace came up with the toe tag the other day. Some of their twists are so cool! And thanks to Taral Wayne for his reviews of the three animated films to avoid.

Thanks to all the letter writers for news updates and other matters — and I hadn't realized that the Mount Saint Helens eruption had destroyed a significant amount of Sasquatch habitat. Joe — and Sue Burke for the Spanish history lesson. To Rod E. Smith: All the best with your novels languishing on an editor's desk and in the revision process . . . (I

know the feeling.)

I'm not familiar with the origin of the 22 November piece (a reference to a Stephen King work, I gather), but I enjoyed reading it.

From: **Brad W. Foster** July 19, 2015
Post Office Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246 USA
bwfoster@juno.com
<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

Like clockwork, another issue appears. I'm astonished at how you can continue to put this together with so much thought and work in each issue, over and over. Each time a new one appears in the mailbox, it just reminds me of how I really need to buckle down and get more work done here!

Usually I can only read the reviews and note down those titles that you make sound interesting enough to think they would be worth seeking out. This issue had one of those rare moments where I had actually read a book already that you were talking about. Due to a very good friend being much too kind, we got a copy of *The Martian* to read this year, and I loved it. I also like how you did the compare-n-contrast thing with *The Flight of the Phoenix*. I've not seen that particular flick in decades, but I recall being totally engrossed in it when I did. Here's hoping the movie version of *Martian* will be equal to that as well.

When the movie trailer begins with a long quote from the book, it seems like someone involved read it.

— JTM

Taral's warnings away from the three animated features were nice to get, but having seen the previews for each and been totally unmoved every time, I don't think I've ever been in danger of trying to seek them out.

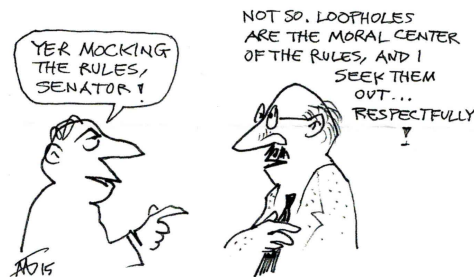
It's now about 10:30 am and I've been up since about 3:00pm yesterday. Weird hours these days, when there aren't any conventions or art festivals to have to adjust my sleeping patterns for. I work until I get tired, and sleep until I wake up on my own. Nice to be able to do this two or three times a year. So, off to bed for me!

From: **Fred Lerner** July 23, 2015
fred.lerner@dartmouth.edu

Thanks, as always, for *Alexiad*. In the July issue Rodford Edmiston's piece on "Unintended Consequences" mentions the medical advances that led to increased survival

rates among wounded soldiers. But it goes deeper than that; as they say, you can't ever change just one thing. The medical advances Rodford mentions were described in a multivolume *Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*, published by the U.S. Army Medical Department. John Shaw Billings, who had been placed in charge of the medical library of the Surgeon General's office, offered this compilation in exchange for books and journals he wanted for the library. Heavy demand for the *Medical and Surgical History* started the Surgeon General's library on the way to becoming the world's largest medical library. Now called the National Library of Medicine, it has also played a pioneering role in cataloging and indexing medical literature and in developing electronic resources for access to biomedical information of all kinds. So 150 years later one can trace current developments in biomedical informatics back to the Civil War!

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** July 18, 2015
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA 22204-1552 USA
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>



Thank you for *Alexiad* #14.3 that arrived on 7/11 an auspicious date for crapshooters and on the eve of the New Horizons flyby of Pluto. Maybe because I am not a crapshooter, my aged keyboard stopped working (it gave plenty of notice) that very same day and had to be replaced before this letter could be composed. Somebody at Johns Hopkins must have been lucky with the dice, however, because the 7/14 flyby went exactly as planned, and we caught the Nova report the next evening, which displayed the tiniest fraction of the images the little robot is returning to its masters on earth. Since it will take 16 months to download all of the various and assorted data this is perhaps not surprising, and we look forward to learning about the Plutonian environment on future Novas.

Rodford Edmiston makes the point that polio was in part the result of improved sanitation. The general case is that our immune system was evolved to cope with the unsanitary natural world, and in our present hyper sanitary environment, the child's immune system is insufficiently challenged to develop properly, although researchers are looking for treatments to provide the necessary challenges. It may be counter intuitive, but we need our exposure to dirt to be healthy.

Which is why unvaccinated upper-middle-class children get hit so hard by epidemics. In a hyper-sanitary world, their immune systems never quite get the chance to develop.

— JTM

George Price continues to maintain that currency debasement is theft, when it is more like entropy, the disordering of a system that naturally happens over time. Does the theft take place when one buys a government bond or when one sells it? On your portfolio, is the theft mitigated when the loss to your cash and bonds are offset by the gain in the nominal value of your real estate? A case can also be made that a stable currency tends (needs?) to be supported by theft. Between about 1814 and 1914 Great Britain enjoyed stable money because it was milking India for all it was worth, the stability of the British pound being maintained by the theft of Indian treasure. Can George offer a counter example? In my opinion debasing the currency is less serious than half-assed wars (on drugs, terror, and split infinitives), our hyper-complex tax system, or failing to maintain the nations roads and bridges.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Aug. 3, 2015
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

Last issue I commented on was the April issue of *Alexiad*. Now I am commenting on the July issue. Time flies when you're having fun. Thus, I have expected a fun filled; although serious filled: *Alexiad*. My expectations have been fulfilled.

My first example of serious fun is your comment on skeptics: that they have very little effect on popular thought. I consider myself a skeptic, and I belong to the local chapter of CSICOPS. However, I agree with you, Joe. Logic and actual science doesn't move people.

I think the skeptics who have been fighting an uphill battle for both should figure out what

people's motives are. A field not quite science yet; but one that could, at least, produce polemical weapons as powerful as the believers have been wielding.

In the case of the anti-vaccination crowd, I suspect the problem boils down to the belief that a mother knows by instinct; and that dramatic incidences like one, or six, autistic children prove a vaccination causes autism. Jenny McCarthy has been really exploiting both beliefs. Realizing that is the real argument, I think skeptics might use it to better turn the tables on the purveyors of pseudo science.

