

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

July 20 marked the 47th anniversary of the moon landing. So many grand dreams, so many unfulfilled.

— Lisa

The 71st Running of the Little Brown Jug (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be **September 22, 2016** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio.

Printed on August 4, 2016
Deadline is **October 1, 2016**

Table of Contents

Editorial.....	1
Reviewer's Notes.....	1
<hr/>	
<i>The Angel of the Revolution</i>	2
D. B. Cooper.....	7
The Joy of High Tech.....	7
Hugo Notes.....	8
Hugo News.....	9
Sidewise Award Nominees.....	9
Worldcon News.....	9
<hr/>	
Book Reviews	
JTM Conroy, <i>1880: Custer in Chains</i>	6
LTM Davids/Schwartz, <i>An Atheist in Heaven</i>	7
JTM Guiteras, <i>Launch on Need</i>	6
JTM Campbell, <i>The Lost Stars: Shattered Spear</i>	5
JTM Manco, <i>Ancestral Journeys</i>	6
LTM Stallings, <i>Bully</i>	7
<hr/>	
Random Jottings.....	2
<hr/>	
Letters.....	10
Sue Burke, Richard Dengrove, Tom Feller, Robert S. Kennedy, AL du Pisani, Lloyd Penney, George W. Price, John Purcell, Joy V. Smith, Milt Stevens	
Comments are by JTM or LTM	
<hr/>	
Trivia:.....	16
<hr/>	
Art:	
Sheryl Birkhead.....	10, 15
Paul Gadzikowski.....	16
Alexis A. Gilliland.....	2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12
Trinlay Khadro.....	2
Marc Schirmeister.....	8
<hr/>	
The 91st Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is August 6, 2016 at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.	
The 62nd Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is September 3, 2016 at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.	
The 124th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is October 9, 2016 at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.	
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The 62nd Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be August 6, 2016 at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.	
The 61st Running of the Messenger Stakes (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be August 27, 2016 at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.	

Reviewer's Notes

We will be having a visitor or two, so I thought I should welcome them beforehand, though I'll not name them yet in case something happens. Take care folks and we'll be seeing you.

In spite of my many health problems (of which having sleep disorders is a new and uncomfortable one) I seem to be the best-off person in the bunch. Which says something, I don't know what.

As for the non-job situation: still stuck in the legal system. It seems to be regarded as, "Well the city has the right to lay off anyone." So much for job security as a shield from political influence.

A lot of people are promoting Dragon*Con's new Dragon Awards as the future Science Fiction Achievement Award. Perhaps not; internet based voting never quite seems to work. Ask the beloved children's character Boaty McBoatface, for example.

You will note that there are no fannish categories in the Dragon Awards. Perhaps that's a sign. For the past few years, the "Best Fanzine" Hugos have been blogs done by minor pros, the "Best Fan Writers" have been said minor pros, and the "Best Fan Artists" have been people who do shows at cons. The frame of reference has shifted, and the story no longer means what it had.

Louisville had FandomFest recently. One estimate gave attendance of between twenty and thirty-five thousand. That's right, four or more times as large as the largest ever WorldCon for a one-day show. The pictures ran to various cosplayers. I suppose it's better than the ritual photo of the two fat guys in homemade Starfleet uniforms that used to be the norm for reporting on any con.

Maybe I can join the next WorldCon. An attending membership is worth the free books in the Hugo Voter's Packet. If the books are any good. I haven't been impressed by most of the last few Hugo winning novels, which are all too often grand tours of a diverse universe with no plot. Well, there was *The Three-Body Problem*, last year. But that was remarkably like a fifties-era adventure novel.

I'm reminded of Eric Norden's "The Curse of the Mhondoro Nkabele" (*F&SF*, September 1980). The Senegalese exchange student had learned English from a priest who was a huge fan of thirties pulp scientificion. So that was what he wanted to write. And, unfortunately for the field, he had ways of making sure he sold. (The bit about Ben Boya and the elephant was interesting, and what happened to Harlan Ellison™ was something else. Not to mention the letter from "Asimov Hall, Asimov State University, Asimovia, New York".)

But that was in a time where there was connectivity.

Note to one contributor: Take heed of the comments.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



TRINLAY KHADRO

Buy my books. (All available on Amazon.com for quite reasonable prices, except the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, which can be bought from NESFA for a reasonable price.)

— Advt.

David Jonathan Thatcher died June 22, 2016 of complications of a stroke. Born July 31, 1921 in Bridger, Montana to Dortha Steinmiller Thatcher and Joseph Holland Thatcher, David joined the Army Air Corps (as it was then) in December of 1940.

Sergeant Thatcher was engineer-gunner of Crew #7, the famous "Ruptured Duck", piloted by Ted Lawson of *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* (1943) fame. The plane bombed targets in Tokyo and crashed off the coast of China, where Lawson was injured.

Thatcher received the Silver Star for his efforts in bringing the crew to safety. He also was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He flew in B-26's for the remainder of the war, was honorably discharged, and became a Post Office clerk and letter carrier.

He is survived by his wife and three (of five) children, seven grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.

This leaves Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Cole, co-pilot of Crew #1, as the last surviving Doolittle Tokyo Raider.

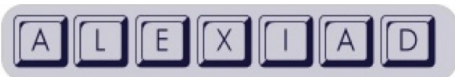
Toujours au Danger

Elie Wiesel

1928-2016

An era ended when Elie Wiesel passed on July 2. He was perhaps the most famous survivor of the Shoah and also the author of many books. The world is much poorer with his loss.

— Lisa



THE DEVIL OF THE DETAILS

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION:

A Tale of the Coming Terror

by George Griffith (1893)

[George Griffith Chetwynd-Jones]

... Orville was surprised to be admitted directly into the Presidential office. And even more so by the fact that the President strode forward to meet him. "Mr. Wright!" he cried. "Your country needs you!"

"My brother and I are patriotic and loyal Americans, Mr. President. I do not know how or why I deserve such an urgent summons."

The President scowled. "Does the name of Richard Arnold mean anything to you?"

Orville thought for a moment. "Some of our correspondents have mentioned him, but I have never encountered any news of his efforts."

"Indeed! Have you not heard the news from Russia!? A flying machine of unimaginable capacities, built by this Arnold, has demolished the Russian naval base at Kronstadt! The Russian aerial armada, already so powerful, has proven itself incapable of resisting it!"

"The Russians have, I believe, built a fleet of rigid airships; requiring clement weather to operate and susceptible to explosion due to their hydrogen gas-bags. They might be able to inconvenience another country under some circumstances."

"Nevertheless, the reports from St. Petersburg are categorical! Professor Langley has demonstrated himself incapable of constructing a functional flying machine, which by default leaves you and your brother as preeminent in the field! An observer I trust fully viewed your work and said as much."

"I don't recall seeing anyone from Washington."

The President turned his head and looked at the boy who had somehow wandered in. "Quentin! What did you say about the Wrights' aeroplane!?"

The boy smiled. "It flew like a bird, Father."

"You see! The entire resources of the United States Treasury are at your disposal! The laboratory of Mr. Edison stands ready to provide any equipment you may require! But give America a flying machine of equal power!"

Future war fiction became extremely popular in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. Indeed, *The Battle of Dorking* was published in 1871, and far from being considered a disdained producer of trash, its author, Colonel (later General Sir) George

Tompkins Chesney was a pillar of the Victorian Establishment, a senior army officer, later knighted and elected to Parliament.

While American works then tended towards the triumphant final victory (e.g., *The Valor of Ignorance* (1909), *The Red Napoleon* (1929), *Lightning In the Night* (1940)), British works tended to be invasion, conquest, and ruin scares. (Well, there was always Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Under the Red Flag* (1919), revised and published as *The Moon Men* (1926).) Such attitudes extended even to more recent times, with works such as *It Happened Here* (1964) and *SS-GB* (1978), not to mention *When the Kissing Had to Stop* (1960, 1989). (We see this reflected in the early work of J. G. Ballard, tempered by his experiences in a Japanese internment camp in China.)



Leon Stover discussed the influence of Henri de Saint-Simon on one of those invasion, conquest, and ruin authors (*The Shape of Things to Come* (1933; filmed as *Things to Come* (1936)), H. G. Wells. Claude Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint-Simon was a French theorist of the early nineteenth century who argued that the change in society needed to be guided by the class of productive workers, what he called the "working class", which is not the same as the Marxist working class. The rising group of laborers and intellectual workers would have to control both industry and eventually society as a whole. In spite of the disintegration of his marriage, his repeated financial failures (he had very poor judgment in choosing business partners), and his inability to organize a movement, he persisted. At least he survived the Reign of Terror, not to mention the suicide attempt where he shot himself six times and lived. One can say that this reflects an idealistic view of humanity.

This story begins with the last gasp of a researcher. It is September 3, 1903. [The Wright brothers are getting ready to go to Kitty Hawk for the third time.] Having inherited a reasonable sum of money, engineer Richard Arnold has set out to solve the problem of powered controlled flight. His principal obstacle is in the "powered"; like most of the researchers, he can make a functioning model, but a full-sized vehicle is somewhat beyond the capacity of existing power sources. Instead of developing something so mundane as the internal combustion engine powered by petrol (he evidently didn't know how to get in touch

with Charlie Taylor), he finally manages to derive a powerful reaction from mixing two chemicals. One hopes they are nothing like the Soviet "Devil's Brew" rocket fuel of unsymmetrical dimethylhydrazine and nitric acid that proved so murderous in the infamous explosion of the R-16 (SS-7 Saddler) on October 24, 1960. Since he handles the chemicals without gloves or other precautions, that's probably the case, but finding out otherwise might be a bit of a surprise.

But Arnold has just about spent his last penny. Being idealistic, he has devoted himself solely to his researches, which means he has no income. Or, evidently, connections; he doesn't even seem to think of Selling Out. (Or for that matter selling, say, bicycles.)

Instead, he takes his last few shillings and goes out to dinner. There he has a random encounter, and by some odd alchemy he tells his new friend all about his splendid work and how it will all go for naught once his goods are seized for the back rent.

His new friend, Maurice Colston, has money, Arnold has ideas. They can come together, and before the next sunset Arnold has his rent paid and his model safe and sound. Then the new friend reveals his ulterior motive.

Society is a thrill with the exploits of an all-powerful, all-secret terrorist group called simply The Terror. With a world-wide range, a vast network of fanatically devoted members, and financial and material resources on an unimaginable scale, The Terror wages war on the Russian Empire. Russian agents in the Motherland and abroad alike are found dead, the twin-T emblem of The Terror cut into their foreheads, and no one is ever caught.

And this group is holding a secret meeting tonight, in London. Arnold is brought thence.

The security is intricate. The leaders of The Terror, for example, are required to be fluent in four different languages, and the sentries admit only those who use the right languages in the right order passing on the pre-arranged passwords. They kill people who don't pass security. Professor Moriarty, anyone? (Come to think of it, where is Sherlock Holmes?)

Twelve hooded and masked people are sitting around a table. Arnold is introduced, he is made to swear absolute and unquestioning fidelity to The Terror and then the people drop their cloaks and want to see the flying machine.

His concepts are unusual. The flying machine is vertical takeoff and landing; it has helicopter screws that lift it off, then the main engines are started and the support is the wings. A full-scale version of the vehicle will be able to fly at the unimaginable speed of one hundred twenty miles an hour, for several days without stopping. Everybody likes it.

On the way in Arnold saw some sensationalist illustrations of the Russian human rights abuses. For example, a half-naked woman being flogged at the triangle.

(As if the like hadn't been a nigh-daily event in Britain a century before.) His new friend and recruiter Colston has already displayed his scars; now he is introduced to Radna Michaelis the man's love item, the young woman who had been whipped. They have something in common. His devotion is unique; he has sworn not to ask for her hand in matrimony until he has personally killed the five men responsible for her being flogged. So far he has done for three of them and the fourth just happens to be in London, a significant official at the Embassy. (So much for Heinlein's beliefs in the effects of flogging on socialization.)

