

Sci Phi Journal

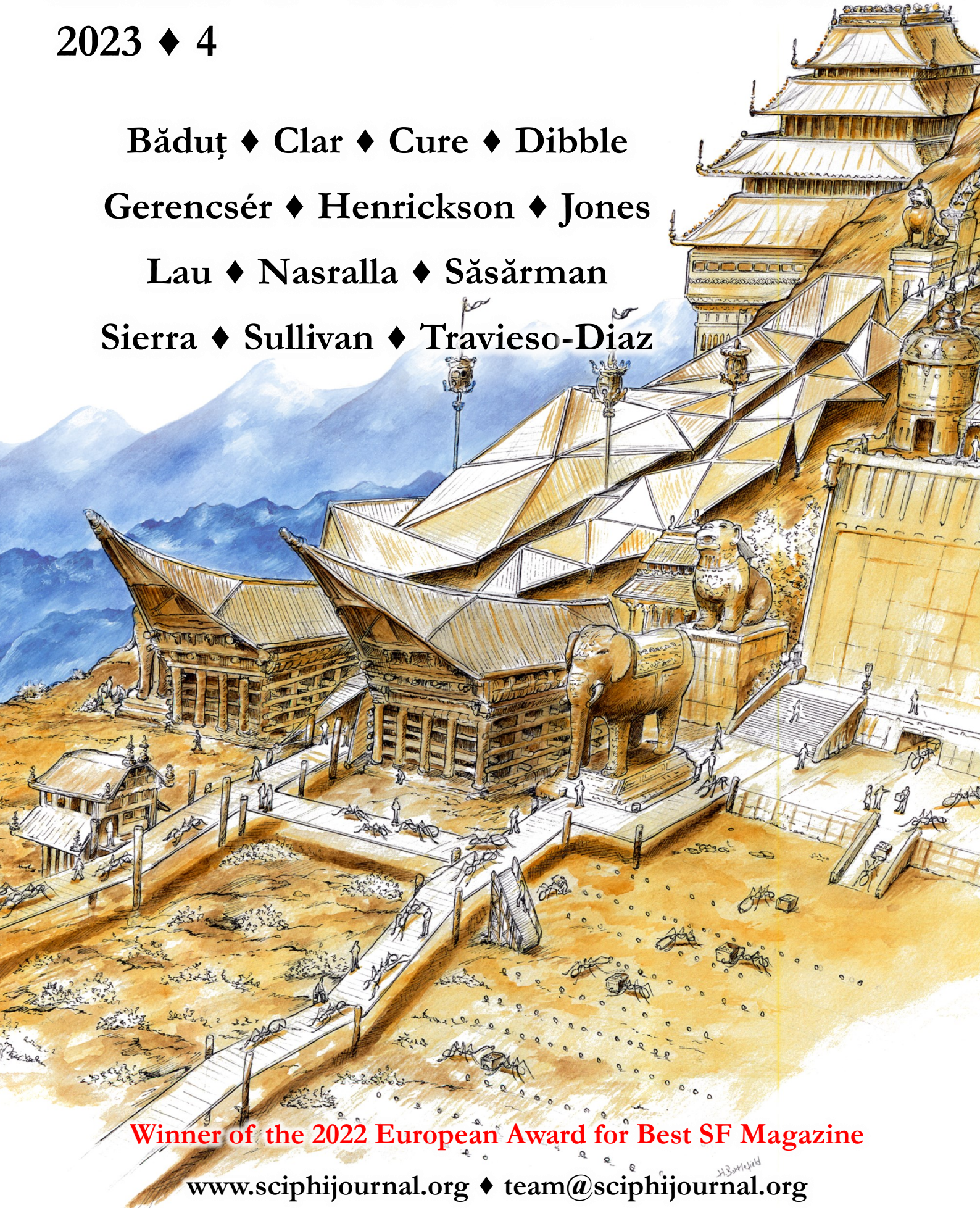
2023 ♦ 4

Băduț ♦ Clar ♦ Cure ♦ Dibble

Gerencsér ♦ Henrickson ♦ Jones

Lau ♦ Nasralla ♦ Săsărman

Sierra ♦ Sullivan ♦ Travieso-Diaz



Winner of the 2022 European Award for Best SF Magazine

www.sciphijournal.org ♦ team@sciphijournal.org

Beheading Of A Queen

Matias Travieso-Diaz

Gravesend, Kent, September 1, 1586

To: Nicolas de Neufville, Marquis de Villeroi,
Secretary of State for War to His Majesty King Henry
III of France [*sent by carrier pigeon*]

Monsieur Villeroi: Greetings. Please deliver this letter
to the King.