The above comment was to lovers of science in general. This comment is to lovers of science in particular. I have to disagree with Rodford Edmiston on why both the Union and Confederacy gave up on balloons for war. While there may have been a soap opera of officer politics on both sides, as Edmiston intimates, I gather what sunk the balloons was that the hydrogen needed was hard to get.

Now I leave the Civil War balloon for a completely different topic, the cartoon and comic strip *The Toonerville Trolley*. Edmiston also mentions it. I remember it from my childhood as a cartoon on television. It starred the trolley master and his enormous wife, Katrinka. However, her problem was apparently not flab. A lot of her mass was muscle. When the trolley went off the track, she put it back.

What stays on the track better are race horses. John Purcell writes how he and his father were tickled by one race Secretariat ran. My wife Heidi, who once worked on the track, was more than tickled by a more recent race horse, Frankel. He raced in England; and Heidi felt he beat the cream of European horsedom. Which she regards as head and shoulders above American race horses.

Fourteen wins out of fourteen starts, descended from Northern Dancer on both sides, also of course Mr. Prospector.

Some have gotten a good run for their money from Secretariat and Frankel. Would we get a good run for our money if our money was backed up by gold? George Price says yes, and he regards the recent large swings in its value as the result of people protecting themselves from inflation. Which, in turn, has been caused by 'fiat money', money unbacked by gold.

I disagree with George. I think the idea behind gold is that its price will remain stable, no matter what. It defeats the purpose if it goes up and down like a yo yo.

I have seen one reason why people drive the price up and down. You do not have to look far.

It has nothing to do with problems with unbacked money. Various dealers have advertised that people can make a killing if they invest in gold. Of course, that only works while the price goes up. When the price goes down, and it has, those investors will abandon their gold certificates.

In short, gold now resembles a number of investments, like real estate, which, at times, imitate manic depression.

That is a subject I disagree with George Price a lot on. There have been others. I am sure many readers would think we were always at loggerheads. However, they will be surprised to learn that I agree with George on one issue.

He took me to task two issues back for using '40s to indicate the forties of the last Century. I originally thought he had wanted me to use "40s for the forties. However, he now said he wanted an apostrophe ' to abbreviate dates, e.g., the '40s. He explained this in the last issue of *Alexiad*.

George would know the accepted way to do this, having been a typesetter for Advent: Publishers. I often do not go with the accepted way, however; instead, I often do my own thing with grammar and punctuation as long as my text is understandable. On the other hand, this hit my funny bone, or at least my grammar bone. I find George's suggestion neat. I think I will use the apostrophe to abbreviate dates in the future.

I agree with George Price for once. However, next, am I disagreeing with you, Joe? Not so it amounts to a hill of beans. My belief is that Mount Saint Helens never served as the main habitat for the Bigfoot. I thought the TV show "Finding Bigfoot" placed the big population in Florida. You have to listen to authority.

As long as we are talking about the Bigfoot, we may as well talk about Young Earth Creationism. The two are related in the land of pseudoscience.

I admit I may have misunderstood Taras Wolansky when I thought he agreed with believers in the universe's Creation 6,000 years ago. Also, I agree with Taras that it cannot be falsified that God was a trickster who created the illusion that the Earth was four billion years old when it is 6,000 years old. It is unprovable if God was a trickster.

However, my point was that God hides many facts about the universe, and we must work hard to discover them. In fact, I would think it is obvious God does that.

I have something else to ponder with Taras. — about the sad puppies. A more trivia point, but one that has been a matter of much controversy recently. I gather Theodore Beale

and John Wright call their Hugo slate 'sad puppies' even if Brad Torgersen has a more moderate 'sad puppies' slate. They don't come right out and call their Hugo slate 'rabid puppies.' Thus, I was right to call them 'sad puppies'.

Wrong.

<http://voxdays.blogspot.com/2015/02/rabid-puppies-2015.html>



A more picayune disagreement still I have with Taras concerns the cartoon "Steamboat Willie" with Mickey Mouse. I don't disagree with him that the term of copyrights should be more limited than now. Also, I don't disagree that Walt Disney had succeeded in getting the copyright lengthened each time the cartoon "Steamboat Willie" was about to fall in the public domain. In fact, some have called those laws the Steamboat Willie law.

Where my picayune disagreement lies is that, according to Wikipedia, "Steamboat Mickey" has apparently fallen into the public domain because of problems with the title. At least, two legal papers have been written to that effect. Including one Disney threatened to sue over.

Walt Disney did a character called "Oswald the Lucky Rabbit", then lost creative control, and so for his own company did a version of Oswald with different ears and named him Mickey. A few years ago they got the rights to Oswald, too.

— JTM

With the Steamboat and Willie, I guess that's it. I have also discussed skeptics, Jenny McCarthy, hydrogen balloons during the Civil War, the gold standard, punctuation, bigfoot, and Creationism.

From: **Murray Moore** August 7, 2015
1065 Henley Road, Mississauga Ontario

L4Y 1C8 CANADA
murrayamoore@gmail.com

Your wide-ranging review of *The Martian*, Joe, was excellent. I should read *The Martian* before the movie version begins its run. If I see the movie I won't read the book.

Thank you.

I doubt I will finish *The Three Body Problem*. I put it aside; tried again; I am stopped at page 243 of the Tor hardcover. *The Goblin Emperor* and the *Dresden Files* series novel I was able to borrow from our public library. I haven't started the *Ancillary* novel. My memory is that I gave the first part, last year, my first place Hugo novel vote.

My wish (not hope — I know better) is that to be eligible for a Best Novel Hugo a novel must be complete in one volume, not complete in three volumes as is increasingly common. More likely is that your country will return to the gold standard.

Mary Renault deserves to be re-discovered. I and other residents of the village in which I grew up, in southwestern Ontario in the late 1970s, lined up to get a lump of sugar injected with polio vaccine, because of an outbreak of polio in the Mennonite farming community. I suppose the Solstice Award is better than no recognition from one's peers.

R-Lauraine Tutihasi and John Purcell each have the impression that I did not fly to Milwaukee and attend Operacon because weather was the hindrance. Weather was not the reason: the inability of the airline to have an airplane at the airport, first Thursday evening, then Friday morning, is why I was unable to fly to Milwaukee in time to be in the opera's premiere audience on Friday evening. A plane *did* leave later Friday, however the best I could have done was to be in the con suite when the opera goers returned. Two cancelled departures were enough.

