APRIL 2021

53rd Anniversary Issue

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY FIELD - ISSUE 723 - VOL. 86 NO. 4 - \$8.99

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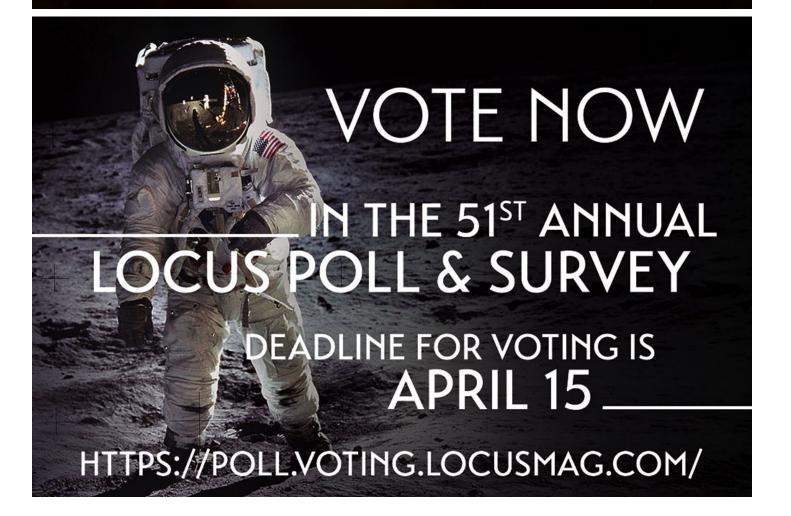
ISOLOR CLE FULL CIRCLE

Nebula Awards Ballot
Nghi Vo Wins Crawford
C.J. Cherryh Wins Heinlein Award
British Fantasy Awards Winners



Join us for the online ceremony in June 2021. Your membership helps make it happen!

LOCUSMAG.COM/2021-LOCUS-AWARDS-WEEKEND



# TABLE of CONTENTS

April 2021 • Issue 723 • Vol. 86 • No. 4 54th Year of Publication • 30-Time Hugo Winner

Cover and Interview Designs by Francesca Myman



#### INTERVIEWS

Ursula Vernon: Shiny New Idea / 10 Isabel Yap: Full Circle / 28

#### MAIN STORIES / 5

2020 Nebula Awards Ballot • Nghi Vo Wins Crawford • British Fantasy Awards Winners • Philip K. Dick Award Judges • Weisskopf Removed as DisCon III GoH • Cherryh Wins 2021 Heinlein Award • Dell Award Winner • Stoker Awards Final Ballot

#### THE DATA FILE / 7

Carnegie and Greenaway Medal Shortlists • Ray Bradbury Prize Finalists • Analog Anlab Award Finalists • Asimov's Readers' Award Finalists • Lambda Awards Finalists • Octavia E. Butler News • BSFA Shortlist • Audie Awards Finalists • Black Creatives Fund • SFWA News • World Conventions News • Publishing News • Workshop News • Contest News • Announcements • Awards News • Financial News • International Rights

### PEOPLE & PUBLISHING / 8

Notes on milestones, awards, books sold, etc., with news this issue about John Varley, Susanna Clarke, Stephen King & Richard Chizmar, Charles Stross, N.K. Jemisin, and many others

#### SPECIAL FEATURES

Commentary by Kameron Hurley: Plotting the Way Forward / 27 SF in India / 32

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

2020 British Book Summary / 30

#### LISTINGS

Magazines Received: February / 34 Books Received: February / 36 **British Books** Received: January / 46 Bestsellers / 48

#### OBITUARIES / 57

Norton Juster • Dean Morrissey • Michael G. Adkisson

LOCUS LETTERS / 57

#### EDITORIAL MATTERS / 58

There's a Light • Locus Awards Voting Deadline • This Issue/Next Issue



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# LOCUS LOOKS AT BOOKS

#### Short Fiction Reviews by Rich Horton / 12

Curiosities Winter '20; Cossmass Infinities 9/20; On Spec #115; Analog 3-4/21; Asimov's 3-4/21.

#### Short Fiction Reviews by Paula Guran / 13

Uncanny 1-2/21; Apex #122; The Dark 1/21, 2/21; Nightmare 1/21, 2/21; Fantasy 2/21, 3/21; Baffling 1/21.

#### Short Fiction Reviews by Karen Burnham / 14

Clarkesworld 2/21; Lightspeed 2/21; Fiyah Winter 21; Tor.com 1/27, 2/3, 2/10, 2/24/21; Beneath Ceaseless Skies 1/28/21, 2/11/21; Strange Horizons 2/8, 2/15/21; Aurealis #137; Fantasy Magazine 2/21.

#### Reviews by Liz Bourke / 15

The Alien Stars and Other Novellas, Tim Pratt; Hold Fast Through the Fire, K.B. Wagers.

#### Reviews by Gary K. Wolfe / 16

The Best of World SF: Volume 1, Lavie Tidhar, ed.; Alias Space and Other Stories, Kelly Robson; I'm Waiting for You and Other Stories, Kim Bo-Young; On Fragile Waves, E. Lily Yu; Chaos on Catnet, Naomi Kritzer.

#### Reviews by Adrienne Martini / 18

What Abigail Did That Summer, Ben Aaronovitch; The Only Living Girl on Earth, Charles Yu; Project Hail Mary, Andy Weir; The Galaxy, and the Ground Within, Becky Chambers; A Psalm for the Wild-Built, Becky Chambers.

#### Reviews by Katharine Coldiron / 19

Unity, Elly Bangs; These Lifeless Things, Premee Mohamed; Skyward Inn, Aliya Whiteley.

#### Reviews by Ian Mond / 20

Hummingbird Salamander, Jeff VanderMeer; Peaces, Helen Oyeyemi; The White Library, Paul Voermans; Rabbit Island, Elvira Navarro.

#### Reviews by Colleen Mondor / 22

Written in Starlight, Isabel Ibañez; Kingston and the Magician's Lost and Found, Rucker Moses & Theo Gangi; Lycanthropy and Other Chronic Illnesses, Kristen O'Neal.

# Reviews by Divers Hands: Alex Brown, Paula Guran, Rich Horton, Gabino Iglesias, Maya C. James, Russell Letson, Alvaro Zinos-Amaro / 23

Written in Starlight, Isabel Ibañez; The Tallow-Wife and Other Tales, Angela Slatter; Driftwood, Marie Brennan; Ink, Jonathan Maberry; Disease, Sarah Tolmie; The Unbroken, C.L. Clark; A Desolation Called Peace, Arkady Martine; Michael Bishop and the Persistence of Wonder: A Critical Study of the Writings, Joe Sanders.

#### Audiobook Reviews by Amy Goldschlager / 26

The Mask of Mirrors, M.A. Carrick; The Witch in the Almond Tree and other stories, C.S.E. Cooney; The Map of Tiny Perfect Things, Lev Grossman; The Tower of Fools, Andrzej Sapkowski; In the Empty Quarter, G. Willow Wilson.

Terry Bisson: This Month in History / 12, 17, 21, 23

#### **CORRECTIONS TO LOCUS**

In the People & Publishing column in our March 2021 issue, we said Premee Mohamed's **These Lifeless Things** was a novel; it is a novella, and sold to the Solaris novella line. In New & Notable, we misspelled Olga Grushin's name as Olga Grushkin. We apologize for the errors.

E. Lily Yu	(F/SEF)4
Andy Weir	(F)4
Elly Bangs	(F)4
Jonathan Maberry	
Nghi Vo	
RJ Barker	
Adam Nevill	
Toni Weisskopf	
C.J. Cherryh	
Jazmin Collins	(F)6
John Varley	
Susanna Člarke	
Marlon James	
Namwali Serpell	(F/PGS)9
Daniel José Ölder	
Ursula Vernon	
Kameron Hurley	
Isabel Yap	
IASFA, Performing Arts	, - , -

### PHOTO LISTING

Department	. (F/SIM)32
Inaugural Session Participants	
Didier Queloz Sujan Sengupta	. (F/SIM)33
Dr. Venugopal KR during h Presidential Address	is (F/SIM)33
Radhakrishna K Norton Juster	. (F/SIM)33

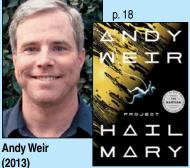
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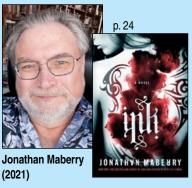
#### AD INDEX

Locus	2.59
Small Beer	
Uphill Downhill Press	60









# Locus Online <a href="https://www.locusmag.com">www.locusmag.com</a>

In April, Locus Online features weekly listings of notable new books; periodic listings of periodicals; and "Blinks" to online reviews, articles, and genre epublications. In addition the site posts breaking news posted by the Locus staff; columns, sample reviews, and excerpted interviews from the Magazine; and periodic Roundtable posts from Alvaro Zinos-Amaro.

# 2020 NEBULA AWARDS BALLOT

#### **Novel**

Piranesi, Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury US: Bloomsbury UK) The City We Became, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit US & UK) Mexican Gothic, Silvia Moreno-Garcia (Del Rev: Jo Fletcher) The Midnight Bargain, C.L. Polk (Erewhon)

Black Sun, Rebecca Roanhorse (Saga; Solaris)

Network Effect, Martha Wells (Tordotcom)

#### Novella

"Tower of Mud and Straw", Yaroslav Barsukov (Metaphorosis 9/25/20) Finna, Nino Cipri (Tordotcom) Ring Shout, P. Djèlí Clark (Tordotcom) "Ife-Iyoku, the Tale of Imadeyunuagbon", Ekpeki Oghenechovwe Donald (Dominion) The Four Profound Weaves, R.B. Lemberg (Tachyon) Riot Baby, Tochi Onyebuchi (Tordotcom)

#### **Novelette**

"Stepsister", Leah Cypess (F&SF 5-6/20) "The Pill", Meg Elison (Big Girl) "Burn or the Episodic Life of Sam Wells as a Super", A.T. Greenblatt (Uncanny 05-06/20) "Two Truths and a Lie", Sarah Pinsker (Tor.com 6/17/20)

#### Novelette, cont.

"Where You Linger", Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam (Uncanny 1-2/20)

"Shadow Prisons", Caroline M. Yoachim (serialized in the Dystopian Triptych series as "The Shadow Prison Experiment", "Shadow Prisons of the Mind", "The Shadow Prisoner's Dilemma")

#### **Short Story**

"Badass Moms in the Zombie Apocalypse", Rae Carson (Uncanny 1-2/20) "Advanced Word Problems in Portal Math", Aimee Picchi (Daily Science Fiction 1/3/20) "A Guide for Working Breeds", Vina Jie-Min Prasad (Made to Order) "The Eight-Thousanders", Jason Sanford (Asimov's 9/10-20) "My Country Is a Ghost", Eugenia Triantafyllou (Uncanny 1-2/20) "Open House on Haunted Hill", John Wiswell (Diabolical Plots 6/15/20)

#### **Game Writing**

Blaseball Hades Kentucky Route Zero The Luminous Underground Scents & Semiosis Spiritfarer

#### **Andre Norton Award**

Raybearer, Jordan Ifueko (Amulet) A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking.

T. Kingfisher (Argyll) Elatsoe, Darcie Little Badger (Levine Querido)

A Game of Fox & Squirrels. Jenn Reese (Holt)

Star Daughter, Shveta Thakrar (HarperTeen)

Ray Bradbury Award Birds of Prey: And the Fantabulous **Emancipation of One Harley Quinn** The Expanse: "Gaugamela" The Good Place: "Whenever You're Ready" Lovecraft Country, Season 1 The Mandalorian: "The Tragedy" The Old Guard

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America have released the finalists for the 2020 Nebula Awards. Final ballots are due April 30, 2021, 11:59 p.m. PDT (only active SFWA members are eligible to vote). Winners will be announced online during the Nebula Awards Ceremony, during the SFWA Nebula Conference (June 4-6, 2021). Details at <a href="https://nebulas.">https://nebulas.</a> sfwa.org/>.■

# **Nghi Vo Wins Crawford**



Nghi Vo (2019)

Nghi Vo's novel The Empress of Salt and Fortune (Tordotcom) is the winner of the 2021 Crawford Award, presented annually by the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts (IAFA) for a first book of fantasy fiction.

Other finalists were Night Roll, Michael DeLuca (Stelliform); Everyone on the Moon is Essential Personnel, Julian Jarboe (Lethe); Flyaway, Kathleen Jennings

(Tordotcom); In Veritas, C.J. LaVigne (NeWest); Beneath the Rising, Premee Mohamed (Solaris).

Participating in this year's nomination and selection process were previous Crawford winners Candas Jane Dorsey and Jedediah Berry, as well as Karen Burnham, Mimi Mondal, and Cheryl Morgan. The award is administered by Gary K. Wolfe and was presented during the 42nd International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, held online March 18-21, 2021. For more: <www.fantastic-arts.org>. ■

# **British Fantasy Awards Winners**

The British Fantasy Society has announced the winners for the 2020 British Fantasy Awards.

Best Fantasy Novel (the Robert Holdstock Award): The Bone Ships, RJ Barker (Orbit).

Best Horror Novel (the August Derleth Award): The Reddening, Adam Nevill (Ritual Limited).

Best Novella: Ormeshadow, Priya Sharma (Tor.com Publishing)

Best Short Story: "The Pain-Eater's Daughter", Laura Mauro (Sing Your RJ Barker (2018) Sadness Deep).

Best Collection: Sing Your Sadness Deep, Laura Mauro (Undertow).

Best Anthology: New Suns: Original Speculative Fiction for People of Color, Nisi Shawl, ed. (Solaris).

Best Independent Press: Rebellion.

Best Non-Fiction: The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas (New York University Press).

Best Magazine/Periodical: Fiyah.

Best Artist: Ben Baldwin.

Best Comic/Graphic Novel: DIE, Kieron





Adam Nevill (2011)

Gillen & Stephanie Hans (Image). Best Audio: PodCastle.

Best Film/Television Production: Us.

Best Newcomer (the Sydney J Bounds Award): Ta-Nehisi Coates, for The Water Dancer (One World).

Karl Edward Wagner Award: Craig Lock-

Winners were chosen by jury, except for the special award (the Karl Edward Wagner Award), which was chosen by the BFS committee. For more: <www.britishfantasysociety.org/bfs/british-fantasy-awards-2020>. ■

# Philip K. Dick **Award Judges**

The five judges for the Philip K. Dick Award for works of science fiction published as paperback originals in the US during the year 2021 have been announced:

John P. Murphy, 30 Peaslee Road, Merrimack NH 03054-4517; ebooks in .mobi format to <john@johnpmurphy.net>.

Kelly Robson, 96 Saint Patrick Street, Suite 315, Toronto ON M5T 1V2, Canada; ebooks in .mobi format to <kellyrobson@gmail.com>.

David M. Sandner, 1530 Ponderosa Avenue, Fullerton CA 92835-2039; ebooks in .epub or .pdf format to <dsandner@fullerton.edu>.

Allen Steele, PO Box 299, Whately MA 01093-0299; ebooks in .mobi format to <allensteele@ comcast net>

Molly Tanzer, c/o J. Campanella, 1310 Carriage Drive, Longmont CO 80501-8921; ebooks in .mobi format to <emollytanzer@gmail.com>.

Publishers are encouraged to mail copies of eligible books to each judge. Nominees will be announced in January 2022. For more: <a href="https://">https://</a> www.philipkdickaward.org/2021/03/philip-kdick-award-judges-announced.html>.

# Weisskopf Removed As DisCon III GoH

DisCon III, the 2021 Worldcon, has announced that Baen Books publisher Toni Weisskopf is being removed as guest of honor. The decision follows reports of calls for political violence on Baen's Bar, the online forum of Baen Books, and the subsequent temporary closure of the board by publisher Toni Weisskopf.

Chair Bill Lawhorn sent a press release on February 19 that reads:

> DisCon III condemns the violent and hostile content found within Baen Books' forums. We also cannot condone the fact such content

was enabled and allowed to ferment for so long. We want to make it clear abusive behavior is not, and will not be, tolerated at DisCon III. Such behavior goes entirely against our already established policies concerning inclusivity and creating a welcoming environment for our members, which can be found here: <discon3.org/about/inclusion/>.

We knew simply saying those words with no actions to back them up would be unacceptable. Too often, we have seen individuals and organizations say they are on the right side of issues yet do nothing to act on those words. We knew we had to take a hard look at our



own position and take action based on our established policies.

As a result, after discussion with her, we have notified Toni Weisskopf we are removing her as a Guest of Honor for DisCon III.

We know this decision was not as quick as some of you would have wanted, and we understand your frustration. Our committee's leadership was always in full agreement that there was a fundamental difference between the values Worldcon strives to uphold and the values allowed to be espoused on the forums-in-question.

In the entire eighty-plus year history of our community, no Worldcon

has ever removed someone as a Guest of Honor. To remove a Guest of Honor was an unprecedented decision that needed discussion, consideration, and consensus. Those mechanisms sometimes do not move as fast as some would want, and we thank the community for its patience.

We also want to let everyone know that we are not planning on adding additional individuals to our Guest of Honor list.

We wish to thank you all for taking the time and energy to send us your feedback. Many of you have strong opinions on this issue, and we want everyone to know all your voices were heard and considered when rendering our decision. We will always welcome your feedback, questions, suggestions, and concerns, and we will continue to listen, reflect and act to ensure our members feel welcome at DisCon III.

Jason Sanford's article, "Baen Books Forum Being Used to Advocate for Political Violence", was posted on his Patreon on February 15, 2021. Many authors and fans online called on DisCon III to comment, or even to rescind Weisskopf's guest of honor invitation. DisCon initially responded by posting a statement on Twitter on February 16 that read simply, "We acknowledge the community's concerns regarding Baen Books' forums. We are monitoring the ongoing situation." That same day, Weisskopf announced to forum participants that Baen's Bar would be going on hiatus, saying that the break would be, "As brief as is possible. But no, not sure yet how brief that brief will be." ■

# Cherryh Wins 2021 Heinlein Award

C.J. Cherryh is the winner of the 2021 Robert A. Heinlein Award, for "outstanding published works in science fiction and technical writings that inspire the human exploration of space," recognizing her body of work, "with emphasis on her detailed social science and commercial

# **Dell Award Winner**



Tales from a Psychic Gardener" by Jazmin Collins is the winner of the 2021 Dell Magazines Award for Undergraduate Excellence in Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing. The award is "given annually to the best short-story written in the science fiction or fan-

"My Gardening Journal:

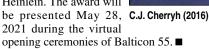
tasy genres by a full-time undergraduate college student," and is accompanied by a \$500 cash prize, publication in Asimov's, and an invitation to ICFA (International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts).

First Runner-up was "The Piano Player". Samuel Owens. Second Runner-up was "Chronicler of a Dying World", Jack Hawkins. Honorable Mention went to "Man's End", Samuel Owens.

The Dell Magazines Award, formerly the Isaac Asimov Award for Undergraduate Excellence in Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing, was established in 1993 by Asimov's and the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts. The awards are co-sponsored by Asimov's magazine and the IAFA, and supported by the Graduate Program in Creative Writing, low-residency MFA, and MA, Western Colorado University. For more: <www.dellaward.com>. ■

relationship based stories set in the space station rich Alliance-Union universe." The award is administered by the Baltimore Science Fiction Society (BSFS).

She will receive a plaque, a sterling silver medallion, and two lapel pins, all featuring the likeness of Robert A. Heinlein. The award will 2021 during the virtual





# Stoker Awards Final Ballot

The Horror Writers Association (HWA) has announced the final ballot for the 2020 Bram Stoker Awards.

Superior Achievement in a Novel: The Only Good Indians, Stephen Graham Jones (Gallery/ Saga); The Deep, Alma Katsu (G.P. Putnam's Sons); Devil's Creek, Todd Keisling (Silver Shamrock): Malorie. Josh Malerman (Del Rev): Mexican Gothic, Silvia Moreno-Garcia (Del Rey/Jo Fletcher).

Superior Achievement in a First Novel: The Taxidermist's Lover, Polly Hall (CamCat); The Return, Rachel Harrison (Berkley); Tome, Ross Jeffery (The Writing Collective); The Fourth Whore, EV Knight (Raw Dog Screaming); True Story, Kate Reed Petty (Viking/riverrun).

Superior Achievement in a Young Adult Novel: Clown in a Cornfield, Adam Cesare (HarperTeen); Bent Heavens, Daniel Kraus (Holt/ Macmillan); The Bone Carver, Monique Snyman (Vesuvian); Cemetery Boys, Aiden Thomas (Swoon Reads/Macmillan): Ghost Wood Song. Erica Waters (HarperTeen).

Superior Achievement in Long Fiction: "Beyond the Reef", Gabino Iglesias (Lullabies for Suffering: Tales of Addiction Horror); Night of the Mannequins, Stephen Graham Jones (Tordotcom): The Invention of Ghosts. Gwendolyn Kiste (Nightscape); "I Will Find You, Even in the Dark", Jess Landry (Dim Shores Presents Volume 1); "Two Truths and a Lie", Sarah Pinsker (Tor.com 6/17/20).

Superior Achievement in Short Fiction: "Am I Missing the Sunlight?", Meghan Arcuri (Borderlands 7); "Introduction to the Horror Story, Day 1", Kurt Fawver (Nightmare 11/20); "One Last Transformation", Josh Malerman (Miscreations: Gods, Monstrosities & Other Horrors); "The Thing I Found Along a Dirt Patch Road", Cindy

**№** p. 54

# THE DATA FILE

#### **Carnegie and Greenaway Medal Shortlists**

• The shortlists for the Carnegie Medal for best children's book and the Kate Greenaway Medal for best illustrations in a children's book have been announced, including the following works of genre interest.

<u>Carnegie Medal</u>: The Girl Who Speaks Bear, Sophie Anderson (Usborne); The Girl Who Became a Tree, Joseph Coelho (Otter-Barry); On Midnight Beach, Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick (Faber); Look Both Ways, Jason Reynolds (Knights Of).

Greenaway Medal: Starbird, Sharon King-Chai (Two Hoots); How the Stars Came to Be, Poonam Mistry (Tate).

The awards are presented by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). The winners will be announced June 16, 2021 in a ceremony at the British Library in London, UK. Winners receive £500 worth of books to donate to local libraries, a golden medal, and a £5,000 Colin Mears Award cash prize. For more: <carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/cilip-carnegie-and-kate-greenaway-medals-2021-shortlists-announced/>.

Ray Bradbury Prize Finalists • Finalists for the 2021 Ray Bradbury Prize for Science Fiction, Fantasy & Speculative Fiction were announced as part of the Los Angeles Times Book Prizes:

Piranesi, Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury) Lakewood, Megan Giddings (Amistad) The City We Became, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit) The Only Good Indians,

Stephen Graham Jones (Saga)

Where the Wild Ladies Are, Aoko Matsuda, translated by Polly Barton (Soft Skull)

The prize is sponsored by the Ray Bradbury Literary Works and "honors and extends Bradbury's literary legacy by celebrating and elevating the writers working in his field today."

Finalists and honorees of genre interest were also announced in other prize categories. Leslie Marmon Silko will receive the Robert Kirsch Award for lifetime achievement. **The Death of Vivek Oji** by Akwaeke Emezi (Riverhead) and **Likes** by Sarah Shun-lien Bynum (Farrar, Straus, Giroux) are finalists in the Fiction category. **Legendborn** by Tracy Deonn (Margaret K. McElderry) is a finalist in Young Adult Literature

Winners will be honored at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, in a virtual ceremony to be held April 16, 2021. For more <events.latimes. com/festivalofbooks/bookprizes-2020>.

**Analog** Anlab Awards Finalists • Finalists for the 2020 *Analog* Analytical Laboratory (AnLab) Awards have been announced.

<u>Best Novella</u>: "Moral Biology", Neal Asher (5-6/20); "Draiken Dies", Adam-Troy Castro (9-10/20); "Flyboys", Stanley Schmidt (7-8/20).

Best Novelette: "The Offending Eye", Robert R. Chase (7-8/20); "I, Bigfoot", Sarina Dorie (9-10/20); "Sticks and Stones", Tom Jolly (7-8/20); "The Quest for the Great Grey Mossy", Harry Turtledove (1-2/20); "Minerva Girls", James Van Pelt (9-10/20).

Best Short Story: "The Greatest Day", Eric

Choi (1-2/20); "The Chrysalis Pool", Sean McMullen (9-10/20); "Wheel of Echoes", Sean McMullen (1-2/20); "Rover", A.T. Sayre (3-4/20); "Hive", Jay Werkheiser (1-2/20); "The Writhing Tentacles of History", Jay Werkheiser (9-10/20).

Best Fact Article: "Veiling the Earth", Gregory Benford (3-4/20); "Big Smart Objects", Gregory Benford & Larry Niven (11-12/20); "Space Dust: How an Asteroid Altered Life on Earth", Richard A. Lovett (5-6/20).

<u>Best Poem</u>: "Miles to Go Before We Rest", G.O. Clark (5-6/20); "Ghost Transmission", Robert Frazier (1-2/20); "How to Go Twelfth", Mary Soon Lee (3-4/20); "Planck", Josh Pearce (3-4/20); "In Theory", Rebecca Siegel (1-2/20).

<u>Best Cover</u>: Donato Giancola (5-6/20); Dominic Harman (7-8/20); Tomislav Tikulin (1-2/20); Eldar Zakirov (3-4/20).

Winners will be announced in the July/August issue. To see the covers and read nominated works: <www.analogsf.com/about-analog/anlabreaders-award-finalists>.

**Asimov's Readers' Award Finalists •** The finalists for the 35th annual Asimov's Readers' Awards have been announced.

Best Novella: "Semper Augustus", Nancy Kress (3-4/20); "Tool Use by the Humans of Danzhai County", Derek Künsken (7-8/20); "Nic and Viv's Compulsory Courtship", Will McIntosh (7-8/20); "Maelstrom", Kristine Kathryn Rusch (9-10/20) "Take a Look at the Five and Ten", Connie Willis (11-12/20).

Best Novelette: "The Hind", Kevin J. Anderson & Rick Wilber (11-12/20); "Tunnels", Eleanor Arnason (5-6/20); "The Beast Adjoins", Ted Kosmatka (7-8/20); "The Long Iapetan Night", Julie Novakova (11-12/20); "Beyond the Tattered Veil of Stars", Mercurio D. Rivera (3-4/20).

Best Short Story: "GO. NOW. FIX.", Timons Esaias (1-2/20); "The Conceptual Shark", Rich Larson (9-10/20); "Return to Glory", Jack McDevitt (11-12/20); "Rena in the Desert", Lia Swope Mitchell (3-4/20); "Father", Ray Nayler (7-8/20); "Return to the Red Castle", Ray Nayler (3-4/20).

<u>Best Poem</u>: "Incomplete Adaptation", Bruce Boston (9-10/20); "After a Year of Solitude", Lora Gray (11-12/20); "The Hot New Collectible", Suzanne Palmer (5-6/20); "Unlooping", Marie Vibbert (1-2/20); "Ode to Cassini", Jane Yolen (5-6/20); "Relic", Jane Yolen (3-4/20).

<u>Best Cover Artist</u>: Maurizio Manzieri (9-10/20); John Picacio (3-4/20); Eldar Zakirov (11-12/20).

Winners will be announced in the July/August issue. To see the covers and read many of the nominated works: <www.asimovs.com/about-asimovs/readers-awards-finalists>.

**Lambda Awards Finalists** • The Lambda Literary Foundation has announced finalists for the 33rd Annual Lambda Literary Awards (the "Lammys"), celebrating "the best lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender books." Nominees of genre interest follow.

<u>LGBTQ SF/F/Horror</u>: The Order of the Pure Moon Reflected in Water, Zen Cho (Tordotcom); Everyone on the Moon is Essential Personnel, Julian K. Jarboe (Lethe); Subcutanean, Aaron A. Reed (self-published); Black Sun, Rebecca Roanhorse (Saga); The Silence of the Wilting Skin, Tlotlo Tsamaase (Pink Narcissus).

<u>Gay Fiction</u>: **This Town Sleeps**, Dennis E. Staples (Counterpoint).

<u>Lesbian Fiction</u>: **Bestiary**, K-Ming Chang (One World).

Transgender Fiction: Finna, Nino Cipri (Tordotcom); The Seep, Chana Porter (Soho); Trans-Galactic Bike Ride: Feminist Bicycle Science Fiction Stories of Transgender and Nonbinary Adventurers, Lydia Rogue (Microcosm).

<u>Gay Romance</u>: **The Ghost and Charlie Muir**, Felice Stevens (self-published).

LGBTQ Anthology: Love after the End: An Anthology of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction, Joshua Whitehead, ed. (Arsenal Pulp).

LGBTQ Children's/Middle Grade: The Deep & Dark Blue, Niki Smith (Little, Brown); LG-BTQ Comics; Apsara Engine, Bishakh Som (Feminist); SFSX (Safe Sex), Vol. 1: Protection, Tina Horn, Michael Dowling, Alejandra Gutiérrez & Jen Hickman (Image).

The awards will be presented during the virtual 33rd Annual Lambda Literary Awards Ceremony, to be held June 1, 2021. For more <a href="https://www.lambdaliterary.org/2021/03/2021-lambda-literary-award-finalists">ward-finalists</a>.

Octavia E. Butler News • The late SF writer Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006) is among the National Women's Hall of Fame (NWHF) inductees for 2021. The list also includes NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson. The inductees will be honored during a ceremony on October 2, 2021 at the NWHF headquarters in the remodeled 1844 Seneca Knitting Mill building in Seneca Falls NY. A livestream of the ceremony will also be available free to the public. For more: <www.womenofthehall.org/nwhfinduction/2021induction>.

NASA has named the landing site of the Mars 2020 *Perseverance* rover after Butler. The rover was launched from Cape Canaveral FL on July 30, 2020 and landed in Jezero Crater, Mars on February 18, 2021. The mission will spend at least one Mars year (two Earth years) exploring the landing site region. For more <www.nasa.gov/image-feature/jpl/welcome-to-octavia-e-butler-landing>.

**BSFA Shortlist** • The shortlist for the 2020 British Science Fiction Association (BSFA) Awards has been announced.

Best Novel: Threading the Labyrinth, Tiffani Angus (Unsung Stories); Piranesi, Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury); The Sunken Land Begins to Rise Again, M. John Harrison (Gollancz); The City We Became, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit); Light of Impossible Stars, Gareth L. Powell (Titan); The Ministry for the Future, Kim Stanley Robinson (Orbit); Club Ded, Nikhil Singh (Luna); The Doors of Eden, Adrian Tchaikovsky (Tor); Comet Weather, Liz Williams (NewCon); Water Must Fall, Nick Wood (NewCon).

Best Short Fiction (under 40,000 words):

• p. 54

# PEOPLE & PUBLISHING

# Milestones

JOHN VARLEY, 73, began having chest pains in late February 2021, and subsequently underwent quadruple bypass surgery. He returned home on February 28 and is recovering well. "I thank you for the good vibes and wishes and karma sent my way during my recent travails. Yes, and your prayers as well, though I'm an atheist and don't know quite what to do with them. Is anyone really listening? Maybe so. Can't hurt to pray, anyhow."

**GWENDA BOND**'s adult work is now represented via Kate McKean at Howard Morhaim Literary Agency. Jennifer Laughran of Andrea Brown Literary Agency will continue to rep her YA and children's work.

## **Awards**

SUSANNA CLARKE's Piranesi (Bloomsbury) is among the 16 titles on the £30,000 Women's Prize for Fiction longlist. The shortlist will be announced on April 28, 2021 and the winner on July 7.

# **Books Sold**

STEPHEN KING & RICHARD CHIZMAR sold Gwendy's Final Task, third in the series begun with Gwendy's Button Box, to Ed Schlesinger at Gallery, with Cemetery Dance to release the hardcover, via Chuck Verrill of Darhansoff & Verrill for King and Kristin Nelson of Nelson Literary Agency for Chizmar.