Arnold himself is introduced to the Angel of the Revolution herself, Natasha, the beautiful daughter and most trusted agent of the mysterious head of The Terror, who himself goes by the palindromic name of Natas. He falls in love with her. Did I mention that she's the best shot at the party? (Remember how annoyed Alice Dalgleish got when in *Red Planet* (NHOL G.077; 1949, 1990) Jim Marlowe's sister Phyllis was a better shot than Jim was?)

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



The Twelve offer Arnold an exclusive contract, he accepts, and then they all go upstairs and have a perfectly innocuous inoffensive dinner party. Bertie Wooster could show up and never think anything was out of the ordinary. (You know, if Bertie is so dumb, and Jeeves is so smart, how come it's Bertie writing all about them?) They might not welcome Sir Harry Flashman if he wandered in, but that's the breaks.

During the evening it comes out that the Chief of The Terror, the second in command of

the mysterious Natas, is an English nobleman, the Right Honourable Alan Tremayne, Earl of Alanmere, who at present is a Secretary at the British embassy to Russia. Arnold knows the man. (Small world.) Strangely enough, he has the amazing ability of pretending in public that his covert life simply does not exist. (There must be rejoicing over the fact that Philip José Farmer did not read this book and so could not shoe-horn him into the Wold Newton family.)

Having signed on, Arnold is dispatched to Russia, ostensibly to evaluate the new Tsarist aerial armada. He returns, observing that the possession of such vessels makes the Russian army unstoppable, and much disturbed, withdraws to a secluded island in Scotland to build a full-scale version of his aircraft.

The resulting vehicle is capable of transporting a substantial crew and passengers in comfort, traveling at one hundred twenty miles an hour nonstop for several days. In addition, it carries a load of immensely powerful bombs. The Terror has available an even more powerful weapon of the air.

Which immediately has to be used. Natasha and her escort, a progressive Russian princess, have been arrested while carrying orders into Russia, and sentenced to be imprisoned on Sakhalin. (Not Kolyma, the author was not that forward-looking.) They happen to know the route that the prison transport will be taking. Natasha, being young and beautiful, is unlikely to make it to Sakhalin but instead will be detained as a personal servant of some Tsarist governor. It's a Fate Worse Than Death.

For the reasons of The Terror, as well as his own, Arnold has to go. And he takes his new aircraft, the *Ariel*, and sets out from Scotland to Russia. Their first stop is in the Gulf of Finland, where they bomb and utterly demolish the fortifications of Kronstadt. (Pretty powerful bombs they have there.)

Thanks to the complete penetration of the Tsarist government by the agents of The Terror, and their own absolute internal security, Colston is able to pose as a trader, with completely plausible documents, and enter the town where Natasha and the Princess are going to be held between stops. The official who will be their host is also a member of The Terror, and falls in with the plan.

In a wild shootout Colston and his Russian servant rescue the ladies and with a horde of cossacks hot on their heels, flee towards the landing site of the *Ariel*. Hearing the turmoil, Arnold flies towards them and bombs the pursuers, which somewhat abates the enthusiasm of the survivors.

After observing the ongoing crisis, where the Russians are pressing the Great Game on the Northwest Frontier, the *Ariel* proceeds to a safe place, a giant secluded area in the heart of Africa discovered by two guys who were fans of *Cinq semaines en ballon* (1863). It lacks the two feuding cities, the lustful queen, the mad king, et cetera of the Tarzan potboilers. ("White Skin"/John Clayton himself is still

growing up amid the ape-men in Angola; he's about fifteen.) Since it's surrounded by mountains of three thousand feet or more, it's inaccessible except by air.

The discoverers, who had sent a message out by their balloon, were disappointed that Henry Stanley hadn't come to rescue them. Since Sir Richard Francis Burton, KCMG had inconveniently made the intimate acquaintance of Death, the Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Societies (and then the Riverworld), Sir Henry Morton Stanley, KCB, was the only man who could pull off the job, except by then he had retired from African affairs and left Parliament (Lambeth North (LU)). Alas, Shackleton didn't have a reputation when the book was written or he would have done it.

Meanwhile, since the prototype did so well, The Terror has gone into full production, and built a fleet of a dozen aircraft. Natasha named them after Islamic spirits (no *Ziz*, for the flying counterpart of Leviathan and Behemoth? Oy.). And just in time too, for the Inevitable General War has broken out. French warships prowl the North Atlantic while Germany is forced into a two-front war, facing a Russian army that has invincible air support (and every man has a rifle, too).

Things are not going well for the allies, even though the thoroughgoing penetration of the Russian government by The Terror has enabled them to be provided with the secret treaties of alliance between Russia and France.

In his day job, Alanmere has already made a speech in the House of Lords explaining why H.M. Government should make a loan to Italy, which would keep the Italians on their side. But the loan is defeated and the government falls. In the subsequent election the Tories are returned with a majority, with Mr Balfour (Manchester East (C)) at their head (apparently over Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (Stirling Burghs (L); did Mr Churchill gain the seat at Manchester North-West (L), or keep his party with his father (mentioned as one of Mr Balfour's supporters at South Paddington (C)) and stay at Oldham (C)?). By then it's too late.

The Russian offensive is crushing Austria-Hungary and the French fleet is making trouble in the Atlantic. Naturally Lord Alanmere decides to take his yacht out for a cruise, after abruptly transferring all his property to the woman he wants to marry.

He has a guest. To see the man one would think he is a charity case, because he is paraplegic and the lower half of his face is horribly scarred. This is Natas, the leader of The Terror, survivor of a horrific attack against a loathsome *zhid*. For some reason the author seems to think that it's wrong to torment, rob, and kill Jews.

Natas has a plan, and overthrowing the Romanovs is only a small part of it. He wants to see a union of the English-speaking lands, which in his opinion are the only peoples

capable of ruling in peace and justice. (Did he send his spirit out through time and time-lines to make common cause with Robert Conquest?) He has spent twenty years working towards this goal, and now that a war has broken out, has decided that now is the time to tip the balance.

A French cruiser encounters the yacht. To show he's a civilian, Alanmere runs up the Royal Yacht Squadron ensign. (Which is the White Ensign, the Royal Navy flag. Oops.) The French start firing on him, and they have a hard time, until the *Ithuriel*, Arnold's super warship of the air, fortuitously intervenes.

They rescue Natas and Alanmere, then fly to the African stronghold. Where other problems intervene; it seems four Russian employees deserted, taking one of the airships with them. Shortly thereafter it shows up off the coast of Denmark, helping the Russian Baltic Fleet exit into the North Sea.

Natas has to settle the problems. First off, he disciplines the man who let the deserters desert, with a one-year suspension from duty. Then, he presides over the wedding of Colston (who it seems is really a Russian named Alexis Mazanoff) and Radna Michaelis, the woman whose flogging he had avenged. For the concerned, the wedding is dated Tamuz 10, 5664 [= June 23, 1904]. *Mazel tov, mazel tov, mazel tov!* (Which nonetheless is not said.)

The world outside is not happy. The Franco-Russian alliance is overrunning Austria-Hungary, defeating the Germans in the two-front war Herr von Moltke feared, and as we see above entering into the North Sea.

Arnold takes the *Ithuriel* in pursuit of the defectors. He seems a bit besotted, because Natasha and her father are also along, which may be a bit hazardous to the organization. They indulge in some balloon busting and try to obtain the surrender of the Russian army besieging Berlin. Eastern Germany has been pretty well demolished by the Russian advance.

In a surprising moment, one of the captured Russian balloon commanders attempts to kill Natas, only to be shot by Natasha. Then it turns out that Natas has a superpower of hypnosis. You would think the others would worry about their will.

Having taken care of the Russian air force in Germany they proceed to deal with the fleet. The commander is presumably luckier than Admiral Rozhstvensky, but the initial parley does not at all go well. In spite of this the Russian fleet proceeds to shell and occupy Aberdeen. However, Arnold manages to recapture the deserters and has them shot.

The war is not going well for the alliance, as Berlin falls (presumably Kaiser Wilhelm does not throw his pencil on the map and fly into a rage upon learning that General Steiner will not be able to relieve the city) and the country is overrun except for Hamburg, while Antwerp is under siege by the French. In an epic naval battle the Russian Black Sea Fleet (presumably including the battleship *Potemkin*) breaks through the Straits into the Mediterranean. Faced with the combined Russian and Italian

fleets the British withdraw from the Mediterranean. The Terror also steps aside, to observe the course of the fight.

Except for a little internal matter. Natas sends Arnold and Natasha to the U.S. where, they are told, she will marry the chief agent of The Terror there. He commands five million men, totally organized, utterly secret (what are the Pinkerton men *doing!*?), and prepared to follow his orders to their last breath, and for his efforts wants to be rewarded with the hand in marriage of the Angel of the Revolution.

They confront him. He opens the letter from Natas and learns to his horror that he is condemned to death for trying to bargain with Natas instead of obeying orders. Somewhat relieved, Natasha shoots him, then confesses to Arnold that if the latter had been otherwise, she would have shot herself. (No, the letter doesn't say YOU HAVE FAILED ME FOR THE LAST TIME.)

The Russian-French-Italian alliance overruns the last stronghold on the continent, then in a daring leap launches Operation *Morskoy Lev* [Морской Лев], also known as *Mer-de-Leon* and *Leone Marino* (well, not really), with Russian troops landing in the north while French and Italians do so in the south. The army is driven back contesting every inch of land, but finally is reduced to holding London, where they are attacked building by building.

Meanwhile in America, in spite of the abrupt change of command, The Terror launches its coup against the monied powers which had rendered democracy a sham and obtained absolute power. Allanmere takes over, has the President and the business leaders arrested, dissolves the United States (ripping up a copy of the Constitution because it had failed) and proclaims the Anglo-Saxon Federation. He issues an ultimatum to the Tsar to surrender or be destroyed.

It seemed the secret powers of America were plotting to join the Russians and French, and were building a powerful fleet. With this, its secret army, and its aerial fleet, the Federation proceeds from the New World to liberate the old. The besieged British government is unsure at first, but needs must, and the Federation's army, navy, and air force secure the surrender of the invaders, taking the Tsar captive.

Now Natas comes forward and Reveals All. Israel di Murska, a well-off Hungarian Jewish merchant, married Englishwoman Sylvia Penarth and lived in happiness. Then he was sent to Russia to plead for the Russian Jews, only to be betrayed and sentenced to katorga labor in the Kara River mines. The Kara river is east of the southern tip of Lake Baikal; as you remember the zeks taking *The Way Back* (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #1) to Poland via Mongolia, China, Tibet, and India were in a camp just west of Lake Baikal.

He is crippled in a mining accident, and then to increase his suffering, a guard sets his beard afire, burning the lower part of his face.

Then he is released, on condition that he get out of Russia. When he gets back to Britain, he discovers to his horror that his wife went to Russia to find his whereabouts, only to vanish on the way to the Kara. Somewhat later, he finds out that she died on the way.

So, he raises their daughter, and makes his plans for the liberation of Russia from Tsardom. Along the way he meets Tremayne, and with his miraculously acquired power to influence minds and command people, he shapes him into a great leader. Always there are two.

This happy occasion becomes further influenced when Allanmere's wife-to-be Lady Muriel is revealed to be the daughter of Natas's wife's sister. (He married a shiksa, nu?) So unified, the two couples are wed and prepare to take up their task. Natas hands over power to Tremayne and goes into retirement. (Until Rey travels to his remote island and hands him oh never mind.)