From: **George W. Price** August 21, 2015
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL
60690-3228 USA
price4418@comcast.net

July *Alexiad*:

I don't usually follow horseracing, but I have been piqued by the spelling of American Pharoah. I first assumed it was a misprint, but no, it really is "oah" instead of "aoh". John Hertz says it was sent wrong to the Jockey Club and got enshrined in the official record. Have the horse's owners made no effort to correct it? Or don't they give a damn?

In Reviewer's Notes, Joe mentions that "anti-vaccination is popular among the forward-thinking people of California." Didn't Governor Brown just sign a law making it harder to get an exemption from vaccination? I say let the forward-thinkers refuse to get their children vaccinated — and when their kids infect other children, let the other parents sue them for everything they've got.

Rodford Edmiston's "Joy of High Tech" article on "Unintended Consequences" says that, far from the romantic view of pre-automobile cities as less polluted, horse dung was much more noxious than engine fumes. Many years ago I read that around 1880 a noted sociologist proved that New York City could never grow much beyond its existing population of about two million. And he was perfectly right. No one has ever refuted his reasoning and calculations showing that it would be impossible to remove the additional horse dung. But a decade later came electric streetcars, and then subway trains and motor vehicles. Horses almost disappeared, and by 1930 the population approached seven million.

Edmiston also mentions "some unexpected environmental effects when folks switched from soaps to phosphate based detergents." There were also psychological effects. As a chemistry major in 1951, I learned that when the manufacturers started selling detergents they found that if the powder didn't make suds, like soap did, most users wouldn't believe it was really working. So they put in sudsing agents — even though the suds had no cleansing value at all — and then detergent sales took off. Modern detergents make suds, so those sudsing agents are still there, and presumably still unnecessary except to please the customers.

The Obergefell decision inventing a constitutional right to same-sex marriage is distasteful to me as public policy. Far worse, it grossly misinterprets the Constitution, repeating the error of *Roe v. Wade*.

The Constitution says no word about marriage (just as it says no word about abortion). Therefore, under the Tenth Amendment, this subject falls entirely under the authority of each individual state. The Supreme Court should have rejected the case for lack of federal jurisdiction, and said nothing at all

about the validity of same-sex marriage.

Had the Court done that in *Roe v. Wade*, the normal political process would likely have reached a consensus about abortion, state by state, and we would have been spared the running battle of the last forty-odd years. Will the Court's similar short-circuiting of the political process in Obergefell result in a similar running battle about marriage for decades to come?

Also, basing the decision on "equal protection of the laws" is a very long stretch. As I have often pointed out, homosexuals have always had exactly the same marriage rights as heterosexuals: the right to marry a person of the opposite sex. This decision is not really about constitutional rights, it is about radically changing the definition of marriage.

The uproar about whether a shop should be forced to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex couple regardless of the owner's religious feelings rings a lot of bells with me — one of my step-granddaughters has a cake shop in Indianapolis. (No, I haven't asked her how she feels about all this.)

First off, the rule should NOT be based on religious beliefs. We should consider the broader case: Tell us when a business owner is not allowed to reject business simply because she just damned well doesn't feel like serving those people, regardless of who or what "those people" are and why she doesn't want to serve them.

Obvious example: A band hires out to play at weddings, singles parties, bar mitzvahs, street festivals, and such-like occasions. As it happens, the band leader and his players are all strong liberals and progressives. Should they be forced to take a gig playing at a right-wing Tea Party political rally? If not, then why should a cake maker be forced to cater at a same-sex wedding?

When is "I just don't want to do it" not a good enough reason to turn away business?

I would put the boundary somewhere between "off the shelf" and "catering." If the cake lady offers a variety of standard cakes in her showroom, she should sell those cakes to all comers, no questions asked. That's a normal requirement for a business open to the general public. But if she is expected to take the cake to the wedding reception and stand there slicing and serving it, then she should be allowed to say "Hell, no!" and — very important! — not have to give any reasons at all for refusing.

We can have a lot of fun arguing exactly where to draw the line between off-the-shelf

and catering, but I'll leave that for another time. Oh, and no carping that a cake from "off the shelf" might be a little stale.

The cover article in the June 2015 *New Republic* is Lauren Sandler's "Taking Care of Our Own," on the movement to make employers grant paid family leave for both sexes. After explaining why it is desirable for both workers and employers, and recounting the considerable progress already made, Sandler segues right into a discussion of proposed legislation to impose paid family leave on all employers. I find it instructive that she sees no need to argue why it should be made a legal requirement rather than just letting market forces encourage its voluntary adoption. She takes completely for granted that if a policy is a Good Idea, well then of course it should be compulsory. Now that's the Progressive mind in operation!

By the time this appears we may have concluded the nuclear deal with Iran. Right now it looks like a disaster. Suppose that sometime soon several nuclear bombs explode in North Korea. Tell me how we will know if this is the Norks up to their usual tricks, or if they are letting the ayatollahs use their testing facilities, and Iran has now broken out. What do we do then?

To mount one of my favorite hobby horses again, note that the problem of the Greeks possibly exiting the euro, and how that might affect the eurozone system, would be no problem at all if the European Union were on the gold standard. In fact, there would be no need for the euro: A 50-gram German goldmark would always trade even with two 25-gram French goldfrancs or five 10-gram Danish goldkroner (and so on), regardless of each country's economic policies. Gold is gold, no matter whose name is on the coin, so why bother with a common currency?

To be sure, the gold standard could not solve the Greeks' real problem, which is that they have been living higher on the hog than their productivity justifies, and making up the difference with borrowed money. Now they have run up against Thatcher's Law, and they need to cut back on their overgrown welfare state. They can do that only by real changes in their production and consumption, not by

manipulating the money.

Last issue I discussed a work-around to obtain an apostrophe ['] even when the word-processing program insists on making it an open-quote [']. I have since found that Word 2010 does have a direct way: Hold down Ctrl and press the apostrophe key twice. Presumably other word-processing programs have equivalent methods.