*[Following is the translation of a message encrypted using the
Vivonne cypher]*

Two heads are better than one.

John Heywood Proverbs (1546)

Your Serene Majesty: This report updates my earlier ones regarding the hostilities between King Philip II of Spain and Queen Elizabeth. Since war broke out, Philip has been preparing to launch an attack against England. While Philip's original motivation was displeasure over English privateer attacks on Spanish vessels returning from the New World and the aid Elizabeth is giving to the rebels in the Netherlands, a new factor is driving him to accelerate preparations for an invasion of England: the perilous situation of the long-imprisoned Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. I have learned that, based on the discovery of a plot to assassinate Elizabeth in which Mary was implicated, Elizabeth intends to bring Mary to trial accusing her of treason.

My sources assure me that Philip is leaning strongly on renowned Admiral Marquis de Santa Cruz, under whose command an Armada is being assembled, demanding that the fleet depart without delay. Likewise, Philip is urging Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, the commander of his forces in the Netherlands, to gather the invading army and finalize construction of the barges that will carry Spanish troops to England.

Gravesend, Kent, February 9, 1587

The English are aware that an attack is imminent and are fortifying the approaches to London. I am fortunate, thanks to your Majesty's wisdom, to have been secretly redeployed after relations between England and France soured last year and I was recalled from my post as Ambassador to Elizabeth's court. I now reside incognito in a house in the village of Gravesend, a day's ride by horse-drawn carriage from the center of London. I miss being Ambassador, but I realize my gathering and conveying accurate information is vital to France.

Sire, I pray to God that He keep your Majesty in perfect health.

Your humble and obedient subject,

Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de la Mauvissière.

Signed this First day of September, 1586.

#

Gravesend, Kent, October 17, 1586

Your Serene Majesty: Mary Stuart's trial on charges of conspiring to assassinate her cousin Queen Elizabeth was concluded yesterday and Mary was found guilty, which will result in her death. The Catholic population in England is quite angry.

Your humble and obedient subject,

Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de la [Mauvissière](#).

Signed this 17th day of October, 1586.

#

Your Serene Majesty: Much has happened since my last communication. A matter of greatest importance is the demise of Mary Stuart. Following the guilty verdict of treason, the English Parliament passed a bill petitioning for Mary's execution. For the next three months, Elizabeth took no action, perhaps fearful of the repercussions of killing an anointed queen. Finally, a week ago, the death warrant was signed and delivered to the Privy Council, which sent it out on its own authority to be administered. Mary was beheaded yesterday at Fotheringay Castle in Northamptonshire, where she had been imprisoned.

Intelligence from my Spanish sources indicates that the Armada has been assembled in Lisbon, and Admiral Santa Cruz is awaiting confirmation that the land forces are on their way to the departure area in the Netherlands. I expect that King Philip soon will issue orders for the invasion to proceed.

Your humble and obedient subject,

Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de la Mauvissière.

Signed this 9th day of February, 1587

#

Gravesend, Kent, June 20, 1587

Your Serene Majesty: I am unable to confirm the accuracy of all the statements in this report, as some have been conveyed to me by people claiming to have witnessed them first-hand. However, I believe the information is substantially true.

