

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Out of curiosity I asked my priest to guess which country my ancestors came from. (I was playing fair with him. There were several possible answers of which I was aware. Even had I not known of the possibility of a guess other than the ones I was aware of he might well have guessed right.) He guessed Ireland and indeed he had guessed correctly. I had at least one Irish ancestor. His answer sent me searching pictures of Irish people. Those pictures told me why he had guessed Ireland. There was indeed a racial likeness between myself and those Irish pictures. It woke no sense of kinship in me such as the pictures of the Welsh people had done. I puzzled over this and decided it was because I got no sense of kin recognition as I had done from the Welsh pictures. The likeness was racial, not personal. And so Ireland remains just a name on the map.

On March 26 I woke to the news of the collapse of the Francis Scott Key bridge. It was a hard lesson on the fragility of life. After the collision it only took ninety seconds for the bridge to collapse. At least six lives were lost. Two people somehow survived the collapse, one seriously hurt and one somehow unhurt. I could not help thinking of Thornton Wilder's *Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

—Lisa

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The 150th Running of the Kentucky Derby was **May 4, 2024**.
Mystik Dan won in a stunning triple dead heat.
The 149th Running of the Preakness Stakes will be **May 18, 2024**.
The 155th Running of the Belmont Stakes will be **June 8, 2024**.

Printed on May 13, 2024
Deadline is **June 1, 2024**

Reviewer's Notes

I am sorry we are late, but I haven't been well. And I fell down. The new primary medical care person looked at my lips and observed that I was dehydrated. I have been taking steps to amend that,

It seems harder now to vote for Best Dramatic Presentation Long Form. When it began everyone could go to the same movie theaters. Now there are several streaming services each costing a lot. And you have things like the Marvel Creative Universe where to understand a movie you have to watch thirty or so previous movies (Marvel: "Let's do a movie with forty heroes all fighting each other and the villains." DC: "Release the clown."). We seem to be in the era in *Science Fiction Five Yearly* where SF had taken over but all the Big Name Fans were ones the fifties fan had never heard of.

Since Lisa mentions it, I took a FamilyTreeDNA test, thanks to the generosity of a relative, and discovered that my ancestral origins were 67% England, Wales, and Scotland, 20% Ireland, 12% Scandinavia, < 1% Greece and Balkans, and < 1% Anatolia, Armenia, and Mesopotamia. Does this mean I have to get upset over *Ravished Armenia* (1919)?

Darrell Schweitzer once opined that fandom as we know it wouldn't last much longer. Back in the good old days, Knarley Welch wanted to have cons run by professional conrunners. We seem to be having this in KampalaCon, the late Jeddicom/Pharaohcon, and for what it's worth, Chengdu. And they all lack experience with cons.

There is a culture of complaint that cons lack a particular feature. I think that what we are seeing is a transition to wanting to have something done, but not making any effort to do so.

Of course we have this, Dragon*Con. Notice that Mike Resnick, who used to sign contracts at Worldcon n(his con reports became lists of where he had eaten and what he had signed there), shifted to going to Dragon*Con before his untimely death.

Would Dragon*Con take over the Hugo Awards here? There certainly wouldn't have been any fandom program.

My email has changed. (Not the address, which is still the same.) Aside from responses to *Alexiad*, what I get are messages from mailing lists and solicitations from Chinese firms wanting an American representative or offering to sell machine parts.

—Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



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

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

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

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

<https://reanimus.com/store>

— Adv.

When I was in third grade, I read a picture book that was a guide to the Great Lakes. It began with a First Nations boy carving a figure of one of his people paddling a canoe, and he painted it appropriately.

Then he put in a snowbank. The snow melted and carried the figurine down into Lake Superior. It flowed from point to point. Someone picked it up and did a rounding of Lake Michigan, to take care of that.

The figurine became slowly battered, losing its paint. The last picture showed the now paintless figure valiantly leaving the St. Lawrence River for the Atlantic.

Does this seem familiar to anyone?

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

2024 will have two solar eclipses. The first will be a total eclipse on **April 8, 2024**, beginning in the south Pacific Ocean and passing through Sinaloa, Durango, Coahuila, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland before ending off the coast of Norway. The longest period of totality will be 4 minutes 28 seconds at Nazas, Durango. The eclipse is part of Saros 139, which began May 17, 1501 and will end July 3, 2763.

The second solar eclipse will be an annular eclipse on **October 2, 2024** beginning in the South Pacific and passing over Easter Island

(Rapa Nui; Isla de Pascua) and Aysan, Chile and Santa Cruz Province, Argentina. The longest period of annularity will be seven minutes 45 seconds, at 22 degrees South 114 degrees 30 minutes West. The eclipse is part of Saros 144, which began April 11, 1736 and will end May 5, 2980.

NASA Eclipse website:
<https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

Other useful eclipse websites:
<http://www.hermit.org/Eclipse>
<http://www.eclipse.org.uk/>

We went up to Shelbyville, Indiana to see the eclipse with David Herrington. It was a mild and clear day. Driving there was not much trouble except for a patch of slow driving caused by construction work.

David had enough eclipse glasses for us, for which we thank him. We stood in front of his place and glanced through them at the Sun as it was gradually obscured.

The sunlight dimmed and then . . . totality. It was cooler, but the sight of the obscured Sun, the corona bright around the Moon, was dazzling. It lasted a few minutes and then there was a diamond ring flash before the Sun moved on. We went out to eat and then drove back to Louisville. There was more construction on I-65 south and it took almost four hours to get home.

The next total eclipse will be **August 12, 2026**, visible in the Arctic. There will be a total eclipse on **July 22, 2028** visible in Australia.

And what was your eclipse experience?

NASFiC ECLIPSE

by Joe

In 2017, too late to do anything about it, Mike Glycer had an interesting thought. Why not have NASFiC in Nashville, during the August 21 eclipse? But Ken Moore, the man who could have organized it, had died in 2009.

Nevertheless, there was a possibility. Bob Emblar annually held Outside Con, where fans got in tents and socialized. What was so important about that?

For several years, in Kelly, Kentucky, there were the Little Green Men Days, commemorating the close encounter there in 1955. (They were canceled because of COVID and have not continued, unfortunately.)

In 2017, the meeting ran a day over, so the flying saucer people could see the eclipse. And they stayed in tents, too, because hotel bills in Hopkinsville were \$300 a day and a minimum of three days' stay.

If Mike and Bob had got together, they could have organized a Kelly OutsideCon NASFiC bid for the 18th through the 21st. Now that would have been better than the San Juan NASFiC.

<http://outsidecon.org/>

THE CHANGE IN A STORY

by Joe

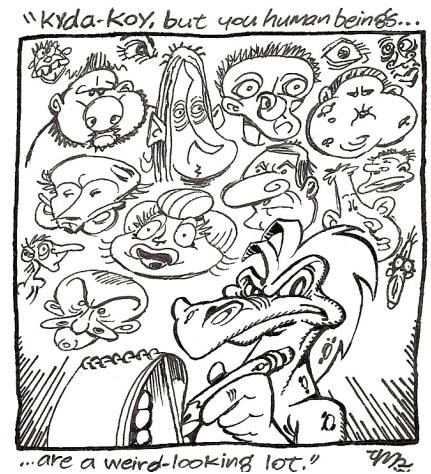
Sometimes a story starts out one way and

suddenly changes. For example, Poul Anderson's *The Winter of the World* (1975) is set in a glacial world (Harry Turtledove's Opening of the World trilogy, anyone?) in a city-state that has just been taken over by the neighboring empire. Josserek, a sailor from across the seas who has jumped ship, and Donya, a courtesan from the wild lands of the north, observe the intrigue and political battles of the new rulers and original inhabitants.

They are captured and taken away — and escape. With some **Hot Sex™** along the way they head to Donya's people, a utopian set of tribes. Josserek learns about the ways of the people, such as their Tibetan family ways (think "Nice Girl with Five Husbands" by Fritz Leiber (*Galaxy*, April 1951) without the other four women).

The empire resolves to conquer the plains. The inhabitants resist and win due to their freedom of society. (Everybody wants to be a heroic fighter, nobody wants to bring up the food.)