There is one last campaign, to defeat a Turkish army attempting to invade Europe, then the armies are disbanded, the fleets scuttled, and a new order of peaceful rule and justice begins. Laws are simplified, a graduated income tax on investment income is introduced, land is redistributed and nationalized, and . . .

Oh yes, the Tsar? He and his ministers and their families are sentenced to katonga in the Kara region. (Is Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin [Григорий Ефимович Распутин] invited to accompany them?) They are transported to Ekaterinburg (where the Tsar's heir Nikolai Aleksandrovich and his family, even the newborn boy, are *not* transferred to the Ipatiev House, followed by disposal in a nearby pit) and marched the rest of the way to the Kara mines, at the end of which Aleksandyr dies.

The general problem of such revolutionary novels is that the subordinate revolutionaries, the revolutionary footsoldiers as it were, become unthinking automatons. Five million in America, millions more in Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and Russia, and no one betrays the scheme? Or has his own ideas? And you thought *The Siege of Harlem* (1964) and *Night of Power* (1985, 2005) were implausible. (At least *Siege* (1969) had an opposing "Afro-American" leader and dissent in the top ranks.)

And there are no double agents? *The Man Who Was Thursday* (by G. K. Chesterton, 1908) is the ultimate example of revolutionary absurdity, with [SPOILER] all the inner circle of the conspiracy being police agents except for Sunday, the leader [SPOILER]. In real life, the Fighting Organization [Боевая Организация] of the Socialist Revolutionary Party of Russia, their terrorist group, was led by Yevno Azeff [Евно Фишелевич Азеф] between 1904 and 1908. It was often successful. Then a defector from the Okhrana (the Tsarist secret police) revealed that Azeff

was an Okhrana agent, and he fled. The Terror has thorough and savage internal security but that good?

Never mind the competition. What are V. Ilyich Ulyanov [Владимир Ильич Ульянов] the lawyer, Lev Davidovich Bronstein [לוי דודוויץ ברונשטיין] the journalist, and Joseb Bessarion Jugashvili [იოსებ ბესარიონი] the bank-robbing exile doing? And how did that street artist in Vienna named Adolf react to this dire plot by a learned Elder of Zion? At least when the Cabal staged its uprising against the Prophet ("If This Goes On —" (G.011; *Astounding* February-March 1940, 1953)), there were other revolutionary organizations.

The development cycle of the aircraft seems rather foreshortened. Arnold builds a prototype and immediately flies several thousand miles with it. This is followed by the production of a fleet which proceeds to engage in combat. He seems rather certain of his design and the strength of his materials, like Arcot, Wade, and Morey going from prototype to service in the same day.

Similarly, the Russian aerial armada seems a bit overpowered. It's rather like the submarine fleet in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Danger!" (*The Strand*, July 1914) which never needed to return to base to replenish and refit and never suffered any breakdowns.

The copy I have is in a collection of England-Invaded stories [*The Battle of Dorking and Other Invasion Stories 1871-1914*, Halcyon Press, \$1.99, available from Amazon Digital Services] ranging from the original, *The Battle of Dorking*, to the ultimate satire, P. G. Wodehouse's *The Swoop!, or How Clarence Saved England* (1909). Griffith seems to be presenting the concept of the Benevolent Catastrophe, the smashing ruin that sweeps away old structures and presents an opportunity for better new ones. A sort of Year Zero, as it were. Yes, one of the other books in the collection is *The War of the Worlds* (1897), H. G. Wells's first Benevolent Catastrophe.

The German *Jahr Null* turned out well. Most Benevolent Catastrophes turn out to sweep away old structures and present an opportunity for worse new ones to emerge.

The new rulers of the earth are a secret conspiracy that is based on absolute obedience to an unchallengeable leader, whose dictates are enforced by death. This does not seem to be the best source for a benevolent government.

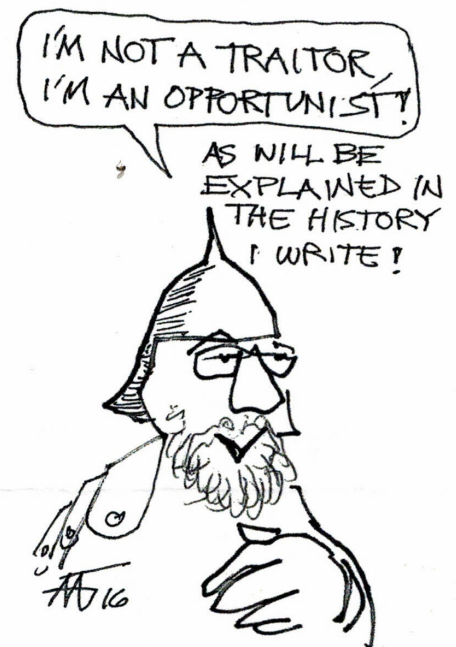
There is a certain class prejudice involved, wherein the British upper classes are considered the most fit to run things. Trotsky achieving world revolution and handing over power to Lord Curzon? Somehow it doesn't seem to fit.

Griffith wrote a sequel, *Olga Romanoff, The Syren of the Skies* (1894) where in 2030, after a hundred twenty-five years of peace and prosperity under the descendants of The Terror (the current head of the organization is Alan Arnold, the descendant of Richard & Natasha and of Tremayne & Muriel), they return full sovereignty to the nations. The heiress of the

Romanovs promptly begins to plot a counterrevolution.

I suppose it could be worse. It could be the Kalkars, *The Moon Men*, coming down to conquer a disarmed world and impose Teivos (spell it backwards) rule. Or Caesar of *Caesar's Column* (1890) rebelling against the Terror, d-n them. (Caesar and his conspiracy even have the Internet, and don't get hundreds of messages from Nigerian barristers saying that someone with the same last name as Caesar has died without a will and left an estate of 100,000£ . . .)

For the record, the Russian for "The Terror" is Teppop, "Terror". In Yiddish it's די טראָרע "di terror". But ט is a little harder to carve in a forehead and might cause trouble. Now "IB" for "Inglorious Basterds" . . .



TILTING AT TERROR

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE LOST STARS: SHATTERED SPEAR
by "Jack Campbell" [John G. Henry]
(Ace; 2016; ISBN 978-0425272275; \$26.95;
Penguin Group (Kindle); \$13.99)

Artur Drakon and Gwen Icení of the planet Midway have many problems; trying to build a government in a social climate without trust, continuing pressure from their former overlords the Syndic, the constant threat of the mysterious war-mongering Enigmas, potential desertion by their sometime foes and sometime friends the Alliance, and parallel assassins out to get each of them. This is how many of these problems are relieved, if not solved.

Does it work out? There are some

surprises, along with new alliances, examples of how brutal the Syndic can be, shifts in loyalty, and a wedding, not quite *Game of Thrones* style even though some people try.

Things may be actually settling down on Midway, even though “settling down” by their standards may merely mean there isn’t a crisis every day. Stay tuned for more insightful observations about the transition away from autocracy.

CHILDREN OF COLUMBIA

Review by Joseph T Major of
LAUNCH ON NEED:

The Quest to Save Columbia’s Crew
by Daniel Guiteras
(2010; T-Cell Publications;
ISBN 978-0615372211; \$12.95;
Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

This was recommended on Mark Whittington’s blog. As author of *Children of Apollo* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1) he presumably has some knowledge of the topic.

After it was all over, some people wondered if it might have been possible to save the crew of the *Columbia* after all. This is the story of how it might have been done.

It is free of dramatic roadblocks; no legal issues, logistics matters (as in *Shuttle Down* (*Analog*, December 1980-March 1981, 1981, by G. Harry “Lee Correy” Stine)), political qualms (as in *The Pilgrim Project* (1964, by Hank Searls, discussed in *Alexiad* V. 12, #2)), terrorist sabotage (as in *Children of Apollo*), or dramatic disasters (as in *The Martian* (2011, 2014, by Andy Weir, reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 14 #3)). About the worst that happens is that somebody drops a toolbox on the pod bay door of the *Atlantis*, and then a foam strike damages some of the tiles.

Rather, it deals with the physical factors; what would be needed to prepare the shuttle, and how the astronauts in *Columbia* would have to survive until then. Think about the planning of the resupply mission(s) in *The Martian*; this is that sort of effort.

Guiteras notes that there were technological means to inspect the area of the foam strike; high-resolution cameras and spacewalk capacity. And he sticks to the realm of the possible; there is no magic Buran launch competing to rescue the astronauts (think *Marooned*, more the later revision (1968)).

The characterization is low-keyed; the author has fictional NASA staff and *Columbia* crew, and no one attempts to blow the airlock, steal food supplies, or block communications home by sending long personal messages. Indeed, about the only internal conflict is in the attitude of a reporter who is trying to come to terms with the death of his wife.

Could it have been done? After reading this, it certainly seems to have been more likely. Dick Pruett (or Jim Pruett), not to mention Mark Watney, would probably approve. This seems to be a good argument

for having built the Liquid Flyback Booster (as the shuttles in *Children of Apollo* have).

Mark Whittington’s blog:
<http://curmudgeons.blogspot.com/>

FIFTY SHADES OF AUTIE

Review by Joseph T Major of
1882: CUSTER IN CHAINS
by Robert Conroy
(2015; Baen ISBN 978-147680511; \$12.95;
Baen (Kindle); \$6.99)



Douglas C. Jones’s *The Court-Martial of George Armstrong Custer* (1976) is about how Yellow Hair somehow survived the debacle at the Greasy Grass, and was put up on charges by the Army for throwing away half of a regiment of cavalry. After some quite detailed analysis, along with some dirty dealing, the court exonerates Custer. Jones did some thorough historical research (he wrote primarily more ordinary Westerns) and knew his legal procedures. The book is written in present tense, which makes it a bit of an ongoing chronicle. (There is a book with the identical title by Lawrence A. Frost (1998) which deals with some real-life dubious activities by Custer in other places out west.)

In 2000 Robert Skimin brought out *Custer’s Luck*, about the victory at the Little Big Horn, followed by Custer winning the Presidency, then attempting to assert the national will and unify the country with a splendid little war with Spain. However, someone with a grudge is stalking him. (Skimin is also the author of *Gray Victory* (1998), a novel about the court-martial of J. E. B. Stuart for dereliction of duty before the Battle of Gettysburg — by the Confederate States Army, of course.)

And now there’s this.

The difference begins when a subordinate, against Custer’s desire if not his orders, brings up a Gatling-gun unit and shoots up the massed Indians at the last moment. Custer is very grateful; that is, he has the man dispatched to the middle of nowhere while taking all the credit for the costly victory over the redskin savages. (Fortunately for his narrative, Harry Flashman had left the country [*Flashman and the Redskins* (1982)].)

1880 rolls around. After a brutal campaign, the ticket of Custer and Arthur has won out over the Democrats, led by Winfield Scott Hancock.

Somewhat at a loss of what to do next, aside from entertaining Libby Custer in the White House presidential bed, the President tries to think of some unifying issue. After a while the matter of Cuba comes up.

The Spaniards provide a convenient atrocity, and so the country’s going to war. We follow not only Custer, but several minor characters — the machine gunner who saved his life, another dead-ended officer, two merry young widows who become nurses, and the journalist who reported the massacre — as the country mobilizes and tries to find some sort of a fleet.

The Spaniards aren’t in much better of a condition. The principal opponent in Cuba is the conditions; lousy climate, poor to nonexistent communications, and no resources. The campaign stalls.

So, in a fit of frustration, the President decides to go see for himself. Bad idea.

With the President a guest of the Spanish and the army bogged down under the questionable command of Nelson Miles, the United States is in a bit of a dilemma. Fortunately, the benevolent Spanish colonial rule is quite able to provide atrocities to help balance the situation.