From: **Sue Burke** August 26, 2015
 calle Agustín Querol, 6 bis 6D, 28014
 Madrid, SPAIN
sue@sue.burke.name
mount-oregano.livejournal.com
amadisofgaul.blogspot.com

On Sunday, August 23, just after I got up, I turned on my computer and caught the end of the live stream of the Hugo Awards. The results generally coincided with my votes. Congratulations to the winners! But I am dismayed to have been hoping for "No Award" so often. I was even more dismayed when I read the Hugo statistics and saw the feast that could have been on the ballot. Worse, the Puppies plan to be back next year, and the voting statistics show there are enough of them to repeat this tragedy, but next time it will be a farce. Those of us who love literature face another wasted opportunity.

A wasted opportunity, **Taras Wolansky**, was the 2006 *Alatriste* movie. I saw it when it first came out. I think Viggo Mortensen

performed well enough and faked a Castilian accent just fine. In fact, he was nominated for a Goya Award, the Spanish equivalent of an Oscar. There were complaints, but about what he said, not how he said it. The language was 20th century, not 17th century, something not Mortensen's fault.

But the movie's major failure lay elsewhere. It tried to cram five of the novels from the Alaric series into one movie, so while almost every scene was a masterpiece, the plot only hung together if you knew the storyline and could fill in the very large blanks. I read the first book in the series, *El capitán Alaric*, and I know there's enough drama and adventure in any one of the novels to fill a movie with a lot more excitement than the final product had. *Alaric* won three Goyas, but not for Best Film, which surprised no one. It was a disappointment.

I was not disappointed by my 60th birthday celebration. My husband and I took a brief trip to the city of León in northwestern Spain, founded by the VII Roman Legion: hence its name, softened by time. We stayed at the San Marcos Hostel, a monumental Renaissance palace originally built as a headquarters for the Knights of the Military Order of Saint James, now a *parador* hotel. In León, we saw amazing medieval treasures, including the Holy Grail – the third one I've seen. That probably makes my three times holier than thou.

That would be *legio VII Gemina*, founded by Galba in the consulship of Ti. Catus and P. Galerius and a whole lot of suffect consuls, AD 68 CE. As for the exhibit, did you have to answer the questions three to get in?

— JTM

We also rented a car and drove 150 kilometers west to hike through Las Médulas, the remains of a Roman gold mine. Flakes of gold could be found in some of the sediment layers of an alluvial mountain, so the Romans built aqueducts, dug shafts, filled the shafts with water to make the mountain collapse bit by bit, and placered out the gold. Pliny the Elder visited in 77 A.D. and called the technique *ruina montium*.

It took 250 years for the Romans to destroy the entire mountain. All that remains are crags of startlingly orange soil towering over a forest of century-old oaks and chestnuts. The eerie, unnatural landscape is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

This gold helped keep the Roman Empire afloat, since it used gold for currency. Gold was

also the standard coinage a thousand years after the empire's fall, in the 1400s. According to a high school history textbook I'm editing (a freelance job), as Europe's economy began to expand in the 1400s, there was not enough gold to mint sufficient coins for the level of commerce. It spurred Portugal and eventually Spain to send out ships in search of silk, spices, and especially gold. They needed gold to do business.

This leads me to a question for **George W. Price**: Is there enough gold in the world to back today's level of currency and commerce?

It's been a record-setting hot summer here in Madrid, with serious agricultural losses. I've been editing, writing, and translating. My translation of "The Dragoon of the Order of Montesa, or the Proper Assessment of History" by Nilo María Fabra came out in July in the anthology *Triangulation: Lost Voices* published by Parsec Ink. Fabra's humorous short story tells of the far-future discovery of a soldier who was mummified by a natural disaster as he was guarding the Royal Palace in Madrid.

My translation of the novel *Prodigies* by Angélica Gorodischer was published in August by Small Beer Press. In it, a new lodger comes to an elegant late-18th century German boardinghouse and changes everything. There's magic afoot, but it might not be hers. Kirkus Reviews praised the book, saying, "Gorodischer writes a poetic, vigorous prose." Well, yes, she does. But the English-language poetry and vigor is mine.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** August 26, 2015
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA
93010-2451 USA
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for Vol. 14, No. 3 (July 2015), Whole Number 81.

I was in the library on Thursday, July 16 and noticed *MORIARTY* by Anthony Horowitz (2014) on display. Having very much enjoyed his *The House of Silk* (2011), *MORIARTY* was checked out. I could hardly put it down and highly recommend it.

You may recall that I previously mentioned that we had a very small rain on June 9 and that it drizzled the night of June 10. Being that we are in our third (or is it the fourth?) year of drought every little bit helps. Well, the night of Friday, July 17 it really rained. On Saturday I was at a DNA meeting followed by my genealogical society club meeting all of which lasted from 11:00 am to 4:30 pm. During that time we heard thunder and it rained heavily. That night it rained again. Then it rained again on Sunday. The humidity was horrible. But,

the rain was needed so badly that the humidity was a minor problem.

There is now another movie to add to my very short list of rating a 0 on my scale of 1-5 — *Fifty Shades of Gray* (2015). It had its moments. Please understand that I do not have any problem with sex in movies and enjoy it. But, overall I found this movie to be disgusting and fast forwarded through parts of it.

All right, the next back page will have Christian Gray interviewing Irena Dubrovna, who has a cat.

Then *CHAPPIE* (2015) was watched because the concept was interesting and Sigourney Weaver and Hugh Jackman are in it. The movie was a great disappointment. Weaver's part was a cameo and could have been played by anyone. Jackman's part was a bit over the top. I rated it a 2.0 and that was being nice.

The TV programs I may wish to watch are set up to record new episodes automatically. I watched three episodes of *Mr. Robot*, decided it was a big nothing and cancelled it. If I'm missing something let me know. On the other hand I am enjoying *Humans*. Also enjoyed was *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. Not having read the book I don't know how closely it might have been followed. *Forever* appears to have been cancelled. Too bad as it was enjoyed.

Eric Flint's *Ring of Fire Series* has been appreciated over the years. Obviously it can go on forever. It is wished, however, that some parts (unless I've missed something) would bring to a conclusion. The Tzar of Russia is on the run. The Pope is on the run. Now in the latest book, *1636: The Cardinal Virtues* (2015), the rightful King of France (even though a new born) is on the run with his mother the Queen of the recently murdered King and the usurper brother of the murdered King is on the throne.