It turns out that Josserek was trying to stir up resistance to the empire — very long-term thinking. But along the way he finds out that Donya and her people are mutants, and not successfully interfertile with humans.



The world-building of the first part seems to have been less significant. Anderson had done that sort of grim disaster before and after. For example, the scientific-trivia puzzle stories of the early Polesotechnic League (*The Man Who Counts* (1978; edited version as *War of the Wing-Men* (1958)) for example. It came to an unpleasant and distressing ending (*Mirkheim* (1977)) to be succeeded by the Dominic Flandry series, where the free-wheeling entrepreneurialism of the League was replaced by the authoritarian Empire. James Blish did much the same with Spengler's theories of social development but the content was less.

Mercedes Lackey likes to develop her backgrounds. For example, *Take a Thief* (2001), which features Skif, a supporting character from the Arrows sub-series.

The first part of *Take a Thief* is set in the slums of Haven, the capital. Skif is, not surprisingly, a thief. The descriptions of the squalor he exists in are positively Dickensian ["Skif trembled in fear as Fagin looked him

over. He finally said, ‘Oy, boychik. Such a fine gonif you’ll make, nu?’” More Yiddish Dickens needed to use.] and make it clear that for all the wonders of the place, Valdemar is not a utopia.

The last part of the novel has an espionage intrigue. Now having a thief spy on an enemy makes some sense, and having him be Chosen to be a Herald would ensure his loyalty. It’s a grim situation, based on overhearing something through immense luck.

But what’s in between that finishes setting up the plot. Skif is Chosen and is taken to the Heralds’ Collegium to be educated in Heralds’ ways. He finds his new lifestyle to be somewhat more agreeable, in that he can have enough to eat, clean clothes, and a warm place to sleep. Lackey has a long and fan-enticing description of the training of a Herald, though with their magic silver steeds it hardly seems troublesome. They seem like medieval Lensmen, but with many more Lenswomen.

(Skif ends up marrying a catwoman. Now if he had married Catwoman . . .)

BLACK BOOMERANG

Review by Joseph T Major of
HOW TO WIN AN INFORMATION WAR:

The Propagandist Who Outwitted Hitler
(2024; PublicAffairs;
ISBN 978-1541774728; \$27.00;
PublicAffairs (Kindle); \$18.99)
by Peter Pomerantsev

John Titor was a time-traveler. He had come back to 2000 to warn the people of the past of terrifying things that were to pass, using this primitive communication system called “internet”. John Titor’s predictions did not come to pass, and he faded away.

Back in the early forties, Germans listened avidly to a man with sources, *Der Chef*. *Der Chef* denounced the *Parteibonzen* for their corruption, their use of delectables that were unavailable for ordinary people. The *Führer* did not deserve such unworthy underlings.

Der Chef had accurate descriptions, but not an accurate background. He was a British black propaganda creation, a German refugee who had German expert Sefton Delmer to script his coarse, obscenity-laden, fact filled wireless speeches. Indeed, Delmer reversed another work, for his lies had a bodyguard of truths.

After the war, he wrote a memoir of these efforts, *Black Boomerang* (1962; reviewed in *Alexiad* WN 072). This work gives the background and the presentation and reception of Delmer’s efforts, as well as biographical material he was too constrained to reveal, and describes modern versions of them.

The various speakers were quite a diverse lot. For example, there was “Christ the King”, a priest who spoke directly and forthrightly. Other broadcasters were more untrue.

The services took various advantages. The prisoner-of-war service interviewed captured men, and the *Atlantiksender* used the information to broadcast true and honest material to the U-boats — along with some disinformation. (Strangely, Pomerantsev does not men-

tion its land-based partner, the *Soldatensender Calais*.)

Delmer’s black propaganda stations were widely listened to, due to his attention to distributing actual news. Commanders of U-Boats often learned of a promotion or reassignment through the *Atlantiksender*.

But, having established a bodyguard of truths, Delmer spread lies. Stories of high Nazi officials having special high rations, or even grandiose entertainments, served to incite distrust. (Remember the descriptions in “If This Goes On . . .” (NHOL G.011; 1940, 1953) about how what a honor it was to provide for the Prophet’s lavish lifestyle.)

From there, Pomarentsev gives incidents from the present. These descriptions suffer from the prejudice that all popular movements that don’t accord with the writer’s own attitudes are authoritarian and oppressive.

This is not a perfect follow-up to *Black Boomerang*, but it does give information on what happened in the target audience, and after the war. Some discussion of the CIA’s Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty might be appropriate.

UKUSA

Review by Joseph T Major of
**THE REAL SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP:
The True Story of How MI6 and the CIA
Work Together**

(2023; Arcade;
ISBN 978-1956763683; \$35.00;
Arcade (Kindle); \$22.99)
by Michael Smith

It was something that no one could have ever imagined could happen; the spy services of two different countries agreeing to work together and not spy on each other.

— *The Ten Just Men*

This isn’t something I made up. The British and American intelligence agencies work together and neither spies on the other country. So those times James Bond acts like an American spy operative (Jimmy Bond of the Combined Intelligence Agency?) are not quite out of consistency.

The book begins with the arrival of American codebreakers at the Government Code & Cypher School at Bletchley Park. With the spreading of the war, the senior agencies, OSS and MI6, began to cooperate.

Smith recounts the successes and follies of the cold war. Such notorious double agents as Kim Philby and William Weisband are set in their respective contexts. The failures of line-crossers and the dubious success of the Iranian coup against Mohammed Mossadegh (Mussadeq) show the cooperation of the agencies.

Related organizations were brought in later and BRUSA became UKUSA as Australian, Canadian, and New Zealander agencies were included.

Smith makes an interesting claim about Vietnam. The establishment of strategic hamlets recommended by the British had increased Diem’s hold on the country, but the urban community disliked this. The CIA backed a coup against Diem but they didn’t expect the

coup workers to kill him,

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was an example of cooperation as the British and the Americans operated in separate areas of the country with their own methods. From there the War on Terror met with its own effects and results.

Political leaders had their own obsessions. For example, while Mrs Thatcher promoted cooperation, her successor was less so.

This history of an unusual era in espionage practices affords the reader an extra dimension in the history of the post-WWII era.

THE INSIDER

Review by Joseph T Major of
CLASSIFIED!:

The Adventures of a Molehunter
(2024; Grand Eagle Retail;
ISBN 978-1785908538; \$29.45;
Biteback Publishing (Kindle); \$29.99)
by “Nigel West” [Rupert Allason]

The Soviet Union is dead (but Russia has taken up the job). The conspiratorial nature of Communism carried over to espionage very well. And an aristocratic reporter got tore in to this murky scene.

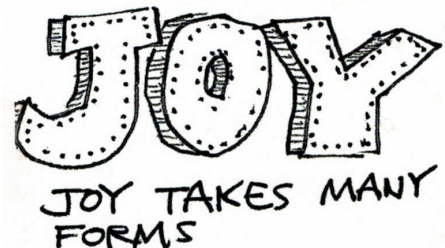
Allason describes his involvement in this dire life with his apprenticeship with Richard Deacon [taking a vacation from *The Dick van Dyke Show?* Oops, wrong Richard Deacon], known as “E. C. Cookridge”, beginning to write espionage history amid the hazards of the Official Secrets Act.

Then he struck out on his own, The most significant act of his early career was finding the artful Catalan, Joan Pujol García, GARBO to the British and ARABEL to the Germans, and having him receive his MBE (yes, he died without the OBE) and other public acclaim..

The book is much about the spies and next to nothing about Allason. It gives a shaft of light into a dark world.

The Joy of High Tech

by Rodford Edmiston



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

Please note that while I am an engineer (BSCE) and do my research, I am not a professional in this field. Do not take anything here as gospel; check the facts I give. If you find a mistake, please let me know about it.

You can do a lot with sand. Which is a good thing, since the world has so much of it.

(Though, as covered in more detail below, there isn't so much of the best kind.) The ancient Egyptians used sand as an abrasive, of course, but also as a multi-function construction aid. As just one example, they would erect large stones — such as tall monoliths — using sand in a pit or an above-ground box as an intermediate support. This allowed the position and orientation of the heavy monolith to be adjusted incrementally until it was properly placed; then permanent supports were installed and the sand removed.