The administration manages to adjust to a President who is in enemy hands, and dispatches more forces to resolve the situation. The Spanish position in Cuba collapses and the army falls back to Havana. But the imprisoned President, the burdened soldiers fighting in the Cuban mire, one of the more atrocity-prone Spanish officers and his victims, the unfortunate captive nurses, and war weariness combine to make the climax of the siege a perilous situation for all . . .

This is a relief from the “Confederates win Civil War” and “Nazis win WWII” scenarios that abound in alternate history (e.g. two of this year’s Sidewise Award nominees). Conroy’s grasp and presentation should render moot any accusations of copycat work in the Moskowitz mode, though one can quibble over the likelihood of the situation. It’s more serious than most of the AH of that period (e.g., “Custer’s Last Jump” (by Steven Utley and Howard Waldrop, *Universe 6* (1976)) which suffers from a lack of changes stemming from its point of departure).

APPLIED GENETICS

Review by Joseph T Major of
ANCESTRAL JOURNEYS:
The Peopling of Europe from the First Venturers to the Vikings
by Jean Manco
(2016; Thames & Hudson;
ISBN 978-0500292075; \$16.95;
Kindle Edition; \$9.99)

Heinrich pumped Tom’s hand. “Dr. Schwoerin. It is to me a great pleasure. I much enjoyed your paper on the gene frequencies of the Swabian tribes. It greatly clarified the routes of their

migrations. A good thing for you that my ancestors dropped their genes everywhere they went. Eh?"

—Michael F. Flynn, *Eifelheim*

In *The Horse the Wheel and Language* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #4), David Anthony discussed the movement of populations in Europe based on their societies, as indicated by their possessions, which in turn were revealed by archaeology and linguistics. Manco takes a different route, indicating how peoples moved as indicated by their genes, or to be specific, their DNA haplogroups.

Manco wrote the book because, as she put it, nobody else did. She provides maps showing how differing peoples spread out based on those haplogroups, dropping their genes everywhere they went as it were, and commenting on archaeological and historical evidence supporting this distribution. While there don't seem to be any shockers, there is a fuller view of the populating of Europe.

There are the usual problems. She discusses Bryan Sykes (see *The Seven Daughters of Eve* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #3) and *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts/Blood of the Isles* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #4) and how the newspapers got Adrian Targett, the next-closest living relative of Cheddar Man, pretty wrong. (Since Sykes is now trying to genotype alleged Bigfoot/Yeti samples, one can wonder.)

THOUGHTS ON D. B. COOPER

by Lisa Major

The FBI has finally closed the DB Cooper file after 45 years. Does the FBI have a strong suspicion as to who did it and is their suspect now dead? Did the statute of limitation expire? Or do they just think it likely Cooper is dead whether or not he survived the dramatic jump 45 years ago? Perhaps they are just tired of dealing with stupid questions about the case and hope that closing the file will put an end to the stupid questions and crank leads. Even if it doesn't stop them they can now ignore them.

BULLY

by Ryan Stallings

\$2.99 kindle

Review by Lisa Major

It begins with the funeral of the mother of Jamie Douglas. His father gives him a teddy bear his mother had planned to give him for his birthday.

Bullies dirty the bear. Feeling neglected by his senator father, who is dealing with his grief, Jamie wishes for a proper father. In answer, his teddy bear becomes Teddy Roosevelt. From then on this a fun ride well worth its three bucks. Even if you're not interested in Teddy Roosevelt it's still a fun read.

AN ATHEIST IN HEAVEN

Paul Davids and Gary Schwartz

\$8.69 Kindle

Review by Lisa Major

The authors claim that Forry Ackerman has not let a little thing like death stop him from visiting living friends. Do I believe this? I don't know. The kinds of things the authors recount, I believe, are exactly the kinds of things that would happen if Forry were indeed trying to make contacts. Even if the book is a hoax it's a marvelous tribute to Forry and an entertaining look at fannish history which a belief in ghosts is not required to enjoy.

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

One Size Does Not Fit All

Fitting something to a human is difficult. Not only are there multiple, compound curves and asymmetries, but every single person is different. Think about that. Even identical twins are different in the details, right down to their finger prints. This is bad enough when buying clothes, but what about situations where well-being and even life depend on a good fit? This was a hard lesson to learn, but it was learned and widely accepted in the Fifties. Yet today, over and over bureaucracies and businesses try to reduce the number of sizes something is offered in to a bare minimum. A minimum in which none of the offerings actually fit anyone. Some folks just don't like history.

During the Second World War a major effort was made by all participants with air forces to find oxygen masks for aircrew which would fit well and stay in place, using the minimum number of parts in the minimum number of different sizes. This was a struggle, and some candidates for pilots and crew were actually rejected due to not being able to make a mask fit. In fact, just getting flight gloves to fit required overturning multiple assumptions among both civilians and the military. The situation only grew worse as altitude increased and the need for proper protection became greater. After the War partial pressure suits came along, then full pressure suits. The difficulty of fitting wearers of these became even greater. There's a reason space suits are still largely custom fitted. (Though most these days are largely assembled from a range of mass-produced parts.) Then there was the problem with the "average man" cockpit; especially the small cockpits of pursuit, fighter, interceptor and attack planes. When flying a plane every control must be in quick and easy reach for every size and shape of the pilot, something difficult to arrange in a small aircraft. The arrival of jets made things worse, with their

higher speeds and altitudes. Then there was the problem of allowing a wider variety of people fly planes after the War.

By the late Forties there were documented fatalities directly because some pilots had trouble fitting the cockpits and reaching the controls. At its worst point 17 US Air Force pilots crashed in a single day, from simply not being able to work the controls due to pilot misfit.

This was difficult to accept, and for a long while investigators leaned towards pilot error as the cause. Eventually, though, the problem of poor fit of pilot to aircraft had to be accepted.

Aircraft designers weren't stupid, and they had been working on the problem for decades. In fact, they thought it was solved! When the US Army was designing its first-ever aircraft cockpit in 1926 the engineers measured the physical dimensions of hundreds of male pilots and used this data to standardize the dimensions of the cockpit. The size and shape of the seat, the distance from there to the pedals and stick, the height of the windshield above the seat, even the shape of the flight helmets were all intended to conform to the dimensions of an average 1926 pilot. As time passed they even took into account the increase in size — including height — among the population over that span. Yet that still wasn't enough. It was back to the drawing board . . . and the measuring tape.

In 1950, in an attempt to address the problem, researchers at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio measured more than 4,000 pilots on 140 dimensions of size, from foot length, through crotch height to the distance from pilots' eyes to their ears. They then calculated the average for each of these dimensions. Everyone believed this improved calculation of the average pilot would lead to a better-fitting standard cockpit — something which today would be termed ergonomic — and reduce the number of crashes. However, some weren't convinced this process would actually result in an improvement. Newly hired 23-year-old scientist Lt. Gilbert S. Daniels had doubts.

Daniels' undergraduate thesis described a comparison of the shape of 250 male Harvard students' hands and gave the conclusions he drew from the project. The students Daniels examined were from very similar ethnic, socio-cultural and gender backgrounds (that is, they were white and wealthy males). However, in the final analysis their hands were not similar at all. Even more surprising, when Daniels reduced his data the "average" hand he had come up with did not resemble any actual person's measurements. Oh, some people came close in most measurements... though even that might be true for only one of their hands! Consequently, Daniels understandably harbored doubts about the new cockpit design philosophy. How many pilots really were average?

He decided to investigate. Using the size

data gathered by the program Daniels calculated the averages for height, chest circumference and so on for a total of ten characteristics. From these he determined the overall dimensions of the “average pilot.” Daniels decided to use a lot of leeway, and defined this as someone whose measurements were within the middle 30 per cent of the range of values for each dimension. For example, he defined the height of the “average pilot” as ranging from five-seven to five-11, even though the average height from the data was five feet nine inches. Next, Daniels compared each individual pilot, one by one, to the average pilot, for all the measurements.

The consensus among his fellow researchers was that most pilots would be within the average range on most dimensions. The pilots used in the program had actually been pre-selected because they appeared to be average sized. (For example, someone much over six feet tall would never have been recruited in the first place.) Those involved in the project expected that a sizable number of pilots would be within the average range on all 10 measures. However, even Daniels was stunned when he tabulated the actual number: Zero.

Out of 4,063 pilots, not a single airman fit within the average range on all 10 dimensions. One pilot might have arms long for his overall height. Another might have shorter-than-average legs. Another pilot might have a big chest and but a short torso. Daniels even found that if you picked just three of the ten dimensions of size, less than 3.5% of pilots would be average all three dimensions. Daniels’ findings were clear and incontrovertible. There was no such thing as an average pilot. If you’ve designed a cockpit to fit the average pilot, you’ve actually designed it to fit no-one. (Note that during the later Mercury program, Gus Grissom was the shortest of the seven but had the longest torso. The capsule was therefore sized for him!)

The world’s aircraft engineers and designers were stunned. There was no easy answer, no real “average”; not even for a large group of people who roughly counted as “mostly average.” The planes had to adapt to the users rather than the other way around. The designers had to develop a whole new type of fit. (The engineers were actually the easy party to convince. Bureaucrats hatehatehate having to treat people as individuals.)

The US Air Force boldly changed its philosophy, taking a new guiding principle: Individual fit. The US military began fitting the system to the individual. In short order, the Air Force demanded that all cockpits needed to fit pilots whose measurements fell within a range of 5-per-cent to 95-per-cent on each dimension.

Now the airplane manufacturers balked, insisting it would be too expensive and take years to solve the problems involved. The military, having reluctantly made the decision,

now refused to budge. The manufacturers were told to comply if they wanted to sell to the Air Force. Grudgingly, they did. To the surprise of everyone except the engineers, those worthies quickly came up with solutions which were both cheap and easy to implement. They designed adjustable seats, technology now standard in all automobiles. They created adjustable foot pedals, which are also common in some consumer vehicles. They developed adjustable helmet straps and flight suits. (Actually, most of these technologies had been available to some extent in some products for decades.)

Most readers of these columns know I am a fan of the F-104. One of the points of praise some pilots have for the plane was how well the cockpit adjustments worked. Once the pilot had everything properly set every control was easy to reach no matter what the size and shape of the pilot. Score one for the designers.

The “adjustable cockpit” is still not perfect, of course. Even though the initial selection of pilots only accepts people within certain measurements, there are still situations where someone just doesn’t quite fit. Even in automobiles there are compromises which affect the adjustability. Humans are just that variable.

The problem of trying to stick people into narrow categories using physical measurements doesn’t stop there, of course. Worse than fitting clothing or equipment to a mythical average size is the attempt to connect mental characteristics to physical ones.

Daniels, himself, had earlier tried to classify the personalities of people according to their body shapes — a practice known as “typing.” He was far from alone in this. Many physical anthropologists of the time believed a short and heavy body was indicative of a merry and fun-loving personality, while receding hairlines and fleshy lips reflected a “criminal type.”

Naturally, any such association turns out to be strictly in the mind of the beholder.

The problem of trying to fit an “average” or “typical” person also exists in the civilian realm, of course. Shoes are an excellent example. In addition to the variability discussed above, a person’s feet will be slightly different from each other in size and shape. Usually the difference is small enough that fitting the pair of shoes to the larger foot is fine. This is not always the case, though. Also, modern footwear designs and materials are inherently more flexible than older ones, and tend to fit better with few size/shape options available. This is one reason there used to be such a fuss about precisely measuring someone’s feet before even starting to try shoes on. This was especially true of children, since poorly fitted shoes could actually damage growing feet. (Anyone remember foot X-ray machines? Though a gimmick which didn’t actually do much good — and did do much harm — the basic idea was sound: look at the internal structure of the feet to help select the perfect shoe.)