The Spanish Armada, comprising about 140 vessels, took off from Portugal on Easter Sunday, March 29, 1587 and progressed towards the English Channel, which they reached almost two months later. The Armada had an initial encounter with the English fleet stationed in Plymouth, but the battle was inconclusive and the Armada proceeded without major casualties along the channel towards a meeting with the army being brought to the coast of the Netherlands by Farnese. Their plans encountered a difficulty, however, in that Farnese was late in moving his troops to the coast. Midway across the channel, Admiral Santa Cruz decided to anchor in the Solent, a sheltered strait between the Isle of Wight and the coast of England near Portsmouth. From this protected location, Santa Cruz continued to send messages to Farnese tracking his progress, until the two agreed to link up at the Flemish seaport of Ostend.

The Armada was continuously harassed by the smaller, more maneuverable English ships but Santa Cruz was able to bring the Armada almost intact to Ostend, where the Spanish vessels arranged themselves into a crescent, placing the barges carrying Farnese's soldiers behind the crescent, within the protection of the Spanish warcraft. The Armada then proceeded to the English coast, where it fought a decisive battle against the English across from Margate, a seaport close to my home. Both fleets suffered extensive losses, but the barges with the Farnese troops were able to land and quickly subdued the English militia guarding the shore.

As of this writing, the progress of the Spanish army is being slowed by arriving English troops, but the Farnese contingent is also receiving reinforcement by the several thousand men aboard the Armada's ships.

Your humble and obedient subject,

Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de la Mauvissière.

Signed this 20th day of June, 1587

#

Gravesend, Kent, June 24, 1587

Your Serene Majesty: Events in the Spanish invasion of England are proceeding with rapidity. Two days ago, the combined forces of the Farnese contingent and the Armada's reinforcements broke through the English lines and forced the English to withdraw to a defensive position around the town of Dartford, trying to protect a bridge over the Thames through which troops could be transported to aid in the defense of London. Yesterday, the Spanish dislodged the English armies, crossed the bridge, and engaged and defeated the main English contingent under the Earl of Leicester, which had been stationed at Tillsbury. With this latest victory, the road to London is clear and the final battle may take place in the city itself.

Meanwhile, there have been uprisings of Catholics throughout England in support of the invaders in places like Lancashire, Westmorland, and Norfolk. The population of England, which includes a large Catholic minority, is sharply divided between those who support Elizabeth and those who want her deposed. This sharp division between Catholics and Protestants has been a fact of English political and social life since Henry VIII broke away from the Church of Rome.

Your humble and obedient subject,

Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de la Mauvissière.

Signed this 24th day of June, 1587

#

Gravesend, Kent, August 4, 1587

Your Serene Majesty: The Spanish invasion of England has been completed. After defeating the main English land army, the Farnese troops marched west towards London. Opposition was mostly by ill-equipped, poorly trained militia whose members could not withstand the assault of the battle-hardened Spanish forces.

Two weeks later, Spanish troops arrived in London and occupied the city, meeting little resistance. They then marched in the southwest direction towards the official residence of the Queen, Windsor Castle. Elizabeth had taken refuge in the castle, which had been fortified and was protected by a force of over 30,000 soldiers under the Queen's cousin and Royal Chamberlain, Lord Henry Hunsdon.

A siege ensued, which ended abruptly last week. Apparently, there was a revolt by Catholics within the English forces. After prevailing in a fierce struggle, the Catholics surrendered the castle to the Spanish. Whether the details of this event are true is immaterial, for the success of the invaders is a fact. Elizabeth is imprisoned and is expected to stand trial for Mary's execution.

Alexander Farnese, acting on King Philip II's behalf, has proclaimed Philip Howard, the godson of Philip II and a strong Catholic, as the next King of England, bearing the name Philip I. Philip Howard is the son of the Duke of Norfolk, who was Queen Elizabeth's second cousin. The Duke had sought to marry Queen Mary Stuart and put her on the throne in place of Elizabeth, but the plot was uncovered and the Duke was tried for treason and executed in 1572. Philip Howard himself was implicated in a similar plot in 1583 to place Mary on the throne. That plot also failed and Philip was imprisoned in the tower of London, where he was at the time of the Armada's arrival.