The Tzar is Mikhail Romanov — oh Bog, a new Time of Troubles! The Pope is Urban VIII, who banned smoking and got annoyed when when a Pisan made a joke at his expense. The King sure isn't Louis XIV, who in our time line was born in 1638. The usurper would have to be Gaston duc d'Orléans. "Gaston Egalité"?

— JTM

The Fall by R. J. Pineiro (2015) was read. I can't recommend it.

From: **John Purcell** August 29, 2015
3744 Marilene Circle, College Station,
TX 77845-3926 USA
askance73@gmail.com

Hold on a second. I need to determine what the whole number issue of this fanzine is. Lessee: we have 13 complete volumes (V) at 6 issues per volume (n), plus 3 issues (i) more here in volume 14 in order to solve for X, the whole number issue. (Opens calculator feature on computer). So establishing the formula as $(V \times n) + i = X$, that becomes $(13 \times 6) + 3 = X$, which reduces to $(78) + 3 = 81$. Therefore, this is the 81st issue of Alexiad. Glad I figured that out! If this fanzine continues for another five years I may have to resort to using SPSS software or at least the formula tab on an Excel spreadsheet. Or I could use my grandson's abacus. It has pretty colored beads that move. Ooh! Manipulatives!

Anyway.
Shall I espouse on Theodore Beale (a.k.a., Vox Day) and the aftermath of this year's Hugo Awards? Naw. I don't think I will. So much -- and I mean SO MUCH, as in voluminous texts on assorted social media, postings, blogs, etc., appearing on the interwebs and elsewhere - has been written in the past two weeks that there is really nothing much more to add at this point. Then again...

Suffice to say that the battle continues for those who believe they have been wronged, but I have become quite tired of the constant sniper attacks already. What I prefer to see now is some intelligent discussion towards working out a voting method for the Hugos that would not exclude anybody, but that's nothing more than a pipe dream. It won't happen. The Hugo Awards are at their core a popularity contest voted on by fans of the genre who believe certain works meet "criteria of excellence" in the field of science fiction. I dunno. It is all so subjective. My humble opinion is that I don't care about the politics or personal belief systems of any particular writer. All I care about is, is this an interesting, thought-provoking, well-written, and entertaining story with solid, well-developed characters that help drive the tale? If yes and it knocks my socks off, it has my nomination/vote. Then again, I am an admitted altruist: such is the burden I bear. We shall see eventually what transpires from WSFS meetings, et al, to address this "slate voting" issue. I have more pressing needs to take care of in my life.

Speaking of which, Joe, I really would like to know what the freaking hold up is on your case. Obviously, you don't know, but the wait

has got to be massively frustrating. As always, I hope for the best for you and Lisa, and that a resolution — preferably in your favor — will soon be forthcoming.

So does my older brother (fifteen years as a hearing officer for the unemployment system, hearing the same sort of cases, and he said that he would have thrown the city's case out if it had been presented to him). So does my younger brother the professor of English Lit. So does my lawyer. Join the respected club.

— JTM

The Martian movie keeps getting great pre-release reviews, and now the movie promos are hitting the airwaves, and I have to admit it looks really good. I may have to procure a copy of the novel to read. Everyone I talk to who has read it really likes the book. The same thing goes for *The Three-Body Problem*, which earned this year's Best Novel Hugo Award. Again, lots of my friends loved the book. Strong recommendations always get my attention, which threatens the load capacity of my To Be Read bookshelf. It is dangerously close to collapsing.

It is interesting to note that from the mid-1930s to the end of the 1940s that there were six Triple Crown Winners over a span of 13 years, or roughly every two or three years another horse would take all three races. And then in the 1970s there were three winners averaging three years apart. I wonder if this pattern may be repeated over the next decade? After all, three times and it's a tradition. Rule of Three, and all that.

So the 2017 WorldCon will be in Helsinki (no way I can go), but Kansas City next summer is on the agenda. Will you two be there? Hope you can make it. We need a proper fane's feast, and KC barbecue is wondrous. I know a handful of places there that might adequately feed a small raiding party of starving fanzine fans. Meanwhile I'm supporting the 2018 New Orleans bid. After that, who knows? Dublin would be awesome, as would New Zealand, then it comes back to Texas, then Qatar, Paris, Australia... Hmm. How much does a passport cost nowadays?

I believe I shall stop there for now. Next up today is a quickie book review to write for CyberCozen (Leybl Botwinik's fanzine) on Asimov's *The Robots of Dawn*. In the meantime, I wish you folks well, and thank you for sending the fanzine to me. I have the next *Askew* in the works (an all letters issue) and the

current *Askance* is available on efanazines.com. Feel free to read and loc. That's my plan.

From: **AL du Pisani** August 31, 2015
945 Grand Prix Street, Weltevredenpark
1709, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
du.pisani@telkomsa.net

The past four months have been nothing to write about. I went on leave at the end of June, and we ended up having a family gathering. A decent one, and it looks as if it will be the only one this year. I had hopes for another one at the end of the year, but it looks as if that is not going to come off.

But I had a decent amount of time to rest. And I found that I needed the rest. Once I came back, it was to find that my department had moved, and I had to search for the new location. There I found that our team had shrunk while I was away, and that my new position of work is directly next to my very demanding manager. In the previous location his was safely ensconced in his own office, and it was possible for me to work on my own. These days I have to hear constant complaints that I am not busy with what my manager deems most important, at any moment in time. Given how our department has shrunk, and how there have been a wholesale departure of our support team, this is getting on my nerves a bit.

During this past weekend, I asked my mother about a story I overheard my grandfather tell her, a bit more than twenty years ago. And she did not remember it. But it is a story that have haunted me a bit the past year or so. Since it is about the First World War, and I have been hearing a bit about that war, now that it is the centenary. My grandfather was too young for the First World War. Apparently, two of his older brothers were not, and joined in the Rebellion, one on each side. But that is not the story.

A cousin of his participated in the Rebellion, on the rebel side. The unit he was with got captured by the government forces, and all men in the unit was sentenced to five years of hard labour. And the particular piece of hard labour he was used for was the building of the railway bridge across the Orange River, at Upington. He celebrated his sixteenth birthday carrying bags of sand. According to my grandfather, he had to carry three bags of sand at a time, one across his neck and shoulders, and one under each arm. He had by this time developed a callus on his neck that was partly comprised of blood and sand.