Gloves, shoes, shirts, pants . . . barring custom tailoring all will be an imperfect fit. This goes beyond comfort or fashion. What about

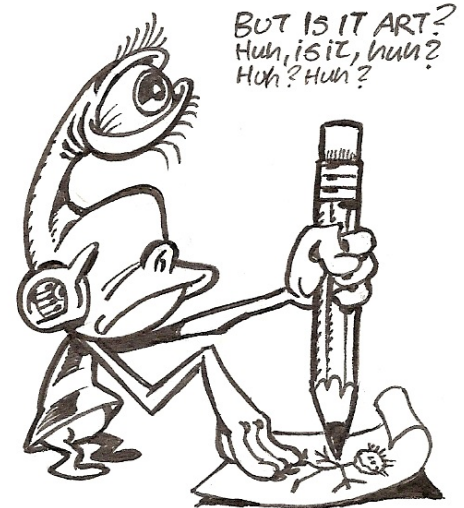
someone who needs a back brace, and can’t find a comfortable one due to being an unusual size/shape? The wrong one could actually make the problem worse, or create new ones.

Another effect of this natural variation is in the field of medical practice. Dosage amount and scheduling for medications should be tailored to the individual. In most cases, the only way to get this exact match is through trial and error. Diabetics must be especially vigilant, due the effects of diet and activity on how much insulin they need.

Things are changing. Already there are cancer treatments which specifically target the cancer of an individual. Implanted insulin pumps automatically meter out only as much as is needed at the moment. As new diagnostic methods are coupled with new fabrication methods, treatments and procedures tailored for each patient will become the norm. The limiting factor then will be the health insurance bureaucracies, who will likely insist in treating everyone the same.

SHORT THOUGHTS FOR THE HUGOS

Review by Sue Burke
of the Hugo short fiction finalists



I’ve read all the short fiction finalists for this year’s Hugo Awards, and I have opinions. Of course.

BEST NOVELLA

“Binti” by Nnedi Okorafor

The protagonist just happens to be able to solve all the problems of the story — too often by coincidence rather than by her own effort. She just happens to have a special artifact, and her cosmetic just happens to . . . well, no spoilers. A dire predicament is solved too easily. However, her anguish at both her danger and her otherness is vividly portrayed, and her home culture proves to hold depth and

strength to help her through her crisis.

“The Builders” by Daniel Polansky

A fairy tale about personified animals – but not for children. The body count is far too high and vivid for children, as is the cold, murderous greed and revenge that motivates the story’s mice, rats, stoats, owls, rattlesnakes, badgers, cats.... Kids would enjoy the jokes and comic asides, though. It might not be my favorite, but it may well be yours.

“Penric’s Demon” by Lois McMaster Bujold

Told with a spare style, generous with humor, low on tension and surprises, and rich with world-building and believable detail. Satisfying, except that it felt more like the start of a novel than like a complete novella.

“Perfect State” by Brandon Sanderson

This Gary Stu is about a brain in a jar “living” in a fantasy world where he is all-powerful and beloved. Then he is ordered to reproduce with a female (also a brain in a jar), and, although this reproduction would be fantasy, for some pointless reason it must be enacted in real-life-like bodies. The story also involves stereotyped women and, of course, a chance for Gary Stu to be a hero.

“Slow Bullets” by Alastair Reynolds

The plot twists back and forth as the survivors of a war disaster discover that they have in fact survived even worse multiple disasters and face grave responsibilities. My only tiny quibble is that the final twist should have been better foreshadowed at the beginning – otherwise, superbly told.

NOVELETTE

“And You Shall Know Her by the Trail of Dead” by Brooke Bolander

A hyper-violent, grim, profanity-ridden love story crammed with more metaphors and similes than a classroom assignment executed by a first-year bipolar MFA student suffering a psychosis-level attack of mania. If I were the professor, I’d give it an A anyway: effective futuristic feel and setting, vivid characters, and compelling plot with a nice twist at the end.

“Flashpoint: Titan” by CHEAH Kai Wai

This story serves as a scaffold for a chronological recital of hardware, especially weapons, employed during a space alien attack, with a predictable plot and characters who exist mostly to activate said hardware. An O’Reilly® reference text, despite certain similarities, offers more human emotion and surprises.

“Folding Beijing” by Hao Jingfang, translated by Ken Liu

The setting turns out to be one big, scary metaphor about current social problems – one of the fine things that science fiction can do best. The style feels a bit odd compared to standard Western storytelling (an observation, not a complaint). In the course of the narration, the idea of folding an entire city, and the reason behind it, becomes believable.

Hao’s story enriches this year’s Hugo ballot.

“Obits” by Stephen King

A burgeoning journalist discovers that he has a unique skill with obituaries. Compared to Brooke Bolander’s story, “Obits” feels tame and bland, and the protagonist is a feckless coward, so the story is shallow: the potential consequences of the skill are avoided rather than explored.

“What Price Humanity?” by David VanDyke

The big surprise is obvious rather early on. One thing this story – and others like it – never explains is why aliens desperately want to conquer Earth’s solar system. What do we have that’s not easily available everywhere else without a fight? The writing is competent, but that isn’t enough to rank this story among the year’s best.

SHORT STORY

“If You Were an Award, My Love” by Juan Tabo and S. Harris

This is neither fiction nor a story – and an obvious insult unworthy of nomination or your time – but at least it is blessedly short.

“Asymmetrical Warfare” by S. R. Algernon

This story goes on too long for its content even though it’s flash fiction: a one-joke monologue from an alien invader who doesn’t understand human biology and is incapable of learning.

“Cat Pictures Please” by Naomi Kritzer

It’s hard to be funny, but this story about a well-meaning, frustrated AI might make you laugh out loud. The story also examines human foibles and dissects our current obsessions, which is a noble use for science fiction. It was my choice for the Nebulas. If you haven’t read it please do:

http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/kritzer_01_15/

“Seven Kill Tiger” by Charles Shao

Part of the *There Will Be War Volume X* anthology, like some other nominees, this story’s war begins as the Chinese – the unredeemably eeevviiiill Chinese – without a second thought prepare to engage in the largest genocide in history, although the biology wouldn’t actually work. A tale told artlessly and unconvincingly.

“Space Raptor Butt Invasion” by Chuck Tingle

Not Hugo material, simply a gay erotic story with science fiction trappings. Lots of typos, too. This was nominated to demean the awards, but Mr. Tingle has handled the situation constructively, with grace and wit, and he deserves respect for that. And the story is not the worst of the nominees, not at all.

2015 SIDEWISE AWARDS

Short Form

- Eneasz Brodski, **“Red Legacy”**, *Asimov’s Science Fiction*, February 2015.
- Eric Cline, **“Elizabethtown”**, *Galaxy’s Edge*, #17 (Nov. 2015).

- Bill Crider, **“It Doesn’t Matter Anymore”**, *Tales from the Otherverse: Stories of Alternate History*, (ed. James Reasoner)
- Rev Dicerto, **“Losing Amelia”**, *Deco Punk: The Spirit of the Age*, (eds. Thomas A. Easton and Judith K. Dial),
- Ken Poyner, **“The Last of Time”**, *Daily Science Fiction*, Nov. 5, 2015.
- James Reasoner, **“The Hero of Deadwood”**, *Tales from the Otherverse: Stories of Alternate History*, (ed. James Reasoner)

Long Form

- Julie Mayhew, ***The Big Lie***
- Tony Schumacher, ***The British Lion***
- Harry Turtledove, ***Joe Steele***

(Two Operation Sealion books and Stalin in America. Yes, I know that Mayhew and Schumacher are setting their stories many years afterwards, it’s still the tiredest and most thoroughly debunked trope of AH.)

WORLDCON BIDS

2017 NASFiC

San Juan, Puerto Rico
<http://www.sanjuan2017.org/>

Valley Forge

<http://www.valleyforge2017.org/>

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

Boston
Dallas/Fort Worth

2022

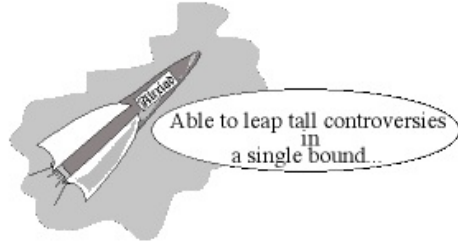
Chicago
Doha, Qatar

2023

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

2025

Perth, Australia

Letters, we get letters


From: **Tom Feller** June 18, 2016
TomFeller@aol.com

Thanks for sending the zine. Milton Stevens knows me, and I know several people who work on Dragoncon. They have started the Dragon Awards for which there are fifteen categories:

- Best Science Fiction Novel
- Best Fantasy Novel (Including Paranormal)
- Best Young Adult/Middle Grade Novel
- Best Military Science Fiction or Fantasy Novel
- Best Alternate History Novel
- Best Apocalyptic Novel
- Best Horror Novel
- Best Comic Book
- Best Graphic Novel
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy TV Series
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Movie
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy PC/Console Game
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Mobile Game
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Board Game
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Miniatures/Collectible Card/Role-Playing Game

There is no requirement to be a member of Dragoncon or any other convention, but nominators are limited to one nomination per category. Then those who nominate vote on the final ballot. I participated, although I am grossly unqualified to nominate in the game categories and, as usual, so far behind in my reading that I even left most of the fiction categories empty.

How are they going to keep Skeets Kalbfleischer, who has a RPG Character Name Generator program and can write code to create email addresses based on that, from nominating his epic adventure *Kalbs the Superb*, available on his own website, one million times?

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** June 17, 2016
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL

33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

I did read part of *Alexiad* and enjoyed the Blackadder piece; and I noticed your piece on steampunk vehicles and the expedition, so I thought you might like these steampunk bookmarks — and I tossed in my *Strike Three* bookmark in case I never sent it to you.

Thank you.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** June 24, 2016
 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA
 93063-3834 USA
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In *Alexiad* #87, you have the lists of the Hugo and Retro Hugo nominees for the year. With the standard Hugos people can debate what “best” really means and technical issues without number. The Retro Hugos are even more complex. The Hugo Awards are for work in the science fiction and fantasy fields. These days that includes anything some dimwit might mistake for science fiction or fantasy. Anything at all. Things weren’t quite the same in 1940. Science fiction and fantasy were genres which were published in pulp magazines. That was about it.

In the Retro Hugo novel category, *The Ill Made Knight* is the best novel and T. H. White is the best writer. However, it is a mainstream novel, and T. H. White was a mainstream writer. Arthurian stories were very much mainstream in the 19th century and are still pretty much mainstream today. In 1940, probably some fans had heard of T. H. White, but he really wasn’t in our field. Smith, Van Vogt, and Williamson were definitely in our field.

It may be *The Plot Against America Syndrome*: “Gee, a Big Name Mundane Writer actually wrote some skiffy! Let’s give him an award!”

It Can’t Happen Here is arguably science fiction. It’s another example of a mainstream novel that some fans might have been aware of. *The Robe* and *The Silver Chalice* are examples of mainstream bestsellers which might have been considered fantasies is you didn’t mind a whole bunch of controversy. I would consider the idea of inanimate objects having magical properties to be fantasy. Knights looking for the Holy Grail is also fantasy. Some people might disagree.

The nomination for *Kallocain* is particularly strange. I’d never even heard of the work before it was nominated. I seriously doubt any of the fans of 1940 would have heard of it. I take this to be a “we were alive at the time” nomination. I don’t think anybody really thinks it was the best novel of the year.

I suspect some of the 2017 WorldCon people do. Swedish is a second language in Finland, and the locals may have nominated a local book.

— JTM

I’ve got a strange issue in the dramatic presentation long form category. *Fantasia* and *The Thief of Bagdad* are first rate movies and well worth an award. However, *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* is one of my childhood favorites. I’ve seen it again in recent years, and I think it’s one of the best serials ever. It’s hard to ignore childhood favorites.