CHARLES STROSS sold two more novels in the New Management series, set in the world of the Laundry books, to Patrick Nielsen Hayden at Tordotcom in the US and Jenni Hill at Orbit in the UK via Caitlin Blasdell of Liza Dawson Associates.

MARLON JAMES sold a story collection to Kate Atley at Penguin UK via Nora Rawn of Trident Media Group on behalf of Ellen Levine.

KEVIN J. ANDERSON & late drummer/lyricist NEIL PEART's Clockwork Destiny, third in their trilogy based on the Rush concept album *Clockwork Angels*, sold to David Caron at ECW Press.

KELLY BARNHILL's speculative novel When Women Were Dragons sold to Lee Boudreaux at Doubleday at auction via Steven Malk of Writers House.

MEG ELISON sold Number One Fan, "Misery for millennials," to Margot Mallinson at Mira via Dara Kaye of Ross Yoon Agency.



John Varley (2009)

**DAVE BARA** sold the second book in the Trinity's Children series to Tony Daniel at Baen via Paul Stevens of Donald Maass Literary Agency.

K.L. ARMSTRONG sold a standalone thriller and a second book Bhavna Chauhan at Doubleday Canada via Lucienne Diver of The Knight Agency.

NICHOLAS KAUFMANN sold horror novel The Hungry Earth to David Niall Wilson at Crossroad Press via Richard Curtis of Richard Curtis Associates.

KRISTI DEMEESTER sold feminist horror novel Such a Pretty Smile to Alexandra Sehulster at St. Martin's in a pre-empt via Stefanie Lieberman of Janklow & Nesbit.

**EUGEN BACON** sold **Danged Black Thing** to Transit Lounge Publishing.

ALAN SMALE's alternate history Hot Moon sold to Shahid Mahmud at Caezik SF & Fantasy via Caitlin Blasdell of Liza Dawson Associates.

**DAVE EGGERS** sold **The Every**, a follow-up to **The Circle**, to John Freeman at Knopf in association with McSweeney's. Canadian rights went to Knopf Canada, and UK rights to Hamish Hamilton.

NAN FISCHER sold Some of It Was Real, about a reluctant psychic, and a second book to Kerry Donovan at Berkley in a pre-empt via Stephanie Kip Rostan of Levine Greenberg Rostan.

BRYAN THOMAS SCHMIDT sold his hard SF novel Shortcut, based on a story by Schmidt & HUNT LOWRY, to Peter J. Wacks at 25 and Y Publishing. Schmidt & ROBERT SILVERBERG will edit Robots Through the Ages for Rick Bleweiss at Blackstone Publishing.

NAMWALI SERPELL sold The Furrows: An Elegy to Alexis Washam at Hogarth in the US and Poppy Hampson at Hogarth UK via PJ Mark of Janklow & Nesbit and Will Francis of Janklow & Nesbit UK respectively.

**DEBBIE URBANSKI's post-**



Susanna Clarke (2004)

apocalyptic SF novel **What Comes After the End** sold to Tim O'Connell at Pantheon in a pre-empt via Kate Garrick of the Karpfinger Agency.

SASCHA STRONACH sold The Dawnhounds and two more SF titles to Amara Hoshijo at Saga Press via Sara Megibow of kt literary.

TARA SIM's The City of Dusk and two more in a new epic fantasy trilogy went to Priyanka Krishnan at Orbit via Victoria Marini of Irene Goodman Agency.

LAUREN OWEN's sold fantasy Small Angels to Caitlin McKenna at Random House in the US and to Mary-Anne Harrington at Tinder Press in the UK.

JUNO DAWSON's historical fantasy Her Majesty's Royal Coven and two more titles sold to Margaux Weisman at Penguin at auction via Alyssa Reuben and Katelyn Dougherty of Paradigm on behalf of Sallyanne Sweeney of MMB Creative.

JENNIFER NEAL sold The Color of Her Blood, described "as reminiscent as the work of Octavia Butler and Helen Oyeyemi," to Jonathan Lee at Catapult via Andrea Joyce on behalf of Milly Reilly of the Jo Unwin Literary Agency.

JOSH WEISS sold alternate history Beat the Devils, "set during Joseph McCarthy's presidency in 1958," and another title to Ben Sevier and Wes Miller at Grand Central in a pre-empt via Scott Miller of Trident Media Group.

ALEX THOMSON's Spidertouch went to Gemma Creffield at Angry Robot via Jennie Goloboy of Donald Maass Literary Agency.

**CHRIS PANATIER**'s SF novel **Stringers** sold to Gemma Creffield at Angry Robot via Hannah Fergesen of kt literary.

JAMES KENNEDY's Dare to Know, about an algorithm that predicts your death, went to Jhanteigh Kupihea at Quirk Books via John Cusick of Folio Literary Management.

ROBERT REPINO sold Malefactor, the last volume in the War With No Name series, to Mark



Marlon James (2018)

Doten at Soho Press via Jennifer Weltz of Jean V. Naggar Literary Agency.

LINDSAY WONG's Careful Dying, a collection of "immigrant horror stories" with speculative elements, and a second book went to Deborah Sun de la Cruz at Penguin Canada in a pre-empt via Carly Watters of P.S. Literary Agency.

ANN DÁVILA CARDINAL's first novel for adults, The Storyteller's Death, and a second title sold to Christa Desir at Sourcebooks via Linda Camacho of Gallt and Zacker Literary Agency.

SASHA FLETCHER's Be Here to Love Me at the End of the World sold to Athena Bryan at Melville House via Monika Woods of Triangle House Literary.

ZAIN KHALID sold Brother, literary fiction with speculative elements, to Peter Blackstock at Grove/ Atlantic in a pre-empt via Kent Wolf of Neon Literary.

LUCY HOLLAND sold a Wild Hunt novel to Bella Pagan at Tor UK via Veronique Baxter at David Higham Associates, and US rights went to Priyanka Krishnan at Redhook via Tor UK.

AINSLIE HOGARTH sold domestic horror novel Motherthing and a second title to Caitlin Landuyt at Vintage via Rach Crawford of MacKenzie Wolf.

M DRESSLER sold Our Eyes at Night, third in the Last Ghost series, to Cal Barksdale at Arcade via Alison Bond of Alison Bond & Associates.

LIZ PARKER sold fantasy In the Shadow Garden to Leah Hultenschmidt at Forever via Rena Rossner of Deborah Harris Agency.

CHARLIE ADHARA sold three books in a spinoff from the Big Bad Wolf paranormal romance series to Stephanie Doig at Carina Press.

HANK SCHWAEBLE sold horror collection Moonless Nocturne to Isabel Penraeth at Esker & Riddle.

**RUS WORNOM**'s sold Southern Gothic **Ghostflowers** to Christopher Payne at JournalStone via Anne



Namwali Serpell (2010s)

Tibbets of D4EO Literary Agency. Scarlett Algee will edit.

TERRY PERSON sold Rewind and Sky People to Valerie Mathews at The Wild Rose Press.

JOHN MAULDIN sold The Orb, illustrated by JEN-NIFER GREEFF, to Valerie Mathews at The Wild Rose Press.

**REBECCA JOHN** sold a fantasy novel to Penny Thomas at Firefly Press via Jenny Savill of Andrew Nurnberg Associates.

JASON OCKERT's surreal collection Shadowselves went to Michelle Dotter at Dzanc Books via John Rudolph of Dystel, Goderich & Bourret.

CHARLES RAFFERTY sold Moscodelphia, "a poetic rendering of a dystopian future," to Christopher Madden at Woodhall Press.

NORET FLOOD IV sold three books in The Legend of Randidly Ghosthound series to Rhett Bruno at Aethon via Drew Gilmour of Achilles Literary Agency.

ANDREW HALLMAN'S Mirrenwood went to David Niall Wilson at Crossroad Press via Richard Curtis of Richard Curtis Associates.

**ROB EDWARDS** sold superhero novel **The Crossover Paradox**, sequel to **The Ascension Machine**, to Geoff Habiger at Shadow Dragon Press.

**KEVIN KAUFFMANN's** SF novel **Daytrippers** and three more titles went to Isabel Penraeth at Lophii.

CARY FAGAN sold fantasy The Animals to Jay Millar at Book\*hug via Samantha Haywood of Transatlantic Literary Agency.

HARISSON SHAWS's postapocalyptic novel The Lonesome Road sold to Eric Williams at 5310 Publishing. Alex Williams will edit.

ELIZABETH CHATSWORTH sold The Brass Queen: Grand Tour to Sue Arroyo at CamCat Books. Helga Schier will edit.

LUNA JOYA sold Wicked Crown, Wicked Match, and Wicked Grace in the Redemption Series to Tee Tate at City Owl Press.



Daniel José Older (2018)

GABRIELLE ASH sold The Unrighteous Son and The Wayward Daughter, second and third in the Circle Seven trilogy, to Tee Tate at City Owl Press, and For the Murder and two more books to Heather McCorkle at City Owl Press, all via Julie Gwinn of the Seymour Agency.

T.M. BLANCHET's fantasy Herrick's End went to Galen Surlak-Ramsey at Tiny Fox Press via Julie Gwinn of the Seymour Agency. Jennifer Wallace will edit.

PATTI CALLAHAN HENRY's novel Once Upon A Wardrobe, inspired by the early life of C.S. LEWIS, sold to Amanda Bostic at Harper Muse via Marly Rusoff of Marly Rusoff & Associates.

ANDREA BOUGIOUKLIS sold The Art of Becoming a Traitor to Eric Williams at 5310 Publishing.

**KATHRYN TROY** sold **A Vision** in Crimson, first in the Frostbite vampire series, and two more titles to Tee Tate at City Owl Press.

RICK RIORDAN sold children's SF Daughter of the Deep, about the last descendant of Captain Nemo from Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea by JULES VERNE, to Stephanie Lurie at Disney-Hyperion via Nancy Gallt of Gallt and Zacker Literary Agency.

DANIEL JOSÉ OLDER sold YA Ballad & Dagger, launching the Outlaw Saints urban fantasy series, and a second book to Stephanie Lurie at Rick Riordan Presents via Joanna Volpe of New Leaf Literary & Media.

RAE CARSON sold YA Any Sign of Life, described as "Arrival meets The Fifth Wave," to Martha Mihalick at Greenwillow via Holly Root of Root Literary.

MELISSA MARR's middlegrade fantasy The Hidden Knife and a second book sold to Nancy Paulsen at Nancy Paulsen Books via Merrilee Heifetz of Writers House.

ANDREA TANG'S YA The Kingdom of Without – "a cyberpunk Six of Crows" – went to Alyza Liu at Simon & Schuster Children's via Thao Le of Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency.

**SOYOUNG PARK**'s dystopian YA **Snowglobe** went to Krista Marino at Delacorte at auction via Sue Park of Barbara Zitwer Agency.

LISETTE AUTON sold YA mermaid novel The Secret of Haven Point and a second book to Emma Jones at Puffin UK via Molly Ker Hawn of the Bent Agency.

ADRIANNE STRICKLAND'S YA Court of the Undying Seasons, about a school for vampires, went to Rachel Diebel at Feiwel and Friends via Hannah Bowman of Liza Dawson Associates.

EMILY LLOYD-JONES sold YA fantasy The Drowned Woods to Hannah Milton at Little, Brown Children's via Sarah Landis of Sterling Lord Literistic.

MEGAN PAASCH's YA fantasy Dream To Me sold to Camille Kellogg at Imprint and Rachel Diebel at Feiwel and Friends via Moe Ferrara of BookEnds. (Paasch is now represented by Natascha Morris of the Tobias Literary Agency.)

AKEMI DAWN BOWMAN's third book in the Infinity Courts series sold to Jennifer Ung at Simon & Schuster Children's via Penny Moore of Aevitas Creative Management. Alyza Liu will edit.

CHLOE GONG "speculative historical noir" YA Foul Lady Fortune and another title sold to Sarah McCabe at Margaret K. McElderry Books via Laura Crockett of TriadaUS Literary Agency. UK rights went to Molly Powell at Hodder & Stoughton via Brent Taylor and Crockett.

MARGARET ROGERSON sold YA fantasy Vespertine, to Karen Wojtyla at Margaret K. McElderry Books via Sara Megibow of kt literary.

New writer HOLLY JAMES sold Nothing But the Truth, "a feminist *Liar Liar*," to Stephanie Kelly at Dutton at auction via Melissa Edwards of Stonesong.

First novelist **KRITIKA H. RAO** sold epic fantasy **The Surviving Sky** and two more books to Leah Spann at DAW at auction via Naomi Davis of BookEnds.

JOHNNY COMPTON's Southern Gothic debut The Spite House and a second title sold to Daphne Durham at Nightfire for six figures in a pre-empt via Lane Heymont of the Tobias Literary Agency.

**ALEPH KATZ** sold first novel **Starborne** to Ashley Carlson at TouchPoint Press.

UMAR TURAKI's debut Such a Beautiful Thing to Behold, set

in "a small community... cut off from the world after a mysterious illness leaves only children behind," and a second book sold to Selena James at Little A in a pre-empt via Andrea Somberg of Harvey Klinger.

First novelist JORDAN BARTLETT sold Contest of Queens to Sue Arroyo at CamCat Books. Bridget McFadden will edit.

BRIANNA JOY CRUMP's debut YA The Culled Crown went to Deanna McFadden at Wattpad.

K.E. FLANN sold humor volume How to Survive a Human Attack, "a guide for vampires, swamp monsters, and other cryptids" on how to avoid humans, to Jess Riordan at Running Press via Courtney Miller-Callihan of Handspun Literary

DON ZACANELLA sold A Storm in the Stars, a novel about Mary Shelley & Percy Bysshe Shelley, to Joseph Olshan at Delphinium. Jennifer Ankner-Edelstein will edit.

# Publishing

Journalist and SF editor GIDEON LICHFIELD is the new global editorial director of *Wired*.

NIVIA EVANS has been promoted to senior editor at Orbit US. ANGELA MAN was promoted to publicist, and LISA MARIE POMPILIO to associate art director.

**ROBERT DAVIS** has been promoted to editor at Forge.

ANNE TIBBETS has joined Donald Maass Literary Agency as a literary agent. She was previously part of D4EO Literary Agency.

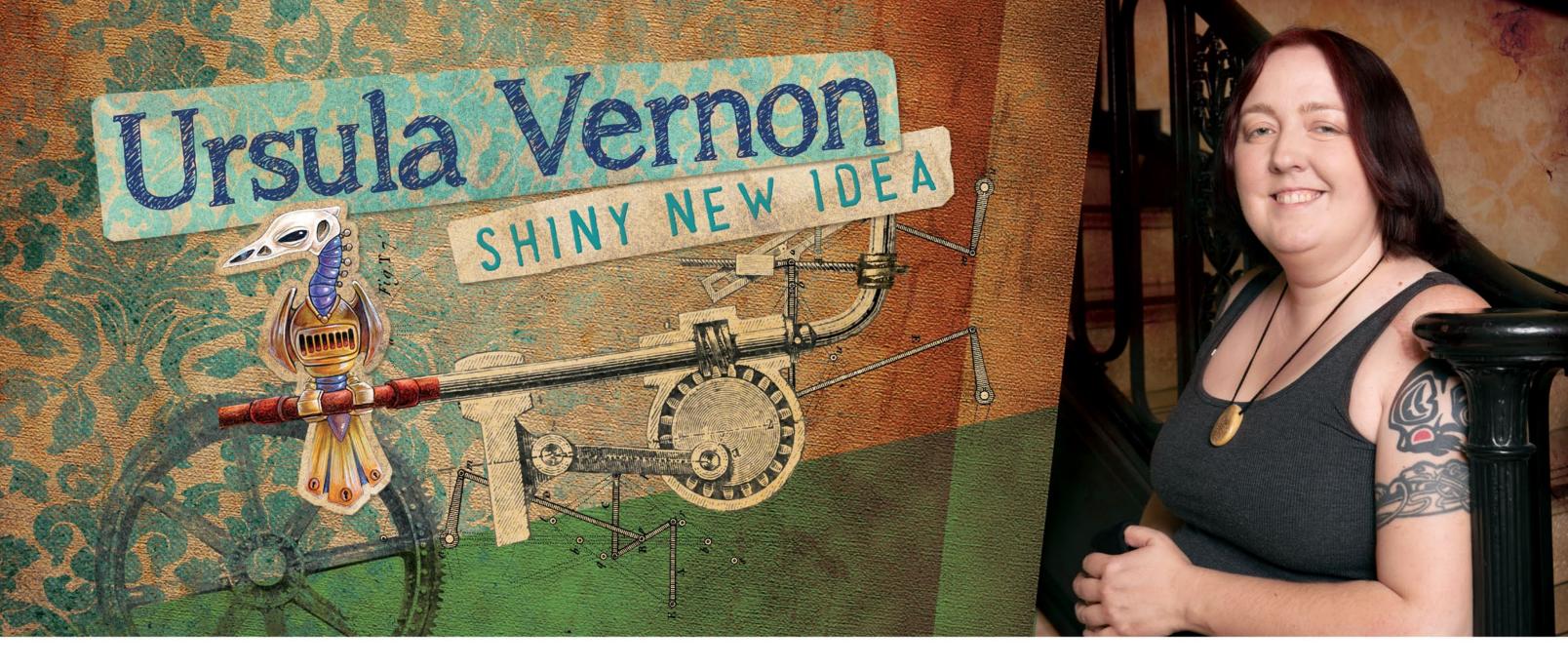
**BRIAN J. HATCHER** is stepping down as program manager of the Horror Writers Association's mentorship program after four years. Assistant manager **JG FAHERTY** will take over his duties.

# Media

TV rights to **N.K. JEMISIN**'s Inheritance trilogy were optioned by Searchlight Television, with Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith's Westbrook Studios to produce the planned ongoing series.

DAVID LEVITHAN will write a graphic novel adaptation of his novel Every Day, illustrated by DION MBD, for Melanie Cecka Nolan at Knopf via Bill Clegg of the Clegg Agency for Levithan and Chad Beckerman of The Cat Agency for MBD. Marisa DiNovis will edit.

YAN LEISHENG sold The Ming Storm, a tie-in to the Assassin's Creed: China video game, to Aconyte. ■



rsula Vernon was born May 28, 1977 in Japan to a military family. She lived in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and grew up mostly in Oregon, Arizona, California, and Minnesota, moving 18 times by age 20. She attended Macalester College in Saint Paul MN. Vernon has lived in North Carolina for the past 17 years.

An illustrator and author, Vernon has written extensively for children and also writes for adults, often under the pseudonym T. Kingfisher. She is one of the field's most prominent hybrid authors, producing work for both the small and large presses and also self-publishing through her own Red Wombat Studio.

Vernon began her career as a freelance artist, and first rose to prominence in the SF field with webcomic Digger (2003-2011), winner of a Hugo Award and a Mythopoeic Award.

Her debut children's book was **Nurk** (2008), and she is best known in that field for the Dragonbreath (2009-2016) and Hamster Princess (2015-2018) series, all illustrated by the author. She also wrote Mythopoeic Award winner **Castle Hangnail** (2015).

Adult fantasy Black Dogs: The House of Diamond (2007) was followed by sequel Black Dogs: The Mountain of Iron (2011), both as Vernon. Her first T. Kingfisher book was Nine Goblins (2013). Other Kingfisher works include The Seventh Bride (2015), Bryony & Roses (2015), The Raven & The Reindeer (2016), Summer in Orcus (2016), Swordheart

(2018), Minor Mage (2019), The Twisted Ones (2019), current Andre Norton Award finalist A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking (2020), and The Hollow Places (2020). The Clocktaur War series is Clockwork Boys (2017) and The Wonder Engine (2018), and the Saint of Steel books are Paladin's Grace (2020) and Paladin's Strength (2021).

She writes short fiction under both names. Notable short works include Hugo Award winner "The Tomato Thief" (2016) and finalist "Sun, Moon, Dust" (2017) and Nebula Award winner and World Fantasy Award finalist "Jackalope Wives" (2014). Some of her stories have been collected in Toad Words and Other Stories (2014), The Halcyon Fairy Book (2017), and Jackalope Wives and Other Stories (2017), all as T. Kingfisher.

Vernon lives in Pittsboro NC with her husband, Kevin Sonney.

"My mom is a fine artist – a painter. She's very talented, and she was always telling me that I should take some art classes in college, but I had no desire to go into art: 'No, I know what that's like, it's all poverty, and your friends are weird.' My mother kept telling me, 'Just take one art class!', so I did, and then I spent about 20 years as an illustrator. Occasionally she still says, 'I told you so.' I had actually always wanted to be a writer, but I decided to go into art because I thought there was more money in it. I make poor life choices.

"I was writing all along. I wanted to be a writer as a kid, and my grand-

mother, God love her, got me a subscription to *Writer's Digest*, which was one of the magazines for writers at the time. I read it religiously. I had **How to Write Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror** by Orson Scott Card, too. I still feel deeply conflicted about them, because they are really useful books, clear and straightforward, but... they're by Orson Scott Card. I'm sure that a lot of people got into writing science fiction from those books. Sometimes we do good despite ourselves.

"I wasn't actually in fandom back then, because I am old and the internet was not around, so we did not have any way to find each other. I didn't go to conventions because they didn't really occur to me – I hadn't heard of them. I didn't even know that fanfic was really a thing, though I was certainly writing it. I had no one to share it with, and in retrospect – thank God. I did not discover fandom existed until my twenties. What I found was furry fandom, because I like drawing anthropomorphic animals, and I discovered there were all these people who were into that. 'Oh, you have conventions? Wow,' People told me, 'You have to go to conventions to sell art.' The first convention I ever went to as an adult was as a dealer. I started out selling art behind the table, which is a very different world than going as a fan. I still love the furries – they are fabulous people, they spend a lot of money on art, and they kept me fed, basically, for over a decade. They're super supportive and just lovely people all around.

"My comic Digger was the first thing I did that got anywhere. I had

actually written a novel I started when I was 16. I wrote a cover letter and sent it off, because Writer's Digest told me to. I knew nothing about that sort of thing, and I had a double-spaced manuscript that was 'this thick.' I got a nice handwritten note back from the editor that said, 'This is good, but I'm not sure why we need to be the ones to publish this. I'd like to see more from you.' I thought, 'Oh, they rejected it, bummer,' not realizing that was as good as rejections got. I shoved the book in a drawer and forgot about it and started doing webcomics. I had never thought about comics either, except one day I was arguing with someone on the internet, and wound up drawing an angry little mammal yelling, 'Oh my God, it has a brain the size of a walnut' at a dinosaur. I stared at it and thought, 'Words and pictures! That's a comic, I've read comics, I've read Sandman. I could do a comic!' It was a very slow percolation through my brain. I started a comic that lasted 13 pages, and discovered doing color is really hard. I began Digger purely as an experiment in black and white. I was uploading the pages to a furry art archive called Yerf and kept telling people, 'Don't get attached. This is a stylistic experiment, and I probably won't finish it.' Seven years and 800 pages later....

"You've got to start with the characters – well, I have to start with the characters, anyway. I know there are people who are like, 'I have a plot, and I will just invent someone who goes through the plot,' but I need to

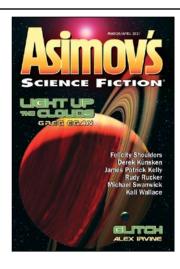
10 / LOCUS April 2021 LOCUS April 2021

# LOCUS LOOKS AT SHORT FICTION: RICH HORTON









Curiosities Winter '20 Cossmass Infinities 9/20 On Spec #115 Analog 3-4/21 Asimov's 3-4/21

t is always a surprise – unfairly so – to find a small new magazine and realize that it's really quite good! I had that experience with the previous issue of Curiosities, and now I see the Winter issue, and it does not disappoint.

Konstantine Paradias offers "And the Faces **Screamed in the Galleries**" – a really striking, surrealist story. The paintings in the Louvre have come to life and are attacking humans. This is a case for... the Astrolabe! It's a wild story that has a lot of fun with its premise and has some philosophical points to make too.

"Six Coins" by Liam Hogan is the tale of a journey to the rim of the world led by famous explorer Sir Richard Dornford. The narrator is his young apprentice, Alex. It seems their world is literally bowl-shaped, and Dornford's plan is to sail over the rim, for he believes there is more territory on the outside of the bowl. This is fun old-fashioned adventure, with a nicely turned closing surprise.

Cossmass Infinities is completely new to me. The September 2020 issue, its third, is the first I've seen and it's pretty solid throughout. "The Line in the Sky" by Maria Z. Medina is told by a young woman who misses her boyfriend, who applied for an exchange program to an alien world and actually was accepted. The narrator plans to make her way there too... but then things change. It's quite sweet, really. "Memento Amicum" by Marc A. Criley reminded me of John Crowley's great story "Snow", in telling of slowly decaying mementas - AIs made from the memories of the deceased and hosted in cemeteries. It's told by a maintenance man at one cemetery, who faithfully cares for the mementas, even as their descendants stop coming and as new technologies - and lack of money - lead inevitably to more decay.

I should also mention a not-so-new small magazine, On Spec. The current issue is their 115th, which is pretty good any way you look at it. My favorite here is "The First Woe" by Virginia Elizabeth Hayes. It's set during an "Eventful Singles" Tour. Two of the singles, PJ and Zeke, each of whom maybe has a few miles on their treads, start to talk and make fun of the woman leading the Tour and her rules... until they notice some mysterious things... Latin, and numbers, and they remember something about the history of the place they're touring. They soon gather that the tour leader has other plans than teaching the group how to hook up. A nice, fun little piece, and I wouldn't mind reading about the second and third woes (though I'm not saying the story didn't end properly.)

On to a couple of the better-known magazines in the field. "The Shadow of His Wings" is the first appearance in Analog for Ray Nayler, who is already familiar to readers of Asimov's (and other magazines). Bashim is a Turkmen boy who is serving as a wallah - helping guide a group of thrill-seeking sheikhs as they hunt in the Kara-Kum Desert. That night, after an obscure warning from his brother, he and his AI teaching device are away from camp when raiders appear, and Bashim is soon fleeing, with the help of the teaching device, which it turns out has been taken over by the falcon accompanying him.... There's some cool SFnal speculation here, but at its heart is a sad, dark meditation on class and privilege and small-scale realpolitik.

Another strong short story comes from Matthew Claxton. "The Acheulean Gift" concerns a group of children who were genetically modified to have "Acheulean" genes - genes from ancient man. That has led, predictably, to violent prejudice - and, also predictably, it didn't quite work perfectly. Jo is a nearly teenaged girl, being raised by her (non-Acheulean) brother, and she and some of her fellows are at a summer camp which is threatened by terrorists. Her special "gifts" prove a way to defend herself – and also suggest something perhaps a bit darker. I didn't quite buy all this – the idea that being able to knap flint to make a stone axe is a genetically carried talent seems frankly Lamarckian to me - but it's a well-done and thought-provoking piece.

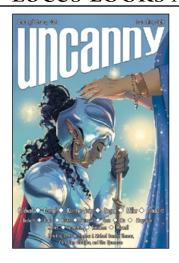
I really liked "Tail Call Optimization" by Tony Ballantyne, which I suppose, in a very different way, is also about class and privilege and small-scale realpolitik. The POV character is a low-status Finn, an alien robot of the Bobobo-Cedian race. This Finn is a salvager in a group of Finns, looking for tech from the vanished Hephaestans on an asteroid. The POV Finn has a faulty scavenged body, and a processor messed up by a sort of Fibonacci virus. And then ve (the pronoun the BoboboCedians use) realizes ve has found another processor unit – and that unit has an intelligence in it. Of course ve decides to erase this intelligence and scavenge the processor – but that intelligence – which turns out to be a human woman's - convinces ve to let her remain, and to help her try to escape. In exchange, the human makes some improvements to the Finn's processing... and before long the two of them realize something quite unexpected about this Finn's actual nature. Ballantyne's far-future speculation is as always scintillating, especially concerning AI... and the story finds a not entirely conventional resolution.

The latest issue of Asimov's features two strong novellas. Alex Irvine's "Glitch" is a tense nearfuture thriller. Kyle wakes up in a hospital - his fiancée Shari is there, but she and the medical professionals are acting strangely - and soon realizes he's been "resurrected" from a backup. He died in a bombing by a white supremacist, an issue that's only gotten worse in this climate change-wracked future. What's worse is that his backup was corrupted, and he soon realizes that the corrupted data is memories from the bomber. This gets complicated quickly: Kyle is white, Shari is Black, and the bomber's personality is trying to take over, and it's an ugly personality. One way out would be to use the bomber's memories to help identify him, but unfortunately admitting that the bomber is now part of his consciousness would just get him arrested, because (and this I found hard to believe) hosting, even unwillingly, a **№** p. 40

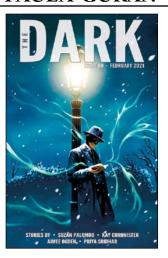
#### THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

April 6, 2034. NASCAR buys Stonehenge. Sold by Charles to compensate Ulster deportees, it will appear in the Talladega infield alongside 1,165 Confederate memorials and three statues of Donald J. Trump, one unfinished.

### LOCUS LOOKS AT SHORT FICTION: PAULA GURAN









Uncanny 1-2/21 Apex #122 The Dark 1/21, 2/21 Nightmare 1/21, 2/21 Fantasy 2/21, 3/21 Baffling 1/21

ncanny #38 is a strong issue. Sam J. Miller's "Tyrannosaurus Hex" posits a future in which alternative realities can be all too real. The story is particularly chilling (and resonates as true) with children as the "early adaptors." "A House Full of Voices Is Never Empty" by Miyuki Jane Pinckard also deals with reality of a sort. Two sisters flee the chaos of Vietnam as the US withdraws. The elder is consoled by familiar objects that speak to her; the younger does not have that comfort but is also "free to imagine a new life." As time passes, Pinckard offers a beautiful perspective on the solace and burden of memories. The children in Nicole Kornher-Stace's "Pathfinding!" are the subjects of torturous and increasingly fatal simulations designed to genetically modify them into superweapons. Subject 06's strength and intelligence are inspiring, despite the chilling scenario. In "Distribution" by Paul Cornell, the world – or at least part of it – has survived a semi-apocalypse to become the "New Situation." It is fascinating. I grasp the basic plot – Shan, a person who grew up in the New Situation is sent to evaluate Dr. Kay, an older recluse, who may be a danger to himself or others - and appreciate Shan's role as a citizen of the new era. But Dr. Kay's experiment in individuality and the multiple aspects of such is beyond me. I suspect the fault is mine and not the story's. In Christopher Caldwell's "Femme and Sundance", a couple of queer hustlers visit a bruja and obtain magic masks to help in a bank robbery. Of course there's a cost, but it proves somewhat different than expected. Great characters and great fun. In "Beyond the Doll Forest" by Marissa Lingen, a nanny joins a household where toys grow "of their own volition" and her young charge believes in curses. It's charming and haunting at the same time; the Norwegian setting provides added interest.

Also strong, Apex #122 offers six new works of short fiction. "Barefoot and Midnight" by

Sheree Renée Thomas takes place after the real-life violence in Memphis of May 1866. The fictional Dusa uses voodoo to take bloody revenge after white people destroy her beloved Freedman's School. This is short but searing historical horror. A.C. Wise's "The Amazing Exploding Women of the Early Twentieth Century" also harkens back to the past: Coney Island, 1906. Cecily tells the story of Gracie and Cat, a young woman who appears in films "designed to make women look useless and small." Cat burns without being consumed. All in all, a lovely story, but (again) I'm not sure I fully understand it. Barton Aikman's science fictional "Black Box of the Terraworms" introduces terraworms (autonomous terraforming machines) programmed to prepare what is thought to be a never-inhabited planet. They discover forgotten gods and history. The terraworms also experience emotions one assumes their (human?) creators did not know they could possess. After an unknown (and probably unfathomable) period of time, future settlers will make their way to the planet and discover a black box that will tell the story of it all. This one will stay with me for quite a while. In Annie Neugebauer's "If Those Ragged Feet Won't Run", the quiet of the night is a fearsome thing for Bethesda and her infant daughter, who are trapped outside the safety of their village. Any noise will bring a deadly nightbird upon them, and a six-week-old baby is impossible to silence. A fight for survival between Bethesda and a nightbird - also a mother - ensues. Readers will find themselves holding their collective breath as Neugebauer artfully builds the tension and crafts a fine story. "A Love That Burns Hot Enough to Last: Deleted Scenes From a Documentary" by Sam J. Miller introduces Ti: legend, icon, diva, "the woman whose voice was called a 'national treasure." Her life is destroyed then regained, but her voice is gone. That's the story everyone knows. But another truth emerges as a fan, a back-up singer, an employee, and a faith-based family-values advocate each tell her story. Music is, indeed, magic, and so is love, and Miller beautifully conveys some of the magic of both. This is interactive fiction best viewed online in a browser.