And then one of the other POWs told him that as a minor, he could not be sentenced to

hard labour. (He was fifteen at the time he was taken POW – hard labour could only apply against somebody at least sixteen years old.) He somehow got hold of the legal stuff, including the format of the letter etc, and drafted an appeal against his sentence. Appeared before a military court, and successfully appealed his sentence. He was released on time served, which was by this time already six months. This started his interest in the legal profession. He ended up studying Law, and became an advocate.

Unfortunately I never caught his name, how exactly he was related to my grandfather, nor how I can find out a bit more about him. At the time he told this story, it had been about five months since my grandmother died. Within six months of this time my grandfather remarried, and I rarely saw him again, before his death. I never had the opportunity to ask him more of this and other stories I heard throughout the years. Since to a large part, I had been shaped by following my grandfather around in holidays, after my father died when I was young.

There have been time when I have been glad that SF fandom in South Africa is just a bit more laid back than in the US. I do not know how much of that is because more people have jobs, and family and other interests, which causes less passion in our fandom. It might also be that there is so much less fans around, that we have to find ways to accommodate each other, if we want to become and remain friends as well as fans.

In the 1990's I got Internet for the first time, and found Rec.Arts.SF.Written on Usenet. I thought to lurk for a while, before meeting up with real fans, from all over the world. I the end I never stopped lurking. Because although I could feel a bit of that this was my kind of people, I also did not feel fully welcome. I do not know how much of this feeling of not being fully welcome is due to my inherent shyness. This shyness has caused me grief over the years. I remember two Fosfax dinners that I attended at Worldcons. The one three shy people ended up at a table, and did not talk to each other. The other one was a larger table, more outgoing people, and I had a wonderful talk with one of the people that made the previous event so awkward.

This may also have been why I have walked out of fan heavy events at Worldcons with the feeling of having very little connection with the fans at the event. Yet at every Worldcon I have had at least one conversation, or meeting, or other function that was deeply enriching, and which encourages me to give Worldcon at least one more chance.

I remember the one time I attended Rivercon with fondness – These were my kind of people. I have always regretted that I have never been able to go back.

You'd probably have to go to ConCave, in Bowling Green, for that sort of feeling nowadays. ConGlomeration here in Louisville has its own ambience, also a lot of gamers.

— JTM

The saddest part of the decline of South Africa, is when responsible elders who should know better insist that there is no decline, and that what is happening now have always been happening, to the same intensity and effect. That makes it difficult to talk about.

In any case, I have paused reading the local news. It is too depressing.

From: **Taras Wolansky** September 1, 2015
100 Montgomery Street., #24-H, Jersey City, NJ 07302-3787 USA
twolansky@yahoo.com

The June 2015 *Alexiad*:

Joe: I wonder if the James Majors can outnumber the Johann Bachs, about 50 of them. Johann Sebastian Bach, himself, named two of his sons Johann; not to mention a daughter, Johanna. (I don't know the reason for this Lectroid behavior.)

I have 59.

"I'm not particularly fond of the bash-the-alien-mooks-tales written by the real guys, either." What stories are you referring to? From the context, it would seem you might be referring to this year's Hugo nominees – except that none of them are like that, to my recollection.

Milt Stevens: There was already a problem in Hugo voting, in that if a category had, say, four men and one woman, the woman would almost always win, because feminists would automatically vote for her. I'm not speculating here: I've actually read feminists who unashamedly say they do that, out of a mistaken idea of social justice.

Should half the romance novel awards be won by men? Men and women are not the same. Anyone who says they are is lying or grossly mistaken (or possibly both).

Eric Mayer: People who are "progressive" in politics tend to be "progressive" in their literary and artistic tastes as well. Evidently there's a similar, hubristic disregard for

tradition in both cases.

Admittedly, in recent years, I too would sometimes cringe at familiar names that turned up in the Hugo nominations, like Kij Johnson or Thomas Olde Heuvelt. However, I would say that normally (i.e., setting aside this year) the Hugo nominees for novelette and novella tend to be better – and more traditional in storytelling terms – than the short story nominees. The last tend more toward experimentation; and, as everyone knows, most experiments fail.

Darrell Schweitzer: “I mean, would you take seriously a book published by something called Patriarchy Press?” I would get the joke, and understand that the name is tongue-in-cheek (even before I read Michael Z. Williamson’s note to the obtuse). Then again, some years ago I happened to read Williamson’s first novel, *Freehold*, which centers on a particularly ferocious woman soldier, so perhaps that tipped me off.

Liberals not getting a conservative’s joke is a common occurrence, though. For example, the late-night current events/humor show on Fox, *Red Eye*, was frequently attacked for homophobia because the host, who was for gay marriage, liked to parody and make fun of opponents!

I can’t say that much about the Puppy controversy; for me, it was like cannon-fire over the horizon. The impression I got, though, was that this was like the old joke about, what will the dog do with the fire engine if he catches it. In other words, the Pups were just trying to get a work or two nominated, and (like Rosie Ruiz winning the New York Marathon) accidentally ended up monopolizing certain categories. (Well, no matter what, they still get to put “Hugo-nominated author” on their future books.)

You’re making them sound like Mr. J.: “Do I really look like a guy with a plan? You know what I am? I’m a dog chasing cars. I wouldn’t know what to do with one if I caught it! You know, I just . . . do things.”

Nonetheless, there were good things nominated across the board. The only category I would describe as embarrassing was Related Works: a couple of what I would describe as pretty-good *Analog* science fact articles; a writer’s autobiography by a writer I never heard of; a book of SF criticism for Catholics (?); and a book of pretty funny but rarely SF one-liners that dragged after a while. (On the bright side, “chicks” didn’t “dig” anything; nor were there

any tie-ins to a certain British children’s show.)

Chicks Dig Gaming got 92 nominations, while Volume 11 of the Heinlein bio got 62.

N.B.: I was at Sasquan, but didn’t attend the Hugos, figuring – rightly, it turned out – there would be an unpleasant lynch mob atmosphere.

Novels: I read most of the Butcher but didn’t like it (as I’ve previously written); started the Anderson but was not impressed by the quality of the writing (and then misplaced it); started the Leckie but couldn’t stand the political correctness, so I’m just glad it didn’t win. The winner from China looks interesting.