Note that there are many types of sand, though the most common component is quartz, which in turn is mostly silica, aka silicon dioxide. The differences are not only due to the proportions of the components of the differing parent rocks which break down to make sand, but also due to the physical characteristics of the grains. They can be coarse or fine, angular or rounded, of a wide range of sizes and various mixes of sizes. One thing which was not predicted about the Moon until the first probes soft landed on the surface and sent back pictures, is that while millions of years of micrometeorite impacts have created a lot of very fine dust, the particles in that dust were jagged, because they had never been subjected to weathering. As a result, lunar dust — actually a fine, angular sand — is very hard on seals and other pieces of equipment.

Also, the lunar surface has reflective properties similar to those of a projection screen. Instead of razor-sharp shadows of absolute darkness (as many predicted before the first actual images from the surface, this being assumed because there was no atmosphere to diffuse light) the shadows on the Moon had moderately sharp boundaries, and were partially lit. (One mark against many current lunar landing conspiracy theories is that so much of what was found to actually be there went against expectations. If the landings were faked, the “discoveries” prepared by the fakers would have been more believable.) It seems those angular particles, though dark, reflect some light, scattering it in all directions. Including into the shadows.

Because properly prepared sand can retain fine surface details, and quartz sand (and some other types) can resist heat quite well, sand is often used as a casting material. Prepared sand molds are used for making things like bronze bells and statues, aluminum parts produced to near final dimensions, and even for iron. Until very recently, most commodes were fired clay over a cast iron core. The iron core and even the porcelain are shaped by sand molds. (Porcelain is durable, smooth and sanitary, and doesn't feel nearly as cold as stainless steel. With a metal core to add strength, porcelain commodes can last for centuries.) Such castings often involve the lost wax process, where damp sand is packed firmly around a wax form, which is then heated to melt out the wax and dry the sand. Molten metal or a liquid clay-mixture slurry is poured into the sand mold, the latter being heated to dry it. For extra rigidity or strength, a stiffening ingredient can be mixed in with the sand. This can be many things, including molasses or glue. Physical reinforcements and dividers complete

the package.

Naturally or artificially colored sand is also used for art, and much of that art is religious in nature. Fine, dry sand with rounded grains can flow like a liquid but tends to stay where it's put. This art can be very temporary, just placed on a flat surface; even on a cleared spot on bare ground. Or the art can be made by dribbling colored sand into a glass container.

Sharp-grained sand can be used as an abrasive. Not just in sand paper, but in stone cutting. The ancient Egyptians used sand to cut rocks far harder than their copper tools, as long as the rocks were not as hard as silica. Modern experiments have shown that even granite can be cut with copper saws or core drills using sand (dry sand works better than wet) patience and effort. Polishing is done with shaped bits of natural stone or with “crayons” made by combining gypsum, sand and water, then letting the mixture dry. Smooth, finely detailed surfaces can be produced with these and similar tools. Again, lots of patience and hard work are needed to achieve the desired result. Don't underestimate what can be produced through persistent effort applied for a long period of time.

Also, don't underestimate the power of hammering for the initial rough shaping of items or even their extraction from a quarry. Hundreds of hammer stones (of tough, hard rock) have been found in quarries, and are about the same diameter as the grooves in the rock which would have eventually freed the piece being worked. (Some large pieces were abandoned after partial excavation, due to obvious cracks which developed in the desired piece of rock.) Ancient excavators also used fire-heated rock doused with water or vinegar, as well as driven wedges. Sometimes dried wooden wedges were driven into cracks and wetted to make them expand, which would widen the cracks. We know the methods used, sometimes in combination, from examining these abandoned works in progress, and even from seeing how current quarries where there are no or few power tools still operate. Hammer stones are effective hand tools for rough shaping. Just bounce the hammer stone on the chalk line, turning it a bit at the top of each bounce to keep it round. Over and over. There's not a huge amount of effort involved in any one strike, but it's slow, boring work with lots of repetition.



Getting back to sand, today, silica sand is

used to make glass and as the feedstock in many other industrial processes. Sand is the main ingredient in the production of chemicals such as sodium silicate, silicon tetrachloride and silicon gels. It is also used in making concrete, mortar and brick, as well as being used as a large scale filler and leveling material. Sand is also used to stabilize brick or paver walkways and patios. It can even be used for the primary filtration of water. In fact, good quality sand (sometimes known as industrial sand, which is not only clean, but of the right composition, grain size mix and roughness for a particular application) is so much in demand that it is actually being stolen!

Beaches composed primarily of quartz sand are uncommon. Most beach “sand” is actually ground up sea shells, with other materials mixed in. The proportions are normally not discernible with unaugmented senses, since both quartz sand and calcium carbonate sand are generally very light in color. However, there are beaches in Hawaii which are black, because they are made primarily of obsidian (more on that below) sand.

Making glass is not easy, especially if doing it the way the ancient Egyptians first used. This largely involved melting chunks of quartz. As they quickly learned, starting with sand and adding the ashes of certain plants made the process much easier, as well as producing a more consistent and desirable product. The ancient Romans were experts at shaping and grinding glass, once they had a lump of it. They produced works of art with this material which are still viewed with wonder today. However, well into the Renaissance the best processes for producing glass were unreliable. Often, the result was a retort full of small pieces of glass, rather than a smooth, continuous melt (as a batch of molten glass is sometimes called). This is one reason that for thousands of years glass beads were actually used as a durable medium of trade. Glass is a hard material, but it can be worked, and carved, and drilled. However, though hard and strong it is brittle. For most of history, drilling a hole completely through a glass bead without cracking it was largely a matter of skill, but also a matter of luck. However, once you have a hole through a small piece it can be strung with other glass beads to help keep track of it.

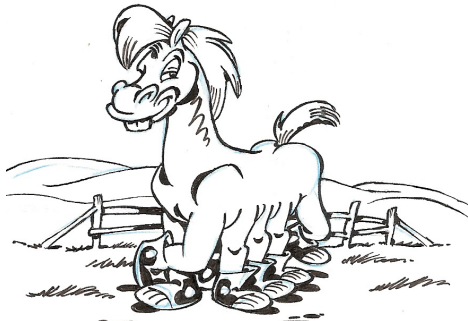
Modern chemistry was needed to make good quality glass on demand. Today glass can be tailored to specific uses. Borosilicate glass (which used to be sold under the name Pyrex, until Corning sold the Trademark and the new owner switched to tempered regular glass) is a low-expansion glass material popular for cookware, laboratory ware and telescope mirrors. Just, please, don't be as cavalier regarding temperature changes with the new version of Pyrex as you would be with the old version. People have actually been injured when the new stuff shattered under temperature changes which the old stuff could handle with ease.

Glass is a remarkable material, but at its base it is still just melted sand plus trace additives. However, while it resembles quartz it does not resemble sand. So how did someone figure out that melting quartz sand could produce glass? This is not known for certain, but

the likely course of events can be guessed: By someone observing what had happened in nature, as well as noting the occasional side-products of high-temperature smelting operations.

There is, indeed, natural glass. Most of this — at least on Earth — is of volcanic origin. Obsidian is a volcanic glass, a superfluid material with an amorphous structure, like what we usually think of as glass, except usually black. It is composed largely of silicon, yes, but with several other materials in the mix. However, there is a natural glass which indeed comes from sand.

After the Trinity nuclear bomb test people examining the site noticed small pieces of glassy material. It was dubbed Trinitite, and was actual glass, produced by the heat of the fission explosion. However, there are natural sources of heat far more concentrated (in the effect on the immediate environment) than a volcano, or even a nuclear explosion. Meteorite impacts have been converting sand to glass on Earth for many millions of years. In a desert environment, these pieces of glass can easily survive long enough to be found. (Keep in mind that such “desert glass” is not the same as the “desert glass” which is produced when the desert environment acts on man made glass.) This natural glass was carved and used as decoration by many ancient peoples, including the Egyptians. (Tutankhamen’s tomb, for example, contains numerous items with worked bits of natural glass attached, including the famous gold mask.) The stuff is rare and in ancient times was considered a type of semiprecious stone. There was therefore strong motivation to find — or make — more. If someone noticed that these interesting bits of material were often associated with signs of very high temperatures they could easily make the connection. Though getting a fire hot enough would not have been easy. Perhaps someone also noticed bits of crude glass in the firepit after smelting copper.