The Dark has dropped reprints and is now offering four original stories per issue. Issue #68 starts off with "The Van Etten House" by Carrie Laben.

Collectibles dealers Kelly and Laura find some strange dolls in the titular house and things get weird. It's a disturbing premise and Laben builds the tension well, but the story is over too quickly. No one sees what Okey sees in his woman, Nkoli, in "Love for Ashes" by Frances Ogamba. A seer warns that she will destroy him and everything he values; only marriage can calm her rage. But the marriage comes too late. The relationship results in multiple tragedies and grief. In "There, in the Woods" by Clara Madrigano, Lucy's husband, Nick, went missing in the woods almost a year earlier. Now a teen boy has gone missing in the same woods - the same woods Lucy feels consumed her parents. Nicely atmospheric and leaves no questions unanswered. "Each Night an Adaptation" by Osahon Ize-Iyamu tells us, "The women of Osamudia family always sleep in their dead's house immediately after they die in order to let them enter the afterlife properly, but Destiny's mother can't bear it." So Destiny stays there in her place. The house "works" on her, and her mother eventually explains why Destiny is the one who must live there. Creepy.

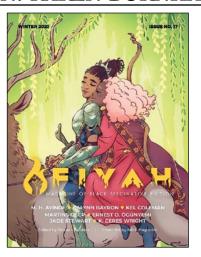
Four more in The Dark #69: Suzan Palumbo paints a rich picture of the tragedy of a child gone missing and the remaining sister's adaptation in "Laughter Among the Trees". Unfortunately, the ending depends on a secret kept for decades suddenly and conveniently revealed. Kay Chronister's stories are often difficult to describe and "The Yoke of the Aspens" is one of those. Both dreamlike and nightmarish, the tale entrances as the truth – eventually – is more or less revealed. In "One Last Broken Thing" by Aimee Ogden, Liv lives with her curmudgeonly father on an acreage with fields full of the castoffs of others: "bones of houses, cars, machines. Sleeping giants." The father, who shoots most any animal about, stymies the possibility of her escape to college. An effective story. Priya Sridhar's "A Resting Place for Dolls" is more of a vignette than a story and, again, I'm not at all sure I understand it. Nydia and her friends are saddened by the suicide of Anthony Bourdain. She makes her grandmother's cake for them – which had once been a cure for sadness – and, as her grandmother had, crafts dolls to help them. It's worthwhile reading that perhaps you can interpret better than this reviewer.

**№** p. 40

## LOCUS LOOKS AT SHORT FICTION: KAREN BURNHAM









Clarkesworld 2/21 Lightspeed 2/21 Fiyah Winter 21 Tor.com 1/27/21, 2/3/21, 2/10/21, 2/24/21 Beneath Ceaseless Skies 1/28/21, 2/11/21 Strange Horizons 2/8/21, 2/15/21 Aurealis #137 Fantasy Magazine 2/21

Sebruary's Clarkesworld leads with a great cloning story, "The Failed Dianas" by Monique Laban. A young woman returning from a space-based financial internship goes to a high-end restaurant and meets a different version of herself, quite a bit older. It turns out that this is the original Diana who disappointed her parents deeply by refusing to go into finance; by the end of the story we've met five versions of the same person, each one cloned and raised at a different age by the same parents. This is a very pointed story about filial relationships, expectations, and autonomy. A very different and unexpected relationship forms in "History in Pieces" by Beth Goder. Here we get the perspective of an alien archivist who captures history in physical artefacts, each one standing as a small vignette suggesting a larger picture, especially when experienced out of order. As the reader assembles the pieces we learn of the first human explorers to visit the archivist's planet and what fate befalls them. Goder conveys a lot of depth, given the fragmentary and fractured nature of the tale she tells.

There are two stories of life in the ruins, the first of which is "Terra Rasa" by Anastasia Bookreyeva (translated by Ray Nayler). In this time of complete climate collapse, cities are literally burning all over Russia. Our main character is a rescuer on the last train to the seaport of Murmansk. Rescuing a senior government official gave him a pass to one of the last ships trying to make safe harbor as far north as possible. His rescuing efforts continue as he also hides a girl when her grandmother is arrested; but hope is hard to come by in a world so devastated and decimated. "Obelisker Adrift in the Desert" by K.H. Meridian imagines a sentient AI system primed for warfare with any other remaining AIs, but badly damaged by its last encounter. When a panzergrenadier (cyborg soldier) named Kouya walks in out of the desert, they form an odd relationship, even when she leaves for a year to investigate a nearby human settlement. I really liked Obelisker's narrative voice here.

Another pair of stories deals with men recovering from trauma and their relationships with aliens. In "Mercy and the Mollusc" by M.L. Clark, an unnamed man is taking his last journey with a giant Oomu, an alien mollusc/snail that he's been riding for about a decade. The Oomu is intelligent, and they can communicate, although that's not obvious to the young person who tries to steal their stuff and instead gets trapped inside the Oomu's mucus. This story has enough space to unfold with deliberate pacing as we learn more about the man, the Oomu, the young person, and the terraformed world they live on. A much shorter story is "'Remember The Washington,' They Said as They Fed the Ugoxli" by Jeff Reynolds. On this planet humans have lost a war against the aliens, and while most have accepted the peace, there are many who are still resentful. The story opens with a group of men tossing an alien child to the Ugoxli to be eaten; some of them killed the parents, then they grabbed a veteran because they assumed he'd be on their side. It turns out he has a much deeper and different connection to the aliens than they had assumed.

Lightspeed has a very strong issue in February. First off is "The Mathematics of Fairyland" by Phoebe Barton, firmly in the science fiction section, despite the title. Marigold's partner, Berenice, has disappeared on a ship that suffered a warp drive malfunction. The grieving woman stitches together space folklore of the fae to come up with ideas of how she might possibly win her love back from her space station home. She befriends a gardener from Mars who contributes some gremlin myths, but who also realizes how deeply grief can drag you down. This is a story of the grieving process that stays constant no matter how far removed in time or space. "Me Two" by Keith Brooke & Eric Brown imagines a person whose life is shaped by a unique circumstance – this individual alternates days between being Danny in England and Cristina in Spain. It takes a while for them to realize that not everyone switches bodies every day, but it remains a constant of their life. The crux of the story is the moment when, as relatively successful adults, they try to maneuver Danny and Cristina into meeting; I very much appreciated the way the story handles the climax and also follows them to the end of their life/lives.

On the fantasy side we have another amazing story from A.T. Greenblatt, "The Memory of a Memory Is a Spirit". Sumé has arrived back on an island that she left 20 years ago. She was its caretaker, and while she left to try to understand why people weren't visiting anymore (and to try to convince them that it's not a haunted place), she also found a lover. Now the spirits are resentful and slow to warm to her, but she works methodically to restore the spirit houses to what she remembers. It turns out that the mainland has turned increasingly xenophobic; one of the reasons why she returned and why she's not sure about her partner, but the ending opens this story up to a much wide scope. Finally, in "Destinations of Beauty" by Alexander Weinstein, he continues his "Eighth Continent" travelogue series with a discourse about beauty, and how the attitudes of both locals and tourists easily trump superficial aesthetics when it comes to how lovely a place may feel.

The first story in Winter's issue of Fiyah is my favorite. "The Techwork Horse" by M.H. Ayinde is a girl-and-her-horse story, but in this case we get the span of the girl's entire life, and the horse is an immobile object for the vast majority of the story. It is brought to Bola's village, one of several magnificent robotic horses, which only the most noble are supposed to control and ride. However this one refuses to respond to anyone, and we get to see how Bola's life unfolds around the space that the horse occupies for her, lowly though she is. This story packs a lot of sweep into a tale that seems bigger than its wordcount. I also enjoyed "All in a Day's Work" by Jade Stewart. Walker is a freelance demon hunter in a world where such folk are usually found in organized covens. We see them help a Black couple in the Northwest, then, as they're contemplating their next move, a oncein-a-lifetime manifestation arises. Throughout the story we get glimpses of their past, as well as the societal structures they're avoiding. This is a heroic story that's also rooted in culture and family.

The stories in *Tor.com* I read this month leaned heavily toward horror, with three edited by El-

# LOCUS LOOKS AT BOOKS: LIZ BOURKE

**The Alien Stars and Other Novellas**, Tim Pratt (Angry Robot Books 978-0857669285, \$12.99, 200pp, tp) April 2021. Cover by grandfailure.

**Hold Fast Through the Fire**, K.B. Wagers (Harper Voyager 978-0062887818, \$26.99, 416pp, hc) July 2021.

stars, The Dreaming Stars, and The Forbidden Stars) is a trio of excellent, modern, space-opera pulp adventures, with a compelling cast and a satisfying amount of solving problems by blowing them up. I'm gutted that there don't seem to be any plans for more novel-length works in this setting – and at the same time delighted by the novellas collected in The Alien Stars and Other Novellas, which form a coda of sorts to the trilogy.

The Alien Stars collects three stories: "The Augmented Stars", "The Artificial Stars", and the titular "The Alien Stars". Each involves or focuses on a different character from the original trilogy, and each is told with a slightly different style – though with equal amounts of panache.

"The Augmented Stars" is told from the point of view of engineer Delilah Mears, hired by Ashok, the augmented engineer from the original trilogy (now an artificial intelligence, an engineering rockstar, and captain of his own spaceship), for a mission to investigate an Axiom anomaly and a missing human-crewed vessel in the same area of space. The Axiom anomaly appears to be able to reverse entropy, and when they arrive, Delilah finds herself in the middle of weird shenanigans involving aliens who have taken a human pirate drama show to structure their culture. Light, snappy, with a fast pace and a great sense of humour, "The Augmented Stars" is everything I enjoyed about the original trilogy compressed into a smaller space. It's not deep, but it's sure as hell fun.

"The Artificial Stars" is about Shall, an artificial intelligence familiar to readers of the original trilogy. Shall's original template was based on the then-husband of Callie Machedo (protagonist of The Wrong Stars and its sequels), but he's long since grown past any jealousy he has for her current wife. Shall is the elected president of the newly reconstituted Trans-Neptunian Alliance, the only polity in the solar system with full citizenship for AIs. "The Artificial Stars" is recounted in the first person, using the conceit that Shall is creating a record as required by his role as a public person – and it kicks off when he receives a message from a previous instance of himself, one he'd for years believed destroyed. This other Shall, now calling himself Will, warns of a threat to the existence of the universe – a threat he needs the other Shall to help him defeat. But Will has been remade with the aid of Axiom tools, as Shall discovers, and he might pose a threat to Shall's world himself.

"The Artificial Stars", while still entertaining, feels a little shallower, a little slighter, than either "The Augmented Stars" or "The Alien Stars". It's a straightforward little adventure with some musings on identity, and a bit of banter to give it teeth.

"The Alien Stars" is the standout novella in this collection. It focuses on Lantern, a member of the alien species who call themselves the Free, and it's told in a quasi-epistolary form. Lantern was part of a sect known as truth-tellers, who alone among the Free always spoke the truth - except that she discovered the higher authorities in the truth-tellers were, in fact, dedicated to the return of the Free's former masters, the monstrous, genocidal Axiom. Now she has finally found where the highest council of the truth-tellers have fled to, since their plans to wait for the return of the Axiom are in disarray. Alone, with only her wits and a handful of tools, it's up to Lantern to

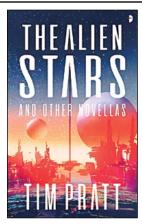
prevent them from setting themselves up as new masters of the universe, for they have gathered old Axiom technology that would give them a great deal of firepower. Introspective about the power of truth and story, about personal ethics and interpersonal relationships and how hard it is when people who were kind to you turn out to be monsters, "The Alien Stars" is also a compelling, fun, explosive work of space opera pulp. It's delightful.

As a whole, I suspect **The Alien Stars and Other Novellas** will mostly appeal to existing fans of Pratt's Axiom trilogy, but I think it might also work as an introduction to the high-octane pulpish entertainment that characterises that trilogy. It contains a satisfying and entertaining trio of novellas. Personally, I'd love to read more of them.

Hold Fast Through the Fire is the second NeoG novel by K.B. Wagers (acclaimed author of the Indranan War and the Farian War space opera trilogies). While it can be satisfying as a standalone, I believe it benefits from having read A Pale Light in the Black, Wagers's first novel in this setting. It helps with small character details, and with appreciating how far some characters have come.

The Near Earth Orbital Guard (NeoG) is an organisation that performs much the same function in space as Coast Guards do at sea. Their fleet of interceptor ships do customs patrol and search and rescue, in conjunction with the navy and other military and law enforcement branches of service. They also participate in the Boarding Games, a multi-service competitive extravaganza with a wide public following, involving competitions in cage fighting, fencing, piloting, navigation, and boarding operations. The crew of the Zuma's Ghost are two-time Boarding Games champions, but personnel changes have arrived to shake up their winning chemistry. Alongside these changes, they're entangled in an intelligence operation that's aimed at a major threat - but their new commander's approach may break the team's trust and cohesion in a way that won't be easy to recover from.

Nika Vagin served aboard *Zuma's Ghost* before his stint with Intelligence. Now he's back, and his orders have him keeping vital information from his curious, competent team. His XO, Lt. Max Carmichael, is very good at digging at in-





consistencies and very protective of her people, and Nika's attempts to keep her in the dark may screw up their relationship for good. They may also screw up his relationship with his adoptive sister Jenks, now promoted to the *Zuma's Ghost's* Chief Petty Officer. Jenks is only just starting to trust other people and to let other people in. Her relationships with Senior Chief Luis Armstrong and Navy lieutenant Tivo Parsikov are only just settling down into something she can rely upon, and it's unfortunate that both Luis and Tivo are in on the secret that Niko's also keeping.

Spacer Chae Ho-ki is also newly aboard *Zuma's Ghost*, serving with the NeoG as part of a plea deal that keeps them out of prison. They're being manipulated and threatened by powerful – and casually murderous – people, with connections in high places, who want to keep the NeoG from interfering in their bottom line. NeoG Intelligence – and Nika – know about this, and are using Chae to try to get evidence to indict some of those powerful people, but Chae doesn't know they know. The situation is primed to go sideways, especially when the crew of *Zuma's Ghost* find themselves in the line of fire.

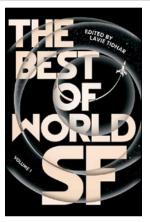
And that's before someone commits an act of terroristic violence that kills numerous NeoG personnel, hoping to spark political divisions and agitation among far-flung (and commercially exploited) settlements into a shooting war. Trust is at a premium, but some of the *Zuma's Ghost* crew are falling apart. Especially Jenks, for whom losing Luis, on top of discovering his breach of her trust, is a terrible blow.

Hold Fast Through the Fire is a darker book than A Pale Light in the Black. It's deeply concerned with trust and relationships: the way they can be manipulated by bad actors, or even by well-meaning people who screw up and hurt the people they care about because they were living too much in their own heads. It's concerned, too, with grief, with trauma, and with recovery and, for all its willingness to grapple with heavy themes, it's a book that comes down on the side of optimism, of healing and triumph. That's both satisfying and comforting.

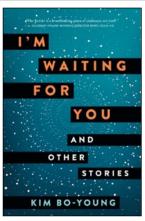
Wagers brings their usual deft gift for action and pacing to this taut, tense, sometimes nail-biting novel. Exciting space adventure with real human consequences is a personal favourite of mine, and Wagers – with their inimitable flair – gives us a

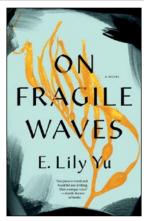
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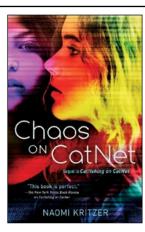
### LOCUS LOOKS AT BOOKS: GARY K. WOLFE











**The Best of World SF: Volume 1**, Lavie Tidhar, ed. (Head of Zeus 978-1838937645, \$39.95, 624pp, hc) June 2021.

Alias Space and Other Stories, Kelly Robson (Subterranean 978-1645240259, \$40.00, 420pp, hc) April 2021.

I'm Waiting for You and Other Stories, Kim Bo-Young (Harper Voyager 978-0-06-295146-5, 336pp, \$26.99, hc) April 2021.

**On Fragile Waves**, E. Lily Yu (Erewhon 978-1-64566-009-5, \$25.95, 288pp, hc) February 2021.

**Chaos on Catnet**, Naomi Kritzer (Tor Teen 978-1-25016-522-0, \$18.99, 304pp, hc) April 2021.

n his incisive introduction to The Best of World SF: Volume 1, a kind of follow-up to the Apex Book of World SF volumes, which appeared over nearly a decade until 2018, Lavie Tidhar takes ironic note of the various meanings of "world science fiction" over the years. Originally a grandiose term for whomever showed up in New York in 1939 for a tiny fan convention which happened to take place during a World's Fair, the name Worldcon stuck forever, even though for decades it basically meant Anglo-Americon. Not until 2015 did Worldcon's highest award go to a novel that was not originally written in English. A loose organization of professionals in 1976 called itself World SF, more social than literary, and in 1986 two of its founders, Brian W. Aldiss and Sam Lundwall, edited The Penguin World Omnibus of Science Fiction, which Tidhar mentions as one of the few anthologies of international SF of the last 35 years (by which I assume he means worldwide, since there have been a number of international anthologies focusing on specific regions). In comparing the contents of that 1986 volume to Tidhar's current anthology, a couple of things become apparent. Few contemporary readers would recognize more than a handful of names from the Aldiss/Lundwall, and those are likely to be the British and American contributors. Tidhar includes no US authors at all, and yet easily a dozen of the names will be familiar to anyone following the field over the last decade. Some have already been widely honored. The lead story, Aliette de Bodard's "Immersion", a marvel of transforming a simple tale of a family restaurant facing a huge order into an exploration of cultural appropriation and enhanced-reality tech, won Nebula and Locus Awards, while the final selection, Zen Cho's "If At First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try Again", was a Hugo winner (an endearing tale of an aspiring dragon and a failed academic, it's one of the few fantasies here). These and other contributors – Chen Qiufan, Vandana Singh, Tade Thompson, Hannu Rajaniemi, Ekaterina Sedia, Lauren Beukes, Karin Tidbeck, Silvia Moreno-Garcia, Tlotlo Tsamaase – have given us deservedly high-profile and award-winning books.

What all this means is not just that the recognition of international SF has come a long way since 1986, but that an anthology such as this no longer needs to serve a missionary purpose. By now, no one should really be surprised that there are SF writers in Botswana or Malaysia or Brazil, and no one should be naïve enough to assume that any particular story somehow "represents" a national tradition. The result is that Tidhar, mostly freed of such diplomatic expectations, can make more personal choices. "Hey, it's my anthology," he says, "I'm allowed to have fun."

As a result, so do we. In fact, while several stories do make use of regional politics (such as Chinelo Onwualo's "What the Dead Man Said", which locates a painful family drama in the context of future Nigerian/Biafran politics) or folklore (such as the Icelandic world of hidden creatures in Emile Hjörvar Petersen's "The Cryptid"), others seem pointedly in dialogue with classic SF, something also often evident in Tidhar's own fiction. As Tidhar notes in his story introduction, Han Song's "The Wheel of Samsara", which involves a young Martian scholar who brings her skeptical father to visit a Tibetan monastery where the titular wheel has been discovered, clearly recalls Clarke's "The Nine Billion Names of God". In Vina Jie-Min Prasad's "Fandom for Robots", one of the funniest selections in the book, the title robot Computron seems to borrow its name from one of the Transformers, although it's actually a vintage 1954 sentient robot - residing in the Simak Robotics Museum - which finds itself drawn into anime fandom, while the story's clever footnotes refer to scholars named Rossum, Bloch, and Williamson. Ng Yi-Sheng's "Xingzhou" - the title may refer to a Chinese term for Singapore - is almost manically inventive, beginning with the narrator's grandfather leaving China in the 19th century and ending up with a power struggle in the fabulous, light-drenched continent of Xingzhou. But SF readers will delight in spotting ansibles, Vulcan lutes, sonic screwdrivers, positronic brains, Trisolarians, Tralfamadorians, and Pan-Galactic Gargle Blasters, not to mention Yog-Sothoth and assorted Elder Gods.

At the same time, some familiar SF tropes get repurposed or implicitly critiqued. Asteroid mining is hardly a new thing, but the workers in Chen Qiufan's "Debtless" are caught in a nightmare, indenture even coded into their genes, and undergo memory erasure to make them more pliable. The time-traveler from the future is an even older convention, but in Tade Thompson's "Bootblack" he arrives during the race riots in post-WWI Cardiff (something I learned about for the first time here). Uplifted animals have seldom had as sophisticated a treatment as Hannu Rajaniemi offers in "His Master's Voice". The idea of the living spaceship is given a rather lovely romantic turn in Karin Tidbeck's "The Last Voyage of Skidbladnir", while Lauren Beukes turns the classic setting of the fecund jungle planet into a horror tale - both corporate and visceral - in "The Green". Probably the closest approach to space opera shows up in R.S.A. Garcia's "The Sun from Both Sides", though you'd never guess it from the modest, fable-like setting at the beginning of the story; structurally, it's the boldest narrative gesture of all the stories here. In Tlotlo Tsamaase's "Virtual Snapshots", both climate change and the migration to "Digiworld" are portrayed from the grim perspective of a poor village in Botswana. In one almost plaintive passage that seems to be addressed directly to reader preconceptions, Tsamaase's narrator says, "We understand technology. We sit at computers and understand what we type. Our cars are not donkey carts. Our houses have corners, and we don't have lions or animals of the wild parading the city centre, but some men are more beasts than human."

As might be expected, the selections are a mix of stories written in English, translated by others, and translated by the author. Of the latter, the best (and the best of the four stories original to the anthology) is Francesco Verso's "The Green Ship", involving an idealistic effort to rescue climate and political refugees. Several selections are worth noting, though, for the sheer beauty and grace of the writing. Not surprisingly, one is by Vandana Singh, whose "Delhi" is a haunting account of a man plagued by visions of figures from different

eras, who consults a mysterious computer oracle for help. In Fabio Fernandes's "The Emptiness in the Heart of All Things", a murder investigation leads to a transformative encounter with a reclusive writer living in the Amazon basin, with overtones of a local legend of a cursed, shapechanging woman (along the way, Fernandes's characters offer some acute critical insights on westerns, of all things). Kofi Nyameye's "The Old Man with the Third Hand" is a moving tale that explores the liminal space between material fantasy and mental illness, with a brief nod to Cthulhu along the way. The protagonist of Silvia Moreno-Garcia's novella Prime Meridian, adrift in an unstable gig economy in a near-future Mexico City, balances her dreams of becoming a botanist on Mars with her day job as a paid companion to a faded B-movie actress, a sort of low-rent Norma Desmond, whose career had been largely defined by tacky SF flicks. Stories like these are the ones you sometimes want to foist upon readers who claim not to like SF, and The Best of World SF: **Volume 1** reminds us that such stories can come from anywhere these days, if only we get to see them. I look forward to future volumes.

I've sometimes been skeptical of authors who assemble a story collection almost as soon as they've totted up enough publications to make a book after all, is almost everything you've published that worthy of preservation? – and I've sometimes been wrong about it, as with writers like Ted Chiang or Eileen Gunn. The latest example is Kelly Robson, who only began publishing a half dozen years ago - she calls herself a late bloomer - and whose Alias Space and Other Stories collects nearly all of her short fiction to date. Whether it's due to launching a career in her forties, working with good editors, or simply being an author who polishes and twiddles until she gets things right, just about all the stories are easily worth collecting. Of course, the main factor may simply be quirkiness of imagination: it's hard to think of another writer who'd begin a career with a sex comedy about magical plumbing in Louis XV's Versailles, follow up with a tale of a dragon-slaying school bus driver, or write a touching series of generational tales about Toronto's queer street-burlesque community (not what comes to mind when I think of Toronto tourism, but I looked it up, and it is sort of a thing). In other words, each of Robson's tales are hand-carved from different materials, and while we can see links and themes emerging, none of the stories are easy appendages to other stories, or to a would-be franchise.

The two best-known stories here are "The Water of Versailles" and "A Human Stain". The former, Robson's multiple award-nominated tale of an aspiring courtier who, with mixed results, introduces indoor plumbing and toilets (inevitably called thrones) to the legendary palace, but whose secret is a water-nixie who (a little creepily) calls him Papa. It's as bright, inventive, and shrewdly satirical as I'd remembered. Though completely unconnected in terms of mood and plot, the Nebula-winning "A Human Stain" (which has nothing to do with Philip Roth, by the way) is almost the dark mirror image of the Versailles story: again we have an historical setting, almost entirely

inside a labyrinthine structure, but in place of the crowded, lively Versailles we find ourselves in a remote windswept *schloss* with only a couple of uncommunicative servants, a strange nursemaid, and an even stranger boy to greet the protagonist Helen, who is fleeing her debts back in Paris by taking on a tutorial job she's not really qualified for. The fantastical element here is pure Gothic horror rather than pixie-lore, but again Robson works out the details with an almost SFnal precision: we can pretty much piece together the biology and life-cycle of the weird creatures Helen finds herself confronting, and the details assemble themselves with masterful pacing.

Several of her SF stories share certain elements with each other, and perhaps also with Gods, Monsters, and the Lucky Peach. After Earth has been devastated, an "outplanet diaspora" has led to an exodus to the Moon, planets, and other space habitats, the most bizarre (and far-future) of which are the giant floating organisms called "space whales" in "We Who Live in the Heart", a tale whose familiar theme of responsibility and redemption is strengthened not only by its setting but by its cynical and crusty neurosurgeon narrator. Another hardnosed narrator (Robson rarely uses first-person) is among the strongest features of "Intervention", in which the protagonist decides upon a late-life career as a creche manager, raising groups of children in a post-family solar system but resolutely refusing to work on the Moon, for both personal and political reasons. The Moon also turns out to be pretty unwelcoming to the protagonist of "A Study in Oils", a hockey player who, having killed a man there, flees to a remote valley in China, where an older, more sustainable way of life suggests yet another alternative to a grim future.

A pretty bleak future is also the setting of "Two-Year Man", in which a rigid caste system is enforced based on the number of years of veteran service in "the colonies", though the protagonist Mikkel knows that, even with more than two years of service, he has little chance of advancing because he's Jewish. A laboratory janitor in the habit of sneaking food and other goods home to his wife, Mikkel rescues a live baby - albeit a mutant with a beak – only to find his wife outraged at the idea. The story may not link to Robson's other futures, but two aspects reflect a recurring dichotomy in her fiction. On the one hand, she recognizes the societal importance of caregivers - the creche manager in "Intervention", the governess/tutor in "A Human Stain", a nursing home director in "The Desperate Flesh", Mikkel's desire for fatherhood - while on the other she recognizes the darker impulses of society to treat some of its members, usually women, as disposable. Mikkel's baby is the most literal example, but a debate about the ease of sacrificing others is featured in "We Who Live in the Heart", and the idea is central to the two most brutal and uncompromising stories in the collection. The protagonist of "What Gentle Women Dare" is a prostitute in 18th-century Liverpool – which, we are reminded, was central to the British slave trade - who decides to steal a smock from a corpse in the river, only to discover it belongs to an ethereal figure who suggests there may be a way to address the habitual violence against women in her world. (She sees the figure as the devil, but we know better.) "The Three Resurrections of Jessica Churchill" opens with a particularly brutal rape and murder, though again some sort of alien consciousness enters the victim's body to repair the physical damage, even as it can't give her a will to survive. I'm not sure that the alien interlopers in either story are quite convincing, given the meticulous naturalism of the settings, but they probably save the tales from becoming unbearably bleak.

There is also an aspect of Robson's fiction that unashamedly celebrates the ways people find to survive, and it's most evident in the trio she calls her Toronto burlesque stories. The first of these, "The Desperate Flesh", a title that might have been borrowed from one of the ancient lesbian paperbacks with which one character decorates her scrubs, concerns efforts to save a geriatric home for lesbians, which the city would like to turn into a museum. The effort is complicated by a former burlesque dancer with a tendency to strip down in public places, which may turn out to be a more effective political statement than it at first seems. It's not SF at all, but by the time of "Alias Space", we're in a post-COVID future in which people are just beginning to venture out again for street festivals, only the manager of one such festival balks when he learns that the dance troupe filling several slots is actually a burlesque group. Agnes, their leader, works a day job at a high-tech upscale parking structure. When a new industrial robot meant for the garage is sent to her burlesque dance studio instead, the confusion tilts the story toward screwball comedy. "Skin City" is set further in the future, the title a pun on burlesque and the habit of most citizens, in a post-privacy domed Toronto, to experience their surroundings through augmented-reality "skins" that even delete people from view. The protagonist, Kass, is a burlesque performer in jail for intellectual property theft – apparently almost any allusion to cultural figures is protected – but whose only goal is to meet a mysterious woman in black with whom she has fallen in love literally at first sight. Kass's acid-tongued centenarian cellmate Janet provides a delightfully sharp counterpoint to Kass's romanticism.

Kass is one of several older women figures who play important roles in Robson's fiction, reminding us how rare such figures are in most SF/F. Another is the crusty school bus driver in "La Vitesse", fleeing a dragon while trying to offer her daughter a more rewarding childhood than her own, when she had to steal books from the local library. Bea is about the coolest school bus driver since Ms. Frizzle, and the story's clearly autobiographical setting of 1980s Alberta is one of the most fully realized in the book. Another landscape

<u>₩ p. 42</u>

#### THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

April 24, 2071. Call of the Wild. Cities and suburbs worldwide panic as 114 labs and collies kill their owner/walkers, the most fatalities in one day since urban coyotes began to "sniff&bond" with leashed pets in 2066.

### LOCUS LOOKS AT BOOKS: ADRIENNE MARTINI

What Abigail Did That Summer, Ben Aaronovitch (Subterranean Press 978-1-64524-029-7, \$40.00, 232pp, hc) March 2021.

**The Only Living Girl on Earth**, Charles Yu (Scribd Originals, subscription required, 43pp, eb) January 2021.

**Project Hail Mary**, Andy Weir (Ballantine 978-0-59313529-4, \$28.99, 496pp, hc) May 2021.

The Galaxy, and the Ground Within, Becky Chambers (Harper Voyager 978-0-06-293694-2, \$27.99, 336pp, hc) April 2021.

**A Psalm for the Wild-Built**, Becky Chambers (Tordotcom 978-1250236210, \$20.99, 160pp, hc) July 2021.

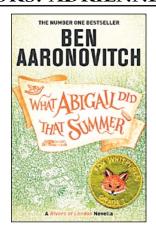
en Aaronovitch's Rivers of London universe keeps sending new rivulets in unexpected directions. The series, which started with a relatively straightforward novel about Peter Grant, a London police officer who finds himself confronted with magic, has branched into a comic book series, an audiobook, a handful of short stories, and seven more novels. The most recent Peter Grant book, False Value, was perfectly fine, if a little bit lacking in some ineffable zazz. But even a perfectly fine Aaronovitch is still a good read.

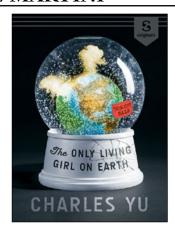
What Abigail Did That Summer, a shorter work set during the events of Foxglove Summer, shifts focus to Abigail, Grant's teenage cousin. Grant and his mentor Nightingale are teaching her about the demimonde they patrol, not because they need an apprentice, but because it's a way to keep her out of trouble. Abigail is smart and curious, a wonderful combination but one that also puts her in peril.