The Anderson (*The Dark Between the Stars*) was rather dreary, I thought. I read *The Goblin Emperor* and *The Three Body Problem*, as you’ll note from the reviews thereof.

Novellas: I find this is almost always the category most worth reading, and even with all the oddities this was still the case this year. If the lynch mob had bothered to read it, they would probably have liked Tom Kratman’s “Big Boys Don’t Cry”. It starts out as a kind of Keith Laumer “Bolo” story, with a brave AI tank defending the human race against nasty aliens. And that’s what “Magnolia” thinks “she” is doing – until the feckless human high command orders the tanks into an obvious ambush and she is so seriously damaged that she begins to remember things she was ordered – commanded – to forget. Then things take a very grim turn, as she remembers why humans no longer accompany the AIs in war, and why the AIs were built to feel pain.

Another excellent novella, apparently an excerpt from a novel, is Arlan Andrews’ “Flow”, about iceberg traders in a distant future. I have to look for the other parts of this. However, the three nominated novellas by John C. Wright are another matter. I found two of them unreadable; but the third, “The Plural of Helen of Troy”, was a good noir detective story set in a city outside of time and ruled by timelords (but not the cuddly kind). So I can’t dismiss Wright altogether.

Novelettes were not particularly outstanding this year; though I think the lynch mob voted in the worst story (by the cringeworthy Thomas Olde Heuvelt). It’s one of those stories that would be passable if it were 5 pages long, instead of 25. Just thinking about it I am filled with ennui. The two best stories are Ed

Lerner’s “Championship B’tok”, in which a secret agent suspects alien POWs are running rings around their jailers but can’t do anything about it; and the great Michael F. Flynn’s “The Journeyman: In the Stone House”, another story about Flynn’s affable barbarian in post-holocaust North America.

In the short story category, it looks like the best story, Kary English’s “Totoled”, was a victim of friendly fire by the lynch mob. With its left-wing sensibility (an evil corporation plays a role) it would have appealed to them, if they had read it; and it was published in Mike Resnick’s magazine. Or is Mike Resnick now considered part of the Evil Right-Wing Cabal?

“As for RequiresHate, this was a puppy of a different stripe, but very much the same phenomenon. . . . Don’t you wish Harlan Ellison were still in his prime?” A bizarre inversion; in fact, the “poison pen” who sometimes used the name RequiresHate could be considered an extreme disciple of Ellison, who often boasted of threatening or even assaulting people who had roused his ire (and of impersonating an officer on the phone). I remember seeing him try to destroy Jim Frenkel’s career because Frenkel had refused to pay Ellison more than had been previously agreed for a story. When Ted White wrote about Ellison holding him up at gunpoint (Ellison didn’t want to give up some recordings he had lost in a foolish wager), I wrote to Ellison to get his side of the story: he tacitly admitted it was true.

I got a chance to talk to Laura Mixon shortly before she won the Fan Writer Hugo for her reportage on RequiresHate. I told her she deserves a “fan Pulitzer”! Mixon says the perpetrator’s identity is known, but is not being made public. It turned out to be a woman, rather than a man posing as a woman. I joked that perhaps now RequiresHate would go annoy people in some other literary genre.

Politically Incorrect Observations: Ellison, typical guy, usually attacks his “enemies” openly; RequiresHate finds their weak point and sneakily sticks in her needle. People who were intimidated by R.H. were themselves all or nearly all women.

Sue Burke: I understand the the Demandasaurus was responsible for the extinction of the Democerasaurus.

Rodford Edmiston: I like the idea of a space elevator designed to burn up in the atmosphere if it falls.

Aside from John Ford’s great *The Horse Soldiers* (1959), the railroad Civil War was memorialized by two films about James J. Andrews’ 1862 raid, Buster Keaton’s *The General* (1926) and an unusually grim Walt Disney film, *The Great Locomotive Chase*

(1956) – unusually grim because it presented the real fate of Andrews (Fess Parker).

Just like “Davy Crockett at the Alamo” (February 23, 1955) which also presented the real fate of Crockett (Fess Parker)

— JTM

Taral Wayne: *Rio 2* wasn’t bad, as animated films go. On the other hand, *Hoodwinked Too*, the sequel to the unexpectedly good *Hoodwinked*, was in a class of badness far beyond the ordinary.

From: **Allan Maurer** September 5, 2015
3 Patriot Circle, Durham, NC, 27704-1752 USA
allan.maurer@gmail.com

Murray Moore mentions the Heinlein bio in his LOC in the July *Alexiad*, finding it unreadable.

I read it, avidly. The first volume included quite a bit about Heinlein I didn’t know — in particular his attraction to the occult and the tragic end of his second wife, Leslie. Turns out he was quite the martinet when it came to requiring others to obey rules and regulations but exempted himself from the same often enough to collect quite a few demerits at Annapolis.

Both volumes of Patterson’s bio are disappointing to me not so much for their style as for their lack of journalism. Editor David Hartwell told me Patterson resisted doing any interviews or much other research apart from the letters and interviews with Ginny Heinlein. It’s a shame no one took on the bio while so many more of Heinlein’s contemporaries were alive, but even so, Patterson could have vastly enriched the biographies by interviewing a much wider group of sources.

He did consult other sources: *In Memory Yet Green* (Asimov) and *Time and Chance* (de Camp) on the Philadelphia NAES days, and what surprised me, “Heinlein Happens” (Earl Kemp) on ChiCon. But he could have done more.

The Heinlein estate, which fired the first official biographer, is probably partly to blame for this. A full portrait of Heinlein would not be as one-sided as Patterson’s, and not nearly as flattering.

The books also lack any real evaluation of Heinlein’s work itself.

My advice to publishers is hire a real

journalist to write biographies rather than some academic approved by an estate.

Despite all of this, I'd dispute Murray's assertion that the books are unreadable. It may depend on how much Heinlein affected you. To those of us who grew up reading his juvenile novels and progressed to his adult work, he was like a literary father, and indeed, saw his juvenile novels as a sort of propaganda (something you do learn from the Patterson bios). Most heroes turn out to have clay feet and Heinlein is no different, but for some of us, he remains fascinating and deserves a much better biography.

He's not the only one of the major figures of SF history who does, either. John W. Campbell, Jr., Don A. Wollheim, Fred Pohl, would all make great subjects, especially if treated warts and all.