DOBBIN'S MOM WAS SCARED BY A THOAT.

As for sand, it continues to support us. Literally. Much of the ground we walk on is sand. That is, soil is often sand mixed with organics. Wash or dissolve away the latter and you may be left with nothing more than a handful of sand.

Dialing 867-5309 will, indeed, get you Jenny, but you have to dial it the way it is sung.

FAAN AWARDS

Courtesy of John Herz, Mike Glycer, Nic Farey, and File770.com

FANZINE CATEGORIES

GENZINE: *SF Commentary* (edited by Bruce Gillespie)

PERZINE: *This Here...* (edited by Nic Farey)

SPECIAL PUBLICATION: *Beyond Fandom* (Rob Hansen)

INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES

FANWRITER: **Mark Plummer**

FANARTIST: **Ulrika O'Brien**

LETTERHACK (HARRY WARNER, JR. MEMORIAL AWARD): **Jerry Kaufman**

COVER: *IDEA #13* (cover by Sue Mason)

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT: **Joe Siclari and Edie Stern**

PAST PRESIDENTS, fwa (FANZINE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION): **Jennifer Farey, Jerry Kaufman**

Nic also says: “Corflu 42 site selection was for Newbury, Berkshire, UK, team headed by David Hodson and to be held April 11-13 2025 (one week prior to Reconnect, the Belfast Eastercon).

“By acclamation (proposed by Dan Steffan), the BEST FANARTIST FAAn Award will become the STEVE STILES MEMORIAL AWARD.”

WORLDCON BIDS

2026
Los Angeles
August 27-31, 2026
<https://lain2026.org/>

2027
Tel Aviv
August 2027

Montréal
<https://bid.montreal2027.ca/>

2028
Brisbane, Australia
Mid-August 2028
<https://australia2025.com/>

Kampala, Uganda
Kampcon: The 86th World Science Fiction Convention
August 23-27, 2028
<https://kampcon.org/>

2029
Dublin
<http://dublin2029.ie>

2031
Texas

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

WORLDCON

2024
Glasgow
August 8-12, 2024
<http://glasgow2024.org/>

2025
Seattle
Worldcon Seattle 2025
August 13-17, 2025
<https://www.seattlein2025.org/>

NASFiC

2024
Buffalo, NY
July 18-21, 2024
<https://buffalonasfic2024.org/>

HUGO NOMINEES



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

Best Novel

The Adventures of Amina al-Sirafi by Shannon Chakraborty (Harper Voyager, Harper Voyager UK)

The Saint of Bright Doors by Vajra Chandrasekera (Tordotcom)

Some Desperate Glory by Emily Tesh (Tordotcom, Orbit UK)

Starter Villain by John Scalzi (Tor, Tor UK)

Translation State by Ann Leckie (Orbit US, Orbit UK)

Witch King by Martha Wells (Tordotcom)

1420 ballots cast for 576 nominees. Finalists range 91-172.

Best Novella

“*Life Does Not Allow Us to Meet*”, He Xi /translated by Alex Woodend (*Adventures in Space: New Short stories by Chinese & English Science Fiction Writers*)

Mammoths at the Gates by Nghi Vo (Tordotcom)

The Mimicking of Known Successes by Malka Older (Tordotcom)

Rose/House by Arkady Martine (Subterranean)

“*Seeds of Mercury*”, Wang Jinkang /translated by Alex Woodend (*Adventures in Space: New Short stories by Chinese & English Science Fiction Writers*)

Thornhedge by T. Kingfisher (Tor, Titan UK)

962 ballots cast for 187 nominees. Finalists range 106-186.

Best Novelette

I AM AI by Ai Jiang (Shortwave)

“Introduction to 2181 Overture, Second Edition”, Gu Shi / 2181 translated by Emily Jen (*Clarkesworld*, February 2023)

“Ivy, Angelica, Bay” by C.L. Polk (Tor.com 8 December 2023)

“On the Fox Roads” by Nghi Vo (Tor.com 31 October 2023)

“One Man’s Treasure” by Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny Magazine*, January-February 2023)

“The Year Without Sunshine” by Naomi Kritzer (*Uncanny Magazine*, November-December 2023)

755 ballots cast for 212 nominees. Finalists range 40-117.

Best Short Story

“Answerless Journey”, Han Song / translated by Alex Woodend (*Adventures in Space: New Short stories by Chinese & English Science Fiction Writers*)

“Better Living Through Algorithms” by Naomi Kritzer (*Clarkesworld* May 2023)

“How to Raise a Kraken in Your Bathroom” by P. Djèli Clark (*Uncanny Magazine*, January-February 2023)

“The Mausoleum’s Children” by Alette de Bodard (*Uncanny Magazine*, May-June 2023)

“The Sound of Children Screaming” by Rachael K. Jones (*Nightmare Magazine*, October 2023)

“Tasting the Future Delicacy Three Times”, Baoshu (*Galaxy’s Edge Vol. 13: Secret Room in the Black Domain*)

720 ballots cast for 612 nominees. Finalists range 27-69.

Best Series

The Final Architecture by Adrian Tchaikovsky (Tordotcom, Orbit UK)

Imperial Radch by Ann Leckie (Orbit US, Orbit UK)

The Last Binding by Freya Marske (Tordotcom, Tor UK)

The Laundry Files by Charles Stross (Tordotcom, Orbit UK)

October Daye by Seanan McGuire (DAW)

The Universe of Xuya by Alette de Bodard (Gollancz; JABberwocky Literary Agency; Subterranean Press; *Uncanny Magazine*; et al.)

677 ballots cast for 228 nominees. Finalists range 79-117.

Best Graphic Story or Comic

Bea Wolf, written by Zach Weinersmith, art by Boulet (First Second)

Saga, Vol. 11 written by Brian K. Vaughan, art by Fiona Staples (Image Comics)

Shubeik Lubeik, Deena Mohamed (Pantheon); as *Your Wish Is My Command* (Granta)

The Three Body Problem, Part One, adapted from the novels by Liu Cixin, written by Cai Jin, Ge Wendi, and Bo Mu, art by Caojiuridong (Zhejiang Literature and Art Publishing House)

The Witches of World War II written by Paul Cornell, art by Valeria Burzo (TKO Studios LLC)

Wonder Woman Historia: The Amazons written by Kelly Sue DeConnick, art by Phil Jimenez, Gene Ha and Nicola Scott (DC Comics)

457 ballots cast for 256 nominees. Finalists range 25-151.

Best Related Work

All These Worlds: Reviews & Essays by Niall Harrison (Briardene Books)

Chinese Science Fiction: An Oral History, vols 2 and 3) ed. Yang Feng (8-Light Minutes Culture & Chengdu Time Press)

A City on Mars by Kelly Weinersmith and Zach Weinersmith (Penguin Press; Particular Books)

The Culture: The Drawings, by Iain M. Banks (Orbit)

X (Discover X), presented by Tina Wong
A Traveller in Time: The Critical Practice of Maureen Kincaid Speller, by Maureen Kincaid Speller, edited by Nina Allan (Luna Press Publishing)

775 ballots cast for 246 nominees. Finalists range 36-343.

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

Barbie, screenplay by Greta Gerwig and Noah Baumbach, directed by Greta Gerwig

Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves, screenplay by John Francis Daley, Jonathan Goldstein and Michael Gilio, directed by John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein

Nimona, screenplay by Robert L. Baird and Lloyd Taylor, directed by Nick Bruno and Troy Quane

Poor Things, screenplay by Tony McNamara, directed by Yorgos Lanthimos

Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse, screenplay by Phil Lord, Christopher Miller and Dave Callahan, directed by Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers and Justin K. Thompson

The Wandering Earth II, based on the novel by Liu Cixin, screenplay by Yang Zhixue, Frant Gwo, Gong Geer, and Ye Ruchang, script consultant Wang Hongwei, directed by Frant Gwo

763 ballots cast for 189 nominees. Finalists range 69-212.