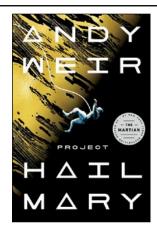
Of course, this story does just that. There's weird bollocks going on in Hampstead Heath. Teenagers are disappearing and Abigail is the only one who can figure out why – which she does, of course. But that's not why this stand-alone story is so satisfying. Not only does Aaronovitch's writing bring Abigail fully to life, it also builds a story that is worthy of her and delivers potent insights about being a teenage girl, which is doubly remarkable because it's not a perspective you often see outside YA fiction, and Aaronovitch does not seem to be writing from lived experience. I hope these tributaries keeping feeding new life to this world.

I'm going to step out on a limb and make a bold pronouncement: the fourth section of Charles Yu's novelette **The Only Living Girl on Earth** is the most beautiful and true summation of what it means to be mortal. The fact that it is also surrounded by a poignant and wry story about Jane, the titular girl, and what has become of Earth in 3020 is merely a bonus.

It shouldn't be a shock that National Book Award Winner Yu, whose **How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe** remains a title I force into the hands of just about anyone who asks for a book recommendation, is able to distill so much into a short story, but this particular story hasn't quite broken though the noise of early 2021, and it's worth loudly calling out.







Without giving much away, Jane is the only living girl on Earth because she works at Earth: The Gift Shop, a tourist attraction for those humans who have scattered far and wide across the galaxy. The Earth itself is no longer inhabitable, for the most part, and some enterprising beings have developed a small part of what remains so that they can separate sightseers from their money. Initially, the gift shop was attached to Earth: The Museum, which didn't really grab anyone. Then it became Earth: A Theme Park and Gift Shop but no one really liked the (sometimes fatal) rides and most visitors wanted some tchotchke to show

they'd been there. Evolution took its course and now only the tchotchkes remain.

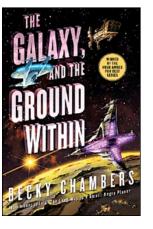
That rough set-up merely suggests the tone and setting, mind. But to tell you all that these 10,000 words suggest about family and isolation in our current odd time would spoil the joy to be found in discovering them yourself.

The breakout first novel is both a blessing and a curse. The blessing part is obvious, right? Cash. Cachet. More cash. The curse hits with the next book, which couldn't possibly live up to the freak success of the work that proceeded it. Lightning never strikes twice. Plus, all of the rejection that the first novel went through likely caused the writer to hone it into a sleek plot delivery system, which likely helped its success. The next book, however, won't go through nearly as many revisions, nor will it be subjected to as much editorial scrutiny during its development.

Andy Weir's **The Martian** was a blockbuster. Not only did it sell and sell and sell, it spawned a hit movie with a big star. His next book, **Artemis**, was perfectly serviceable but didn't do nearly the business his first outing did. With his third book, **Project Hail Mary**, Weir is leaning hard into all that made **The Martian** kick.

Science teacher Ryland Grace wakes up with no memory of how he got where he is (or even that he is a science teacher or that his name is Ryland Grace). What he does know is that there are two dead people in the room with him, and that big robotic arms keep trying to do stuff to him.

Grace decides to science the shit out of his problem and figures out that he's a) on a spaceship





and b) expected to save the Earth from an alien menace. His memory comes back to him in fits and starts – and, like in **The Martian**, opens the story up not a second before it needs to be opened so that we can understand Grace's conflicts and what their solutions could be.

**Project Hail Mary**, however, isn't a simple rehash of **The Martian**. Instead, it's a celebration of Weir's voice. His strength as a writer is explaining science with accuracy and nerdy excitement. Early on in the story, Grace goes off on an aside that starts "the cool thing about pendulums" and the paragraphs that follow show you a lot about the character and, of course, a cool thing about pendulums.

Weir's jaunty blend of science and fiction in **Project Hail Mary** is a return to the work that got him where he is, yes, but it's also the work of a writer who has the confidence (and cash) to write what makes him most happy, even if it won't break sales records and star Matt Damon this time around. As a bonus, it's a joy to read.

Becky Chambers's Wayfarers series, which is concluding with **The Galaxy, and the Ground Within**, is a nice warm cup of tea when the weather outside is terrible. Sure there are conflicts and sadness but all of that unpleasantness is always outweighed by decency and honesty. It would be tempting to also claim that Chambers's books are always interwoven with a fundamental belief in the goodness of humanity, which is true but only in the abstract. All of her characters in **The Galaxy, and the Ground Within** are very much not human.

**№** *p.* 43

### LOCUS LOOKS AT BOOKS: KATHARINE COLDIRON

**Unity**, Elly Bangs (Tachyon 978-1-61696-342-2, \$16.95, 304pp, tp) April 2021. Cover by Elizabeth Story.

**These Lifeless Things**, Premee Mohamed (Solaris Satellites 978-1-78618-448-1, \$15.99, 176pp, tp) February 2021.

**Skyward Inn**, Aliya Whiteley (Solaris 978-1-78108-882-1, \$24.99, 336pp, hc) March 2021.

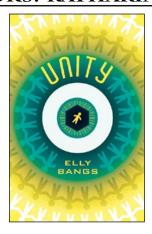
lly Bangs's debut novel **Unity** is a rare book, a passionate, complex, profoundly philosophical novel of apocalypse. Bangs has crafted a detailed story that leaps from the page, a narrative in which every character, every action, every sentence achieves integration into the larger purpose and achievement. It's not a terribly approachable book, but it is a deeply rewarding one, a fully realized journey from despair to hope.

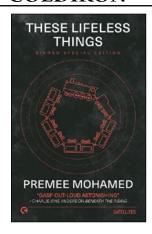
The first thing to know is this book deals with the "gray goo" apocalypse scenario, which is much more frightening than it is likely. In it, the world is at risk from exponentially self-replicating nanotechnology, which will eventually devour everything on Earth in order to make more of itself, leaving the planet devoid of life and covered in microscopic bots. (This scenario is so scary to your reviewer that she does not like to think about it at all.) But in **Unity**, the world, though currently threatened by "the gray," has previously undergone other apocalypses: a nuclear war, a horrifying pandemic known as Blood Rain, destructive political brinksmanship. Governments have divided, militarized, and destroyed; people have built cities below the sea to escape the worsening climate. Resources are shrinking, daily life is oppressive and threatening, and generally human life seems to be drawing to a close.

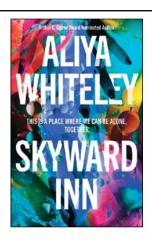
Maybe the horrifying cosmic truth had been there all along, buried in the common threads between all the mutually murderous denominations of all the wasteland religions I'd always dismissed out of hand: maybe the world was really approaching its apocalyptic end.

Speaking these words is Alexei, one of **Unity**'s four narrators. He is a soldier with nothing left to lose, guilty of atrocities that have rendered him emotionally dissociated and unable to kill. He agrees to escort Danae, the central narrator, and her companion Naoto from an underwater city to a specific place in what was once Arizona. A third narrator, Borrower, is a villainous, bodyhopping consciousness intent on tracking Danae wherever she goes. The fourth, "I," is much more mysterious.

The main conceit of **Unity** is so complicated that it takes the entire book to explain it fully. Danae is part of a gestalt, a consciousness composed of hundreds of minds, all joined together with nanotechnology. In unity, they can accomplish far more than individual minds working apart can. Joined experience and intelligence has a multiplier effect when these minds achieve total understanding. Thus, the gestalt can cure the Blood Rain, invent solutions to climate change, and even deactivate the gray – saving the world over and over. Years ago, Danae was traumatically severed from the rest of the gestalt, and she is returning to Arizona







to unify with them once more.

Along the way, Danae and her companions meet with a lot of trouble, as the ruthless Medusa Clan tracks and attempts to destroy her, Borrower persistently stalks her, and the rest of the world panics over the gray threat. General planetary instability is something of a subplot, though; the main business of Unity is unpacking its big ideas. Bangs incorporates the gestalt's backstory, as well as Alexei's, with extremely adept timing – just when the reader loses patience about everything she does not know, Bangs drops a page of exposition that clears the fog. Unity is densely written and not particularly interested in handholding the reader, which makes it a book to concentrate on and take seriously - not a quick weekend read - but the prize for this kind of concentration is significant. The reader can almost hear her brain expanding, chewing away at Unity's ideas.

The title is a promise of fulfillment stretched across most of the book. Such a promise was never going to be kept in the way Danae hopes for, but the fate of the gestalt is still quite unexpected, and increases the intellectual tension right when Bangs could have slowed down and let the book coast to its close. Her confident philosophizing, the fierceness with which she tackles thought experiments, continues its momentum to the very end.

Such daring should be rewarded. Concentrate on **Unity**. Bring it to a book club. Think about it – the promise and the peril of true understanding.

These Lifeless Things by Premee Mohamed tantalizes with evocative ideas, excellent characterization, and beautiful language. It is a perfect story to tell in novella form, a snippet of a postapocalyptic world where humanity has been defeated too many times to make sense of its struggle. Mohamed alternates the book's narration between tense, hopeless diary entries and commentary by an anthropologist who has discovered the diary in question decades later. This isn't a plot-driven tale; rather, it's thematically rich, with layered backstory and worldbuilding which rewards a second read.

The two narrators are Emerson, the anthropologist, and Eva, the diarist. Emerson lives in a comfortable world not too different from our own (phones, computers, and other technology are mentioned), part of a team of scientists visiting a "siege city" on a research trip. Eva lives in a nightmarish combat zone, scavenging supplies

from the destroyed city and eating human flesh to survive. The event that occupies both people is the Setback, a near-extinction of human life by extradimensional aliens – Eva is living through it and Emerson is studying it. The Setback "knocked the entire world back to the stone age and everything had to be recreated from scratch," but many of its details remain fuzzy, decades later.

Eva faces deadly challenges and tries to root out a spy among her group. Eventually she discovers that the aliens have been kidnapping and holding children, and she assembles a plan to free them. She does this in spite of her fear and exhaustion and the near-certainty that she won't survive. The story implies that this specific action allowed humanity to survive the Setback, and in this way and others, These Lifeless Things exhibits the power of implication rather than explanation. For example, the city in which the team is studying seems to be haunted, causing the researchers to sleepwalk and otherwise act strangely. These issues link to the threats of Eva's world – statues and animals - which in turn link to the aliens. Mohamed never fully solidifies these links, but these suggestions, this seeming, add mood.

Despite this lack of clarity, the book is mesmerizing. Eva's voice is finely tuned, at once despondent and determined, traumatized and yet loving, turning on a dime from humor to lyricism: "After the world ended I thought we would resemble the dusty movies of the eighties, you know, studs, spikes, leather. Instead we all look like extras from Fiddler on the Roof, our clothes worn-down, exhaustively beaten up at the riverside, mangled and hung in the sun." Emerson is as moved by her as the reader is. Once Eva finds a purpose (rescuing the children), the book's tone changes a little, becomes more focused but also more sentimental. This is not a change for the better. As a record of an apocalyptic time and the person studying it decades later, These Lifeless Things is fascinating enough. It almost doesn't need the plot that kicks in during its last third.

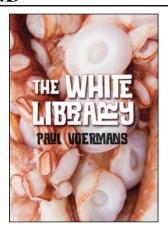
Plus, the conflict between Emerson and their team has interesting reverberations for our current moment. Emerson's occupation as an anthropologist studying the Setback seems pointless to the team; they gather scientific data while Emerson reads and analyzes the journal and tries to map the city. As Damien, the leader of Emerson's team, puts it:

**₩** p. 43

### LOCUS LOOKS AT BOOKS: IAN MOND









**Hummingbird Salamander**, Jeff VanderMeer (MCD 978-0-374-17354-8, \$27.00, 368pp, hc) April 2021.

**Peaces**, Helen Oyeyemi (Riverhead 978-0-593-19233-7, \$27.00, 272pp, hc) April 2021.

**The White Library**, Paul Voermans (PS Publishing 978-1-786365-92-4, £25.00, 246pp, hc) November 2020.

**Rabbit Island**, Elvira Navarro (Two Lines 978-1-949641-09-7, \$19.95, 184pp, tp) February 2021.

ith due regard to Jeff VanderMeer's earlier work, which I adore, his new novel, Hummingbird Salamander, continues an extraordinary run of books that began with the publication of **Annihilation** in 2014. Having given us existential horror, modernist science fiction, and portal fantasy, VanderMeer turns the genre dial to the hard-boiled end of the scale with a tale of the Anthropocene told in the language of noir. The opening and closing sentences that bookend the prologue - "Assume I'm dead by the time you read this / "I'm here to show you how the world ends" - provide a taste of the novel's noir-ish and apocalyptic tone while introducing us to Jane Smith (not her real name). She asks the reader to imagine receiving an envelope, abrupt and unexplained, from the local barista, which holds a key, a scribbled address, and the number seven. "The key is a trap," she informs us, "but you don't know that yet." The address leads Jane to the Imperial Storage Palace, where in a unit marked seven she discovers a taxidermied hummingbird inside a cardboard box ("Frozen wings. Frozen eyes. Iridescent feathers"). Alongside the stuffed bird, there's a single piece of paper "with two words written on it and a signature. Hummingbird... Salamander - Silvina." This is all it takes to set Jane on an obsessive, violent, painful quest in search of the Salamander, Silvina, and an answer to the question: why her?

Consistent with her nom de plume, Jane provides false names for the people we encounter, chiefly her husband, daughter, and co-workers, and withholds her exact location, noting it's somewhere in the Pacific Northwest. Jane is also vague about when her tale is set, though this isn't a deliberate move; from her perspective, her reader is from the future. This uncertainty, though,

allows VanderMeer to do something rather brilliant. Instead of falling back on flashy advanced technology – predictive algorithms, 3D printing, and body enhancements - he employs the growing, encroaching effects of climate change to signify that Hummingbird Salamander takes place, to paraphrase the author, ten seconds from now. That fact, however, isn't immediately apparent; not because VanderMeer obfuscates (though the species of hummingbird central to the plot – Selastrephes griffin – is fictional) but because, like Jane, we've all become so damn good at treating the Anthropocene as background noise. Early references to climate refugees, unprecedented wildfires, snowstorms, and the white rhino's extinction are easy to gloss over. It's as Jane dives deeper into the world of eco-terrorism and wildlife trafficking and unearths (literally) Silvina's journal, within which she speaks to humanity's reflexive, instinctual, self-destructive compulsion to exploit the planet's flora and fauna, that Jane begins to appreciate there's no stopping the impending climate catastrophe, and we, the reader, recognise that Jane's present is a possible, even inevitable future.

While the existential threat of climate change and especially the rapid extinction of so many species is a major concern of Hummingbird **Salamander**, what stood out for me is Vander-Meer's portrayal of Jane. Early in the piece, with the help of her assistant Allie, Jane discovers that (a) Silvina is (or was) an eco-terrorist accused of blowing up five people in Argentina, (b) that Silvina's father is a very wealthy and powerful industrialist who has distanced himself from his daughter's radical ideology, and (c) that Silvina (apparently) is dead, killed in a hit-and-run accident. As a security consultant, Jane is fully aware of the measures influential people will take to protect their secrets, legacies, and reputations. Regardless, she continues to burrow deeper, covering her tracks by cynically co-opting her co-workers, including Allie, whom she genuinely likes, under the pretence they're researching a potential client. Even after her frightened husband points out the spy-drone peering into their house, even after one of her colleagues is brutally bashed by assailants unknown, even after someone calling themselves Jack sends her menacing text-messages about the case, and even after the lives of her husband and daughter are threatened, Jane wilfully continues to dig for a trace of Silvina. Key to Jane's actions and the plot is the gradual reveal of her awful childhood: an abusive grandfather, a distant father, a mentally ill mother, and the one shining light, a supportive brother, who tragically drowns under mysterious circumstances. Jane's backstory does provide context as to why she is so emotionally stunted and why this quest has become her lodestone; however, it doesn't come close to excusing the decisions she makes, decisions that directly hurt the innocent and those she loves. And yet, while Jane is not a very likeable person - at times, I loathed her selfish, singular attitude – it's hard not to be engrossed by her story. Partly it's because **Hummingbird Salamander** is a propulsive, hard-boiled novel with several unexpected gear shifts. But mostly it's because Jane, for all her dissembling about people and places, is never anything but savagely honest about who she is. "I am not a pretty woman," Jane tells us early in the novel, and while she offers the caveat that she gets her fair share of men chatting her up in bars, there's a frankness and vulnerability to this admission that makes Jane a fascinating, layered person. The great tragedy of Hummingbird Salamander is that Jane does find the answers she's looking for, she does have an epiphany about the damage she has wrought, but by then it's too late. The question that VanderMeer asks is whether it's also too late for all of us.

Peaces is my second encounter with Helen Oyeyemi's work. The first book of hers I read was 2016's What Is Not Yours Is Not Yours, a collection of stories that Kirstyn McDermott and I discuss at length on The Writer and The Critic podcast. I found reading the collection to be an invigorating experience, inspired by Oyeyemi's embrace of the strange and the fantastic; her playful approach to story-telling and her precise use of language and technique (the final story in What Is Not Your Is Not Yours, as Kirstyn notes on the podcast, is a near-perfect example of second-person perspective). To one degree or another, all of this is present in Peaces, a short, beguiling, and outlandish story about the inner turmoil that comes with not being seen, both figuratively and literally.

**Peaces** begins with a couple and their pet mongoose about to board a train. The couple, Otto and Xavier, have recently shared their names via deed poll (rather than get married) and are now embarking on their non-honeymoon honeymoon. The mongoose is Arpad XXX, the latest in a two-hundred-year lineage of mongooses dating back to the first Arpad who saved the life of Otto's grand-father when he was a child. The train is The Lucky Day, a "seafaring creature" of a locomotive, bearing its "name like a diadem, scarlet letters dancing along a ruby red band set just above the window of the driver's cabin." Otto and Xavier are The Lucky Day's only paying passengers for the next four days, a gift from Xavier's Aunty Shin Do Yeon. They have no idea where the train will take them, but the couple is aware that, driver and engineer aside, they won't entirely be alone. *The Lucky Day* has one other full-time inhabitant, the enigmatic Ava Kapoor.

The novel's epigraph, and inspiration for its title, is Emily Dickinson's poem "I many times thought Peace had come". It's a melancholy verse that compares the likelihood of finding solace and happiness to a shipwrecked sailor discovering land "At Centre of the Sea". The poem's sentiment describes Otto's state of mind when he boards the train. He wants to believe he has found contentment in his relationship with Xavier, but the fact his partner only commits to sharing names, and not marriage, has Otto wondering whether his happiness is a "fictitious shore". Their honeymoon (non-honeymoon) is not only an opportunity for the couple to grow closer but for Otto to be truly seen by Xavier. And yet, it's not long before Otto is sidelined in his own narrative, acting as a conduit for a much larger mystery involving Ava Kapoor. Drawn to Ava's cabin by the sound of her theremin, Otto is told a fantastic tale of a piece of music Ava is commissioned to play by its composer, Karel Stojaspal, to an empty bedroom. We later learn that the bedroom was not empty, that Ava was playing her theremin for Karel's son, Premysl, who she literally could not see. The story, told as a series of recollections and flashbacks all conveyed to Otto, is an attempt to piece together (yes, the title is also a play on words) the question of Prem's existence, why he seems familiar to Otto and Xavier, and how all this relates to Ava inheriting Karel's fortune following the composer's death.

Premysl's shape-shifting identity, his method of inveigling his way into the lives of everyone on board, except for the one person he's desperate to notice him, is only one aspect to this delightfully weird novel. There's also the remarkable locomotive that transports our characters. In an interview for Hazlitt back in 2019, Oyeyemi explained that when writing a novel, "I don't think about place too much. Place is very abstract." That approach is evident with The Lucky Day. From the moment the train is introduced – "sleek scrolls of silvered metal flickered and twisted... along its long low body" - it has a very concrete presence. As Otto explores the interior, there are loving, vibrant descriptions of each car, including the Library (with its "framed photographs of reading rooms in nine libraries"), the Greenhouse ("where [Otto] walked under a green-veined glass roof"), and the Portrait Gallery where two blank canvases, or "paint-less paintings" made by Prem, impossibly depict Ava playing her theremin. But the carriages and what's inside them also add to the abstract quality of The Lucky Day. While they're not impossible places, there's something very TARDIS-like about them, a distinct feeling that the locomotive is far bigger and more capacious than it could possibly be. Abstractness aside, it's clear that Oyeyemi enjoyed creating this impossibly strange but wonderful environment.

There is so much packed into **Peaces** for such a short novel, so much that is beautiful and bewildering. The abrupt ending, almost perfunctory in how quickly it comes and goes, is my only quibble. I could have easily spent another fifty or more pages with Oyeyemi's eccentric cast of characters and their adventures on the magnificent *The Lucky Day*.

Because it happens so rarely, I always get a buzz when my hometown of Melbourne is depicted in genre fiction. It's even exciting when it's an alternate version of the city with a different name and a divergent history, provided I can recognise the famous landmarks, the streets, and alleyways. This is the case in Paul Voerman's first novel in nearly 30 years, The White Library, where he imagines a parallel timeline in which the fabled Terra Australis is first "discovered" by the Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendana de Neira and then later colonised by the British. This altered history sees Australia renamed the Federated Kingdom of Mendania and Melbourne changed to Cavendish, though the suburb remains the State of Victoria's capital city. Voermans does not spell any of this out; it took me a good 20 or so pages to realise that despite the strong resemblance, with trams trundling down Swanston Street and the dome of the Victorian State Library glinting in the sun, this was not my Melbourne. What does become clear is that Voermans's alternate history, where the year is 1983 and humanity has colonised the moon and Mars, is there to provide texture but also add a further level of dissonance to a story about a woman trying to find her way in a world that hasn't yet entirely accepted her.

The woman in question is Angela Donohoe. For those who've read Voermans's second novel, The Weird Colonial Boy, she is the sister of Nigel Donohoe, the protagonist of that story, making The White Library a sequel of sorts. When we first meet Angela, she is being interviewed for a job at the Victorian State Library by the exuberant and chatty Frederic Hillacre. He leads the "Byllion Book Search Unit", a small team that hunt down rare books for customers. "But it's more than that," Frederic explains to Angela, "A library isn't just an institution anymore. It has to fly! It has to soar, It's a part of a network. So we have to work with other libraries as well. It isn't just a building." Angela's role is to use her computer skills to start developing this network, to make it easier to "gather information at a distance." The thing is that Angela is more than just adept at working with computers. She is a physicist with a unique, neurodiverse, and literal manner of parsing the world. As such, rather than develop a computer network, or a proto-form of the Internet, much like Voermans did in his role at the State Library in the '90s, she creates a portal, a crack in space that allows people to travel to destinations instantaneously. Angela's incredible invention is more than just a teleporter though; travelling through it can fundamentally change a person in unimaginable ways.

Even if you're not from Melbourne or don't appreciate the way Voermans's alteration to the State, including Australia's political landscape (I found both moving and upsetting the treatment of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in this timeline), there is still so much to enjoy about **The White Library**. First, there's the bonkers plot, which I've made a point of providing as little detail as possible, though I will say it features a romance as heartfelt, genuine, and unconventional as anything you're likely to encounter in literary or genre fiction. Then there's Voermans's love letter to the Victorian State Library and its Great Dome, the beautiful, poetic way he captures this astonishing monument to books, one that has me longing to go back there once life returns to some vague sense of normality. There's also the memorable cast of characters, not just Angela and Fred but the members of the Unit, Peter and Elly, and those we encounter along the way, Rosie and Alfred, all of whom have their hang-ups and neuroses but are also incredibly warm, generous and oh-sotragically human. And finally there's Voermans's use of language, sentences, and paragraphs that go in unexpected directions, reflecting Angela's mental tics, her anxious but vibrant perspective on the world. It does mean that **The White Library** has a short learning curve, a requirement to read the opening clutch of pages slowly so you can find the novel's rhythm, it's peculiar beat. But once you do, the novel is a joy to read, brimming with wild ideas, vibrant characters and a cinematic, sense-of-wonder denouement, that's a poignant hat tip to one of the genre's great luminaries, James Blish, and a literal expression of Fred's vision for libraries and institutions of learning across the world.

Rabbit Island is Spanish writer Elvira Navarro's first collection to be translated into English by the always terrific Christina MacSweeney. While this is my first encounter with her work, two of Navarro's novels – A Working Woman and Happy City, both of which have won numerous awards – have also been published in English.

Rabbit Island consists of 11 pieces that view the ordinary and the banal from a twisted, surreal and sinister perspective. The latter is evident in the opening piece, "Gerardo's Letters", where a woman wanting to break-up with her boyfriend (the eponymous Gerardo) instead takes a trip with him to Talavera. There's an air of menace and desperation from the moment they arrive at their accommodation – a hostel outside of town – and are met at the front desk by a short man with "greasy hair, grubby clothes... [and] big clumsy hands with dirty nails." Navarro cleverly keeps

**▶** p. 44

#### THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

April 18, 2103. Nobel sword dance. 350 Russians in bright green ushankas, flaps up for Spring, perform in Red Square to honor New Soviet Union's Azov-Kolskaya Rotary, the prize-winning jetstream windfarm.

### LOCUS LOOKS AT BOOKS: COLLEEN MONDOR

**Written in Starlight**, Isabel Ibañez (Page Street 978-1-64567-132-9, \$18.99, 368pp, hc) January 2021.

Kingston and the Magician's Lost and Found, Rucker Moses & Theo Gangi (GP Putnam & Sons 978-0-525-51686-6, \$17.99, 288pp, hc) February 2021.

Lycanthropy and Other Chronic Illnesses, Kristen O'Neal (Quirk 978-1-68369-234-8, \$18.99, 384pp, hc). April 2021.

sabel Ibañez's Written in Starlight is a companion novel to **Woven in Moonlight** – not exactly a sequel though it can certainly be read as one. Moonlight was Ximena's story and Starlight is Catalina's. They are best friends who are deeply involved in the political drama surrounding the country of Inkasisa where Catalina was the Condesa, destined and determined to rule. Banished to the jungle after a war at the end of Moonlight, her adventure begins in the second book. She wants to get the Inkasisan throne, she needs to persuade the ruler of the remote city of Paititi to help her make war to accomplish that and, more than anything, she has to survive her first night in the jungle. Written in Starlight is about that survival, Catalina's evolution, a long simmering romance, and some seriously dark magic. The ending ties both books together, thus making it essential reading for Moonlight's fans.

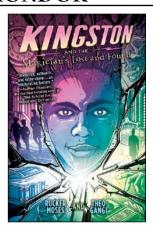
First and foremost, Catalina is not the most endearing of heroines. Ibañez presents her with all of her arrogance and insecurity, which makes her a protagonist who is quite believable but not particularly lovable. This is okay though, because Catalina is established immediately as a character whose circumstances are forcing her to change. Left in the jungle to fend for herself she is wholly unprepared for a lot of terrifying moments, but the sudden appearance of an old friend, who has been gone on a years-long mission for her kingdom, proves to be a game-changer. Catalina survives, Manuel is back in her life, and she has an actual chance of finding Paititi and thus maybe getting her kingdom back. The sticky problem is that she might have marry the Paititi ruler to get his help, which is a pretty big commitment for a guy you barely know. (Even though he's a good guy.) But royals do what they must do and if you're going to wage a war then you marry the guy with the army. And all Catalina wants is to wage that war. Really. For sure.

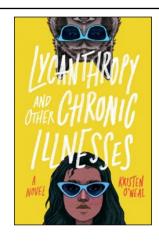
Except, maybe she doesn't.

In the midst of a killing virus that is racing through the jungle and attacking the people of Paititi (which involves some limb-ripping moments), Catalina comes to a lot of realizations about what she should be doing with her life. As she lets go of assumptions about her past and her future, she begins to reconsider everything from the throne to her true calling (which might not include the throne). That is the moment that the magic comes to her and everything is clear and Catalina becomes the hero we always suspected she could be.

Written in Starlight is an adventure/comingof-age novel that happens to take place in an







imaginary kingdom (and jungle) that is populated by a lot of familiar (and hungry) animals. The magic, which involves a dark religious twist, is brutal frightening stuff, and Catalina's journey to stand up to it is far beyond the standard "girl power" narrative. This is a complex group of characters in a gorgeously written setting that sweeps readers away. Ibañez has done an excellent job with these two books and Catalina, like Ximena, is a wonderful, complicated character to spend time with.

The writing collaboration of Rucker Moses (pen name of Craig S. Phillips & Harold Hayes Jr.) and Theo Gangi has created Kingston and the Magician's Lost and Found, an adventure novel of breakneck pacing and major magical concerns. It begins with the return, after four years, of Kingston and his mother to the Brooklyn neighborhood where he grew up. They have come back to help Kingston's two uncles save the family brownstone by staving off foreclosure. Kingston is immediately drawn to the Mercury Theater, the site of his father's disappearance during a magic act. Three people leaped into a mirror that night and none of them returned. Kingston's family knows this is because of dangerous magic but more than anyone else, he yearns for an answer to what went wrong. In Brooklyn, along with his cousin and an old friend, he immediately finds himself in the midst of a dangerous mystery. His father - or someone far more nefarious - has left clues for Kingston to follow. But no one knows what lies at the end of this trail or just how far he should go to find the truth.

This is a story where setting is everything. A map decorates the early pages and it is finding that map, and the places on it, that propels the narrative. Brooklyn is a very big character here, from the local pizza, to the brownstones, street art, and, finally, the Mercury Theater. Kingston, Veronica ("V"), and "Too Tall" Eddie, run from one destination to another as they try to find a way to bring Kingston's father back. Along the way they pick up some enemies, first some local kids who seem oddly transfixed by Kingston's quest, and later a woman of terrifying origins. Kingston reaches out to his magic-loving uncles and finds some new friends who are enmeshed in the mystery for their own reasons. In the end he loses a part of himself, jumps into a mural, wanders a ghost cemetery and waits for a clock to strike 13. Through it all, the teens stay together and don't let up until the very exciting finale.

Kingston and the Magician's Lost and **Found** sacrifices a bit of nuance to keep the plot moving at such a rapid clip. Hints are dropped about V's relationship with her father, but for all that he promises to the narrative, he and Kingston's other uncle remain largely flat characters who exist primarily to direct the kids in one direction or another. It is also disappointing that for all the physical movement, much of the mystery unfolds by Kingston being told things. Good guys tell him things and bad guys tell him things. V and Eddie follows along behind as he learns all these things, but there is no strong group dynamic, à la Stranger Things, of kids working together here, and their contributions overall are relatively small, which is a shame.

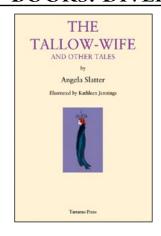
Reluctant readers will likely shrug their shoulders at my complaints however, and just enjoy the rush. For them, the book will be a boon and we shouldn't undercut that positive impact. Moses and Gangi have found a formula to keep the pages turning and Kingston, most definitely, is a hero to stick with until the end. If this group returns for a second installment, I just hope everyone else gets a chance to shine as well.

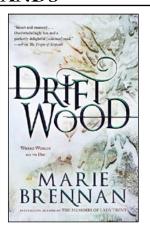
A ton of books have been published with werewolf characters, but debut author Kristen O'Neal has written one that stands out for all that it lacks: no romance, no murder, no vampires, and no climactic battle between good and evil. Lycanthropy and Other Chronic Illnesses takes readers into the world of a chronically ill young person who must deal every month with losing all of her teeth, becoming overwhelmed with meat cravings, succumbing to blood-thirsty aggression, and generally losing control of her body. Determined to prove her independence from caring parents, she ends up relying heavily on a best friend who is extremely sympathetic because she is fighting her own battle with chronic Lyme disease. The narrative is actually grounded by an entire circle of friends who are struggling with chronic illness and their perspectives provide a whole new way of considering this classic horror trope. Emotional, thoughtful, and a true testament to the power of friendship, Lycanthropy and Other Chronic Illnesses is a werewolf novel that will make you look at navigating illness, supernatural or not, in

**№** *p.* 44

### LOCUS LOOKS AT BOOKS: DIVERS HANDS









#### **ALEX BROWN**

Written in Starlight, Isabel Ibañez (Page Street 978-1645671329, \$18.99, 368pp, hc) January 2021.