From: **John Purcell** June 29, 2016
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Ah, yes, this is the 87th issue of *Alexiad*, and once again I am glad to see it. Despite all that is going on in your world, I hope that this fanzine serves as a lifeline; in many ways, that is how my fanzines affect my life. I do hope that things turn around for you and Lisa in the very near future.

My wife likewise freaks out at spiders. Unless it’s a big honker and/or I recognize one as a potentially hazardous (read: venomous) spider, they don’t bother me at all. They are subsequently smushed or destroyed underfoot or by some other implement in the end, so I applaud Lisa’s humanitarian solution. That would never happen in our house. Outside, that’s another story because spiders serve a purpose in nature, especially since we have a vegetable garden. Out there these critters are gainfully employed, and so far this summer they are performing their job admirably. Ergo, they live. Heaven help them should they slack off and decide to take a break from the Texas heat indoors.

As you well know, Joseph, my wife and I enjoy reading Steampunk literature and attend such events in full costume, so your article “A Steampunk Vehicle?” is a bit of fun. I so enjoy reading old dime novels and pulp adventures for the same reasons as many other fans, but this real life contraption sounds like something straight out of a Scott Westerfield novel. Frankly, I am not surprised that the Third Byrd Antarctic Expedition in 1939 developed this vehicle; that Snow Cruiser is a pretty damned awesome bit of engineering for its time. I like your closing paragraph, and might just take you up on this idea. I promise to not credit you as the originator of the idea. That way if this sells and becomes a best-seller, movie rights result, and then is a blockbuster Michael Bay-produced movie in which not only do the Nazis living underneath the Antarctic ice cap in miles-deep caverns get defeated, but the entire continent blows up, causing the planet’s polar alignment to flip over in a heartbeat, all of which will require gargantuan explosions and Special Effects up the wazoo — only then will you be

able to sue me for copyright infringement and be rewarded ungodly sums of money, making your retirement — what's left of it by then — a life of ease with your beloved Lisa. I'll get right on it.

The Snow Cruiser was designed by Thomas Poulter, who had been on Byrd's second Antarctic Expedition. He had taken one of the expedition's motor vehicles and rescued Byrd when he was dying of carbon monoxide poisoning. (Read *Alone* (1938) by Byrd for that harrowing story.) The vehicle in question was half-tracked, and Poulter seems to have been looking at the wrong end.

— JTM

You know, I started reading "The Old Oil Lamp War" by Robin Usher, and as I went along I found myself first angry at how ridiculous this entire argument was, how disjointed it was, until my anger shifted completely over to disbelief. By the time I got halfway through I began thinking, "this has got to be a pastiche of one of Robin Bright's (PhD) fan articles" because it was all so ludicrous. The grammar alone was nuts. Mighod, the mile-long sentences were beyond compound-complex construction, moving into Brobdinagian proportions rivaling the obfuscation of mid-19th century transcendentalism tomes. This article is definitely academic writing of the Piled Higher and Deeper variety. This has to be a parody, right? Please tell me you made this up. Please?

I am not going to get into any discussion of the Hugo nominees and this year's strategy of the Sad and Rapid Pound Puppies. All I can do is shake my head and move along.

A fine letter column, sir, as usual, but nothing of note leaps out at me right now, so I believe I shall sign off and get on with my day. In fact, what I really need to do is get cracking on the final sections of *Askance* #37 so I can have that fershlugginer zine completed by the end of the 4th of July weekend. It can be done.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** July 18, 2016
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Thank you for Vol. 15, No. 3 (May 2016), Whole Number 87.

A couple of months ago I was in the Friends of the Camarillo Library Bookstore. There were a number of DVDs on sale and among them was *FARSCAPE*. After a lot of thought I purchased the first two which included the Premier Episode. Total cost \$4.00. Each week after that I checked to see if any of the other DVDs were still there.

They were and obviously were not selling. So, after a couple of months I asked the person at the counter if there was someone who could agree to a further reduction in the cost of DVDs. She took me into the back room where people handed recently donate books, etc. A rather humorless man who was apparently in charge said NO. After a few moments he then said: "Unless it's *FARSCAPE*". I said it is *FARSCAPE*. So, we went out front and he took another dollar off the prices. I now have a multitude of *FARSCAPE* DVDs. There are something like 67 episodes along with numerous EXTRAS. There are some missing episodes. But, that's ok because I will usually in my mind be able to fill in the blanks. Also, I will skip episodes that don't interest me. In addition there have been a couple of episodes that I either never saw or don't remember. A number of the DVDs are still in shrink-wrap and have never been opened. Total cost for all the DVDs, including the first purchase — \$20.00.

With the failed coup in Turkey the Atatürk revolution is over and the Islamists have won. The would be Islamist dictator will now proceed with getting rid of all persons (military, judicial, journalists, etc.) who have disagreed with him. It's a sad time and future for Turkey.



Tara Wayne: *Arthur Christmas*, *The Nut Job*, and *Over the Hedge* are all available at my city library in the Children's section. Since you enjoyed them I will probably check them out.

Richard A. Dengrove: I have two volumes regarding Amendment IX. *THE RIGHTS RETAINED BY THE PEOPLE: The History and Meaning of the Ninth Amendment*, Edited by Randy E. Barnett (George Mason University Press.). The first volume is 1989 and the second volume is 1993. "For two hundred years the Supreme Court of the United States never seriously considered a general constitutional right to liberty; at the same time it has, with few exceptions, treated the Ninth Amendment as though it were an ink blot." I don't remember purchasing these books. But, they are both autographed by Randy Barnett.

Well, I've voted for the Hugo's and the Retro Hugo's. I very much hope that *The Martian* wins Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form) Andy Weir wins The John W. Campbell Award. I voted in some categories and left some others blank. But, the only ones I really care about are the two mentioned.

That's it for now.

The Force Awakens has its moments, too. But I'm afraid they'll cancel out and *Mad Max: Fury Road* will win.

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** July 21, 2016
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Thank you for *Alexiad* 87, and as is my habit, here comes some commentary on what I find inside. Inside is also a good place to be on a hot summer day.

I know where you are, Joe... I have not been able to find work, and my employment benefits are about to run out. However, much of the benefits have gone into a bank account, and I still have some savings, so that will keep me going. We are definitely going on our long-awaited trip to England for a couple of weeks of tourist, Harry Potter and steampunk fun, but as soon as we're back, I must find some kind of work. I have progressives, too, and it seems every year, my prescription changes radically.

There's a topic for discussion...are we past the age of the collector? We see value in what we gather, and we hope for a payday sometime in the future, but few others see value in our collection...is there yet value to realize as cash, or is it now just pretty paper for recycling?

I mentioned getting those fliers for "limited edition special collectables" where the "limit" was the number of purchasers. It isn't just painted plates and cute figurines, either; back in the sixties, the post office printed up a whole batch of misprinted commemorative stamps because a collector had found one sheet that had a misprint. Spoilsports.

I have now such a difficult time generating any interest in the Hugos, but it is always interesting to see who is bidding for future Worldcons, and there is now more of the world in it. I won't be able to go to any of these, but still, seeing bids from New Zealand, Paris and Qatar shows some life in the old con.

The local... I do not believe I've become over-specialized in my work, but I think I can safely say that my skills have become obsolete. I have been trying to apply them to advertising and other industries, but no luck...so far.

Well, three years after the Java language was introduced, HR staffers demanded a minimum of ten years' experience programming in Java for new hires.

— JTM

Our Syrian refugees have been fitting in locally just fine. In fact, Yvonne's office has hired one of them, and he has started off well. There was plenty of screening to make sure we weren't facilitating a terrorist cell anywhere, and most of the refugees we took were mothers and children and fathers. I hope nothing bad will happen, but all possible screens were in place to make sure.

I gave this a second read, and I am afraid I have done what I can. Thank you for this issue, and I hope I can do better with the next one.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** July 23, 2016
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As usual, I found a lot to write about in your zine. More than I could ever write about. As usual I had to cut down the topics. Do I feel strongly enough about this topic to write about it, I ask myself. There is only one topic where I stifle myself beforehand, politics. I don't wish to outstay my welcome.

Early on, I saw a topic that I was very interested in, eyes. Of course, especially mine. Joe, you, on the other hand, I am sure, are more interested in yours, particularly since you are looking forward to paying a bundle for progressive lenses.

I got my last glasses from a company on the web called Zenni. Mine were not only progressive but photochromic, yet they only cost \$80. While I don't know what they would cost now, you might want to check Zenni out. I have been very happy with mine. Of course, whether you would also be satisfied with Zenni is a matter of opinion. My wife Heidi wasn't happy with hers.

Regardless of the cost, I like the technology in my glasses. Technology has done a lot for us. Of course, there are more possibilities for technology if you are not bound by scientific realities, and you don't mind they are limited to science fiction.

In fact, it's fair game to use outmoded technology in a Steampunk or Dieselpunk novel. It would even be legitimate to use the airplanes with four decks, you mention, Joe. For me, that would be true even if a wonder like that was the product of publicists who were out to give you a bright future if they had to violate Newton's laws.

Certainly, it would be legitimate to have some professor come up with gravity's negative charge, AKA anti-gravity, which allows us to fly in outer space. Nothing was considered amiss with anti-gravity until 1910 when Einstein's Theory of Relativity proved gravity had nothing in common with magnetism, and positive and negative charges. Before then, around 1900, writers, like H.G. Wells, George Griffith and Garrett P. Serviss wrote novels where people were boosted into outer space through anti-gravity devices.

Anti-gravity and four deck airplanes are

just two of infinite possibilities for imaginary tech, as the flourishing of Steampunk proves. The possibilities only stop when the technology sounds childish, like the man eating cheeseburgers in *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2*.

However, while the technology in that picture is for kids, I disagree with Taral Wayne that there was nothing for adults in it. I think the idea of a childhood hero being a villain hits the mark, even for adults. ... Especially for adults. Many of my childhood heroes, I later found to have feet of clay.

Of course, I found out later still that my childhood heroes had extenuating circumstances. But you can only appreciate that when you get even older.

Thus, I disagree with that particular criticism of Taral's. Do I disagree with Taral on *The Good Dinosaur*? Not sufficiently to go hand to hand with him with computers. Instead, I have an observation about humans somehow evolving with dinosaurs, like the film portrays.



I gather the belief now is evolution depends on chance at all stages. Maybe human/dino evolution would happen in one of the infinite alternate time lines. However, I imagine, simply because of chance, in most timelines, no species as intelligent as us evolves; or that an intelligent species of dinosaur might evolve.

Of course, such thinking is not proper when you're talking about children's fare, which this movie is. Kids yearn to have evolved beside dinosaurs.

To answer the conundrum of human/dinosaur evolution, we can summon a lot of knowledge. It is all around us in the geological strata. For the conundrum of the Norse colony in Vineland, we can summon very little.

Was it marginal to the population of Greenland, or a comparable population? I am sure you are right, Joe; and only a few houses were found at L'Anse aux Meadows. Did the person who estimated a colony of 1,000 presume more based on those few, though? And was he justified?

Where a few archaeological structures exist, did that archaeologist presume more that have yet to be dug up? Is that why he estimated a colony of a 1,000 Norse? The estimate, you object to, Joe. If he did, what do other archaeologists think?

I gather some buildings devoted to weaving, iron-working and other things indicate a much

larger population, if only further south.

There is another question beside the one I ask above: will I miss that estimate of the Vineland population if it is debunked? I don't know. I hope I am not committed to the number 1,000 for the population of the L'Anse aux Meadows Norse.

I do know one thing, however. I will miss Sue Burke's letters to us from Spain. They make Spain come alive far more than any statistics, like Vineland population's. Unfortunately, she is leaving Iberia.

Fortunately, I won't have to miss the debate on duplicates even if this is the tail end. I think my point was whether a duplicate person was the same or different than the original depended on our perspective.