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

Doctor Who: “The Giggle”, written by Russell T. Davies, directed by Chanya Button

Loki: “Glorious Purpose”, screenplay by Eric Martin, Michael Waldron and Katharyn Blair, directed by Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead

The Last of Us: “Long, Long Time”, written by Craig Mazin and Neil Druckmann, directed by Peter Hoar

Star Trek: Strange New Worlds: “Those Old Scientists”, written by Kathryn Lyn and Bill Wolkoff, directed by Jonathan Frakes

Star Trek: Strange New Worlds: “Subspace Rhapsody”, written by Dana Horgan and Bill Wolkoff, directed by Dermott Downs

Doctor Who: “Wild Blue Yonder”, written by Russell T. Davies, directed by Tom Kingsley

490 ballots cast for 318 nominees. Finalists range 46-115.

Best Game or Interactive Work

Alan Wake 2, developed by Remedy Entertainment, published by Epic Games

Baldur’s Gate 3, produced by Larian Studios

Chants of Sennaar, developed by Rundisc, published by Focus Entertainment

DREDGE, developed by Black Salt Games, published by Team17

The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom, produced by Nintendo

Star Wars Jedi: Survivor, developed by Respawn Entertainment, published by Electronic Arts

334 ballots cast for 165 nominees. Finalists range 26-157.

Best Editor Short Form

Scott H. Andrews

Neil Clarke

Liu Weijia

Jonathan Strahan

Lynne M. Thomas & Michael Damian Thomas

Yang Feng

530 ballots cast for 179 nominees. Finalists range 40-146.

Best Editor Long Form

Ruoxi Chen

Lindsey Hall

Lee Harris

Kelly Lonesome

David Thomas Moore

Yao Haijun

254 ballots cast for 103 nominees. Finalists range 16-81.

Best Professional Artist

Micaela Alcaino
Rovina Cai
Galen Dara
Dan Dos Santos
Tristan Elwell
Alyssa Winans

270 ballots cast for 219 nominees. Finalists range 17-66.

Best Semiprozine

Escape Pod, editors Mur Lafferty and Valerie Valdes
FIYAH Literary Magazine, publisher and executive editor DaVaun Sanders
GigaNotoSaurus, editor LaShawn M. Wanak
khōréō
Strange Horizons, by the Strange Horizons Editorial Collective
Uncanny Magazine, publishers and editors-in-chief: Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas

338 ballots cast for 82 nominees. Finalists range 32-159.

Best Fanzine

Black Nerd Problems, editors Omar Holmon and William Evans
The Full Lid, written by Alasdair Stuart and edited by Marguerite Kenner
Idea, editor Geri Sullivan
Journey Planet, edited by Michael Carroll, Vincent Docherty, Sara Felix, Ann Gry, Sarah Gulde, Allison Hartman Adams, Arthur Liu, Jean Martin, Helena Nash, Pádraig O Méalóid, Yen Ooi, Chuck Serface, Alan Stewart, Regina Kanyu Wang, James Bacon and Christopher J. Garcia
Nerds of a Feather, Flock Together, editors Roseanna Pendlebury, Arturo Serrano, Paul Weimer; senior editors Joe Sherry, Adri Joy, G. Brown, Vance Kotrla.
Unofficial Hugo Book Club Blog, editors Olav Rokne and Amanda Wakaruk

286 ballots cast for 80 nominees. Finalists range 20-70.

Best Fancast

The Coode Street Podcast, presented by Jonathan Strahan and Gary K. Wolfe
Hugos There, presented by Seth Heasley
Octothorpe, by John Coxon, Alison Scott, and Liz Batty
Publishing Rodeo, presented by Sunyi Dean and Scott Drakeford
Fans (Science Fiction Fans Buma), production team Liu Lu, Liu Chang
Worldbuilding for Masochists, presented by Marshall Ryan Maresca, Rowenna Miller, Cass Morris and Natania Barron

693 ballots cast for 230 nominees. Finalists range 28-104.

Best Fan Writer

Bitter Karella
James Davis Nicoll
Jason Sanford
Alasdair Stuart
Paul Weimer
Orjan Westin

363 ballots cast for 134 nominees. Finalists range 27-134.

Best Fan Artist

Iain J. Clark
Sara Felix
Dante Luiz
Laya Rose
Alison Scott
España Sheriff

180 ballots cast for 96 nominees. Finalists range 16-43.

Lodestar Award for Best YA Book

Abeni's Song by P. Djèli Clark (Starscape)
Liberty's Daughter by Naomi Kritzer (Fairwood Press)
Promises Stronger than Darkness by Charlie Jane Anders (Tor Teen)
The Sinister Booksellers of Bath by Garth Nix (Katherine Tegen Books, Gollancz and Allen & Unwin)
To Shape a Dragon's Breath by Moniquill Blackgoose (Del Rey)
Unraveller by Frances Hardinge (Macmillan Children's Books; eligible due to 2023 U.S. publication by Amulet)

345 ballots cast for 178 nominees. Finalists range 33-56.

Astounding Award for Best New Writer (sponsored by Dell Magazines)

Moniquill Blackgoose (1st year of eligibility)
Sunyi Dean (2nd year of eligibility)
Ai Jiang (2nd year of eligibility)
Hannah Kaner (1st year of eligibility)
Em X. Liu (1st year of eligibility)
Xiran Jay Zhao (eligibility extended at request of Dell Magazines)

349 ballots cast for 167 nominees. Finalists range 35-50.

The following nominees received enough votes to qualify for the final ballot, but declined nomination:

Best Novel – **System Collapse**, by Martha Wells
Best Novelette – **"The Far North"** by Hai Ya
Best Related Work: Bigolas Dickolas Wolfwood's promotional tweets for *This Is How You Lose the Time War*
Best Editor, Long Form: **Natasha Bardon**
Best Fan Writer: **Camestros Felapton**

The following nominees received enough votes to qualify for the final ballot, but were not eligible for specific reasons:

Best Novel – **Cosmo Wings** by Jiang Bo – publication in 2024

Best Fancast (1) – **X Discover X** interviews by Tina Wong – professional production; also qualified in the Best Related Work category.

Best Fancast (2) – **Diu Diu Sci Fi Radio** – also a professional production.

And, Ghu curse it, *Hurry Up Living* wasn't nominated! Maybe it'll be on the Sidewise Award list.

John Hertz's comment on getting on the Best Fanzine ballot with a small number of nonimators seems relevant. Some of those nominees could get on the ballot if the entire list of editors nominated.

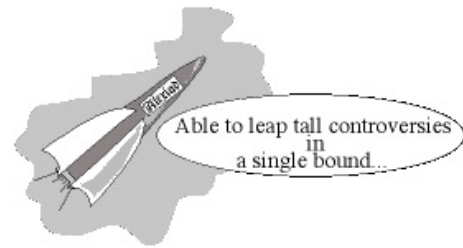


Worldcon may be in trouble anyway. Seattle has problems. Some of the foreign venues have issues. At Tel Aviv the Hugo Awards won't be the only rockets. At least Israel has a fannish conrunning community.

The Hugo Awards are having their own problems. For example, there are the Semi-Pro nominees with forty or fifty editors listed. And how are you to read the Chinese nominees?

No, Worldcon isn't what it used to be. I'm not sure about there being what we'd call a fannish community (as opposed to small-f fans) in some of those bid sites.

Letters, we get letters



From: **C. D. Carson** March 4, 2024
Box 1035, Fort Worth, TX 76101

This is something I have been working on for a while now — I handed out copies of a much rougher draft at Loscon back in November. I'd be happy to have your comments, although I like to think this is a nearly-final revision. If you think it would be of interest to readers of *Alexiad*, please let them know that they may have a copy by writing me and requesting one.

ATOMIC POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

"This" is a booklet titled *Blast*, which contains many items about nuclear waste and nuclear power in general. It has some interesting facts, useful for discussing power generation.

—JTM

From: **Heath Row** March 15, 2024
4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA, 90230

It's been more than a year since my previous letter of comment, and I hope this finds you both well. I was struck by the opening editorial for Vol. 22 #6. Earlier this month, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article about Brett Gelman canceling an appearance at Book Soup, a local bookstore, because of antisemitic intimidation. A bookstore in San Francisco previously canceled an event with Gelman because of remarks he made against other ethnic and social groups, so the issue might be somewhat complicated — bidirectional bigotry, perhaps. Regardless, the actor and writer's support of Israel seems to play a role. If interested, you can read more at <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2024-03-06/stranger-things-brett-gelman-book-soup-event-canceled>. I hope the year improves for us all.