**7ritten in Starlight** begins not long after the chaotic events of Woven in Moonlight, the first book in Isabel Ibañez's young-adult fantasy duology. Ximena, the fake condesa, and Princess Tamaya remain in the capital as Catalina, the actual condesa, is banished to the jungle where she is expected to die. All Catalina has ever wanted is to take back the throne and rule of Inkasisa as her ancestors did. Now, her last chance is to forge an alliance with the notoriously fierce Illari who live deep in the Yanu Jungle and don't take kindly to outsiders. As fate would have it, Catalina bumps into Manuel, the presumed lost son of an Illustrian general who has been trapped in the jungle for months. They head for Paititi, the mythical city of the Illari, with the goal of returning to the capital with an army at her back and magic at her fingertips. There in the hidden mountain city, Catalina finds something else instead: herself.

Ibañez's choice to focus the story on Catalina the colonizer will be a hurdle for some readers. Catalina is a very difficult character to connect to, although I found her compelling. Stubborn to a fault and unwilling to take feedback, she begins the book ostracized by everyone she ever cared for. She believes everyone else is to blame for her circumstances. The throne is her birthright; it is what she is owed, what she is entitled to. She would rather be cast into the jungle where she will surely die than accept that she isn't the center of the world.

Many, if not most, of the readers of **Written** in **Starlight** are colonizers or at least benefit from colonialism. We live in societies that call themselves post-colonial while maintaining colonial power over smaller territories. We sleep on stolen land and turn cultures into mascots and strip resources from their caretakers. We as readers are also trained to think the best of a main character, especially in young adult fiction. Catalina is the heroine. She has to win. Why? Because she's the main character, that's why. Catalina expects everyone to root for her and is thoroughly disappointed when no one does. She is a colonizer without a colony. Her attempts to partner with the Illari have nothing

to do with helping them reestablish themselves in the lowlands and everything to do with retaking her lost power. She does not want to lead but to rule, to conquer rather than defend, but her entitlement allows her to pretend that her selfish goals are selfless. Ibañez uses Catalina to twist the reader's expectations and force us to confront our assumptions about privilege and power,

We should ask ourselves why some readers would deem a character like Catalina "unlikeable?" Why do we need a heroine to be "relatable" at all? Why do we build an entire fandom around cishet white male villains who get latestage redemption arcs without reckoning with their epic violence, while simultaneously shunning and despising a Latina who pushes back against those same tropes? (You know why.)

Written in Starlight sets the reader up to expect Catalina to take back her crown without considering why we want that, or if she even deserves it. Ximena obviously thought she didn't, or she wouldn't have made the choices she did in Woven in Moonlight. So where does that leave the reader? Do we believe Ximena or Catalina? What if they are both wrong? Neither girl has thought much beyond how to unite the two people of Inkasisa, the Illustrians and the Llacsans. Except there aren't two civilizations there are three. The IIIari lived on the land first and were driven into the jungle by the invading Llacsans, who themselves were driven into the hills by the invading Illustrians. Ximena and Catalina are fighting over who rules the land when really neither people have any real claim on it. They seek to dominate the land while the Illari understand that the land is not theirs to own. Unity cannot occur until all three societies are working together for the benefit of all.

Admittedly, Ibañez's critique could have been stronger. Some of her authorial choices end up undermining her thesis. Catalina's redemption comes too late for her to do much in the way of restorative justice and reparations. The magic system is well explained and detailed, but the characters only use it in the simplest of forms and with little effort.

While the story was inspired by Bolivian culture and history, the Illari stuff veers a little too close to Indigenous cultural appropriation for my liking. Furthermore, the duology starts off with the premise that the Illari are every

harmful Native stereotype there is and doesn't do enough to counteract that. All of the main characters are colonizers in some capacity, and all hold anti-Indigenous beliefs. Catalina does not begin to shed her racist ideologies until after the Illari demonstrate their worth to her mission and her person, meaning all of the work of understanding and reconciliation falls on the oppressed rather than the oppressor. I assume, based on the tone and structure, this was unintentional, but intent does not negate impact.

There is a lot to love about this series. The characters are complex and messy, the plots intriguing and unexpected, the setting fascinating and enticing. Ibañez does a good job of exposing the hypocritical core of colonialism and racebased power structures. This is a young-adult fantasy series, so romance is par for the course, but instead of steamy insta-love we were gifted with slow-burn mutual pining. Love comes, but not until both characters stop defining each other by their hierarchical roles and start seeing each other as people.

Despite all that, I also walked away with some serious concerns about the Indigenous rep. As much as Ibañez was able to call out her characters' colonialist attitudes, reading Written in Starlight suggests she may have been unaware of her own. It is not my place as a person who is not Indigenous to decide whether the portrayal of the Illari is harmful to that community or not; however, as someone who has several identities that are often written poorly by outsiders, I personally prefer no rep to bad rep. Ultimately, Isabel Ibañez wrote a story that attempts to use a colonizer to deconstruct colonialism. While I don't think she was very successful at that particular goal ("the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," as the great Audre Lorde wrote), overall Written in Starlight is a thought-provoking and challenging story.

-Alex Brown

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#### THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

April 1, 2308. 'Oumuamua's back! The spaceship first sighted in 2017 returns to park in Earth polar orbit. According to SETI diplomats, it's here to say aloha (hello). But that's all we know so far.

# Divers Hands

#### PAULA GURAN

**The Tallow-Wife and Other Tales**, Angela Slatter (Tarturus 978-1-912586-24-0, £40.00, 452pp, hc) March 2021. Cover by Kathleen Jennings.

e are barely into 2021 and Angela Slatter is already having quite a year. A novel (All the Murmuring Bones as A.G. Slatter) and a collection of microfiction (Red New Day and Other Microfictions) were both reviewed here last month. Add The Tallow-Wife and Other Tales to the list. It is a gorgeous new mosaic collection of tales (with illustrations by Kathleen Jennings) of the world Slatter previously explored in collections Sourdough and Other Stories and The Bitterwood Bible and Other Recountings, novella Of Sorrow and Such, and the aforementioned novel. Only four of its twelve stories have been previously published. Slatter's Lodellan (and its fictional environs) is vaguely Victorian, sometimes a bit Irish, a somehowfamiliar "other." It's a comfortable place (as most are) for those with the means to buy comfort – not that many do. And - just as in the real world whatever one may possess is always in danger of being lost. There are forces at play, though, that exceed the bounds of our reality. Strange things walk by day and night, eldritch influences take flight, specters and spirits make their displeasures or whims known. Witchcraft is not tolerated, yet it most certainly exists and can be helpful. Sorcery is just as often a salvation as it is a curse. Secrets abound, as do bargains. The architecture is rich, somewhat Gothic, and embellished with the richest of materials. Ancient ruins abound. The sea is a power unto itself. Mirrors can be a mode of travel. Grief is common, and life is bittersweet. Women are often victims but are also formidable. Choices must be made, costs must be paid. Paths are never straight. It is all flavored with bits of myth, legend, fairytale, and folklore that we "know," which here take new twists and shadings. Each story stands alone, a gleaming gem to enjoy individually, but they also fit together to become an even richer treasure. Helen Marshall assures us in her beautiful and apt introduction:

Although Lodellan may lie on the far side of yesterday, a land that never was, in reading this book you may just discover something true about the world. And if you're lucky – if you're patient and wise and fair and fierce – maybe it will be enough to set you free.

She speaks the truth.

Angela Slatter is a dark enchantress and her exquisite stories are likely to steal your soul (or at least your enthralled attention). **The Tallow-Wife and Other Tales** will also compel you to read or re-read the previous entries in this fantastic mythos. The only negative is that the collection is limited to 350 print copies. Luckily, ebook versions are available.

-Paula Guran

#### **RICH HORTON**

**Driftwood**, Marie Brennan (Tachyon 978-1616963460, \$15.95, 224pp, tp) August 2020.

ay back in 2008 and 2009 I saw a couple of stories by a writer fairly new to me, Marie Brennan, set in an extremely original setting called Driftwood. I liked those stories ("A Heretic by Degrees" and "Driftwood") quite a bit. Over time, Brennan added three more stories in this setting, and by-the-by established a reputation as a novelist with her Lady Trent books. Now she has turned the five Driftwood stories into a fixup novel, by adding linking material and a new story, "The God of Driftwood".

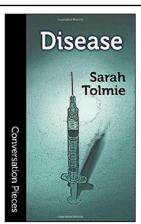
The title story opens the book, and it introduces the central, very cool idea – Driftwood is a place where "worlds"

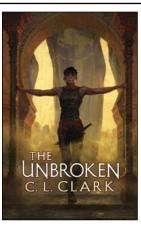
come to an end, pulled into a center, smashed together inexorably, the territory of each reduced and reduced over time. It also introduces the central character of the book – Last, a resident of Driftwood who seems to have been there forever, and who has a remarkable knowledge of the various realms and cultures that compose it. In this story Last is found by a woman from a world now disappearing into the "Shreds" at the core of Driftwood, who wants to save her world – but he has no good news for her.

The interstitial stories in the book are worthwhile (not always the case with the sort of material produced for fixup novels). They frame the remaining longer stories as sort of a memorial to Last, who has impacted the lives of the various people who tell their stories. The other longer stories very effectively portray different intriguing worlds captured in Driftwood.

'A Heretic by Degrees' is about a world whose king had declared that there is no world besides their world. As they are consumed by Driftwood, this becomes more difficult to maintain. Crisis comes when the king falls ill and it appears that the only possible cure is from outside the world. A councilor heretically decides to leave the world to find a cure, with the help of Last. But changing one's worldview is not so easy. "Into the Wind" tells of a woman who determines to leave her world to retrieve something important, despite the destructive wind that forms its border. "The Ascent of Unreason" may be my favorite of these stories, perhaps because it gives the fullest view of Driftwood. It's about a man who enlists Last's help in making a map of Driftwood by taking a balloon above it so he can see its whole extent. Even so, Driftwood is ever changing, but the seemingly unreasonable effort still seems worthwhile. "The Ascent of Unreason" is somewhat comic, while "Remembering Light" is more tragic, as a woman deals with the knowledge that her world, reduced to a few blocks, will no longer have the sun - or suns - they worshipped. A reminder that this novel is really, primarily, at every step about loss. Finally, new story "The God of Driftwood" posits a man who starts a religion based on the belief that the God of Driftwood must have saved him from absorption by the void at Driftwood's core. This story is a meditation on religion - on its consolations and its lies.

The breadth of imagination displayed here is





lovely – each of these worlds is an intriguing fantasy creation. The characters live. And the central image of Driftwood, and the constant loss of worlds, of culture, is stunning and moving. A very fine fantastical creation, and a perhaps-rare case of independent stories truly enhanced by their presentation in a fixup.

-Rich Horton

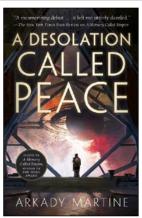
#### **GABINO IGLESIAS**

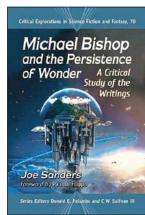
**Ink**, Jonathan Maberry (St. Martin's Griffin 978-1250765888, \$17.99, 464pp, tp) November 2020. Cover by Jonathan Bennett.

People are the amalgamation of their memories and experiences, and Jonathan Maberry's Ink explores what happens when we lose our most important memories. A sprawling, dark narrative made up of the interwoven stories of a set of misfits that struggle to get by, Ink is a moody horror novel that deals with grief, anger, guilt, and Otherness in a small town.

Patty Trang, known as Patty Cakes, is a Vietnamese tattoo artist living in the small town of Pine Deep. She runs a tattoo shop she opened after spending some time in New York. She has a tattoo of her dead daughter's face on the back of her hand and has a sixth sense that makes her connect deeply with some of her clients. Unfortunately, she's losing her memories of her daughter, who was kidnapped and brutally murdered. Owen Minor is a man who became something else, something darker than human. He can steal people's tattoos and lives for the thrill of stealing the painful memories attached to them. Monk Addison is a private investigator working with a bail bonds agency. He has a collection of tattooed faces of murder victims. They all collide in Pine Deep. Folks like Patty and Monk must come together to find the evil and stop it from feeding on the memories of others.

Maberry is a master of atmosphere, and he shows that here. Besides the characters at play, there are a series of elements that become such an intrinsic part of the narrative that they turn into characters and add to the gloomy, eerie ambiance of the novel. Dark birds like crows and grackles that appear at certain times and follow people around, the incessant rain that pummels Pine Deep mercilessly, and the art inked on people's skin all take lives of their own. The same goes for the flies, which add a layer





of creepiness that runs through the entire story, even inside houses, businesses, and hospitals:

There were five of them. Big, bloated ones. Dark as bruises. Ugly. The homeless vet lay on his side, with the ties of his gown askew, the flaps open to reveal the ornate landscape of interlocking tattoos on his back. The flies were crawling over them. Mike edged forward and saw the little bastards licking at the man's skin.

While the character development and atmosphere are superb, there are two elements that push **Ink** into must-read territory: the way Maberry tackles Otherness and how he weaves in and out of incredibly dark places.

In terms of Otherness, characters from the fringes, immigrants, loners, LGBTQ+ characters, and even languages like Spanish and Vietnamese are sprinkled throughout the book. Everyone is different here, and some of their differences matter a lot when it comes to the way other people react to and perceive them.

When it comes to the dark stuff, Maberry allows readers to get comfortable and then drops horrific bombs on them. For example, there is a conversation in which Monk has to tell a local cop how Patty's daughter died, and it's so brutal it will surely stick with readers for a long time after they've turned the last page.

Lastly, memories are at the core of the story. Maberry explores what they are, how they come about, the role they play in people's life, and what happens when they're lost. Owen wonders "what would happen when all of his memories were gone":

Would he simply go away, too? Would he fade like a mist and simply not be there anymore. There, or anywhere?

Would it hurt?

Would it be like falling asleep?

Would he vanish from other people's memories?

Or would he exist only in the eternal now, like a monk or a lama?

There is a lot happening in **Ink**, but the book ultimately soars because Maberry achieves a perfect balance between gripping and difficult to read; it's the kind of story that's hard to put down but that also delivers devastating passages and cuts to the marrow of the lives of flawed, lonely characters that feel real because they face some of the same situations most people face. Maberry

is a master of dark fiction, and **Ink** is an impressive, enthralling addition to his already impressive oeuvre.

**Disease**, Sarah Tolmie (Aqueduct Press 978-1619761933, 120pp, \$12.00, tp) August 2020.

Sarah Tolmie's **Disease** is a strangely funny book about fictitious diseases and psychological conditions. Presented in a scholarly tone that resembles a series of academic case studies, this book looks at some bizarre ailments that range from scavenging, a psychological affliction in which people compulsively move into old houses, to a poor guy who developed

an allergy to comedy.

Tolmie's imagination runs wild in this book. There are new diseases being discovered all the time, as the COVID-19 pandemic so violently reminded the world, but the illnesses presented in Disease are not only new but also quite strange, unique in their symptomatology, and fun to read about. For example, a man wakes up one day to find out he is made of glass, a poor young women suffers from "chronic misrecognition" - a disease that makes others confuse her with a variety of people, both male and female - and a man is followed by animals wherever he goes. Tolmie's serious tone and the heartbreaking nature of some of the diseases contrast with the humor behind some of the cases presented. For example, the woman suffering from chronic misrecognition is at a coffee shop when people confuse her with the movie star Jackie Chan. Hilarity ensues.

**Disease** has superb pacing, and the space dedicated to each illness ranges from a single paragraph to a few pages, but never more. This allows Tolmie to pack a lot into a relatively short book. There is almost no character development and there's no dialogue, but each look at a different disease reads like a self-contained narrative. Here's the case of a man suffering from "acquired former expertise":

Patient N., a 50-year-old man of Dominican heritage, with no cultural exposure to the art of yodeling, sitting at an arena watching a hockey game, suddenly found himself, instead of the customary yelling and swearing, emitting long articulated shrieks in E, which were soon identified by other patrons to be yodels. He was unable to thank them, or to speak at all. at the time, as ever more complex ululations burst uncontrollably from his mouth. He fled his seat, and the building, and found his relief that the yodels diminished and finally ceased approximately half way across the parking lot. The arena was found to have recently hosted the Southwestern Ontario Junior Yodeling Finals. Patient N., an avid hockey fan and supporter of his local club, was forced to give up his season tickets to the venue.

It's not okay to laugh at someone else's misfortune, but this collection of strange phenomena makes it okay. The beauty of **Disease** is that it's packed with reminders of just how fragile human bodies and psyches are, but it simultaneously provokes laughter, which is one of the best medicines in the world.

Disease is part of Aqueduct Press's Conversa-

tion Pieces series. The books published under this project celebrate "the speculations and visions of the grand conversation of feminist" science fiction. Those familiar with the series will enjoy this witty, wildly imaginative entry. Those unfamiliar with it will find in Tolmie's book a perfect entry into the series. Also, while the feminist discourse isn't blatant, it is brilliantly scattered throughout the book. For example, gender differences are pointed at under the discussion of privacy: "Privacy is a disease of men. Women throughout recorded history have been less subject to it, volitionally speaking, which explains the wide variety of practices designed to enforce it eternally or superficially by means of unrevealing dress."

With a great mixture of funny, sad, and creepy, **Disease** is a satisfying read that inhabits the interstitial space between humor, horror, and science fiction. Its strange format, formal tone, and array of short narratives showcase Tolmie's talent and prove that a great imagination and a sense of humor can turn even maladies into great entertainment.

-Gabino Iglesias

#### MAYA C. JAMES

**The Unbroken**, C.L. Clark (Orbit 978-0316542753, \$16.99, 544pp, tp) March 2021.

L. Clark's debut novel **The Unbroken** is a military political fantasy teeming with sapphic romance, treacherous espionage, and violent-but-necessary revolution. Situated in a setting reminiscent of North Africa, Clark pens a precise and horrifying tale of the Balladaire Empire's cruel domination over the Qazāl people. Readers follow Touraine's journey from an obedient lieutenant to a revolutionary of her own making. While the enemies-to-lover theme is certainly present, it mostly functions to accentuate the novel's underlying concept: every empire falls, whether in the bedroom or on the battlefield.

The Balladaire Empire occupies the hot, desert Qazāl lands, profiting from their trade routes, quarries, and bodies. Princess Luca, heir to the Balladaire throne, is sympathetic to the systemic mistreatment of the Qazāl people, but balks at the idea of their self-determination. While the cane-wielding princess is incredibly intelligent, she is marred by her prejudice against the "uncivilized" Qazāl people and her desire to ascend to the throne, with the latter desire often pushing out her kinder tendencies. Even if she "loves" one of them, Princess Luca cannot help but brand an entire people as mere slurs if they disappoint her.

While Clark humanizes the rulers of the Balladaire Empire, she does not glamorize them, even showing us the error of doing so through Touraine, our stubborn and temperamental protagonist with incredible military instincts (and really incredible arms, too, according to everyone she meets). Even after earning her freedom, Touraine's decisions are impaired by her desire to please her masters. While Touraine's unlearning is frustratingly slow, Clark unravels Touraine's violently reinforced beliefs with a calculated patience – her unexpected freedom snowballs into a rediscovery of the culture stolen from her as a child: religion,

**№** *p.* 44

## LOCUS LISTENS TO AUDIOBOOKS: AMY GOLDSCHLAGER

*The Mask of Mirrors*, M.A. Carrick; Nikki Massoud, narrator (Hachette Audio 978-1-54919091-9, \$26.98, digital download, 23.25 hr., unabridged) January 2021.

en, a former child thief turned con artist, seeks the security that she believes can only be found in large sums of money. So she embarks on her greatest scheme yet, returning to her native city of Nadezra in the guise of Alta Renata Viraudax, a foreign daughter of an exiled member of local family House Traementis, in an attempt to worm her way into their affections and finances. She has her beauty, her wits, and the skillful needle of her adopted sister, Tess, who's posing as her maid. But there are several complications. To begin with, House Traementis is almost broke and significantly diminished in political and social status. More seriously, Ren becomes a tool in a sinister plot involving kidnapped street children unable to sleep, a dangerous new drug that turns users violent and at the physical mercy of their own fears and nightmares, and unrest between the city's two ethnic groups, the ruling Liganti and the downtrodden but defiant Vraszenians. Despite her initially self-serving motives, Ren finds herself becoming sympathetic toward her marks and taking an active role in attempting to save the city, despite the growing risk of exposing her true identity... and losing her life.

Massoud has some real challenges here as narrator; the main thing is that she must establish distinct accents in a fantasy environment and deploy them appropriately, given that some characters use more than one accent. Thankfully, she's more than up to the task, using clues in the text to draw on appropriate real-world equivalents. Ren employs two accents: her own Vraszenian accent (sort of Slavic, which is appropriate to the names and cultural touchpoints in the story) and one as Alta Renata from faraway Seteris (Massoud chooses a very careful British Received Pronunciation). Massoud has the Liganti speak in upper-class Standard American accents, and ensures that Grey Serrado, a Vraszenian working for Liganti law enforcement, code-switches accents as his circumstances require. Finally, Massoud uses an Irish-sounding accent for Ren's adopted sister Tess, who comes from yet another country, Ganllech.

M.A. Carrick is the pen name for Marie Brennan & Alyc Helms, whose joint pen name reflects how they met on an archaeological dig in Wales and Ireland. And I'm so glad they did meet. This novel hits all of my sweet spots, featuring as it does an elaborate con, secret identities, political machinations, stunning revelations, and three really interesting and well-delineated forms of magic.

The Witch in the Almond Tree and other stories, C.S.E. Cooney; narrated by the author (Self-published, \$4.99, digital download, 4.25 hr., unabridged) December 2020.

Many people have tried to embark on some kind of creative or crafty project during the pandemic; author/narrator Cooney chose to self-produce a recording of three charmingly erotic works. The result is a sweet and steamy distraction. The titular story concerns a brilliant, assertive, and fun-loving witch who travels from school to visit her mother, her new stepfather, and her handsome and adorably naïve stepbrother, only to discover them ensnared by a malevolent ghost. If she can't break the spell, they'll all be forced to reenact the grisly and Grimm tale, "The Juniper Tree", in which an evil stepmother murders her stepson and feeds him to the boy's father. "Witch, Beast, Saint" unabashedly argues that some men might be more attractive as Beasts, and that rescue can take on many different forms. Finally, "Braiding the Ghosts" is a more contemporary story of a lonely young woman trained by her selfish, sociopathic grandmother to capture and enslave ghosts – you can guess where she eventually finds some solace. C.S.E. Cooney is a gloriously lusty writer and reader, in all senses, whose joie de vivre shines through her writing and narration. I just can't help but enjoy an author whose go-to solution to an apparent love triangle always seems to be a threesome.

*The Map of Tiny Perfect Things*, Lev Grossman; Michael Crouch, narrator (Hachette Audio 978-1-54910912-6, \$5.00, digital download, 1.75 hr., unabridged) February 2021.

Of course, the individual publication of this story, the audio production of this story, and the Amazon Prime film based on this story all came out February 2, 2021. This trapped-in-a-time-loop YA fantasy and its author pay explicit homage to Groundhog Day and several similar works. In this instance, teenage nerd Mark realizes that he is repeating a hot August day in his Boston suburb and decides to do what a lot of Locus subscribers would do: Spend his time reading all the science fiction books in the local library. He doesn't get very far - he's still on Douglas Adams - when he realizes that there's someone else aware of the time loop, fellow teen Margaret. The two of them become friends as they explore their situation and learn to find beauty in it. But when Mark tries to pursue a more active way out of their apparent trap, he realizes that Margaret might have her own reasons for remaining.

As Michael Crouch demonstrated in Victoria Lee's The Fever King, he can absolutely deliver a believable American teenage boy voice. (Thankfully, there were no pronunciation challenges in this story to trip him up.) I very much enjoyed his depiction of Mark, a sweet nerd who's open to learning that the world (in this case, practically literally) does not revolve around him. Ultimately, this is a fairly slight, but pleasant, story in welltraveled territory. Frankly, the most interesting part was an afterword voiced by Grossman himself, in which he tells the history of the various versions and formats of the story, transitioning from a political thriller time-loop TV series to a YA romantic story adapted into a film. It's a great peek behind the scenes of the creative process.

*The Tower of Fools*, Andrzej Sapkowski; Peter Kenny, narrator (Hachette Audio 978-1-54910162-5, \$24.98, digital download, 19 hr., unabridged). October 2020.

After the popularity of the Witcher novels, games, and Netflix series, it's no wonder that US publishers would seek out Sapkowski's other works. Originally published in Polish in 2002 and newly translated into English by David A. French, this is the first in the Hussite Trilogy, a historical fantasy set during the 15-century conflict between the Church and the followers of Jan Hus, a Czech precursor to Martin Luther. Our "hero," Reinmar of Bierlawa, also known as Reynevan (I think having multiple names is a cultural convention, but it does make things a bit confusing for the listener), is a skilled doctor (by the standards of the time), a gifted if not entirely well-trained wizard, and an absurdly lucky and well-connected doofus. The story opens when he's caught in the bed of a Crusader knight's bored and lonely young wife, Adele, by an angry mob of her in-laws. One of the mob dies by accident during the frantic chase that follows, leaving the survivors even angrier. Reinmar then begins a long, bumbling journey through eastern Europe, first seeking to rescue Adele, believing that she loves him and needs his help (big surprise: neither of these prove to be the case), and then in a reluctant flight toward Hungary, judged to be far enough away from an ever-growing list of Reinmar's pursuers, which, in addition to the vengeful in-laws, include the Holy Inquisition and a sinister cabal of murderous knights who can change shape into flying creatures.

The story is incredibly episodic, perhaps because it's inspired by medieval tales of the time, but it nearly comes across as if the author intended its adaptation into a TV series. But, as noted, Reinmar is no Geralt of Riva. He's kind and book-smart, but incredibly rash, and it's monotonous and credulity-straining to observe him brainlessly charging into situations over and over, only to be saved in the nick of time due to the not-entirely earned loyalty of his friends.

There's some good worldbuilding and the chance to pick up some history I never learned before (I know very little about proto-Protestants), but the real saving grace here is narrator Peter Kenny, previously appearing in this column as the reader of Iain M. Banks's Consider Phlebas and Claire North's The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August. He invests the story with dignity and a richness that brings it closer to the epic tale Sapkowski seems to be envisioning. What's more, Kenny does my favorite thing in an audiobook: He sings, in English, Latin, and what I think is Old German, no less. Musical selections include a variety of hymns as well as several pieces drawn from the 12th-century poetic cycle Carmina Burana (not the part about Fortune's wheel that everyone knows, but the parts involving carousing and sex). Obviously, Kenny does not employ Carl Orff's music here; not only would 20th-century music not be contemporaneous with the story, but securing the rights would've been prohibitive. I'm assuming Kenny invented the music or perhaps used some public domain tunes, because there's no music credit listed; whatever the music's provenance, I loved it. It both redeemed the novel somewhat and Kenny himself entirely (for not knowing

**₩** p. 46

# PLOTTING THE WAY FORWARD

'n ancient Rome, they marked the new year in March, a time which has always made far more sense to me than a dark, frigid day in January. .March is when we get the first breath of spring, when winter's grasp begins to ease, and we realize that we have survived another miserly winter season.

After a very dark COVID-19 winter surge, I have emerged bleary-eyed into a new year and a new spring. As I am immunocompromised, I was in an early group for vaccination against the disease here in Ohio (though it was for me, as it's been for many, a Hunger-Games-esque experience of calling, clicking, signing up at multiple places, calling again, clicking, etc. until I was able to secure both appointments, because, while the vaccines are a scientific miracle, the administration of same was an American mess).

By the time you read this, spring will have arrived to the Northern hemisphere in earnest. Now, however, I have only the frustratingly tantalizing hints of its arrival: hardy daffodil shoots pushing up through the soil; a bubbling, ice-free solar fountain; the inevitable return of mosquito larva to the pond (always the first arrivals!); a flock of geese honking away as they return from the south.

After a year of hard lockdown and a particularly grim winter, I find myself impatient for the arrival of full spring and early summer color. The days are still brisk; the nights are still cold. I long to enjoy a few early blooms. I have taken to hacking the rose bushes and pruning back the fruit trees. Spreading fertilizer. Doing some pond maintenance. Lifting iris rhizomes to ensure Kameron Hurley they have enough light to flower (I inevita-

bly worry I've planted them too shallowly, but always plant too deep). Anything to get me outside and working with my hands under the cold, brilliant light of winter's end and spring's beginning.

There is a tendency this time of year to spend one's time dreaming of what will be, and getting frustrated with every frosty morning because that last frost date has yet to pass. Yet I was reminded by a recent gardening program that one should not rush through this time of year. It's a slow process, waiting for the end of winter - the end of a global pandemic and its restrictions, the beginning of a new and uncertain year – and we should cherish the time it gives us to pause, reflect, and work toward setting the foundations for our garden – and our lives – in the coming year.

There is much to ponder, on both fronts.

There's a collectively urgency to "go back to normal" as soon as possible, as vaccines roll out across the country and the globe and the ground warms. But "normal" is a shifting target. After the last year, our world will not be quite the same, just as the garden is never going to be the same from year to year. Consider the perennial plants that unexpectedly die off during the winter, the pots that crack, the perennials that now shade out your irises and must be moved, the trees that will leaf out so well this year that only hostas will grow beneath them, and of course the new garden beds you begin to prepare and mulch and border.

Your garden will never be the same, year-to-year.

Nor will life after this pandemic.

I have been easy on myself this last year, spinning my wheels with various writing projects that failed to interest me and biding my time reading about both gardening and writing far more than I've been doing it. But as the seasons turn and the pandemic environment changes, I have found a renewed sense of interest in both writing and gardening; in creating something brilliant from all the cold horror.

I have written often about how I am unable to process and write through trauma until after the worst has passed, and while there are many unknowns ahead, my instinct and the prevailing evidence thus far

> suggests that we have seen the very worst of the COVID-19 surge, and are about to see what a post-COVID world looks like. We are about to help shape it.

> What I can be certain of is that the world isn't going to be the way it was, no matter how desperately many wish it. But instead of mourning that world, I find myself looking ahead and anticipating what it may be like. There were many things about that world that sucked. Many things I won't miss.

> I won't miss commuting - that constant rush between here and there. I won't miss the frenetic worry about turning down various events or social invitations that involve milling through crowded airports that treat me like chattel. I won't miss getting sick more often.

its ilk totally dead.

I'll take it.

Other changes will be scientific in nature. I look forward to seeing what we can do with

advanced mRNA technology. Now that it's been shown effective on a large scale, I expect it to get funding for more applications, some of which like its use in cancer treatment – may completely transform the world.

I anticipate that mask-wearing will be more prevalent and acceptable in the US, even after all the mandates are dropped and COVID deaths zero-out. I also won't miss greeting strangers with handshakes, especially after learning this last year how many people weren't actually washing their hands after going to the bathroom (!!). I myself am also hesitant about the idea of ever going to a massive convention with tens of thousands of attendees again. We will certainly continue to see more virtual components to many mass gatherings and, for an introvert like me, that sounds fabulous.

There will, of course, be other horrors and traumas, which I can't help thinking about even as we begin to see this one start to turn. There will be other pandemics. And the US political situation is harrowing, balancing on a knife's edge between democracy and cult-based fascism. There's never going to be a perfect world. Only a different one.

But here, today, as spring teases my senses and I can see the end of the pandemic on the horizon, I choose to enjoy this particular moment, this pause between the darkest winter I've ever seen in my life, and the promise of something else, something different – and possibility something much brighter - within our grasp.