George Price is right that a duplicate should not be allowed to get away with the original's crimes. On the other hand, the original's property belongs only to the original and the original's wife remains married only to the original.

I only differ in one respect. I am not certain that if Hitler created fifty copies of himself, we shouldn't let them live. I believe that Hitler's charisma existed because there was only one of him. Whom he met and what he said, at particular times, made him the most powerful man in the world.

Hitler's duplicates would be unlikely to have the same luck with their associates and their words. If I remember correctly, that was Ira Levin's conclusion in *The Boys from Brazil* (1976) For that reason, none of Hitler clones in that novel had much impact on the world at large.

Since they were boys, their effect on world politics would be minimal at the time. But then, Libermann destroyed Mengele's list of the clones. (It was remotely possible that the real Mengele could have seen the movie.)

— JTM

Of course, what I say about Hitler is based on a contrary assumption. I haven't been criticized for it yet, though. However, Taras Wolansky criticized me for making a contrary assumption about extraterrestrials when I argued against the Fermi Paradox. He did this even though I admitted I made an assumption.

My assumption being that the conclusions of modern science are correct, and it will remain impossible to travel faster than the speed of light. Those conclusions currently pretty much bar everyone from going faster than light. Also, I made the assumption we know of no way for either intelligent beings or intelligent self-replicating robots to populate the whole universe. I admit modern science permits the possibility of such robots, but they remain from a reality.

On the other hand, supporters of the Fermi Paradox are making another assumption, that some planet's science will progress enough for

them to travel faster than light and populate the stars. It is an assumption nonetheless.

My answer is we have no crystal ball. We don't really know how science will progress on different planets. Maybe no planet will ever discover how to travel faster than light. Maybe none will ever learn how to make robots infinitely self-replicating. We don't even know if, unlike humans, how many extraterrestrials would be interested.

With my statement on the Fermi Paradox, I will end this letter. We have covered glasses, Diesel Punk, dinosaurs, the Norse in North America, Sue Burke, human duplication, and Fermi and his paradox. Perhaps, I will, at some point, discuss the Decans, which are astronomic divisions originating in ancient Egypt.

From: **George W. Price** July 26, 2016
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June *Alexiad*:

Robin Usher's "The Old Oil Lamp War" puzzles me greatly. Was it intended as a satire? It reminds me of the way conspiracy theorists weave together many disparate and apparently unrelated strands to come up with something for which there is actually no evidence at all.

Whatever Usher intended, he (or she) lost me right at the start, when he garbled the framing story of *One Thousand and One Nights*. Usher says: "The fiction is that Shah Jehan was the Mogul ruler who beheaded his wife, Mumtaz Mahal, for alleged unfaithfulness with his brother. Scheherazade told the mad Jehan stories to calm him and stop him from marrying a new wife each day and beheading her each evening. . . . [So] Scheherazade saved the women of the Mogul Empire in India."

In the Burton translation it is King Shahryar whose queen is unfaithful to him, but not with his brother. Her paramour is "a black cook of loathsome aspect and foul with kitchen grease and grime." Shahryar then discovers that his brother King Shah Zaman of Samarcand also has a wife who is carrying on with a slave, "a big, slobbering blackamoor." (Note the blatant racism in both cases.) It is King Shahryar who takes to marrying and beheading a new wife each day until Scheherazade dissuades him.

Shah Jehan of the Mogul Empire has absolutely nothing to do with any of this. Jehan (also spelled Jahan) is famed for building the Taj Mahal as a memorial to his beloved late wife Mumtaz Mahal, several hundred years after the *One Thousand and One Nights* stories appeared.

When an author gets one thing so wildly wrong, it makes me wonder what else he may have screwed up that I didn't catch, and I find it hard to take him seriously about anything.

Usher uses the word "futanarian" several

times, as in "futanarian sexual reproduction." It's not in my unabridged dictionary. However, an online search indicates that it refers to women with penises. So I presume that Usher is talking about women reproducing without needing men.

I also notice a typographical oddity. Throughout Usher's piece the grave accent mark is used instead of quotation marks and apostrophes. I can't believe he wrote it that way, so I assume it's an error introduced when his original went through *Alexiad*'s composition program.

By the way, the framing story that introduces *One Thousand and One Nights* is the only piece of fiction I can recall in which a woman rapes a man — in fact, two men at the same time. She says to Shahryar and Shah Zaman, "Stroke me a strong stroke, without stay or delay, otherwise will I arouse and set upon you this Ifrit who shall slay you straightway." This is probably not the kind of female empowerment that feminists have in mind.

**They charge extra for that,
too. More commonly it's two
women and one man, which means
twice the pay for half the work.**

* * * * *

The 1941 Retro Hugo finalists include Heinlein's "Blowups Happen" in the novelette category. The enthusiastic reception of this story when it appeared shows how our society has changed. At the time, there was little or no criticism of the basic premise that we would build a power plant that we knew would kill vast multitudes if it went out of control. Nowadays this would be regarded as a self-evident absurdity. Our attitude toward risk-taking has changed enormously, and may even have shifted too far toward no risk at all.

**"The dire events of the
Gerlache expedition demonstrate
that Antarctic exploration is
inherently too stressful for the
human psyche. We must ban this
dangerous activity."**

* * * * *

Richard Dengrove agrees with me that light rail is too expensive, but thinks I will disagree with his solution: "I figure, with the money we paid for the Washington, DC Metro, we could run the bus system for free. If bus service were free, a lot of people wouldn't need cars, and traffic would thin somewhat. No guarantee of this with light rail."

I am dubious, but not just because of the expense. A much bigger obstacle is that Americans really really like to drive. We love the ability to travel exactly when and where we please without being tied to bus routes and schedules. There's also the psychic pleasure of

personally controlling that big mass of metal. Many — perhaps most — of us will drive if we possibly can, heedless of the extra expense compared to public transit.

(Actually, I am one of the exceptions. For most of my working life I never owned a car; I went to work by bus and elevated train. I also didn't own a house, and when I rented an apartment, I always made sure it was close to a train stop. I own a car now, but only because after I retired I married a woman who already had one, and I inherited it when she died three years ago. I'll admit it does come in handy now that I am old and much less willing to stand in the cold and snow waiting for a bus.)

Mass transit started in the days when most people had to live within walking distance of where they worked. We might even say that the advent of streetcars pretty much killed the "company town" and gave the working class a much wider selection of jobs, which added pressure on the bosses to pay competitive wages. We might also note that government deserved no credit — the streetcars were installed by entrepreneurs looking to make a profit, not to liberate the working man.

Of course this was too good to last. In Chicago (and I suspect in most other big cities) the politicians found privately-owned transit to be an irresistible honey pot for graft, since the companies had to get permission to use the city streets. Chicago's private companies were never permitted to set fares quite high enough to sustain operations and make a decent profit, and by the time I became aware of such things, circa 1940, the streetcar and rapid transit companies were in receivership. The city took them over in 1947 and set up the Chicago Transit Authority — while, of course, blaming the companies for bad management. Under public ownership, the fares cover only half the cost of the service, and taxpayers shoulder the rest.

I sometimes wonder what would happen if Chicago's mass transit were thrown back to private ownership. I'd guess that the elevated trains would make a go of it (with sharply higher fares), while most of the bus lines would disappear and be replaced by privately-owned jitney cabs like we see in many third-world cities. I now have a personal interest in this, since one of my stepdaughters has begun driving for Uber, which is giving the taxicab companies very stiff competition. Jitneys may be next.

* * * * *

Sue Burke informs us that she and her husband are moving to Chicago. Welcome!

Fair warning: the Burkes might be best advised to settle in the suburbs, not the city itself, which is very poorly governed — though not as poorly as the State of Illinois. I won't go into the horrid details, since *Alexiad* now forbids political jeremiads. That's why my last letter was so much shorter than usual — the editor cut most of it.

See their new address in
Sue's LoC below.

— JTM

Sue also mentions one advantage of buses: "they're reading rooms on wheels." Amen, sister. That's one big reason I always took trains and buses to work. Driving would have cost me an hour or more a day of reading time.

* * * * *

Taras Wolansky, discussing *To Kill a Mockingbird*, says, "There may once have been a world in which white women routinely made false accusations of rape against noble, upstanding black men. In our world, rape victims are — usually — telling the truth."

Many years ago my mother told me that when she was a student at the University of Chicago, around 1920, other girls in her dormitory advised her that if she was ever raped, she should say it was by a black man. She would then be given a "dilation and curettage" — that is, a preventive abortion done without waiting to find out if she was pregnant. But if she reported that the attacker was white, she would just have to take her chances on pregnancy. (This obviously applied only when the rapist was not caught, and the girl's word was all there was.) We might suspect that this policy resulted in blacks being blamed for many more rapes than they had actually committed, thus reinforcing the racist belief that blacks were prone to raping white women.

From: **Sue Burke** July 30, 2016
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After two weeks of frantic activity and large expenditures of cash, I'm more or less settled in the Edgewater neighborhood in Chicago. If you look at a map of the city, I'm right at the north end of Lake Shore Drive, right around the corner from the Bryn Mawr station on the Red Line "L" in an area known for its busy urban mix, historic buildings, and beaches.

Since the last LOC, my husband and I finished packing up our Madrid apartment, selling and giving away a lot of stuff, then a local affiliate of Allied Van Lines hauled 72 boxes away and trucked them to Valencia, to be loaded onto a ship probably on August 4 and carried first to New York Harbor and finally to Chicago. With luck, we'll see them by early September, although there's a one in ten chance that Homeland Security will decide to give them a thorough examination, in which case it will take somewhat longer and cost somewhat more.

In addition, we've crossed the ocean twice,

rented an apartment, bought a car (a black 2015 Chevy Sonic), bought smart phones, unpacked several very big suitcases, and bought furniture at Ikea — which we assembled successfully without injuring ourselves or murdering each other. We now need to get Illinois driver's licenses, which involves some IDs we don't have, but the nice man at the DMV told us how to get them. Then we have to take a vision exam, written exam, and road exam. I must brush up on my parallel parking.

One sad consequence of this cash hemorrhage is that I can't afford to go to Worldcon, even though it's relatively close. I'll just stay home and write. Elsewhere in this 'zine I've shared a few thoughts about the short fiction on the Hugo ballot. We'll see if the majority agrees with me.

I've noticed that the humidity in Chicago is about three times that of Madrid, and in a hot summer, this makes a big, sticky difference. It also makes for a much more verdant landscape. The Midwest is green and beautiful.

Meanwhile, I have a lot more to learn about this place where I have begun a new chapter in my life.

We look forward to your
reports on Windycon.

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** August 1, 2016
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This letter is much later than I had planned. Because I did not plan to have an interruption in my Internet service lasting for about 41 days.

A tree or something fell on the telephone line leading to my house, breaking one of the wires. That left me with no telephone and no Internet. I logged a problem with my local telecoms monopoly. Interestingly enough, it was only on my first call that I have to wait for longer than about a minute to talk to somebody at the service centre. On previous occasions I had issues, it took about 20 minutes on hold before you spoke to a human. Unfortunately, they still have not fixed the problem that their helpdesk does not talk to their technicians, nor the one where speaking to two different call center people will get you two different stories.

After a week, the call was closed by a technician, without restoring my service. I then logged a second call. It only became clear a week later that this was not actually a call that was sent to a technician for action, but only one so that the call center could get hold of the technician who closed the previous call, so that they could ask him why he had closed the call. It took a week, but the service center finally got hold of him: He was employed on a contract basis, and his contract was not renewed. So he closed all the calls assigned to him, before he left. (Apparently one more reason why his

contract was not renewed.)