I had been unaware of Demetrios Polychron's *The Fellowship of the Kings* and planned sequel *The Two Trees*. Suing the Tolkien Estate took gumption. I wonder whether Polychron's writing is any good! The story and book reviews were worth reading, as always, and I appreciated the convention listings and Hugo recommendation.

The reviews on Goodreads are strangely mixed, with three five-star reviews (from friends?) and 33 one-star reviews (from people

who actually read it?). And, oddly enough, a two-star review.

Though I've read *Alexiad* off and on over the years, I don't remember seeing such a sizable letter column! What a joy to encounter. I enjoyed reading Dale Speirs and Taras Wolansky's discussion of the North American Science Fiction Convention and other cons, as well as the latter's graduation from Tom Swift to "real science fiction." As a child, I was aware of Tom Swift—I even knew where the books were shelved in the library—but I didn't dip into them at all. The current me wishes I had. Regardless, I still found my way to sf and fantasy before I was a teenager.

The Frankfort Library had several. I read them avidly, but never could find *Tom Swift and His Space Solartron*. Grant had a complete set of the books, but he gave it to Bruce Gardner, who sold them.

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

AND DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT TRUTH!



Darrell Schweitzer's five-point definition of fascism is a welcome elaboration, though his use of the term "woke" is somewhat problematic. His definition is a checklist—symptoms to diagnose—that could be applied to the United States at this point in history. But all-gender bathrooms are hardly signs of a coming apocalypse. They're often bathrooms with enclosed personal spaces and shared sinks, rather than more traditional open-plan bathrooms with exposed urinals and stalls for sitting. Or, they're single seaters. At least in my experience. My sense is that it's more of a cost-effectiveness-in-real-estate play than anything else.

Garth Spencer expands on correspondents' use of the word "woke." According to Merriam-Webster, that old saw, the term means "aware of and actively attentive to important societal facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)." That's hardly a negative thing, unless one is opposed to racial and social justice.

Spencer's mention of Lee Gilliland inspired me to reach out to her on Facebook, as well. When Marty Cantor died, I inherited a good amount of Alexis Gilliland's artwork for fanzines, some done in collaboration with William Rotsler. I'd reached out to Gilliland last July seeking his permission to continue using the illustrations and gag cartoons Cantor has on hand but didn't hear back. His wife Lee was immediately responsive, helpful, and friendly. I hope they've returned to fanac in their area. (We should see Gilliland's work in *The Stf Amateur* in future issues!) A great example of faneds helping faneds, right here in the *Alexiad* lettercol. I'm giddy.

How is Alexis doing? We never hear from him.

George W. Price's discussion of global energy sources reminded me of a recent pamphlet published by the Man and Atom Society, *Blast* #1. In it, the also-heard-from C.D. Carson examines the energy usage and population of various countries and regions, and the outcome is quite interesting. For example, the United States represents roughly 4 percent of the world population and consumes 15 percent of the world's energy. India, then, represents 18 percent of the population but only uses almost 7 percent of the available energy. Wealthy nations use more energy, and energy use creates wealth. The pamphlet makes a compelling case for nuclear energy, and the pamphlet can be obtained from C.D. Carson, Man and Atom Society, P.O. Box 1035, Fort Worth, TX 76101; <http://www.man-and-atom.info>.

See above.

—JTM

I found the formatting of "I Am, What Are You?" somewhat confusing but was able to figure out how the text flowed. Satisfying silliness!

Putting it on a tight beam,

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** March 17, 2024
darrells@comcast.net

Contrary to Taras Wolansky I doubt I am in agreement with Ron DeSantis about many things. I can't claim any particular expertise on the subject of trans people. I just think that the state should stay out of private, personal matters. Like most people of my generation, I was aware of Christine Jorgensen by the time I was in high school, mostly as the subject of jokes about "Swedish convertables," but I never imagined I would ever meet a trans person. Of course there were none (acknowledged as such) in our school. Then I did get to know one when I was in my twenties. Now I can think of three fairly close acquaintances who have trans offspring. I still have never seen a drag show,

which seems to be a hot topic with Republicans these days. I wonder what small children, who aren't old enough to know about sex, make of drag queens. Do they see them as a specialized species of clown?

I also wonder how it is possible for a kid to transition without the parents knowing about it? If your son or daughter starts dressing as the opposite gender and takes a new name at school, how can any parent who is at least semi-conscious in the daytime not know about this or hear about it. What does the teacher say at the PTA meeting? "About your son ..." "Son? I thought I had a daughter." "You mean you didn't know?" Any parent that uninvolved in their children's lives perhaps shouldn't have a legal say, on the grounds that they are a totally negligent parent. But how realistic is this scenario? The parents I know who have trans kids are well aware of it, and are supportive.

It's illegal in California to tell parents that their child identifies as a different gender. Or, I presume, as an animal or whatever.

As for worldcons in exotic places, yes, fans in other countries should have the chance to show off their own fannish cultures, but only if their countries can meet certain guarantees of tolerance and safety. How many Jewish fans, or gays, or women, would want to go to Riyadh? How many gays would want to put themselves in danger by going to Kampala? Israel could probably guarantee tolerance, but not safety, because it's in a war zone. Of course I myself am starting to get too old for long-distance worldcons, particularly as my wife (who is older than me) seems to be losing her enthusiasm. I will be 76 in 2028 and she will be 80, so we are probably not going to Brisbane. I doubt Kampala has any serious chance. I myself will continue to go to World Fantasy as long as I can. (Maybe I can persuade the Mrs. for another go at Brighton next year, particularly if me repeat what we did last time and go by way of Paris.)

"I doubt Kampala has any serious chance." Which is what we said about Chengdu.

I would go to the NASFIC this year except that it conflicts with NECon, which is, to a NECon Legend like myself, sacred. I continue to range from New England to the Washington DC area and west as far as Pittsburgh, if only because I have an urgent need to unload some of my book stock. (Publishers keep going broke or retiring and unloading their stock on me. I've been working through Owlswick Press stock for the past 14 years. Some of the Borgo Press stock is much older than that.)

As for the Fascist concept of the "corporate state" (raised by Richard Dengrove), no, it wasn't that the Fascists were in the pockets of the rich (although many rich people thought that was the case at first), but that the rich were in the pockets of the Fascists. That was, temporarily at least, a safe place to be. If you were a rich industrialist and the Communists

were determined to dispossess or kill you, and the Fascists would let you survive and retain your property as long as you cooperated, which side would you choose? Mussolini seem to think that the "corporate state" concept was important. Then again, he thought that Fascism was a profound philosophy, not that he was a particularly profound thinker himself. If you follow the old rule of "ignore what they say and watch what they do," neither Hitler nor Mussolini seemed to be moving toward collectivism of property. They wanted collectivism of will. Everyone was to obey the state and worship the leader, of course, but the economics were a little vague.

Yes: BELIEVE OBEY FIGHT
—JTM

From: **Robert Kennedy** March 17, 2024
The Terraces of Boise, 5301 East Warm Springs Ave., Apt. B306 Boise, ID 83716-6205
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank for Vol. 23 No.1 (February 2024, Whole Number 133).

It's been some time since I've written, but I'm still here. Receiving *Alexiad* is always a highlight of the day it is received.

With the recent comments concerning males claiming to identify as females competing in female sports I feel compelled to make some comments of my own.

Some time ago I recall reading about a female champion wrestler being forced to wrestle a male. She was soundly defeated and said that she thought she was going to die.

Then there's the photo I saw recently of a female bicycle race where 1st and 2nd place were won by males. They towered over the female who was in 3rd place.

A female swimmer, Riley Gaines, tied a male swimmer with exactly the same time which is something I think may never have happened previously in swimming. They gave the trophy to the male and promised Riley they would get one for her. To the best of my knowledge she has never received the trophy.