That is what this time of year is for: rebirth and renewal, not only of the garden, or the world, but of ourselves, and our hopes for the future. That is why March will always feel to me like the true beginning of the new year. It's when we celebrate surviving the very worst the world could throw at us, and plot a new way forward.

After all, consider how many fewer infectious diseases were making the rounds due to COVID protocols. Maybe shopping malls will finally - FINALLY! - be finished for good. Maybe we will re-think our crowded buildings in crowded cities that have few to no greenspaces. Maybe remote work will finally - FINALLY! - make it possible for people to leave big cities without sacrificing big city jobs. And hey... many restaurant designers have declared those annoying communal seating arrangements at Chipotle and

-Kameron Hurley ■



was born May 23, 1990 in Manila in the Philippines and grew up in Quezon City. She attended Ateneo de Manila University for her first two years of undergrad, then moved to the US, where she earned a BS in Marketing from Santa Clara University in 2013. That summer she attended the Clarion Writers Workshop, and since 2016 she has served as secretary for the Clarion Foundation. She worked in the tech industry in the Bay Area and in London before completing an MBA at Harvard Business School, and is currently a product manager at an early-stage startup.

*Yap is a prolific fanfiction writer,* producing more than 100 works in 30 fandoms. She published original fiction and poetry in the Philippines, including in volumes of the Philippine Speculative Fiction anthology series. Her first professional genre sale was "Have You Heard the One About Anamaria Marquez?" in Nightmare (2014), followed shortly by "A Cup of Salt Tears" in Tor.com (2014). She has since published more than 15 stories, including several in the Hurricane Heels sequence. Some of her short fiction has been collected in Never Have I Ever (2021) from Small Beer Press. *She is working on her first novel.* 

You can get published in a school folio, usually where you're attending college, or you could try to submit to one of the national magazines. There were really only two that took fiction, Graphic *Magazine* and *The Philippines Free Press*. There was this website, <panitikan.ph>, where people would post about anthologies with open submissions, but there weren't very many of those. One that I found as a college freshman was for the Philippine Speculative Fiction series. I decided to send in a story there, and got an acceptance on my first try. That was obviously very exciting - up until that point I'd only been published in school folios, which was also pretty exciting, but it's different when it's a book that's going to be published outside your university. The next year they had another call for volume five, I submitted a story, and I got accepted there as well. For the publications I had in the Philippines, it was usually like that. There'd be an anthology, and the editors would either solicit me or there'd be an open call, and I would write on demand. 'Oh. there's a horror young-adult anthology. Okay, I will write a horror young-adult story.' Most of them we're unthemed, but speculative. I would submit to those and get accepted. I had a pretty good hit rate for the Filipino folios in spec fic. I was also trying to write literary fiction. There was an anthology for stories about infidelity or something, which I wrote a story for, and they didn't accept it. For whatever reason, the places that liked my stories were the spec fic outlets. I only submitted to Philippine anthologies – it didn't ever occur to me to submit my stories to international publications. Like, who does that? Everyone around me, all the other writers, were also just submitting to the same places. I can't stress how little I thought about submitting to

"I moved to America in 2010, my junior year of college. At that point, I'd been starting to get a little bit established in the Philippines, and I'd gotten into a prestigious national workshop. I was really more focused on poetry at that time, and starting to establish myself as a poet. The fiction was nice because I would get into these anthologies, but my community was really more poets. I tried to get into the most prestigious national workshop, the Silliman National Writers Workshop in Dumaguete, and I wasn't accepted. I was just crushed. In my poetry community, when my friends found out I didn't get in, they would say, 'Oh no, I was so sure you would get in.' It wasn't their intention, but that made me feel very ashamed. I actually got blisters on my hands and feet from the shame. It was weird – like my body was rejecting the idea. I was just very dramatic at that time, and I assumed if I didn't get into Dumaguete then I was leaving my community. I was so sure that whatever writing career I had was over. I was moving to the States, and I was a business major – I just didn't see a way forward.

"So I moved to America. I took a break from writing. I was still doing anthology stuff, so if one of my previous editors said, 'Isa, we have this book,' I would say, 'Okay, I'll do that for vou.' But I felt detached from everything. I didn't have a community – I'd lost my community. I was still a business major, though I was also an English minor, so I would be forced to take creative writing classes at my university, which meant I was generating some work. But still, I was in a fog, and moving was really difficult for me. There were a lot of deaths in my family in a short amount of time, and so those were weighing on me. I had this dramatic thing – 'I'm going to finish my business degree and then that's it for writing. I will keep writing fanfiction. I love it, so I will keep writing for myself, but I don't know what else I can do publishing-wise. I guess I'll keep doing the anthologies in the Philippines, but that's about it.'

"Then I attended the Clarion workshop. There were two things that led to that happening. One of the people whose fanfics I liked the States?' But because she told me to try, I googled California writing workshops, and the first one that came up was Clarion. I'd never heard of it and, again, my focus at that time was poetry. But when I clicked on the Clarion workshop, I saw the instructor lineup for 2013 included Kelly Link. Kelly Link is going to teach at this thing? I've got to apply. The workshop was six weeks in the summer, and that was going to be the summer after I graduated college. That worked out, because I could do the Clarion thing before I started working full time. I knew when I started working, I would be too focused on my tech career. It was precarious for me jobhunting because I was an international student. and it's hard for us to get jobs so we can stay in the States. I applied to Clarion without knowing much about it. I hadn't written a new story in a while, but I wrote two for the application, in the same way that I'd written stories on demand for anthologies. I was accepted, and I was just so surprised and happy and feeling very fortunate that whole time. I didn't know the history of the workshop, or who had gone to it before. Going to Clarion really changed the trajectory of my career, first of all because I wrote seven stories - two for my application, and while I was there I wrote five more. That got me back into the right mindset – 'You can actually write a story if you stop being so dramatic.'

"I didn't have expectations when I went to Clarion. To be honest, and this shows a colonial mentality, I thought my stories were 'good enough' for a Filipino audience, but I had no idea how they would perform on an international stage. I could not tell if they would resonate with people not from the Philippines. Now I realize

**№** *p.* 52

# 2020 BRITISH BOOK SUMMARY

The number of books we saw from the UK dropped to a new low for the second year in a row. This isn't surprising; between the pandemic and the loss of our British correspondent Ian Covell at the end of 2019, we've had a hard time seeing books, and are undoubtedly missing a lot of titles. We are trying to be more creative about finding ways to determine if books are actually in print, and we still get some UK books sent to our office, despite substantial rate hikes for parcel shipping to the US. As a result, many strictly UK publishers more reluctant than ever to send books, particularly reprints not likely to be reviewed. On the other hand, the last few years have seen a dramatic increase in publishers bringing books out as international editions in both the US and UK, making it much easier to see books from UK publishers with US distribution, most notably Angry Robot, Black Library, Rebellion/Solaris, and Titan.

The UK publishing scene was relatively quiet in 2020, with no major mergers that affected our figures. HarperCollins UK acquired Egmont UK, but no Egmont titles came our way during the year. Head of Zeus introduced a new SF imprint, Ad Astra; with the imprint just gearing up, we only listed three books from them in 2020. Flame Tree Publishing introduced new trade fiction imprint Flame Tree Press, which focuses on genre fiction; before the COVID shutdown we managed to see eight titles of interest, a mix of fantasy, SF, horror, and thrillers. Games publisher and distributor Asmodee Entertainment expanded into tie-in novels with Aconyte, which publishes not only gaming-related titles but also a substantial number of Marvel tie-ins. PS Publishing announced a new imprint, Absinthe, to start in December 2020, but we haven't seen any of their titles yet.

We saw 358 titles, down 15% from 422 last year. New books (first and first-UK editions) were actually up 3% at 277 titles. That gain was offset by the decline in reprints, down 47% to 81 titles. They made up 23% of the total books seen in 2020. We used to consider 50% reprints ideal, since books were more likely to make a profit if reprinted, but ebooks have changed things considerably, usually coming out simultaneously with the first print editions, and largely replacing small-format paperback reprints. We still aren't tracking ebooks reliably in the UK, but since the pandemic started we've been seeing a lot more new titles out in ebook months before any print editions; in some cases this is clearly an attempt to have a title come out simultaneously with the US, but with the pandemic a lot of UK print editions got pushed back on the schedule, leaving the ebook in place. It seems reasonable that during lockdowns physical books might be postponed while ebooks would still be available, since they don't require physical handling at printers and warehouses. We usually only spot such editions through Amazon, and can't always be sure they really exist, since it's not uncommon for ghost listings to be left behind when print editions are pushed back.

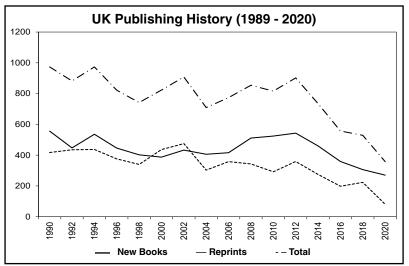
The data used to create these figures is extracted from our monthly "British Books" column. All the books counted here were listed there, but not all the books listed there are counted here, since we drop marginal items such as strictly associational titles and chapbooks. We include books published in 2019 but not seen until 2020. "New books" refers to originals, plus first-UK editions of books originally published elsewhere, usually the United States, Australia, or Canada. (Titles newly translated to English count as new books.) Young-adult imprints are generally lumped in with their adult namesakes, even if technically they are part of separate children's divisions; it's too hard to sort the imprints out from their adult versions, and US editions aren't necessarily a guide; UK publishers are much less likely than their US counterparts to automatically designate books with young protagonists as YA or children's books.

The list of Total Books Published breaks down the output for all publishers with five or more genre titles in 2020. Black Library held onto first place with 37 titles, down from 58. All their books had international prices and only one ISBN was noted, so we listed them as UK editions, even when seen in the US. Titan moved into second place with 35 titles, up from 11 last year; they've always had a few titles that are strictly US or UK editions, but the majority are international editions, and we've moved to listing those as UK, even when seen in the US. The next three publishers all dropped a notch: Orion/Gollancz took third place with 31 titles, down from 57; HarperCollins/Voyager followed in fourth place with 28 titles, down from 44, and Little, Brown/Orbit was fifth with 22 titles, down from 34. The rest of the publishers shuffled around as usual.

We saw books from 51 publishers, down from 56 in 2019; 16 had five or more titles, down from 18. Publishers with fewer than five titles are lumped together in Miscellaneous Publishers. We counted 35 miscellaneous publishers, down from 38. Two small presses made it out of miscellaneous: NewCon Press and

Total Books Published in the UK, 2020										
Publisher		HC			TP			PB		TOTAL
	New	<u>1UK</u>	Rpt.	<u>New</u>	<u>1UK</u>	Rpt.	<u>New</u>	<u>1UK</u>	Rpt.	
Black Library	4	-	4	-	-	5	12	-	12	37
Titan	5	-	1	1	-	1	24	1	2	35
Orion/Gollancz	14	1	-	-	-	-	9	-	7	31
HarperCollins UK	10	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	14	28
Little, Brown UK/Orbit	7	-	1	-	-	-	9	1	4	22
PS Publishing	19	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	22
Angry Robot	-	-	-	1	-	-	16	-	2	19
Rebellion/Solaris	2	-	1	-	-	-	10	-	3	16
Hodder & Stoughton	11	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	15
Penguin Random										
House UK	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	15
Quercus/Jo Fletcher	2	-	2	-	-	-	8	-	3	15
NewCon Press	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	12
Head of Zeus	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	10
Aconyte	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	8
Flame Tree Press	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	8
Pan Macmillan	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	6
Total 35 Misc Publishe	ers 15	-	-	-	-	-	37	1_	6	<u>59</u>
Totals: 51 Publishers	110	2	10	2	-	6	158	5	65	358

Total	Briti	ish l	Book	s Pub	olish	ned	by SF	lmp	rint,	2020	
PUBLISHER		HC			TP			PB		TOTAL	TOTAL
	New	<u>1UK</u>	Rpt.	New	<u>1UK</u>	Rpt.	New	<u>1UK</u>	Rpt.	2020	<u>2019</u>
Black Library	4	-	4	-	-	5	12	-	12	37	58
Gollancz	12	1	-	-	-	-	8	-	6	27	52
Harper Voyager	7	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	12	22	35
PS Publishing	19	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	22	16
Angry Robot	-	-	-	1	-	-	16	-	2	19	15
Orbit	6	-	1	-	-	-	7	1	1	16	21
Jo Fletcher	1	-	2	-	-	-	7	-	2	12	12
NewCon Press	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	12	6
Solaris	2	-	1	-	-	-	7	-	2	12	10
Aconyte	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	8	-
Flame Tree Pres	s -	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	8	
Total Imprints:	51	1	8	1	-	5	89	2	38	195	225



PS Publishing. We saw 12 POD titles in 2020, up from eight.

Chart #2 shows the top 11 publishers with their totals for the last five years. Five increased their output this year, up from three last year: Angry Robot, up 27% from 2019; Hodder & Stoughton, up 25%; PS Publishing, up 38%; Quercus/Jo Fletcher, up 7%; Titan, up 218%. The remaining six all decreased their output: Black Library, down 36%; HarperCollins/Voyager, down 36%; Little, Brown UK/Orbit, down 35%; Orion/Gollancz, down 46%; Penguin Random House UK, down 52%, and Rebellion/Solaris, down 11%.

The list of Books Published by SF Imprint gives the numbers for SF imprints (and some small presses) with five or more titles, separate from their corporate groupings. The top three held steady, with Black Library in first place with 37 titles, down from 58 titles; Gollancz came in second with 27 titles, down from 52 titles; and Harper Voyager was third with 22 titles, down from 35 titles. PS Publishing moved up a notch into fourth place with 22 titles, up from 16, followed by Angry Robot in fifth with 19 titles, up from 15. Orbit came in sixth with 16 titles, down from 21. Three imprints tied for seventh place with 12 titles each: Jo Fletcher, with the same number of titles as last year; NewCon Press

#1: UK	Books	s by	Suk	oject	
		<u>2019</u>		<u>2017</u>	
SF Novels	48	58	75	73	64
Fantasy Novels	79	85	97	135	114
Horror Novels	31	10	19	30	21
Paranormal Rom	ance 5	6	13	15	15
Anthologies	21	20	13	11	18
Collections	22	19	19	37	27
Reference	2	1	1	2	0
History/Criticism	6	4	4	6	13
Media-Related	41	23	51	49	31
Young Adult	15	33	40	51	42
Omnibus	1	2	4	7	3
Art/Humour	4	5	4	3	0
Miscellaneous	2	2	3	2	1
Total New:	277	268	341	421	359
Reprints	81	154	226	254	198
Total Books:	358	422	567	675	557

#2: Total Books									
	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016				
Black Library	37	58	84	72	16				
Titan	35	11	31	38	33				
Orion/Gollancz	31	57	61	95	74				
HC/Voyager	28	44	61	43	39				
Little, Brown/Orbit	22	34	70	84	82				
PS Publishing	22	16	24	30	36				
Angry Robot	19	15	5	8	10				
Rebellion/Solaris	16	18	12	13	21				
Hodder & Stoughton	15	12	27	26	31				
Penguin									
Random House Uk	15	31	41	69+	71+				
Quercus/Jo Fletcher	15	14	11	16	14				
(* combines Penguin L	JK, Rar	ndom H	ouse, ai	nd Trans	sworld)				

with six more titles than before; and Solaris, up from ten. Newcomers to the list are new imprints Aconyte and Flame Tree Press, both with eight titles. The 11 imprints were responsible for 195 titles, or 54% of total books published, down slightly from 55% last year. They published 144 new titles, or 52% of the new books total, up from 50% last year. (In the US, 16 imprints were responsible for 32% of total books, and 27% of new books.)

We break down publishers' new books by Original Books (first editions) in Chart #3 and First UK editions in Chart #4. Titan jumped up to top spot in original books, with 30 titles, but only one first UK edition; 97% of their titles were new. Orion/ Gollancz, last year's leader in Original Books, ended up in second with 23, and also had one first UK edition, the same as last year; 77% of their titles were new. PS Publishing was third in originals with 21; they had no first UK editions, and 95% of their titles were new. Angry Robot followed in fourth place with 17 original titles and no first UK; 89% of their titles were new. Two publishers tied for fifth place in originals with 16 titles each: Black Library had no first UK editions and only 43% new titles, the lowest percentage of new titles of any of the publishers on the list (mostly because they do a lot of limited first editions we never see); and Little, Brown/Orbit, which had one first-UK edition; 77% of their titles were new. Among the top ten publishers, Titan had the highest percentage of new books at 97%, followed by PS Publishing with 95%, and Angry Robot with 89%. The increasing globalization of publishing has changed the significance of first UK editions, once common. Now many publishers make a point of publishing simultaneously in the US and UK, to avoid losing sales to earlier overseas editions, easily available through online ordering and ebooks. As a result, the number of first UK editions has dropped precipitously over the last ten or so years. This year, only six publishers had at least one first UK edition, down from ten last year; HarperCollins/ Voyager led with two first UK editions; none of the rest had more than one.

Chart #1 shows the breakdown of new UK Books by Subject in 2020. Six subjects went up compared

#3: Original Books								
			2018		2016			
Titan	30	8	22	31	26			
Orion/Gollancz	23	31	31	41	29			
PS Publishing	21	15	20	25	31			
Angry Robot	17	15	5	8	10			
Black Library	16	16	27	25	9			
Little, Brown/Orbit	16	21	43	59	52			
HC/Voyager	12	16	23	21	13			
NewCon Press	12	6	11	13	7			
Rebellion	12	16	12	13	21			
Hodder & Stoughton	11	6	13	12	16			
Penguin Random								
House UK	11	14	23	35⁺	33⁺			
Quercus/Jo Fletcher	10	11	9	13	6			
Aconyte	8	-	-	-	-			
Flame Tree	8	-	-	-	-			
Head of Zeus	7	5	3	4	2			
	_			. —				

(\* combines Penguin UK, Random House, and Transworld)

to 2019, six dropped, and one held steady. As usual, fantasy novels had the most titles with 79; add nine YA fantasy novels, and there were 88 new fantasy novels, 32% of the new books total, the same as in 2019. SF novels were second, with 48 new titles, plus three YA SF novels; there were 51 new SF novels, 18% of the new books total, down from 24%. Among the novels, horror came third with 31, up significantly from ten last year; add one YA, and there were 32 new horror novels, 12% of the new books total, up from 5%. Paranormal romance novels had five titles, plus two YA for a total of seven; they were 3% of the new books total, up from 2%.

We saw 15 new young-adult titles, down 55% from 33 last year. There are lots more books we're not seeing, but we've never gotten many UK books for younger readers sent to us, and we're not seeing simultaneous international editions from UK publishers in kids' books. That's partly a marketing phenomenon; publishers appear to think kids want different things in the US and UK, to the point that a number of popular titles come out with not just different covers but different interior illustrations as well. And while adults are assumed to be able to deal with differences in spelling and colloquialisms, making it possible to sell books in both markets without major copy editing, that's more of a concern for younger readers. Still, in what we did see, fantasy led once again, with nine titles, down from; it made up 60% of the new YA total. YA SF returned in second place with three titles, down from seven; it was 20% of the new YA total. YA paranormal romance moved up to third with two titles, up from none last year; it was 13% of the new YA total. Horror trailed in fourth with only one new novel, down from four; it was 7% of the new YA total.

New Anthologies were up for the third year in a row, up 5% to 21. Another seven anthologies are counted with Media-Related titles, down from eight last year. Collections also increased to 22 titles, up from 19; another two are with media tie-ins. Omnibuses dropped for the third year in a row to only one title, down from two; another four are media tie-ins, down from nine. We counted two Reference titles, up from one last year; History/Criticism came in with six titles, up from four titles. The always-mixed Art/Humor category had four titles, down from five; we saw two "making of" movie art books, a graphic novel, and a SF guidebook/catalog showing genetically engineered dinosaurs for sale.

Media-Related titles went up to 41 titles, a significant increase from 23 last year, but still down from 51 in 2018. Tie-ins were 15% of the new books total, up from 9% last year. They included seven anthologies, four omnibuses, and two collections. Black Library led with 17 titles, nine in the far-future world of Warhammer 40,000, the rest scattered between their various other categories, including the

#4: First UK Editions									
20	20	2019	2018	2017	<u>2016</u>				
HarperCollins/Voyager	2	5	8	4	4				
Hodder & Stoughton	1	-	-	1	-				
Jacaranda	1	-	-	-	-				
Little, Brown/Orbit	1	1	4	3	7				
Orion/Gollancz	1	1	3	4	8				
Titan	1	2	6	6	4				

new imprints Warhammer Horror (three titles) and Warhammer Crime (one title). Titan had eight tieins, three related to Marvel comics, the rest mostly TV and movie tie-ins. We saw nine titles from new tie-in publisher Aconyte, based on a varied mix of games and Marvel comics. There were two tie-ins related to Rebellion comics, and two new *Doctor Who* tie-ins from BBC Books. We don't count tie-ins here that are simply US editions imported in the UK, such as *Star Trek* titles, just as we don't count BBC *Doctor Who* and Warhammer in the US.

It's hard to judge the quality of new titles, of course. Our only quantitative method of judging is our Recommended Reading list published in the February issue, which lists titles recommended by reviewers and select editors, authors, and publishers. By that gauge, quality looks to be good: we listed 65 new titles from 25 UK publishers, the number of titles down a bit from 73 last, while publishers were up slightly from 23.

#### CONCLUSION

The pandemic made it hard for us to keep on top of UK publishing. Publishers had trouble just getting hold of print copies and then mailing them out during the coronavirus lockdowns, and then soaring postal rates added to expenses in already uncertain times. Publishers, not knowing how long any of this would last, or how much effect it would have, shuffled their schedules around, with many books postponed – at least the print versions.

COVID-19 even managed to upstage Brexit, the UK's break with the EU, which technically happened at the end of January 2020. However, discussions over new trade regulations between the UK and EU continued until late in December of 2020, and the resulting free trade agreement didn't take effect until January 2021. Details are sketchy, but the deal apparently prevents new tariffs or taxes specifically as a result of Brexit; some difficulties with new customs rules have cropped up for some industries, but it remains to be seen how much the publishing industry will be affected.

Postal rate increases hit small presses particularly hard. The decline in air traffic during the pandemic meant the Royal Mail, which relied on commercial flights, had to pay extra to make sure the mail got shipped, and the costs got passed along to consumers. On top of that, the US negotiated a special deal with the Universal Postal Union that allowed the US to set rates for delivery in the US. As a result, the cost for packages mailed to the US doubled in some cases, and it's not clear if rates will be coming back down at all, which could make a big difference for small presses struggling to break even.

Judging from the forthcoming lists we've gotten since the start of the pandemic, quite a few publishers did trim their lists a bit, but for the most part it appears that UK publishing has done better than initially expected, much as in the US, with healthy sales thanks primarily to online sellers. Clearly, lots of people used the lockdowns to catch up on their reading. Unfortunately, brick-and-mortar bookstores are generally struggling, not all able to shift to online sales, or come to terms with the need to keep staff and shoppers safe. Vaccines should help, and as things stabilize we should be able to do better at tracking down titles as they come out.

-Carolyn Cushman ■

he 19th Annual/5th International Science Fiction Conference was organized by the Indian Association for Science Fiction Studies Bangalore (IASFS) in collaboration with Bangalore University and held online December 7-10, 2020. The theme was "All Roads Lead to Science Fiction", and participants included members of 58 departments at the university, faculty from 700 affiliated colleges, scientists, authors, editors, journalists, and luminaries from all over the world.

A variety of activities and programs were simultaneously held in 12 channels, including University Programs, Science Fiction, Language and Culture, Life Science and Micro-Biology, Humanities and Social Sciences, Performing Arts, Journalism and Mass Communication, and more.

The conference began with the invocation by Ranjani Vasuki. University student Malavika B Swamy introduced the vice chancellor of Bangalore University, professor Venugopal KR, who welcomed the guests, including Radhakrishna K, the former Chairperson of Indian Space Research Organization, who delivered the inaugural address, and Sujan Sengupta, associate professor at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, who presented the plenary talk.

Venugopal lit the inaugural the lamp with Srinarahari, conference convenor Krishna Murthy, and the coordinators of the channels, followed by the inauguration of each channel individually.

Krishna Murthy G delivered the preamble, highlighting the presentation of 300 papers, the presence of 250 special guest lecturers, and the release of 20 books during the event. He added

that the University is publishing four international journals collecting selected scholarly papers presented during the conference: a journal of physics, a journal of computational and life sciences including biological sciences, and a journal of current research in humanities and social sciences and engineering.

Srinarahari read the report of the IASFS, a non-profit organization registered under Karnataka State Society Act, dedicated to providing guidance, material, and a platform for the development and progress of research in the field of SF for all, without restrictions to any class, creed, region, race, gender, language, or other. He highlighted how the association could organize 14 national and four

# SF IN INDIA

#### 19TH ANNUAL/5TH INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION CONFERENCE by Srinarahari Mysore

international conferences in collaboration with departments of post graduate and doctoral studies in English in various universities of the country. He requested the government of Karnataka and the vice-chancellor of the university to consider establishing a virtual science fiction study chair with an honorary chairperson, supported by a technical team from the university, so there would be uninterrupted progress in the field of research creative work.

Mr. Yeddyurappa, the chief minister of Karnataka state, congratulated the organizers for the success of the event, and quoted Albert Einstein, who said that imagination is more important than knowledge. The amalgamation of imagination, curiosity, and need are crucial for science. It requires speculation and skepticism. Science fiction can inspire, educate and entertain. He hoped the deliberations would generate many ideas to help the growth of science and technology and be useful to humanity.

Ashwath Narayan, the cabinet minister for higher education, information technology, biotechnology, science and technology, and skill development addressed the virtual gathering, and observed that the internet is the global platform that provides an opportunity for the exchange of



tion could organize 14 national and four IASFS and the performing arts department jointly inaugurate Channel 1 human problems and human solutions.

academic and research innovations. He said the theme of the conference is very interesting and needed in the present world. He observed that it is essential to discuss social, economic, and social issues and emerge with solutions.

Suresh Kumar, the cabinet minister for primary and secondary education, as well as Manu Baligar, the President of Kannada Sahithya Parishad, spoke about how the conference could benefit people from all walks of life, and particularly the Kananda-speaking people of the Karnataka state in India.

While delivering the presidential address, the honorable vice chancellor of Bangalore University remarked that it was a great day for the university, as all 58 departments of post graduate and doctoral study were taking part in the conference. Sharing his personal achievements as a background, Venugopal disclosed that he has earned 11 degrees in addition to two doctoral degrees in economics and computer science and an engineering degree. He recalled the day in September 2019 when the secretary-general of the Indian Association for Science Fiction Studies, Srinarahari, approached him with a proposal to hold the conference in collaboration with Bangalore University. He felt it difficult to answer on that day, as the budget proposal would have exceeded millions of rupees to organize such a large conference. Then CO-VID-19 took over. He thought the university had lost a wonderful opportunity, but things always change, because of the impact of science and technology. What felt impossible a year before became possible by transitioning to a virtual, online conference. During the last eight months, the

university had conducted online classes, which gave him confidence to hold a virtual conference.

Analyzing the genre, he remarked that SF is the literature of change. One can observe science, technology, innovations, extrapolation, planets, time travel, catastrophe, and disaster, or any of those combined, depending on the author's imagination. What the author imagines and visualizes today becomes scientific reality tomorrow. The movies of the present also become the real world of tomorrow. What appears to be fictional today could be a reality in fifty years. To conclude, the professor said that science fiction stories are about human beings; human problems and human solutions





The 58 departments were grouped under ten channels, holding parallel sessions on all the days of the conference. The Indian Association for Science Fiction Studies had an exclusive channel for science fiction with its coordinator Srinarahari, and the university had a channel managed by the convener of the conference, Krishna Murthy. The latter included online plenary talks by eminent scientists, astrophysicists, Nobel Laureates, and others, including Nobel Laureate for Physics (2019) Didier Patrick Queloz; NASA scientist Ravikumar Kopparapu; Radhakrishna K, former chairperson of the Indian Space Research Organization; Annapurni Subramaniam, Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics; and more.

Other channels brought in eminent persons for online lectures, including academics, musicians, chemists, psychologists, sociologists, experts on intelligence and security, and other areas.

Twenty books were released during the event, including works on engineering, science and technology, music, and science fiction. Galakke **Sikka Chandira** by Savitha Srinivas, an Indian police service officer, is a Kannada-language SF about the colonization of Moon and attempts to provide solutions to contemporary humanistic problems.

The science fiction channel held 17 sessions, including paper presentations by academic practitioners at the universities, PhD research scholars, undergraduate students, retired officials, senior citizens, scientists, science and SF writers, working women, homemakers, medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, farmers, industrialists, writers, critics, media persons, and others.

There were also "Authors Speak" events, with special lectures from editors and authors, and a talk by Lucie Lukacovicova and Julie Nováková of the Czech Republic celebrating the hundredth

anniversary of the play **R.U.R.** by Karel Čapek.

There were several SF stories presented by their authors during "Narrating Stories of Tomorrow" sessions. The stories were in English, Hindi, and vernacular languages. Eminent SF writers like Shweta Taneja, Kalpna Kulshreshta, Arvind Dubey, and Sumithra chaired these sessions. The themes of the sessions were "SF from Singapore and Czech Republic perspectives", "Artificial Nobel Laureate Didier Queloz



Participants in the inaugural session

Intelligence", "Ecology and Science Fiction", "SF from Indian, American and Czech Republican Perspectives", and "Portraiture of Women in Science Fiction works". Papers were presented on various sub-themes: "Authors Narrate Stories of Tomorrow", "Visual Science Fiction - Movies", "Panel Discussion with Science Fiction Magazine Editors and Webmasters", "Authors Speak", and "Framing SF Curriculum for UG courses". Each session began with pre-recorded videos introducing the ch airperson, co-chair, and each paper presenter/guest speaker/panelist. The chairperson's remarks were followed by the paper presentations in each session and in all the panel discussions.

The Bangalore University department of performing arts joined with the Science Fiction group channel, and both groups worked together in a common studio, and dance, music, and drama programs highlighting Indian culture and tradition were streamed on all four days, alternating

with the SF activities. The performances were organized by Susheela SN and Pavithra of the performing arts department.

The second day was inaugurated by medical doctor BD Joshi; the third day by Purushothaman, the founder and president of IASFS; and the fourth day by Deepa Kamal, who represented the student community.

Coronavirus made an impact on this megaevent. Out of 122 abstract submissions, only 70% were able to send pre-recorded videos. A few of the chairpersons, guest speakers, and anchor persons contracted COVID-19, and the schedule of the program was badly affected. It was a Herculean task for the organizers to find suitable substitutes.

The organizers have uploaded videos pertaining to the Inauguration, the keynote by a Nobel Laureate, special lectures by eminent personalities, deliberations of presentations, panel discussions, interviews, plenary sessions, and authors narrat-

> ing stories of tomorrow to YouTube and Facebook. The videos of all the 17 sessions of Channel One are also accessible. Readers may see the videos by visiting the gallery of the website: <a href="https://iasfs.in">.

> We invite all the readers of Locus and members of SF fandom to join and actively participate in the upcoming proposed regional, national, and international in-person IASFS conferences during the post-pandemic era, perhaps at the end of 2021.