Philip Howard is thus an ideal choice to rule England as a pawn of the Spanish. He will be a strong Catholic ruler, furthering the aims of King Philip II. The English Parliament has been dissolved and many of Elizabeth's supporters have been slain or imprisoned. However, the English fleet – under Lord Howard of Effingham, Francis Drake, and John Hawkins – has taken refuge somewhere off the coast of Ireland and remains a threat to the Spanish domination of the country and the seas.

Your humble and obedient subject,

Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de la Mauvissière.

Signed this 4th day of August, 1587

#

Gravesend, Kent, December 30, 1588

Your Serene Majesty: The trial of Queen Elizabeth was concluded and the Queen was found guilty of various offenses, including the murder of her cousin Mary. At dawn today, Elizabeth was beheaded and her remains incinerated.

Public opinion in England remains divided between those that revere Elizabeth as a martyr, and those – mainly Catholics – who believe her execution was justified.

New English King Philip I is expected to sign a peace treaty with Spain, seeking to bring about the removal of Spanish forces from the island. England has ended its support of the rebellion in the Netherlands and is renouncing its privateers' attacks on Spanish shipping, which nonetheless continue to be carried out by the rebellious Navy Royal.

But all is not well with Spanish rule in England. The Protestants in the country, supported by Scotland, have chosen James VI, son of Mary Stuart, as King of England. A civil war is in progress, as the Protestant majority abhors the country's domination by a Catholic beholden to a foreign power. The English resistance will make the ongoing Dutch efforts to oppose Spanish rule pale by comparison.

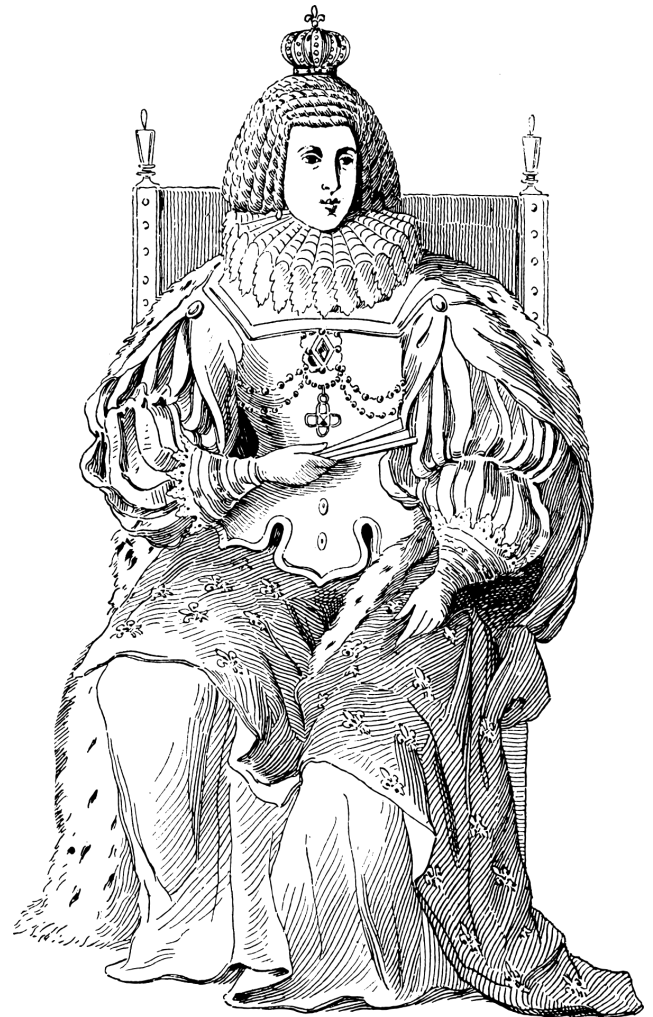
Many years of conflict are in the offing. This enduring strife will undoubtedly weaken both Spain and England and create opportunities for France to increase its power throughout the world. Time will tell what transpires, but the potential benefits for France appear immense.

Sire, I pray that God will keep your Majesty in perfect health and grant you a blessed 1589.

Your humble and obedient subject,

Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de la Mauvissière.

Signed this 30th of December, 1588



~