As far as I can determine the males competing in female sports have not done well competing against other males. But they win a lot of trophies competing against females. It would be quite easy for males who do poorly against other males to say that they identify as females so that they can start winning trophies.

When these males defeat females they must feel very proud of themselves (sarcasm). For biological males to compete in female sports is obviously the end of female sports.

The Babylon Bee does a bit of that. A thirty-five year old man identifying as a twelve-year old and powering his tee-ball team to victory, for example.

<https://babylonbee.com/> —JTM

George W. Price: You ask if a biological female has ever competed in a man's sport and how did she do. I read of a female swimmer competing against males and she did poorly.

You also comment that "Fascism arose among Italian Socialists." Mussolini came from the Italian Socialists. He was expelled because he supported the Allies against Germany in WWI. I think it was the war itself, not necessarily Germany. Also, German NAZI was, if I remember correctly, just short for The German National Socialist Workers Party.



From: **George W. Price** March 22, 2024
4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL 60630-3333
price4418@comcast.net

February *Alexiad* (#133)

My condolences to Lisa for the loss of both her parents. I will offer no remarks, only sympathy.

Thank you.

—LTM

Joe notes in "Random Jottings" that "Iran has claimed Antarctica," making it now "part of the Dar al-Islam." Now all they have to do is enforce that. Oh, all right, let them claim the South Pole, as long as Santa Claus can keep the North Pole.

I am reminded of the story that a couple of hundred years ago the University of Warsaw was a center for the study of electricity and magnetism. Two scholars were hotly debating whether the current flowing from electric cells should be called "positive" or "negative." Being Poles, they were both very stubborn and

neither would yield an inch. And so, to this day, every battery has both a positive Pole and a negative Pole.



I'm glad to see "The Joy of High Tech" come back.

I never realized how much goes into making realistic animation. Edmiston mentions *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, which combined both animation and live photography. One scene has a booboo which I think I mentioned in *Alexiad* several years ago.

In a live-action scene early in the movie, conspirators are talking in a bar. Through a window behind them we see a typical 1920s-style streetcar pass by. A few minutes later, an identical streetcar goes by in the opposite direction. This is live action, not animation – I presume they found a film of an old trolley car in motion. The booboo is that it is entirely too identical – the second appearance is really the same film strip played backwards. You can tell by the way the trolley pole slants.

Most streetcars of that era had identical ends, with power pickup poles at both ends. A strong spring made the pole in use, at the car's back end, slant upward and backward to the direction of travel. The pole not in use, at the front, was hooked down flat against the roof. At the end of the line, the pole at the front was unhooked and raised to contact the power wire, and that end became the back. The pole at what had been the back was pulled down and hooked, and that end became the front.

In the movie, when the car goes by the

second time, in the other direction, the pole is still slanted as in the first time. That would mean the car is backing up (which they hardly ever did).

The movie makers obviously didn't know how those old cars worked. This flub jumped out at me because I grew up in the 1940s when Chicago had about 5,000 streetcars. By 1959 buses had replaced them all.

Taras Wolansky, replying to Darrell Schweitzer's remark that having both sexes share a bathroom is not really so outrageous, says, "I take it you've never encountered a urinal that is just a long, shared trough with water running through it." Those were ubiquitous in the Army when I was in, circa 1952. And there was no privacy whatsoever.

A typical barracks latrine had two rooms. One would have a number of shower heads, with no partitions between them. The other room would have one or two trough urinals along one wall, each trough long enough for maybe three men standing side by side. A row of toilets would be along the opposite wall, with no partitions at all. Washbowls for shaving would be along the other walls. And everybody could see exactly what everybody else was doing.

I don't know what arrangements the women's barracks had. Maybe there were concessions to privacy – but I wouldn't bet on that.

The concluding item, "Not From the Telnarian Histories," reminds me strongly of the novelette "The Road Not Taken," by Harry Turtledove (*Analog*, Nov. 1985). Earth is invaded by barbarians who have almost no technology except the hyperdrive for their ships. The invasion goes very poorly for them. As I recall, this was the story that alerted me to keep an eye out for other Turtledove stories, a decision that has rewarded me greatly.

Also, the initial *Analog* version of "The Road Not Taken" has a misprint with a life of its own. In the battle near the end, "roundshot" – meaning a cannonball – is spelled "roundshout." Well, no big deal, typos happen. But when the story was reprinted in *Warrior!* (1986, Vol. 5 of Jerry Pournelle's *Tor* anthology series *There Will Be War*), there's that same damned misprint! I suppose *Tor* scanned the text from *Analog* – and nobody ever read it closely enough to notice the error. Or even worse, nobody realized that it was an error and made no sense.

Captain Mainwaring has a comment for the editor: "You stupid boy."

—JTM

From: **Richard Dengrove** March 24, 2024
richd22426@aol.com

This comments on your February 2024 *Alexiad*.

Lisa mourns that her stepmother and father died. It always hurts when someone you know dies. It also hurts when you think of yourself

dying. While death will happen to all of us and we can't do anything about it, our minds can't do the rational thing, consider it something we can't control, and purge the thought.

About money, I'm lucky. In addition to getting a government pension, I did some inheriting. I don't have to worry about food. Thus, I can even send people paper zines and not worry about it.

About Antarctica, I don't think the Iranians are actually claiming all of Antarctica for themselves. I think they just believe that they have property rights there, like a lot of countries. However, if they tried to colonize Antarctica, according to the Explorersweb website, they would be violating the treaty other nations have signed.

About the Chinese Worldcon, what people worried about came to pass. The Chinese decided to censor works that had anything bad about Communist China and anything good about Taiwan.

About the colonies of "Hayek" and "Milton" in Antarctica. I guess you can make a profit near the sea. Fisherman have. Farther out, where there is nothing but snow, I don't see how anyone can make a profit. ...Maybe I'm wrong.

They were in OTL Idaho.

About *Rendezvous with Corsair*? I guess when a good percentage of the population is flying in outerspace, pirates will arise to steal any 'booty' they have. .

About *Tom Derringer and the Aluminum Airship*, it sounds like a steampunk series, a genre I haven't heard about in a while.

About "The Joy of High Tech," it isn't so much that fiction can only be made to look real; instead, it's that it can be made to look real cheaply. ...Yes, I remember "Roger Rabbit."

Lloyd Penney. I agree Worldcon should be in a different nation each year and Nasfic should be our national con. It would make more sense.

Richard Dengrove. I'm not going to comment on my own letter but comment on your words concerning my mail. Was what I was doing time travel or para-time travel? I was thinking more of re-doing our time line until we get it right.

George W. Price. About the Middle East, what Hamas did was terrible but I don't know how much better the Israeli reaction was.

What were the Israelis supposed to do when their children were slaughtered in such a horrible fashion? What would we do if the Canadians or Mexicans did the same to us? What would we expect them to do to us if we did that to them? Hamas slaughtered Israeli babies and aged Holocaust survivors. They are still holding American hostages and the odds are vastly against our getting them back alive.

—LTM

About Mussolini, he was close to believing in a form of socialism early on. However, after

II Duce took over, he didn't regulate industry much. On the other hand, I gather the Nazis regulated industry very tightly. Basically, what makes a fascist is not economics but politics. Nobody rules but the Fascists.

About women soldiers, I think war is becoming completely mechanized. Ultimately, it won't matter whether the troops are physically strong or weak. Male or female. In short, I'm taking the position Heinlein may or may not have taken.

About literary cons, I have been to several of them recently. The DC con Capclave is definitely literary.

Taras Wolansky. I'm sure it was popular to claim to put out every forest fire. However, I hear the attempt to do this can cause fires. For one thing, against Smokey the Bear, some small fires, I hear, can prevent big fires if it burns down trees the big fire needs..

Not from the Telnarian Histories. Any modern army, I hear, would make Conan the Barbarian into schnitzel.

Well, that was, the basic idea, and it broke, the arrogance, of the barbarians, which was why, the British Empire, came to rule, the stars.

-JTM

That's it.

From: **Taras Wolansky** March 31, 2024
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Thanks for the February *Alexiad*.

Rodford Edmiston: "The concept of the Uncanny Valley [...] has been largely debunked."