-Srinarahari Mysore ■





Sujan Sengupta



Venugopal KR delivers his presidential address



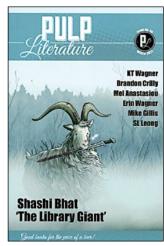
Radhakrishna K lectures on the New Space Age

# **MAGAZINES RECEIVED - FEBRUARY**









Dreamforge—Scot Noel, ed. Issue #7, December 2020, tri-annually, 72pp, 21½ x 28 cm. Science fiction and fantasy magazine specializing in "Tales of Hope in the Universe". This issue includes fiction (each story illustrated by various artists) by Deborah L. Davitt, Marie Vibbert, and others; part two of a story by James Verran; and poetry. Cover by John Blumen. Subscription: \$17.99 digital-only, for six issues to DreamForge Press LLC, 2615 Detroit Street, Grapeville PA 15634; website: <a href="https://dreamforgemagazine.com/subscribe-to-dreamforge-magazine/s;email:<a href="mailto:subscribe-to-dreamforge-magazine/s;email:<a href="mailto:subscribe-to-dreamforge-magazine/s;email:subscriber@DreamForgeMagazine.com/subscriberomb.">https://dreamforge-magazine/s;email:subscriber@DreamForgeMagazine.com/subscriberomb.</a>

Dreams & Nightmares—David C. Kopaska-Merkel, ed. No. 117, January 2021, \$5.00, irregular, 20pp, 14 x 21 cm. Magazine of fantastic and speculative poetry, with work by Bruce McAllister, Geoffrey A. Landis, Mary Turzillo, and others. Cover by Denny Marshall. Subscription: \$25.00 US/\$30 outside North America for six issues, to David C. Kopaska-Merkel, 1300 Kicker Rd., Tuscaloosa AL 35404. Make checks out to David C. Kopaska-Merkel. Email: <ppre>cjopnquog@gmail.com>; website: <dream-sandnightmaresmagazine.blogspot.com/>.

Fusion Fragment <www.fusionfragment.com/>—Cavan Terrill, ed. Issue #5, March 2021, online pay-what-you-want or purchase a hardcover copy through Blurb <www.blurb.com> (price various by issue), irregular. Online speculative fiction magazine. This issue includes work by David F. Shultz, Zandra Renwick, Vanessa Fogg, and others. Cover by KiTT St. Joans. Subscription: Not available.

Galaxy's Edge-Lezli Robyn, ed., Issue #49, March 2021, \$7.99 print/\$4.99 digital; bimonthly, 115pp, 19 x 24½ cm. Online and print SF magazine with a mixture of original and reprinted fiction, reviews, and columns. This issue includes fiction by Mike Resnick, Todd McCaffrey, Walter Jon Williams, and others; the next chapter in the serialization of Over the Wine-Dark Sea by Harry Turtledove; columns by Gregory Benford and L. Penelope; and reviews by Richard Chwedyk. Subscription: \$19.99/digital for six issues from <www.weightlessbooks.com> or Amazon; \$37.74 for six print issues to Arc Manor/Phoenix Pick, PO Box 10339, Rockville MD 20849-0339; website: <www. GalaxysEdge.com>.

The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction—Sheree Renée Thomas, ed. Vol. 140, No. 3 & 4, Whole No. 754, March/April 2021, \$9.99, bimonthly, 260pp, 13 x 19½ cm. This issue includes novelettes by C.L. Polk, Madeleine E. Robins, Molly Tanzer, and Robin Furth; short stories by Cat Rambo, Rebecca Campbell, Nick Wolven, B. Morris Allen, Marie Brennan, Harry Turtledove, and Meg Elison; a column by Arley Sorg; a science article by Jerry Oltion; poetry; reviews, and etc. Cover by Mondolithic Studios.

Metaphorosis < www.metaphorosis.com>—B. Morris Allen, ed. March 2021, \$7.00 print/\$4.00 digital/free online, monthly, 178pp, 10 x 15 mm. Online and print speculative fiction magazine. This issue includes original stories by V.G. Campen, Martin Westlake, Chris Cornetto, and Esem Junior. New stories are posted online every Friday. Cover by Kathryn Weaver. Subscription: Digital subscriptions available at \$3.00/month through Patreon < www.patreon. com/metaphorosis>. Single issues available from Amazon.com and IngramSpark.

On Spec-Diane L. Walton, ed. Vol. 31 No. 1, Whole No. 115, C\$6.95, 2020, quarterly, 120pp, 13½ x 20½ cm. Canadian small-press fiction magazine. This issue has stories by Colleen Anderson, Anthony W. Eichenlaub, Lee F. Patrick, and others; interviews with Virginia Elizabeth Hayes and Fred Gambino; an article by Derryl Murphy; poetry and art. Cover by Fred Gambino. Subscription: Print: C\$24.00/ C\$30.00 US/C\$45.00 overseas a year to On Spec, c/o Variant Edition Comics, 10132 151 Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5P 174, Canada; digital subscriptions available through Weightless, Kobo, and Variant Edition Comics and Culture; website: <www.onspec.ca>.

Pulp Literature–Jennifer Landels, et al. eds. No. 29, Winter 2021, C\$14.99, quarterly, 225pp, 13½ x 20½ cm. Canadian small-press fiction magazine dedicated to all types of pulp literature with substantial genre content. This issue includes stories by Shashi Bhat, KT Wagner, Brandon Crilly, and others; an interview with Shashi Bhat; a graphic story by Joseph Stillwell & Hugh Henderson; the next chapters in stories by Mel Anastasiou and JM Landels; poetry; etc. Cover by Kris Sayer. Subscription: C\$50.00 Canada/\$C70.00 continental USA/C\$86.00 elsewhere for four print issues to Pulp Literature Press, 21955 16 Ave., Langley BC, V2Z 1K5, Canada; \$C17.99 for digital; website: <pupplierature com>

Smith's Monthly-Dean Wesley Smith, Issue #45, January 2021, \$6.99 digital/\$12.99 print, monthly, 156pp, 17½ x 25½ cm. A magazine written entirely by Dean Wesley Smith, with four short stories; a full novel, Heads Up; and a WMG Writer's guide "Stages of a Fiction Writer". Subscription: Digital-only: \$29.99 (six issues)/\$49.99 (12 issues)/US print plus digital: \$59.99 (six issues)\*\$9.99(12 issues)/0.utside the US print plus digital: \$99.99 (six issues)/\$199.99 (12 issues) at <www.smithsmonthly.com/subscribe/>; website: <www.smithsmonthly.com/subscribe/>; website: <www.smithsmonthly.com/subscribe/>; website: <www.smithsmonthly.com/subscribe/>; website: <www.smithsmonthly.com/subscribe/six subscribe/six subscri

Smith's Monthly-Dean Wesley Smith, Issue #46, February 2021, \$6.99 digital/\$12.99 print, monthly, 130pp, 17½ x 25½ cm. A magazine written entirely by Dean Wesley Smith, with six short stories; a full novel, Hot Springs Meadow; and a WMG Writer's guide "How to Write a Novel in Ten Days".

Subscription: Digital-only: \$29.99 (six issues)/\$49.99 (12 issues)/US print plus digital: \$59.99 (six issues)/\$99.99(12 issues)/Outside the US print plus digital: \$99.99 (six issues)/\$199.99 (12 issues) at <www.smithsmonthly.com/subscribe/>; website: <www.smithsmonthly.com /subscribe/>; website: <www.smithsmonthly.com /subscribe/>; website: <www.smithsmonthly.com >.

Star\*Line-F.J. Bergmann, ed. Issue No. 44.1, Winter 2021, \$5.00 + \$2.00 s&h print/\$2.50 digital, quarterly, 49pp, 14 x 21½ cm. Speculative poetry magazine from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association. This issue includes poems from David C. Kopaska-Merkel, Mary Soon Lee, Beth Cato, Christina Sng, and others; small press coverage, etc. Cover by Michal Kvá. Subscription: \$24.00 for four print issues/\$10.00 digital or included with a SFPA membership via paypal to <SFPATreasurer@gmail.com>; website: <sfpoetry.com/starline.html>.

#### **Online Magazines**

Aurealis <a href="www.aurealis.com.au>—Stephen Higgins">www.aurealis.com.au>—Stephen Higgins</a>, ed. No. 138, March 2021, \$2.99, 10 times a year (every month except January and December). This issue incudes fiction from Maddison Stoff, David Harris, and Joanne Rixon; articles by Ani White and Pamela Jeffs; an interview with Andrew Hook; and reviews. Subscriptions \$19.99/year for 10 issues from their website.

Beneath Ceaseless Skies < www.beneath-ceaseless-skies.com>—Scott H. Andrews, ed. Issue #324, February 25, 2021, free online, biweekly. Online fantasy/adventure magazine. This issue includes original fiction by Andrew Dykstal and Evan Macroft, and a reprint from Elly Bangs. Cover by Tyler Edlin. Subscription: \$19.99/year from Weightless Books < www.weightlessbooks.com>

Beneath Ceaseless Skies < www.beneath-ceaseless-skies.com>—Scott H. Andrews, ed. Issue #325, March 11, 2021, free online, biweekly. Online fantasy/adventure magazine. This issue includes original fiction by Izzy Wasserstein (with accompanying podcast) and Stephen Case, and a reprint from Erin Eisenhour. Cover by Leon Tukker. Subscription: \$19.99/year from Weightless Books < www.weightless-books.com>.

Clarkesworld <a href="www.clarkesworldmagazine.com">weil Clarke, ed. Issue #174, March 2021, free online or \$2.99 ebook, monthly. Online SF/fantasy magazine. This issue includes original fiction by D.A. Xiaolin Spires (with accompanying podcast), Isabel J. Kim, Wang Zhenzhen (Carmen Yiling Yan, trans.), Arula Ratnakar, Isabel Lee, Wole Talabi, and Sarah Pauling; an article by Julie Nováková; and interviews with Elly Bangs and Becky Chambers. Cover by Alex Ries. Subscription: Digital subscription \$35.88 for 12 issues at <a href="https://clarkesworldcitizens.com/direct-support/">https://clarkesworldcitizens.com/direct-support/</a> or issues may be purchased monthly: \$2.99 digital/\$10.00 print (\$14.00 Canada & Europe)/\$12.99

print + digital (\$16.99 Canada & Europe). Also available from third-party sellers.

The Dark < www.thedarkmagazine.com>Sean Wallace, ed. Issue #70, March 2021, free online or digital available for \$1.99-\$2.99, monthly. Dark fantasy and horror magazine. This issue includes original fiction by J.S. Breukelaar, Clara Madrigano, David Tallerman, and Jelena Dunato. Cover art by chainat. Subscription: digital subscriptions available for \$23.88 for 12 issues from Weightless Books <a href="www.weightlessbooks.com">www.weightlessbooks.com</a>. Issues can be purchased at a monthly subscription rate from Amazon.com at \$1.99/month or £1.99/month via Amazon.co.uk; or as single copies at \$2.99 from Apple, B&N, Kobo, and Weightless.

Fantasy Magazine <www.fantasy-magazine.com>—Christie Yant & Arley Sorg, eds. Issue #65, March 2021, free online or \$3.99 ebook, monthly. Online Fantasy magazine. This issue includes original fiction by M. Shaw and Hal Y. Zhang; flash fiction by M. Kinley Valentine and Donyae Coles; an interview with Charles Yu; and poetry. On the website, each month's contents are serialized throughout the month, with new features published on the first four Tuesdays. The ebook edition is available on the first of the month. Cover by Liia Chevnenko Adobe Stock Image. Subscription: \$2.99/month via Amazon.com or \$23.88 for 12 issues from Fantasy <a href="https://www.fantasy-magazine.com/subscriptions/">https://www.fantasy-magazine.com/subscriptions/</a>/> or Weightless Books <www.weightlessbooks.com>.

Fireside < www.firesidefiction.com>— Brian J. White ed., Issue #89, March 2021, \$5.00 digital only, monthly. In the March issue, the site posted short fiction by Wendy Nikel, John Wiswell, and Ashley Park. Subscriptions: digital subscriptions available for \$60.00 for 12 issues at <a href="https://firesidefiction.com/#subscribe">https://firesidefiction.com/#subscribe></a>.

Future Science Fiction Digest <future-sf. com/>—Alex Shvartsman, ed., Issue 10, March 2021, free online/\$3.99 digital, quarterly. SF magazine with a focus on translated and international fiction. This issue's theme is artificial intelligence and includes stories from Alberto Chimal (Patrick Weill, trans.), Liu Cixin (Nathan Faries, trans.), Nic Lipitz, Jelena Dunato, and Ti Sha (Judith Huang, trans.). Contents from this issue are also posted free online. See their website for release dates. Cover by Stephane "Wootha" Richard. Subscriptions: \$11.99 for four digital issues from King Games <a href="https://www.kingsgames.com/online-store/Future-Science-Fiction-Digest-ANNUAL-SUBSCRIPTION-297358304">https://www.kingsgames.com/online-store/Future-Science-Fiction-Digest-ANNUAL-SUBSCRIPTION-297358304</a>. Quarterly digital issues are available through Patreon. Individual copies available to purchase from Amazon, Nook, Kobo, iBooks, Google Play, and Weightless

Lightspeed Magazine <www.lightspeed-magazine.com>—John Joseph Adams, ed. Issue #130, March 2021, free online or



#### JOIN ISABEL YAP & REBECCA ROANHORSE FOR AN ONLINE EVENT: APRIL 13, 8 P.M. EST

"A truly powerful, propulsive collection, exploring the makings and reshapings of myth, and the myriad ways we might save each other." - Maya Gittelman, Tor.com

★ "Such a joy to read."— Booklist (starred review)

"Captivating . . . monsters, Filipino folklore, immigration, and queerness." — Buzzfeed

"Where Yap consistently dazzles is her unsentimental, tender, evocative and brutal examination of the life and interiority of young women and girls: the innate monstrousness of growing up in the shoes marked 'woman.' A masterclass collection."

- Tamsyn Muir, author of Gideon the Ninth











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Subscription: Limited-edition digital version (pdf. epub and mobi) available prior to web

Nightmare Magazine <www.nightmare-magazine.com>—Wendy N. Wagner, ed. Issue #102, March 2021, free online or \$2.99 ebook, monthly. Online horror/dark fantasy magazine publishing both original and re-printed fiction. This issue includes original fiction by Woody Dismukes and Joanna Parypinski; flash fiction from Michael Kelly and Meg Elison; and a non-fiction essay by Donald McCarthy. On the website, each month's contents are serialized throughout the month with new features published on the first four Wednesdays. Cover by Dominick / Adobe Stock Art. Subscription: \$1.99/monthly from Amazon or \$23.88/ year from *Nightmare* or Weightless Books <www.weightlessbooks.com>.

Sexy Fantastic <sexyfantasticmagazine. com>-Robert Zoltan, ed. Issue #2, March 2021, \$6.99 digital, bimonthly. New online sex-positive "art, literature and culture" magazine. This issue includes stories by Robert Zoltan, Drew Martyn, Christopher K. Miller, and Theda Hudson; and other genre-related material. Cover by Robert Zoltan. Subscription: \$6.99/monthly or \$29.94/year from Sexy Fantastic <sexyfantasticmagazine.com>

SFRevu <www.sfrevu.com/>- Gayle Surrett ed., March 2021, free, monthly. Online SF review site. In the March issue, the site posted an article by Sam Tomaino, short fiction and book reviews, and various columns. Cover by Ernest Lilley. Subscriptions: Not available.

Strange Horizons < www.strangehorizons. com>- Vanessa Rose Phin, et al., eds. February/March 2021, free, weekly. Online speculative fiction magazine publishing fiction, poetry, essays, reviews, and interviews. New issues are posted each Monday. For February and March, the site posted short fiction (with accompanying podcasts) by Sasha LaPointe, Lorraine Wilson, and Isana Skeete; a conversation with the editors of *Rikka Zine, khōréō mag*, and Constelación; a column by Kuzhali Manickavel; poetry (with accompanying podcasts); reviews, etc. Covers by Tahlia Day. Subscription: unavailable.

ADY CHURCHILL

ROSEBUD WRISTLE

Tor.com <www.tor.com>— Tom Doherty, Fritz Foy, Irene Gallo, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, et al., eds. February/March, free online. Macmillan publishing house site specializing in genre fiction. Each month *Tor.com* publishes free fiction and articles including original works, reprints, novel excerpts, and comics; re-reads/re-watches of novels and television shows; an artist gallery; original reviews; articles and com-mentary; interviews; as well as providing a forum for the genre community. New material is posted throughout the month. February/March posts include novel excerpts from books by Cassandra Clare, Sarah Gailey, Premee Mohamed, Jillian Boehme, Nicky Drayden, Adrienne Tooley, E.J. Beaton, Jessica S. Olson, Amanda Joy, Sarah Beth Durst, Nino Cipri, Morowa Yejidé, and Aiden Thomas; and original fiction by Tegan Moore and Usman T. Malik.

Uncanny Magazine <www.uncannymagazine.com>-Lynne M. Thomas, Michael Damian Thomas, Chimedum Ohaegbu & Elsa Sjunneson, eds. Issue #39, March/ April 2021, \$3.99 digital only, bi-monthly. Science fiction and fantasy magazine with original and reprint fiction, non-fiction essays, and interviews, and poetry. This essays, and interviews, and poetry. This issue includes fiction by Catherynne M. Valente, Dominica Phetteplace, Caroline M. Yoachim, Carrie Vaughn, Rati Mehrotra, and Sarah Pinsker; a reprint from Alaya Dawn Johnson; essays from Tansy Rayner Roberts, Sid Jain, Marieke Nijkamp, and Jay Edidin; interviews with Caroline M. Yoachim and Sarah Pinsker; and poetry. Cover art by Paul Lewin. E-book subscribers receive the complete ebook on the first Tuesday of the month. Online readers will

receive the first half of the magazine on the first Tuesday of the month. The second half will be available the first Tuesday of the following month. Also available free on the *Uncanny* website is the *Uncanny* Magazine podcast with some of the stories, interviews, and other content available for listening. Subscriptions: \$23.88 for one year at Weightless Books <www.weightlessbooks.com>.

Underland Arcana<www.underlandarcana. com>-Mark Teppo, ed. Issue #1, Winter 2021, free online/\$4.99 ebook/\$9.99 print, quarterly. Premiere issue of a new fiction magazine"influenced by the tarot, both in symbolism and intent." This issue includes original fiction by Jessie Kwak, Michael Barsa, Nina Kiriki Hoffman, and others. Cover by George Cotronis. Subscription: Not available. Single e-book issues are available from various third-party sellers; print issues available from Amazon.com.

Underland Arcana<www.underlandarcana. com>-Mark Teppo, ed. Issue #2, Spring 2021, free online/\$4.99 ebook/\$9.99 print, quarterly. Fiction magazine influenced by the tarot, both in symbolism and intent." This issue includes original fiction by Jon McGoran, Jennifer Quail, Selah Janel, and others. Cover by Tod Ryan. Subscription: Not available. Single e-book issues are available from various third-party sellers; print issues available from Amazon.com.

Wyldblood <www.wyldblood.com/>-Mark Bilsborough ed. Issue #1, February — March 2021, £5.99 print UK/£5.99 + shipping print overseas/£2.99 digital; shipping print overseas/£2.99 digital; bi-monthly. Premiere issue of a new UK-based SF magazine. This issue includes fiction by Holley Cornetto, JL George, and others; an interview with Tiffani Augus; and book reviews. Subscription £15.00 digital/£35.00 print UK/£55.00 overseas print for six issues to Wyldblood Press, Thicket View, Bakers Lane, Maidenhead SL6 6PX, IK. amail: coentact@wwldblood.omx UK; email: <contact@wyldblood.com>. Also available from Amazon. ■

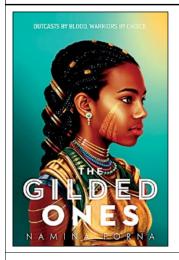


\$3.99 ebook, monthly. Online SF/fantasy magazine. This issue includes original science fiction by Claire Wrenwood and Adam-Troy Castro; reprinted SF by Ken Liu and Yoon Ha Lee; original fantasy by PH Lee and Sarah Grey; reprinted fantasy by Alyssa Wong and Amber Sparks; and book reviews. On the website, each month's contents are serialized throughout the month, with new features published on the first four Tuesdays. The ebook edition is available on the first of the month with exclusive content not available on the website. This month's exclusive content is an excerpt from a novel by Arkady Martine. Cover by Grand-failure / Adobe Stock Image. Subscription: \$2.99/month via Amazon.com or \$35.88/ year from Lightspeed <www.lightspeed-magazine.com/subscribe/> or Weightless Books <www.weightlessbooks.com>

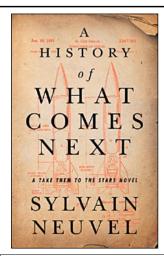
Luna Station Quarterly < lunastation-quarterly.com/>—Jennifer Lyn Parsons, ed. Issue #45, March 2021, \$2.99 digi-tal/\$10.95 print, quarterly. A science fiction and fantasy magazine with a mission "to display the vast and varied talents of women-identified speculative fiction writers." This issue includes fiction by Hannah Whiteoak, Gabrielle Roselynn Dina, Catherine George, and others. Cover by Natasa Ilincic. Subscription: \$9.99 digital for four issues available through Weightless Books. Single digital issues available directly from the publisher <gumroad.com/l/lsq045>. Digital and print editions available through

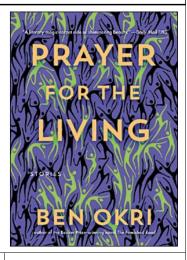
Mysterion < www.mysteriononline.com/>-Donald S. Crankshaw & Kristin Janz, eds. March/April 2021, free online or via Patreon. Online magazine presenting stories that engage "meaningfully with Christianity...although not exclusively from a Christian perspective." The site posts one or two stories per month, with occasional interviews and reviews. For March and April the site posts stories by Marissa James and J.L. Royce. Cover by Toe Keen.

### **BOOKS RECEIVED - FEBRUARY**









Compiled by Liza Groen Trombi & Carolyn Cushman. Please send all corrections to Carolyn Cushman, c/o Locus. We will run all verified corrections.

KEY: \* = first edition + = first US edition.

Albert, Melissa The Night Country (Macmillan/Flatiron, 978-1-250-24609-7, \$11.99, 326pp, tp) Reprint (Flatiron 2020) young-adult fantasy novel, sequel to The Hazel Wood. This adds bonus novelette "The Boy Who Didn't Come Home", set between the two novels; copyrighted 2020 and apparently first released as a promotional dioital item.

\*Albert, Melissa Tales from the Hinterland (Macmillan/Flatiron, 978-1-250-30272-4, \$19.99, 223pp, hc) Young-adult original collection of 12 stories, the third book in the Hazel Wood series, in the form of a collection of tales featured in the first book. The title page shows Alethea Proserpine as the author of the stories "collected by Melissa Albert." Illustrated by Jim Tierney. Issued without a dustjacket. Ebook also available. Simultaneous with the Penguin UK edition (illustrated by Nick Hayes).

\*Anderle, Michael How to Be a Badass Vigilante: Book One (LMB-PN Publishing, 978-1-64971-446-6, \$8.99, 258pp, tp) Urban fantasy novel, the first in a series. Kera MacDonagh finds a book on witchcraft with spells that actually work and uses her powers to hunt criminals in LA. A print-ondemand edition; Ebook also available. LMBPN Publishing, PMB 196, 2540 South Maryland Pkwy, Las Vegas NV 89109; <Imbop..com>.

+Arnott, Robbie **The Rain Heron** (Macmillan/FSG Originals, 978-0-374-53930-6, \$16.00, 269pp, tp, cover by Kate MccGwire) Post-apocalyptic ecological fantasy novel about two women searching for a legendary bird that can change the weather. First US edition (Text Publishing, Australia 6/20). Ebook also available.

\*Arradondo, Chance The Path of Kingdoms (self-published, 979-8675137244, \$14.99, 308pp, tp) Epic fantasy novel. Heroes must find the lost Elementus swords to save mankind when the imprisoned God of Fire threatens to break free. A first novel. This is a print-on-demand edition; ebook also available.

\*Babcock, Margaret A. **Eden.2** (Rebel Satori/Queer Space, 978-1-60864-146-8, \$17.95, 348pp, tp) SF novel. An Episcopal priest and his exobiologist

husband lead a small, religiously diverse community on a far planet, aided by a mysterious entity — until more human colonists arrive. A first novel. Ebook also available. Rebel Satori Press, <www.rebelsatoripress.com>.

\*Bacchilega, Cristina & Jennifer Orme, eds. Inviting Interruptions: Wonder Tales in the 21st Century (Wayne State University Press, 978-0-8143-4700-3, \$32.99, xxv +225pp, tp, cover by Rosalind Hyatt Orme) Anthology of 24 items (12 stories, one original) and 12 artworks, including a graphic story, a heavily illustrated poem/story, and a short film, all explored in notes looking at their relationship to traditional fairy and folk tales, symbolism, and the ways they challenge assumptions and stereotypes found in traditional fairy tales. Authors include Kelly Link, Sofia Samatar, Nisi Shawl, and Shaun Tan. Part of the Series in Fairy-Tale Studies. A print-on-demand edition; a hardcover edition (-4699-0, \$92.99) was announced but not seen; ebook also available. Wayne State University Press, 4809 Woodward Ave., Detroit MI 48201-1309; 800-WSU-READ; <wsupress.wayne.edu>.

\*Bailey, Robert **The Golfer's Carol** (Penguin Random House/Putnam, 978-0-593-19050-0, \$24.00, 224pp, hc) Fantasy inspirational novel, about a suicidal golfer given a magical gift by a ghost: a chance to play one round each with his four golfing heroes. Simultaneous with the UK (Headline) edition. Ebook also available.

Bardugo, Leigh Crooked Kingdom (Macmillan/Square Fish, 978-1-250-07697-7, \$11.99, 544pp, tp, cover by Thomas Walker & John Bartlett) Reissue (Holt 2016) young-adult fantasy novel, sequel to Six of Crows, part of the Grishaverse series. This notes the coming of the Netflix Shadow and Bone series.

Barry, Quan **We Ride Upon Sticks** (Penguin Random House/Vintage, 978-0-525-56543-7, \$16.95, 363pp, tp) Reprint (Pantheon 2020) fantasy novel.

\*Beckett, L.X. **Dealbreaker** (Tor, 978-1-250-16529-9, \$27.99, 503pp, hc, cover by Stephan Martiniere) Near-future SF ovel, second in the Bounceback series begun in **Gamechanger**, set in a Solar System where Earth's rejuvenation is underway, but members of the galactic community still want to stop humans from being allowed to take part. Beckett is a pen name for A.M. Dellamonica. Ebook also available.

\*Bertrand, Lynne City of the Uncom-

mon Thief (Penguin Random House/ Dutton, 978-0-525-55532-2, \$19.99, 384pp, hc, cover by AJ Frena) Youngadult fantasy novel about Odd Thebes, a polyglot storyteller in an ancient, longquarantined city with mile-high towers. Ebook also available.

\*Biglow, Sarah & Molly Zenk Hunted (Cayélle/Spectral, 9781952404085, \$11.99, 192pp, tp) Vampire novel. A vampire hunter seeks his missing brother and finds himself attracted to the vampire Edith. Ebook also available.

\*Boswell, Len Simon Grave and the Sons of Irony (Black Rose Writing, 978-1-68433-621-0, \$18.95, 191pp, tp) Humorous near-future SF mystery novel, the fourth in a series about Detective Simon Grave in the town of Crab Cove, this time investigating the hovercycle underworld. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available. Black Rose Writing, <www.blackrosewriting.com>

Briggs, Patricia **Smoke Bitten** (Ace, 978-0-440-00157-7, \$8.99, 319pp, pb, cover by Daniel Dos Santos) Reprint (Ace 2020) urban fantasy novel, 12th in the Mercy Thompson series.

Brooks, Max **Devolution** (Penguin Random House/Del Rey, 978-1-9848-2680-0, \$17.00, 282pp, tp) Reprint (Del Rey 2020) near-future SF horror novel about Sasquatches.

\*Brown, Jayna Black Utopias: Speculative Life and the Music of Other Worlds (Duke University Press, 978-1-4780-1167-5, \$25.95, 212pp, tp, cover by Betye Saar) Non-fiction, a critical exploration of speculative dystopias and utopias in the thinking of Black visionaries and in the works of Octavia E. Butler and Samuel R. Delany and the music of Alice Coltrane and Sun Ra. Includes notes, bibliography, and index. A hardcover edition (-1054-8, \$99.95) was announced but not seen; ebook also available. Duke University Press, <www.dukeupress.edu>.

+Buckley, Jonathan Live; live; live (New York Review Books, 978-1-68137-547-2, \$16.95, 264pp, tp) Novel of the occult, love, and mortality. Lucas Judd apparently hears the dead speaking, but a neighbor boy begins to question things as he grows up. First US edition (Sort of Books 7/20).

Bujold, Lois McMaster Penric's Progress (Baen, 978-1-9821-2520-2, \$8.99, 453pp, pb, cover by Dan dos Santos) Reprint (Baen 2020) collection/omnibus of the first three fantasy novellas in the World of the Five Gods series featuring Penric and his demon

Desdemona: Penric's Demon (2015), Penric and the Shaman (2016), and Penric's Fox (2017).

Carson, Scott **The Chill** (Simon & Schuster/Atria, 978-1-9821-0460-3, \$17.00, 435pp, tp) Reprint (Atria/Bestler 2020) horror novel. This is a pen name for Michael Koryta.

\*Cavallaro, Brittany **Muse** (HarperCollins/Tegen Books, 978-0-06-284025-7, \$17.99, 332pp, hc) Young-adult alterate-history novel with possible fantasy elements. An inventor's daughter, at the 1893 World's Fair in the First American Kingdom, is believed to have the ability to "bless" others with good fortune, and claimed by the Governor as his muse. Ebook also available.

\*Chadha, Olivia **Rise of the Red Hand** (Erewhon, 978-1-64566-010-1, \$18.95, 382pp, hc, cover by Rashed AlAkroka) Young-adult near-future SF novel, the first in the Mechanists series. The revolutionaries of the Red Hand fight the computer-run government in a South Asian land split between those who enjoy luxury in a biodome and the outsiders who struggle to survive. Ebook also available.

Chiles, Patrick **Frozen Orbit** (Baen, 978-1-9821-2515-8, \$8.99, 446pp, pb, cover by Bob Eggleton) Reprint (Baen 2020) SF novel.

\*Cornwell, Patricia **Spin** (Amazon/Thomas & Mercer, 978-1542044783, \$28.99, 402pp, hc) Very-near-future SF police-procedural mystery novel, the second in the Captain Chase series about an astronaut/quantum physicist/cybercrime investigator. This is an international edition with US and UK prices. Ebook also available.

\*Corrigan, Ava Fate: The Winx Saga: The Fairies' Path (Scholastic, 978-1-338-69226-6, \$11.99, 334pp, tp) Tie-in novel based on the new Netflix series based on the old Winx Club animated series. Copyrighted by Netflix. Ebook also available.

\*Cypher, Ellie The Girl from Shadow Springs (Simon & Schuster, 978-1-5344-6569-5, \$19.99, 311pp, hc, cover by Lente Saira) Young-adult fantasy novel. Jorie scavenges from the wrong dead treasure hunter in the frozen wasteland, and faces a deadly foe who thinks she took something valuable. A first novel. Ebook also available.

\*Dalglish, David **Voidbreaker** (Orbit US, 978-0-316-41673-3, \$16.99, 458pp, tp. cover by Crystal Ben) Fantasy novel, third in the Keepers trilogy. Simultaneous with the Orbit UK edition.

Ebook also available.

\*Daoud, Kamel **Zabor, or The Psalms** (Other Press, 978-1-63542-014-2, \$17.99, 372pp, tp) Magical realism novel about a young man who can heal people by writing about them, forced to deal with his own childhood trauma when his estranged father is near death. Translated by Emma Ramadan from the French **Zabor ou Les psammes** (Editions Barzakh, Algeria; Actes Sud, France 2017). A French flap edition; ebook also available.

Davis, Charlotte Nicole **The Good Luck Girls** (Tor Teen, 978-1-250-29972-7, \$10.99, 346pp, tp, cover by Chung-Yun Yoo) Reprint (Tor Teen 2019) young-adult fantasy Western novel.

\*de Bodard, Aliette Fireheart Tiger (Tordotcom, 978-1-250-79326-3, \$14.99, 99pp, tp, cover by Alyssa Winans) Fantasy novella set in a world inspired by precolonial Vietnam, about a princess dealing with magical fires, diplomacy, and romance. Ebook also available.