Those wouldn't get published, while *Chicks Dig Francis Stevens* would go over big with editors.

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** September 1, 2015
236 S. Coronado Street, Los Angeles,
CA 90057-1465 USA

Allow me to join those who explain to Tom Feller that neither Clark Kent nor Superman changes identities in a telephone booth. I can't say where that came from.

From the near-vanishment of public telephones a cynic might infer the extent to which they were provided as a service. But they might be needed more than ever. What if you're in a pickle and for some reason your can't-live-without-it mobile phone doesn't work?

The Fanzine Lounge at Sasquan was swell. Byers, Hooper, O'Brien & Co. built a comfy open space to convive in and, not incidentally, a wall — both sides — of first-rate fanart to look at. Actually that was the Fanzine Lounge by Day, in the Exhibit Hall. The Fanzine Lounge by Night was in a room at the party hotel. That was jolly too.

Before Sasquan, during, and since, the most striking thing to me about Puppy-related conversation has been the volume of finger-pointing. Those folks over there are bad, if they'd only quit their badness all would be well. Alas.

Sheryl Birkhead is right. If we don't nominate, the Hugo ballot will be full of whomever others nominate — as it has been, in the fan categories, for some time.

But I think we'd be

overwhelmed by all the followers of the minor pros with blogs.

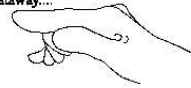
— JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Martin Morse Wooster, likewise.

Alexiad...thataway...



FLASHMAN AND THE WARLORD

... I've played various native sorts over the years, usually as prelude to my own capture and near disposal of by supposedly friendly troops. This time was no different, and those sentries of Wolesley's force nearly had me shot for the crime of being a Mahdist. If it hadn't been for an old whoring comrade of mine, you wouldn't have been reading this. I expect Sir Garnet would have been very sorry once he found out.

I had an excuse for going home again, and legged myself out of the country as fast as I could go. This bliss lasted until I got back to Blighty. The very day I arrived back, whilst Elspeth was cooing and billing over me and arranging our invitation to social affairs where I could recount with great melancholy the tragic martyrdom of that great booby Gordon, a wire came from the States.

I'd known Carter from those days in the Army of Northern Virginia. He had a little more sense than that bloody great dashing fool Stuart, who all the same relied on him wholly. Supposedly, he had killed the man who had mortally wounded the general.

After the war he had disappeared out west, out of my purview. I never heard anything of him any of the times I was out there, which made me suspect that the Indians had been a little more fortunate.

But here was an offer of a pre-paid ticket and an invitation to a place in New York. He must have done something. Making my heartiest excuses to Elspeth, "Old comrade . . . may be dying . . . wants to say a final farewell," which provoked cries of how she had bought several new dresses and Lady This and Lord That wanted to know the tragic story, I managed to evoke the ties of old times to get off. Besides, if I were in the States I would be out of reach of whatever mad scheme the War Office had dreamed up to get my hide pierced again.

Carter hadn't done half badly, it seemed, a small but well-setup house on the Hudson, and in good taste, which set him apart from the general run of Yank Gilded Age sorts. The man who greeted me was his son, I thought. Then he said, "Flashman! Your heroic reputation has only grown in the years since we have seen each other!"

Now Carter had looked to be about in his mid-twenties, in those days in Virginia, and this chap appeared to be the same age. He knew me, not everything fortunately, so it had to be him. Yet it couldn't be!

We spent the next day talking about what all we had done in the past few years. I passed on some tales of my more dangerous adventures, suitably edited, and he talked about gold prospecting and mining. The Apaches seemed to be a bloodthirsty lot, but I had heard that already. He had lost his partner to them, and apparently barely got away with his own scalp. He was very impressed when I showed him what had happened to me in that line.

It was when we got to family that he started getting strange and evasive. I talked about Elspeth and the boy, and he said he was married to the most beautiful woman in the world and they were about to have a child when he had to leave. He got bloody melancholy when he mentioned that. I didn't press him.

"You ought to write your memoirs," he said the next day. "That man Arnold only gave one side of the story." Bloody well right he had. I nearly called him out, but better sense, or well-placed cowardice, dissuaded me.

"You ought to as well," says I, and it turned out he was. But not for immediate publication, it seemed, and I admitted I was in the same boat. "I have some comments some people might not want to hear."

"The powerful rarely like having their dark secrets unveiled."

A couple of nights later I was outside, having a smoke, and was somewhat startled to see Carter out standing on a rock, stargazing. I didn't know he had it in him.

Towards the end of March that next year I heard Carter had died. And naturally, too, which really surprised me. It certainly wouldn't have been from an angry husband, he was too virtuous. That worried me.

There was a notice from an American firm of solicitors describing the demise. Most of the estate went to a relative, but I got a small sum and a note.

I've still got it. Bloody queer comment:

When your time comes, look to the planet Mars.

— Not from the Flashman Papers

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

This is issue **Whole Number Eighty-two (82)**.

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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ALEXIAD

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major

1409 Christy Avenue

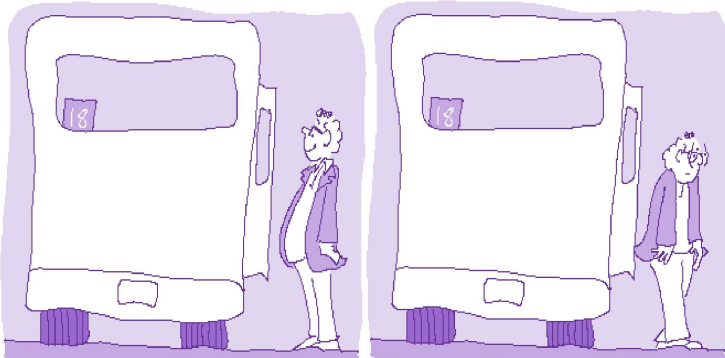
Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA

jtmajor@iglou.com

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

LAST WEEKEND WHEN MY CAR DEVELOPED TROUBLE I WAS ACTUALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO RIDING TO WORK ON THE BUS FOR AWHILE JUST TO SWITCH THINGS UP

I HAD FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH THE ENFORCED WASTED TIME SUCKS ALL THE MEANING EVER OUT OF EVERY SINGLE FACET OF YOUR LIFE



<http://arturkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

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