I hadn't heard about that. I still remember when the concept was applied to the "corpse-like" visage of the conductor (Tom Hanks) in the 3D animated Christmas movie, *The Polar Express* (2004). What's the story?

Lloyd Penney: "Let's see what they [Chinese con runners] do before we criticize further."

Er, you think what they did up to now was acceptable? I would say excluding nominees on political grounds is enough to put them beyond the pale.

At the very least, eligibility decisions and ballot counting would need to take place in a free country, even if the results are announced in a "Nazi" Worldcon. There is, after all, no reason for Hugo administration to be run by this year's concom.

George W. Price: "When enemy raiders attack, the men run to the battle line, and the women run to gather up and protect the children. Always."

This kind of behavior seems to ring true in the light of evolution. It's reminiscent of the old rule, "women and children first", during a shipwreck.

Yet I seem to recall reading of an Indonesian shipwreck decades ago — a large, capsize ferry — in which hundreds drowned, and men famously stepped on women's heads to get to the lifeboats.

There has been a morality

shift. And other things; the rescuing ships taking off survivors from the *Andrea Doria* found the first lifeboats filled with stewards.

A Muslim society might react differently from a society with a Christian heritage, I speculate.

AT THE MOHAMMED CARTOON CONTEST

THIS IS VERY FUNNY, BUT IT'S ABOUT US, NOT MOHAMMED. DISQUALIFIED!



Darrell Schweitzer: "The BBC has announced that 2023 was the hottest year on record."

As this isn't my first rodeo, the question I immediately come back with is: by how much? In my experience, it always turns out to be a tiny fraction of a degree.

The sky may be warming; but it is not falling!

"Do not invest in shorefront property ..." Except everything I've seen indicates that shorefront property is dramatically rising, not falling, in value. People are actually behaving as if sea level rise were a distant and/or easily accommodated problem.

Steve Green: So far, I have found the "increasing politicisation of programme streams" at science fiction conventions easily avoided; but your mileage (or should I say "kilometerage") may vary.

There is an exception to that. Even as, in my experience, all doctors and dentists no longer require surgical masks, conventions typically still do. Or at least they did last year.

Joe: "S.M. Stirling would tell you that women are fully as combat capable as are men"

In athletic terms, my guess would be that, on average, an adult woman is roughly the equivalent of a 15-year-old boy. I base this on a

couple of high profile incidents in which championship-level women's soccer teams were defeated by teams of 15-year-old boys.

Hence the scandal where men identifying as woman rack up sports victories. And make dressing rooms, well, interesting.

These are only averages, of course. The women's and men's bell curves certainly overlap to some degree.

Of course, that kind of physical ability is gradually becoming less critical to combat. During the Battle of Britain, for example, fighter pilots had to slam the controls with every muscle in their bodies, or they would die. Flying a modern fighter plane is no longer so strenuous.

"Not from the Telnarian Histories": I'm unfamiliar with most of the works being parodied here. However, it seems thoughtless of the British not to take prisoners, to tell them how to operate the captured space ship. At any rate, no prisoners are mentioned, even if it's likely some of the barbarians would be wounded, but not killed.

The wounded ones fought until they were killed. Stupid boys. -JTM

WAHF:
Mike Glycer, Lee Muncy, Rod Smith, Taral Wayne, with thanks.
Lloyd G. Daub, with various items of interest.

THE SOMBER STREETS OF GOTHAM

The thief saw them coming and scrambled up a wall out of the way. The boy was talking to the man and woman — his parents, must have been. At least he had had parents. She was not so well off. Her father had left them, her mother had died, and she was on the streets to live by her thefts.

The parents were smiling as the boy babbled enthusiastically about the movie when it happened. A mugger stepped out of the darkness and held them at gunpoint. "Your money," he said and the man offered up his wallet. "Those pearls," he said then and the woman pulled them off. The string broke and pearls scattered over the pavement.

He leveled his gun. She felt three pains in the next moments. The first was when he whipped about and a bullet tore through her leg. The last was when her head struck the pavement.

But the second was when her boots crashed into his head, knocking him down.

"Martha! Look after that boy!" Dr. Wayne began to tie up the unconscious mugger's wrists with his tie.

"It's a girl, Tom!" she shouted back as she tried wrapping her husband's handkerchief around the girl's leg. She was wearing a leather jacket and trousers, and was skinny as a rail, so the confusion was understandable.

He looked at their son, as he fumbled in his pocket for change. "Bruce, call the police and an ambulance." The boy took the money and was gone running towards the drug store at the end of the alley.

"Thomas, what are you going to do?"

"She saved our lives. I have to pay." He laughed, nervously.

Selina opened an eye and looked over the two people above her, then fell into blissful unconsciousness.

"You're pretty."

It was warm, it was clean, it was quiet. Selina shifted and realized she was not handcuffed to the bed. She could get up and flee — if she could get the tubes out, if she could get some clothes, if she could do something about this boy. She could barely speak and her mouth was filthy, but she could say, "Water." He handed her a glass — it was clean water, nothing like the runoff from the roof she was used to. She drank.

Now she could speak. "Who are you?"

"Bruce Wayne — the boy whose life you saved last night. Me and my parents." He lifted some papers. "I came here after school. My father is doing financial work but he will be here in a while."

She let her head sink back on the pillow. Rich people.

A well-to-do man entered. "Miss Kyle," he said. She blinked. "The doctors said you're all right except for the leg, and that should heal in a week or two. The bullet missed the bone.

"When it's healed up, you're going to my home. Bruce, take care of her and no naughty things."

The Waynes had had an argument. "Thomas, she's a street thief," Margaret had said.

He replied, "She saved our lives. I owe it to her.

"And Bruce needs a companion. After Tommy Elliott made such a fuss, the time he went there, he can use someone who will be grateful. You are right, she is pretty, and she has an impudent look about her."

"I hope she doesn't start stealing again."

She healed enough to be discharged, and soon Dr. Wayne showed up to take her to his home. The car was fancy, and the driver was a tall and reserved man. The house was big.

"She is quite the street urchin. Mistress Selina, I have laid out your bedroom and prepared decent clothing," the man said.

"Oh, Selina, this is our butler, Alfred," Dr. Wayne said.

"Can I have a set of leather trousers? The docs had to cut mine off."

The butler said, "Master Thomas?"

Dr. Wayne sighed. "As you will."

Selina struggled to eat properly. There was so much food! Her leg was recovering; she could walk properly, and could climb again.

As they found out. One spring day. Bruce was working on his homework, and there was a sudden gust of air, followed by a kiss on his cheek. He looked out the window, and there was Selina, sitting on a tree branch, a smile on her face,

"Come out and join me, grind," she said.

He put a book on his papers and carefully went out the window. She sometimes seemed to flinch but scrambled up and down the bole of the tree. He was a little more careful, but the breeze was pleasant.

The next day another doctor came and examined Selina's leg. Afterwards she said to Dr. Wayne, "She's recovering."

When Thomas told Selina, she said, "Does this mean I have to leave?" He shook his head and she said, "Can I have a balance bar?"

About a week later Alfred went to see Dr. Wayne. His report was interesting: "Master Thomas, that Selina is walking on the bar, a foot above her head, as though she was walking on the floor. Her balance is extraordinary."

He went down and looked. After a moment he said, "When did you become a gymnast?"

She bent forward, put her hands on the bar, and flipped. When she was on her feet again she said, "I've always been this way."

"You weren't even holding out your arms."

"Like I said, I've always been this way. Bruce is a good climber, too."

"If you were such a gymnast, why did you become a thief?"

She jumped off the bar. She winced when she landed on the floor. "You gotta know someone to get in the circus."

"Well, we saw the Flying Graysons, the last time Haly's Circus was in town. You might like them."

"I bet that would be fun. Now I had better go take a shower."

She was, if not problematic, impudent. As when they were in Italy, and she drove a motor scooter with Bruce clinging to her at a dreadfully fast speed.

Then they went to one of the museums of Florence. Selina had brought a camera and was taking pictures of everything. Bruce said, nervously, "Are you casing the joint?"

"You never know," Selina said with a smile.

And then there was the time the two children went out west but only got as far as Kansas . . .

— Not by Bob Kane & Bill Finger, *Gotham*, or BatCat Moment

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