Call two was now closed, and call three was opened. After a week I heard that a technician had investigated, and asked that part of the telephone cable be replaced. This was assigned to another competency, and it took them a couple of days to come out and put in the new cable. They did not splice in the new cable. After another week I got lucky, and was connected to the technician just assigned to my call. I had a pleasant conversation, and the next morning a couple of nice and competent technicians showed up and fixed my line. Since the previous telephone cable was the best part of twenty years old, once the new cable went in, I received a boost in line speed: I could now get 90% of what I was paying for, instead of the 65% if I am lucky, previously.

So after a month, my problems had been solved. I could start to catch up on all the email that have queued, and get around to doing all the things I had not been able to do.

Unfortunately, one day later my line went down again. I suspect that the cable guys came by to splice in the new cable, and to remove the old one. Since they did not know that was already done, they spliced in the old cable and removed the new one. So I logged my fourth call. This time round I was attended too relatively soon, and had my line back after a week. My line speed had now dropped to 80% of what I am paying for, but since I have had it now for a couple of weeks, I am not complaining much.

During the time the line was down I investigated a couple of alternative options. What I want is fiber. And there are three potential options for me. Unfortunately option one flamed out. Option two is apparently starting to survey the environment, hoping to start work on laying cables by 1 August. And option three is moving closer, claiming that they will have finished laying their cables by 1 January. So, nothing currently available in my area. It is also an expensive to very expensive option, but at significantly better capacity and speed than what I currently have.

I also tried a wireless connection. I live in a valley which is apparently quite convoluted, especially with relation to the radio wavelengths in use by the various providers. So I cannot get a good enough signal to reliably get a fast enough connection. For instance, some days I had difficulty in connecting to my mail server, and could not even download my emails. Even so, this was better than nothing. While the initial hardware is cheap and it is very easy to get working, once you start using it, the bandwidth is very expensive.

Onwards: The cold came slowly this year. It was only in July, after the Winter solstice, that I saw frost. I do not know how much of my experience this winter has been shaped by my changed work hours, where I get up later and leave for work two hours later than previously. But I have not experienced this as a cold winter.

We even had rain at the beginning and middle of winter, which is unusual. (One reason

why we get snow only one day every decade or so.) I hope the rains will see my mother through this year – They had a very dry last year, and this year had also been mostly dry. A bad time to be farming. But so far they have survived. Even with a thousand less sheep than last year. Even though the predators have eaten a significant part of this year's lamb crop.

My mother is not a great fan of the Square Kilometer Array (SKA). Her farm is in the area that will be affected by building and operations, but only in a later phase. Her main complaint is that the people selling the concept to the locals had lied about what the project entails, and what the effect of that will be on the surrounding area. They had also been very careful about not mentioning what will happen in the next phases. The next phases are now starting, and is starting to affect the local community.

In phase one two farms were bought out, and the initial work was done. Currently, in phase two, they want to buy out 35 more farms.

It looks as if the government was expecting a bunch of uneducated hicks that could be pushed around easily. Which is why one of their tactics is to show up unannounced on a farm on a Saturday afternoon, with a contract stating that the owner will sell the farm to the SKA organization at a price to be determined later, by the buyer. And where the owners are threatened with eminent domain if they refuse to sign.

It also looks as if the environmental impact study was so thorough that they somehow missed that there is an artillery test range 70km away from the center point of the SKA. The SKA organization now want the artillery range to close down, so that it would not interfere with the SKA's operations. My mother state that it looks as if they want to close down all human or economic activity within a 100km radius of the center of the SKA.

They managed to prevent the building of a wind farm, and is trying to shut down the solar plants already built and operational, about 70 km from the centre.

Taking these 35 farms over will have economic consequences: Removing 15 000 lambs from the market per 10 month lambing cycle. The farmers will be gone. Their workers will be gone. A large part of the local economy will be gone, and the SKA is not going to replace it. And the local town is sliding more and more into being just another welfare town – being kept alive only because there is a large number of people being paid a monthly dependency amount.

But the one aspect where the government had seriously miscalculated was about the education of these hicks: The Northern Cape is the province with a hunger for education not found anywhere else in the country. Perhaps because of the limited local opportunities, denizens of the Northern Cape had to educate

themselves and find jobs elsewhere. So that when the government had their initial meetings with the farmers, one of the people present was a retired senior advocate. Who made use of the opportunity to educate the locals and the government to the limits of what the government can legally do.

Not that that have stopped the government in the past: Soon after 1994, the provincial big bug regarding Education lived under the delusion that she could run the province's schools via telegram. I.e. she would send a telegram to the schools which would announce a policy which the school had to implement immediately. This burned up an enormous amount of goodwill, and in the end, money. As the schools fought back legally. I once heard of an advocate involved in the fights: He lost one of the 92 cases where he represented the schools, on a technicality, and won the rest. And every time, once the government had lost the legal fight, they had the votes to change the law to make legal what they wanted. So that in the end the MEC for Education could send a telegram to a school and expect the headmaster of the school to have no option but to do what he was ordered.

This is one of the reasons why the Northern Cape had a lot of schools close down permanently. And the ones left tend to have more and more pupils crammed into them. My one sister is a teacher in the Northern Cape, and is looking to get out of there. Unfortunately, the province to which she want to move to is so attractive jobs wise that she have not yet been able to compete successfully for one.

I heard that on one occasion similar jobs was offered both in that province and in Gauteng – requiring the same qualifications but with a better salary in Gauteng, and the Gauteng job received 10 applications and the other one 126.

We have local government elections on 3 August. The ANC is expected to be hammered in the polls. Currently they are expected to lose control over the major cities of Pretoria, Port Elizabeth and maybe even Johannesburg. Which will have interesting ramifications at the next national elections in two years' time.

Unfortunately, from an economic perspective, most of the alternatives are as bad or worse. Just about every single political party in South Africa have as their economic foundation a belief that they can make socialism work. The degrees of socialism differ, but all of them know that what you need is high taxes, lots of regulation, and paying people to remain poor.

The good thing is that just about everybody else is so far less corrupt than the ANC.

There is also a lot of pre-election violence. In many cases it looks as if this is the only way the locals can get the politicians to take them seriously. But the bloodshed and wasted lives that result of this will have long-lasting aftereffects. For instance, in Limpopo there is an area that was affected by a demarcation issue, who were moved into a different voting

district. Because the locals were unhappy, they ended up burning down 30 schools. I do not know how the children in that area are ever going to get educated or use education to get ahead any time in the next twenty years.

There have been something like 17 candidates murdered. It looks as if most of them by somebody else in their party who wanted to become the candidate but lost out. In Pretoria, we had ANC members rioting, looting foreign owned shops and burning busses, because they did not like the candidate put forward by the party as mayor.

One of the minor things that is affecting this election and may make it less legitimate, has been a couple of court cases brought in by minor parties. They essentially got the administrators of Southern African elections, the IEC (Independent Electoral Commission), to admit in court that they have been doing an incompetent job with the voter's roll. That they do not know how many of the registered voters are actually living at the addresses supplied, and that they think that with a bit of effort they will need five years to fix the current problems. The last news I heard is that the judge ordered this year's elections to go ahead, with the current voter's roll, but that the IEC have 18 months to fix it, before the next elections.

Voting day has been declared a public holiday. I expect to have to queue for a couple of hours to get to the polls. Same as last time. And, like last time, I expect that the voting area will be spacious and sparsely populated. With one person and one machine to vet voters being the holdup. With a queue of a couple of hundred voters (of the about 3500 eligible voters), waiting to be vetted before they can enter the voting area.

In the meantime, I still read my Science Fiction, and meet with likeminded people. Where we can discuss things other than crime and politics and how the world is going to Hell.

I wish you less exciting times ahead.

WAHF:

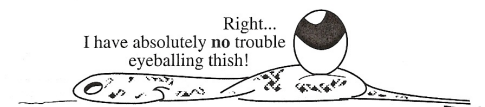
Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Martin Morse Wooster, the same.

Guy Lillian, announcing forthcoming zines.

Fred Lerner, Earl Kemp, Bruce Gillespie who got it.

Alexis Gilliland, who still must have computer problems, but sent more art.



DEAR ABBY From the Gotham Gazette

Dear Abby:

I love my boyfriend very much and he loves me. We've been through some terrible times together since way back when we were children. He does ever so much for me and I try to do what I can for him. Some nights we meet someplace, or go out together, and have a wonderful time.

But he keeps on locking me up, just because I go places he thinks I shouldn't and borrow things. And some of his friends don't trust me. He sees the world in terms of black and white, and I see only shades of gray. What can I do?

Signed, "Moon Cat"

Dear Moon Cat,

If you two care for each other as much as you say you do, and if you two have survived hard times together, you can come together and work this out. You should stop this behavior he finds wrong for your own sake. It sounds as if it could get you into real trouble with others, not just him.

GEORGE LUCAS'S "THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION"

. . . Darth Natas brought his sabre across and with one mighty blow smote off Arnold's sword hand. In shock and agony he staggered back, and at the last moment, grabbed the rail on the platform of the mighty *Ziz*, The Terror's greatest ship of the air, with his remaining hand to keep from falling off.

Darth Natas's voice boomed, "ARNOLD BUBBELEH, SUCH IMPORTANCE YOU HAVE. YOUR POWER YOU HAVE NOT EVEN DISCOVERED. WITH ME YOU JOIN, THESE WARS WE CAN END AND BRING ORDER TO THE WORLD."

"I'll never join you! Never!"

"FLASHMAN NEVER TOLD YOU WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR TATA."

In his shock Arnold cried, "He told me enough! He told me *you* killed him!"

"OY, SUCH A LIAR HE WAS. I AM YOUR TATA!"

"No! No! That's not true! It's impossible!"

"YOUR FEELINGS YOU SEARCH, NU? AND TRUE YOU WILL KNOW IT IS."

"Nooooo!" Arnold said and he let go, falling into the ocean below.

Natasha stood on the deck of the *Ariel*, staring into the night. She heard a voice. Decisively, she turned around and snapped at Colston and Radna, "Reverse course!"

"But the *Ziz*—"

"Turn back!"

Ever since she had seen Tremayne frozen into a giant block of ice in the freezing chamber of the *Ziz* she had been strained and strange. Then Darth Natas had demanded to take Natasha, saying to Colston "THE DEAL HAVE I ALTERED NOW. PRAY I DO NOT ALTER IT FURTHER.". Colston had led them to the *Ariel* and flown off into the night.

Down below in the chilly ocean, maimed, betrayed, Arnold floundered. "Natasha . . ." he half sobbed, and the darkness began to well up around him. Then, in the night, a spotlight lit him up, and he saw the *Ariel* . . .

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This is issue **Whole Number Eighty-eight (88)**.

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

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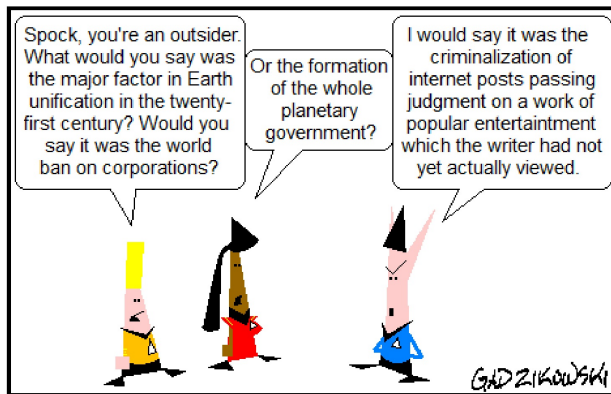
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I GOT SO EXCITED THAT MY THEATER WAS PLAYING STAR TREK BEYOND A DAY AHEAD OF THE PREMIERE DATE OF RECORD THAT I FORGOT TO DRAW A CREATIVE PROCESS.

SO HERE'S A HERO OF THREE FACES FEATURING THE CHARACTERS.



<http://arthurkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

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