Dennard, Susan **Sightwitch** (Tor Teen, 978-1-250-18354-5, \$10.99, 233pp, tp, cover by Cliff Nielsen) Reprint (Tor Teen 2018) young-adult fantasy novella in the Witchlands series, set before **Truthwitch**. Illustrated by Rhys Davies. This has a deckle edge, and includes the unpaginated "A Brief Guide to the Sightwitches".

\*Deyhim, Michael **The Battle of Fiji** (Omni Publishing, 978-1-954452-00-8, \$24.99, 503pp, hc, cover by Deanna Deyhim) Far-future SF novel about a man who battles for fame and fortune in an VR world; this is "Season 1" in the Omnitrek series. A paper-over-boards, print-on demand edition; ebook also available. Omni Publishing, <www.omnitrekseries.com>.

\*Edmunds, Lisa **Heart of Vengeance** (City Owl, 978-1-64898-020-6, \$15.99, 351pp, tp) Urban fantasy novel, the sixth in a series featuring mage PI Alice Worth. The head of the Vampire Court asks Alice has to search for a treasure stolen by a thief intent on vengeance. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available.

\*Faber, Liz W., ed. The Computer's Voice: From Star Trek to Siri (University of Minnesota Press, 978-1-5179-0976-5, \$27.00, 217pp, tp) Critical non-fiction exploring why some computers, and fictional talking spaceships, are gendered male or female. Though focused almost exclusively on films, TV, and computer-based games and assistants, the book touches on general SF themes of interest. Includes notes and index. A hardcover edition (-0975-8, \$108.00) was announced but not seen; ebook also available. University of Minnesota Press, 111 Third Ave. South, Suite 290, Minneapolis MN 55401-2520; <www.upress.umn.edu>

\*Faizal, Hafsah **We Free the Stars** (Macmillan/Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 978-0-374-31157-5, \$19.99, 577pp, hc, cover by Simón Prades) Young-adult fantasy novel set in a world inspired by ancient Arabia, the second book in the Sands of Arawiya duology. Ebook also available. Simultaneous with the Macmillan UK ebook edition.

Faring, Sara **The Tenth Girl** (Macmillan/Square Fish, 978-1-250-62082-8, \$11.99, 456pp, tp) Reprint (Imprint 2019) young-adult gothic horror novel. This has a stepback cover.

\*Faring, Sara **White Fox** (Macmillan/ Imprint, 978-1-250-30452-0, \$18.99, 417pp, hc, cover by Shane Rebenschied) Young-adult associational thriller/mystery novel with eerie and fairytale story-within-a-story elements. Sisters whose actress mother disappeared ten years before search for clues to what happened in the woman's last work, an unproduced screenplay. Ebook also available.

\*Fendley, T.W. **Methuselah's Legacy** (Soul Song Press, 978-0-999-8434-5-1, \$13.99, 278pp, tp) Near-future SF novel. A woman with terminal cancer tries an experimental longevity serum she helped create with remote viewing. Ebook also available. Sea Song Press, 34 Atlantic Avenue, St. Augustine FL 32084; <www.SoulSongPress.com>

\*Forbes, Lani **The Jade Bones** (Blackstone Publishing, 978-1982546-10-6, \$18.99, 308pp, hc) Fantasy novel inspired by Aztec and Mayan legends, the second book in the Age of the Seventh Sun trilogy. Ebook also available.

\*Forna, Namina The Gilded Ones (Penguin Random House/Delacorte, 978-1-9848-4869-7, \$18.99, 415pp, hc, cover by Tarajosu) Young-adult feminist fantasy novel inspired by West Africa, the first book in the Deathless series. Deka's gold blood condemns her to life in the army. A first novel. Simultaneous with the UK (Usborne) edition. This is copyrighted 2020 but did not appear until now. A German version apparently appeared 10/20 as Die Göttinnen von Otera - Golden wie Blut (Loewe) translated by Bea Reiter. This indicates second printing, but was not seen previously. Ebook also available.

\*Fox, Andrew The Bad Luck Spirits' Social Aid and Pleasure Club (MonstraCity Press, 978-0-9898027-6-5, \$17.95, 451pp, tp) Satirical urban fantasy novel set in the same world as the Fat White Vampire series. Tricksters and bad luck spirits team up to to create a hurricane-based disaster that will drive humans out of New Orleans, but one spirit stands in their way. Ebook also available. MonstraCity Press, <monstracitypress@gmail.com>.

\*Fraser, Mary Ann Mortal Remains (Sterling, 978-1-4549-3948-1, \$18.95, 360pp, hc) Young-adult paranormal mystery/romance novel. Lily, who works in her family's funeral home, investigates a house damaged by an explosion and fire, and finds a teen trapped in an underground vault, with few memories about his past. Ebook also available.

Freed, Alexander Star Wars: Shadow Fall (Penguin Random House/Del Rey, 978-1-9848-2006-8, \$9.99, 479pp, tp, cover by Jeff Langevin) Reprint (Del Rey 2020) Star Wars tie-in novel, second in the Alphabet Squadron series. This is a premium/tall rack-size edition. Copyrighted by Lucasfilm.

\*Frey, Dan **The Future Is Yours** (Penguin Random House/Del Rey, 978-0-593-15821-0, \$27.00, 335pp, hc) SF novel in epistolary form. A startup company has a computer that accurately predicts the future one year ahead – but it looks like apocalypse looms. Ebook also available.

\*Gabaldon, Diana & John Joseph Adams, eds. The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy 2020 (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt/Mariner, 978-1-328613103, \$16.99, xxii + 407pp, tp) Best-of-the-year anthology, the sixth in the series, with 20 stories from 2019 by authors including Kelly Barnhill, Jaymee Goh, Ken Liu, S.P. Somtow, and E. Lily Yu. Introduction by Gabaldon; foreword by series editor John Joseph Adams, who also provides his own list of notable stories. Ebook also available.

\*Gailey, Sarah **The Echo Wife** (Tor, 978-1-250-17466-6, \$25.99, 254pp,

hc, cover by Will Staehle) Near-future thriller/SF novel. Scientist Evelyn Caldwell's husband is having an affair with a cloned replica of her. Ebook also available. Simultaneous with the Tor Canadian trade paperback (-81825-6, C\$22.99) and UK (Hodder & Stoughton) editions.

Gaiman, Neil **Neverwhere** (Harper-Collins/Morrow, 978-0-06-307072-1, \$16.99, 440pp, tp, cover by Henry Sene Yee) Reprint (BBC 1996) novelization of Gaiman's own dark-fantasy TV series. This follows the Morrow 2016 edition with the author's preferred text and bonus story, "How the Marquis Got His Coat Back". This is the second trade paperback edition of this text; first printing.

Gaiman, Neil **Stardust** (HarperCollins/ Morrow, 978-0-06-307071-4, \$16.99, 233pp, tp. cover by Henry Sene Yee) Reissue (DC/Vertigo 1998) fantasy novel. This has the expanded text of the Spike 1999 edition.

\*Galland, Nicole Master of the Revels (HarperCollins/Morrow, 978-0-06-284487-3, \$29.99, 543pp, ho) Science fantasy time-travel adventure novel, a sequel to The Rise and Fall of D.O.D.O. (co-written with Neal Stephenson). Ebook also available. Simultaneous with the UK (The Borough Press) ebook edition.

\*Glass, Cate A Summoning of Demons (Tor, 978-1-250-31105-4, \$18.99, 346pp, tp, cover by Alyssa Winans) Fantasy novel, third and final in the Chimera series begun in A Conjuring of Assassins. Copyrighted by Carol Berg. Ebook also available.

Grace, Adalyn All the Stars and Teeth (Macmillan/Square Fish, 978-1-250-76280-1, \$10.99, 368pp, tp, cover by Gemma O'Brien) Reprint (Imprint 2020) young-adult fantasy novel, the first in a duology.

Gratton, Tessa **Lady Hotspur** (Tor, 978-0-7653-9250-3, \$19.99, 590pp, tp, cover by Sebastian Giacobino) Reprint (Tor 2020) epic fantasy novel.

\*Gray, Claudia Star Wars: The High Republic: Into the Dark (Disney/ Lucasfilm Press, 978-1-368-05728-8, \$17.99, 425pp, hc, cover by Giorgio Baroni) Young-adult Star Wars tie-in novel. Ebook also available. Copyrighted by Lucasfilm.

\*Grey, Ornella The Night Whisperer (self-published, 978-1-661666736, \$16.65, 484pp, tp) Gothic horror novel set in Regency England. Porphyria Thaxton is pressured to marry a man she loathes, but the arrival of a foreign nobleman may offer an alternative. A print-on-demand edition. Ebook also

\*Gruenke, Jessica Of Silver and Shadow (North Star Editions/Flux, 978-1-63583-054-5, \$14.99, tp) Young-adult fantasy novel. A silver wielder with forbidden magic and the kingdom's youngest prince get caught up in a rebellion. A first novel. Ebook also available. North Star Editions, 2297 Waters Drive, Mendota Heights MN 55120; <www.fluxnow.com>.

\*Hamilton, Denise, ed. **Speculative Los Angeles** (Akashic Books, 978-1-61775-856-0, \$15.95, 304pp, tp) Original anthology of 14 SF and fantasy stories about Los Angeles. Authors include Aimee Bender, Stephen Blackmoore, Francesca Lia Block, and Charles Yu. A hardcover edition (-864-5, \$25.95) was announced but not seen. Ebook also available. Akashic Books; <www. akashicbooks.com>.

\*Hamilton, Laurell K. **Rafael** (Penguin Random House/Jove, 978-0-593-33291-7, \$7.99, 258pp, pb) Paranormal romance/horror novel in the Anita Blake series, focusing Rafael, king of the wererats, who needs Anita with him to fight a rival with dark secrets. Ebook also available. Simultaneous with the UK (Headline) edition.

\*Hand, Elizabeth The Best of Elizabeth Hand (Subterranean Press, 978-1-64524-005-1, \$45.00, 557pp, hc) Collection of 16 stories, with story notes on the inspirations of each. Edited by Bill Sheehan. This is a signed, limited edition of 1,000. Ebook also available. Subterranean Press, PO Box 190106, Burton MI 48519; <subterranean press.

Hathaway, Joanna Storm from the East (Tor Teen, 978-0-7653-9645-7, \$11.99, 495pp, tp, cover by Marisa Aragon Ware) Reprint (Tor Teen 2020) young-adult historical fantasy novel, the second in the Glass Alliance series.

Hearne, Kevin Ink & Sigil (Penguin Random House/Del Rey, 978-1-9848-2127-0, \$16.00, 308 + xiipp, tp, cover by Inkymole) Reprint (Del Rey 2020) fantasy novel, first in a series featuring cursed mage Al MacBharrais, set in the world of the Iron Druid series.

\*Hearne, Kevin A Question of Navigation (Subterranean Press, 978-159606-981-7, \$40,00, 142pp, hc, cover by Paul Youll) SF novella. Six scientists abducted by aliens try to rescue another 50,000 humans scheduled to be eaten. This is a signed, limited edition of 1,250; a traycased, leatherbound lettered edition of 26 (\$300.00); and ebook also available. Subterranean Press, PO Box 190106, Burton MI 48519; <subterraneanpress.com>.

\*Hernandez, Catherine **Crosshairs** (Simon & Schuster/Atria, 978-1-9821-4602-3, \$27.00, 250pp, hc) Near-future dystopian SF novel. Kay, the gay son of Filipino and Jamaican immigrants in a world torn by floods, joins a Resistance against a fascist regime. Ebook also available

\*Howe, Barbara **The Wordsmith** (IFWG Publishing Australia, 978-1-925956-57-3, \$17.99, 305pp, tp, cover by Catherine Archer-Wills) Young-adult epic fantasy novel, the fourth book in the Reforging series. Irene van Gelder seeks to earn her living as an Air Witch. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available. IFWG Publishing Australia, <ifwgaustralia.com>.

\*Hunt, Roy V. **Roy V. Hunt: A Retrospective** (First Fandom Experience, 978-1-7332964-6-5, \$45.00, 144pp, tp, cover by Roy V. Hunt) Art book with over 100 color reproductions of works by the SF fan and artist, from mimeo fanzine art to oil paintings, with a biography covering Hunt's life and career. Written and edited by David Ritter & Daniel Ritter, with foreword by Martin Mahoney of the Norman Rockwell Museum offering a historical perspective with examples of period illustration. Includes woodblock prints produced for the Work Projects Administration in the 1940s. An illustrated appendix documents technology used by early fans to reproduce art. Includes a chronological index to Hunt's published art. First Fandom Experience, <firstfandomexperience.org>

\*Jackson, Kosoko **Yesterday Is History** (Sourcebooks Fire, 978-1-4926-9434-2, \$17.99, 305pp, hc) Young-adult fantasy romance novel. Andre gets a liver transplant that gives him the ability to travel in time, wakes up in 1969, and connects with a boy. Ebook also available.

\*Johnson, Alaya Dawn Reconstruction (Small Beer Press, 978-1-61873-

**>>** 

#### **H** Books Received

- 177-7, \$17.00, 271pp, tp, cover by Tessa Mars) Collection of ten stories, two original, spanning Johnson's writing career; her first collection. Small Beer Press, 150 Pleasant St. #306, Easthampton MA 01027; <www.smallbeerpress.com>.
- \*Johnston, Michael Silence of the Soleri (Tor, 978-0-7653-8775-2, \$29.99, 381pp, hc, cover by Stephen Youll) Fantasy novel inspired by ancient Egypt, the second book in the Amber Throne series begun in Soleri. Ebook also available.
- \*Jones, Nick And Then She Vanished (Blackstone Publishing, 978-1-66503-655-9, \$26.99, 262pp, hc) Time-travel fantasy novel, the first in the Joseph Bridgeman series about a man who discovers he can time travel through hypnosis and tries to prevent his little sister's disappearance over 20 years before. This is updated and significantly revised and expanded from The Unexpected Gift of Joseph Bridgeman (self-published 2015), the first book in the Downstream Diaries series. Ebook also available.
- Jordan, Zack **The Last Human** (Penguin Random House/Del Rey, 978-0-451-49982-0, \$18.00, 428pp, tp) Reprint (Del Rey 2020) far-future SF novel.
- Katsu, Alma **The Deep** (Penguin Random House/Putnam, 978-0-525-53792-2, \$17.00, 417pp, tp) Reprint (Putnam 2020) horror novel of the *Titanic*. This includes a discussion guide.
- \*Kingfisher, T. A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking (Argyll Productions, 978-1-61450-524-2, \$14.95, 320pp, tp, cover by Ursula Vernon) Young-adult fantasy novel about Mona, a 14-year-old mage whose magic only works for baking. Kingfisher is a pen name for Ursula Vernon. Argyll Productions, <argyllproductions.com>
- \*Kirkpatrick, Russell Silent Sorrow (IFWG Publishing Australia, 978-1-925956-52-8, \$20.99, 466pp, tp, cover by Luke Spooner) Fantasy novel, the first volume in the Book of Remezov series. Brilliant earthquake predictor Remezov finds a dead scientist's diary that warns of an imminent invasion. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available. IFWG Publishing Australia, <ifwgaustralia.com>.
- Kluwe, Chris **Otaku** (Tor, 978-1-250-20394-6, \$17.99, 349pp, tp) Reprint (Tor 2020) near-future SF novel.
- Knight, Damon A For Anything (ReAnimus Press, 979-8576241637, \$14.99, 243pp, tp. cover by Clay Hagebusch) Reprint (Zenith 1959 as The People Maker) SF novel about the gismo device, which can create anything. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available. ReAnimus Press, 1100 Johnson Road #16-143, Golden CO 80402; <www.ReAnimus.com>.
- Knight, Damon The Best of Damon Knight (ReAnimus Press, 979-8584452414, \$16.99, 313pp, tp, cover by Clay Hagebusch) Reprint (SFBC 1976) collection of 22 stories. A printon-demand edition; ebook also available. ReAnimus Press, 1100 Johnson Road #16-143, Golden CO 80402; <www.ReAnimus.com>.
- +Knox, Elizabeth **The Absolute Book** (Penguin Random House/Viking, 978-0-593-29673-8, \$28.00, 626pp, hc) Fantasy novel set in three worlds: contemporary England and Auckland, a fairy land, and Purgatory. Taryn Comick writes about things that damage libraries, and gets questioned about fires, including one in her grandparents' home. First US edition (Victoria University

- Press, New Zealand 2019, in "slightly different form").
- \*Kress, Adrienne Bendy: The Illusion of Living (Scholastic/AFK, 978-1-338-71588-0, \$14.99, 249pp, hc) Young-adult gaming tie-in novel in the form of a fictional memoir of Joey Drew, the creator of the Bendy animations in the horror video game. Copyrighted by Joey Drew Studios. Ebook also available.
- Kwaymullina, Ambelina & Ezekiel Kwaymullina **The Things She's Seen** (Penguin Random House/Ember, 978-1-9848-4953-3, \$9.99, 193pp, tp) Reprint (Allen & Unwin 2018) young-adult supernatural thriller.
- Lackey, Mercedes & Cody Martin Breaking Silence (Baen, 978-1-9821-2519-6, \$8.99, 439pp, pb, cover by Larry Dixon) Reprint (Baen 2000, not seen) fantasy novel in the SERRAted Edge series, sequel to Silence; part of the Elves on the Road universe.
- Lam, Laura **Goldilocks** (Orbit US, 978-0-316-46288-4, \$16.99, 333pp, tp) Reprint (Wildfire 2020) SF technothriller about an all-female space mission.
- \*Laporta, Mark Entropy Refraction (Chickadee Prince, 978-1-7329139-6-7, \$14.99, 250pp, tp, cover by Daniel Middleton) SF space opera novel, the second in the Against the Glare of Darkness series. Ebook also available. Chickadee Prince, <chickadeeprince. com>.
- \*Laporta, Mark **Orbitals: Journeys to Future Worlds** (Chickadee Prince, no ISBN, \$0.99, 235pp, eb) Collection of four stories, all originally published in slightly different form in *Audere*. The author's first collection. Available only as an ebook. Chickadee Prince, <chickadeeprince.com>.
- Lee, Mackenzi The Gentleman's Guide to Getting Lucky (HarperCollins/Tegen Books, 978-0-06-296717-6, \$9.99, 113pp, tp, cover by David Curtis) Reprint (Tegen Books 2019) associational young-adult historical adventure/romance novella, set between the first two books in the Guide series set in the 18th century, the first volume of which had fantasy elements; this focuses on romance. Copyrighted by Mackenzie Van Engelenhoven. Ebook also available.
- \*Leimbach, Marti **Dragonfly Girl** (HarperCollins/Tegen Books, 978-0-06-299586-5, \$17.99, 373pp, hc) Young-dult SF thriller novel. Teen scientist Kira Adams brings a rat back from the dead and ends up in the middle of intrigue that threatens her life. Ebook also available.
- \*Lemberg, R.B. & Lisa M. Bradley, eds. Climbing Lightly Through Forests: A Poetry Anthology Honoring Ursula K. Le Guin (Aqueduct Press, 978-1-61976-197-1, \$18.00, 165pp, tp) Anthology of 63 poems, 13 reprints. Authors include Mary Soon Lee, Sofia Samatar, Lawrence Schimel, Nisi Shawl, David Sklar, Sonya Taaffe, and Hal Y. Zhang. This includes a retrospective article on Le Guin's poetry by R.B. Lemberg. Ebook also available. Aqueduct Press, PO Box 95787, Seattle WA 98145-2787; <www.aqueductpress.com>.
- \*Leroux, Gaston The Bride of the Sun (Black Coat Press, 978-1-64932-038-4, \$20.95, 226pp, tp, cover by Mike Hoffman) Lost world novel, a thriller involving a young woman kidnapped by Incan descendants in Peru planning a virgin sacrifice. Translated/"adapted" by Jean-Marc Lofficier & Randy Lofficier from the French L'épouse du soleil (Pierre Lafitte 1914). Introduction by Jean-Marc Lofficier. This is a printon-demand edition, available online

- from <www.blackcoatpress.com>, or from Hollywood Comics.com, PO Box 17270, Encino CA 914916.
- \*Lesperance, Nicole The Wide Starlight (Penguin Random House/Razorbill, 978-0-593-11622-7, \$16.99, 304pp, hc, cover by Ioana Harasim) Young-adult fantasy/magical realism novel based on Norwegian folklore. Strange things start happening after Eli's mother whistles at the Northern Lights. This is the author's debut YA novel, but a debut middle-grade dark fantasy novel appeared a month earlier. Ebook also available.
- \*Lewis, Elle **Warrior of the Stars** (Black Rose Writing, 978-1-68433-633-3, \$17.95, 175pp, tp) Fantasy novel, the third and final in the Glass Star trilogy. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available.
- Llywelyn, Morgan Finn Mac Cool (Tor/Forge, 978-1-250-75422-6, \$18.99, 400pp, tp) Reissue (Tor 1994) historical novel with fantasy elements. This indicates first printing of the second trade paperback edition. Ebook also available.
- \*Lo, Malinda Last Night at the Telegraph Club (Penguin Random House/Dutton, 978-0-525-55525-4, \$18.99, 408pp, hc) Associational young-adult LGBTQ+ historical romance novel about two girls in San Francisco's Chinatown during the Red Scare in the 1950s. Ebook also available.
- \*Lyke, Alison **Tripping the Multiverse** (Black Rose Writing, 978-1-68433-626-5, \$18.95, 199pp, tp) SF novel, the first in the Jade and Antigone series. A teleporter test gone wrong gives science journalists Jade and Antigone strange new talents that could help them rescue a colleague trapped in another dimension. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available. Black Rose Writing, <www.blackrosewriting.com>.
- \*Maas, Sarah J. A Court of Silver Flames (Bloomsbury USA, 978-1-681196282, \$28.00, 751pp, hc, cover by Happypets) Young-adult fantasy novel, the fifth in the Court of Thorns and Roses series. Nesta Acheron must rely on the warrior Cassian as the human queens forge a new alliance. Simultaneous with the UK (Bloomsbury) edition. Ebook also available; at least seven exclusive/special editions (some signed) were announced but not seen.
- \*Maberry, Jonathan, ed. **Don't Turn Out the Lights** (HarperCollins, 978-06-287767-3, \$16.99, xvii + 394pp, hc, cover by Compiet. Oros) Middle-grade original anthology of 35 horror stories, a tribute to Avin Schwartz's **Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark**, presented by the Horror Writers Association. Authors include Tananarive Due, Kami Garcia, Christopher Golden, Josh Malerman, Madeleine Roux, and R.L. Stine. Illustrated by Iris Compiet. Ebook also available.
- \*Magnotta, Josh A Sweet, Soft Glow (FyreSyde Publishing, 979-8694505451, \$12.99, 243pp, tp) SF horror novel. Mass killings may be the result of a form of mind control. A first novel. Ebook also available. FyreSyde Publishing, <www.FyreSydePublishing.com>.
- \*Mangum, Lisa, ed. Hold Your Fire: Stories Celebrating the Creative Spark (WordFire Press, 978-1-68057-174-5, \$14.99, x + 269pp, tp) Original anthology of 19 stories (two reprints) about inspiration in many forms. Introduction by Kevin J. Anderson, who discusses his collaborations with the late Neil Peart; the duo has one reprint story here. Other authors include Brian Corley, Shannon Fox, Kitty Sarkozy,

- and Wayland Smith. This is the sixth volume in a series in support of the Don Hodge Memorial Scholarship Fund for the Superstars Writing Seminar. A hardcover edition (-176-9, \$25.99) was announced but not seen; ebook also available. WordFire Press, PO Box 1840, Monument CO 80132; <wordfirepress.com>.
- +Marrs, John **The Minders** (Penguin Random House/Berkley, 978-0-593-33472-0, \$17.00, 400pp, tp) Nearfuture SF thriller/horror novel about five people who hold the country's most classified information as genetic code in their heads. First US edition (Del Rey UK 9/20). Ebook also available.
- \*Martin, George R.R. & Melinda M. Snodgrass, eds. Wild Cards: Deuces Down (Tor, 978-1-250-22720-1, \$28.99, 352pp, hc, cover by Micah Epstein) Shared-world original anthology/mosaic novel of ten stories, significantly revised/expanded from the ibooks 2002 edition; this adds three new stories by Mary Anne Mohanraj, Caroline Spector, and Carrie Vaughn. This retains illustrations by Timothy Truman and the original introduction by Walton Simons. Snodgrass is credited as assistant editor only on the title page. Ebook also available.
- \*Martin, Leila A.M. & Timothy Jacobs, et al., eds. **Venus Remembered** (OmicronWorld Entertainment/Fahrenheit Books, 978-0-9830945-7-9, \$19.95, 49pp, hc) Anthology of Ray Bradbury's "All Summer in a Day" plus sequel "When the Rain Stops" by Jason J. Marchi. Includes a 2002 letter from Bradbury on Marchi's story, a 2008 foreword by William F. Nolan, a new introduction by Jonathan R. Eller, two prefaces by Marchi, and discussion questions. Edited by Martin, Jacobs & Frances Migliaccio. This is a limited hardcover edition signed by Marchi; ebook also available. OmicronWorld Entertainment, 42 Water Street, Suite 222, Guilford CT 06437; <www.omicronworld.com>.
- \*Matthews, Mark The Hobgoblin of Little Minds (Wicked Run Press, 978-0578786834, \$12.99, 202pp, tp, cover by Vincent Chong) Psychological horror novel with SF and werewolf elements, involving experiments on psychiatric patients. A print-on-demand edition; a hardcover edition (978-1736695005, \$19.99) was announced but not seen; ebook also available. Wicked Run Press, <wickedrunpress.com>.
- \*Maxwell, Everina Winter's Orbit (Tor, 978-1-250-75883-5, \$24.99, 428pp, hc, cover by Magdiel Lopez) SF queer romance/space opera novel. Prince Kiem, the Emperor's least favorite grandchild, is commanded to marry the widower of another royal prince. A first novel. Ebook also available. Simultaneous with the Orbit UK edition.
- \*McCoy, Tod & M. Huw Evans, eds. Pocket Workshop: Essays on Living as a Writer (Hydra House, 978-0-9979510-7-3, \$17.95, 190pp, tp, cover by Cory Skerry) Non-fiction anthology of 27 essays (six reprints) on writing SF, fantasy, and horror from 28 Clarion West instructors, including Octavia E. Butler, John Crowley, Stephen Graham Jones, and Connie Willis. Forewords by the editors; introduction by Neile Graham. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available; a limited hardcover edition (-8-0, \$27.95), not seen, was announced as available from the publisher website only. Hydra House, 2850 SW Yancy St. #106, Seattle WA 98126; <www.hydrahousebooks.com>.
- \*McFall, Kathleen & Clark Hays Scorched Earth (Pumpjack Press, 978-1-7345197-2-3, \$15.95, 309pp,

tp) Near-future SF mystery novel, the second in the Halo trilogy set in 2188 on Mars. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available. Pumpjack Press, <www.pumpjackpress.com>.

\*McGuire, Seanan Across the Green Grass Fields (Tordotcom, 978-1-250-21359-4, \$19.99, 174pp, hc, cover by Robert Hunt) Fantasy novel, the sixth book but a standalone in the Wayward Children series. Illustrated by Rovina Cai. Ebook also available.

Milford, Kate **The Thief Knot** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt/Clarion, 978-0-358348207, \$7.99, 454pp, tp, cover by Jaime Zollars) Reprint (Clarion 2020) middle-grade fantasy/mystery novel, part of the series begun in **Greenglass House**, in the Nagspeake universe.

\*Miller, Kirsten **Don't Tell a Soul** (Penguin Random House/Delacorte, 978-0-525-58120-8, \$17.99, 368pp, hc, cover by Dan Quintana) Young-adult gothic horror novel with a feminist twist. Bram moves in with her uncle, whose house is rumored to be haunted, in a tiny town with dark secrets.

\*Modesitt, L.E., Jr. Fairhaven Rising (Tor, 978-1-250-26519-7, \$29.99, 460pp, hc, cover by Marc Simonetti) Fantasy novel, 22nd in the Saga of Recluce series. Ebook also available.

\*Moning, Karen Marie Kingdom of Shadow and Light (Penguin Random House/Delacorte, 978-0-399-59369-7, \$28-99, 492pp, hc) Paranormal romance novel, the 11th and final book in the Fever series. Ebook also available.

Montimore, Margarita **Oona Out of Order** (Macmillan/Flatiron, 978-1-250-23661-6, \$17.99, 336pp, tp) Reprint (Flatiron 2020) fantasy novel.

Morgan, Louisa **The Age of Witches** (Orbit US/Redhook, 978-0-316-41954-3, \$16.99, 437pp, tp) Reprint (Redhook 2020) historical fantasy novel of women from families of witches. Louisa Morgan is a pseudonym for Louise Marley, who has also written historical fiction as Cate Camphell

\*Moses, Rucker & Theo Gangi Kingston and the Magician's Lost and Found (Penguin Random House/Putnam, 978-0-525-51686-6, \$17.99, 275pp, hc, cover by Dan Mumford) Middle-grade fantasy novel set in an underground New York with magic and secrets. Kingston hunts for his missing father and the magic that's gone missing from Echo City. Rucker Moses is a pen name for Craig S. Phillips & Harold Hayes, Jr.

\*Ness, Mari Resistance and Transformation: On Fairy Tales (Aqueduct Press, 978-1-61976-195-7, \$12.00, 125pp, tp) Non-fiction collection of 14 essays originally published on *Tor. com*, looking at French literary fairy tales during the reign of Louis XIV, and the authors who used such stories to critique the court and change the face of literature. This is volume 78 in Aqueduct's Conversation Pieces series. Ebook also available. Aqueduct Press, PO Box 95787, Seattle WA 98145-2787; <www.aqueductpress.com>.

\*Neuvel, Sylvain A History of What Comes Next (Tordotcom, 978-1-250-26206-6, \$24.99, 302pp, hc) SF/secret history novel, the first in the Take Them to the Stars series about a family working for over 99 identical generations to get mankind to the stars, but other forces are working against them. In the 1940s, Mia tries to get Werner von Braun away from the Nazis and working on rockets for the US. Ebook also available.

\*Ogden, Aimee **Sun-Daughters, Sea-Daughters** (Tordotcom, 978-1-250-78212-0, \$13.99, 105pp, tp, cover by

Chase Stone) SF novella reimagining "The Little Mermaid" as a tale of geneedited humans on colony worlds, and a former seaclan daughter getting help from the mercenary World-Witch to find an offworld cure for a plague among the land-dwellers. Ebook also available.

\*Okri, Ben Prayer for the Living (Akashic Books, 978-1-61775-863-8, \$24.95, 212pp, hc) Collection of 24 stories (12 new) and a poem. First US edition (Head of Zeus 10/19). Ebook also available. Akashic Books; <www.akashicbooks.com>.

\*Older, Daniel José Flood City (Scholastic Press, 978-1-338-11112-5, \$17.99, 327pp, hc, cover by Sam Gilbey) Middle-grade SF novel about kids in Flood City, the last inhabitable place on flooded Earth, where the Star Guard and the Chemical Barons living in spaceships battle for control. Ebook also available.

\*Osborne, Karen Engines of Oblivion (Tor, 978-1-250-21550-5, \$17.99, 409pp, tp, cover by Mike Heath) SF novel, second in the Memory War series. Natalie Chan continues to fight corporate plans for her and the remnants of an alien civilization. Ebook also available.

\*Owen, Margaret **The Faithless Hawk** (Macmillan/Holt, 978-1-250-19194-6, \$18.99, 385pp, hc, cover by M.S. Corley) Young-adult fantasy novel, the second in a series begun in **The Merciful Crow**. Ebook also available.

\*Polk, C.L. Soulstar (Tordotcom, 978-1-250-20357-1, \$17.99, 299pp, tp, cover by Will Staehle) Fantasy novel, third and final in the Kingston Cycle series begun in Witchmark. Robin becomes involved with efforts to end discrimination against lower-class witches. Ebook also available.

Pool, Katy Rose There Will Come a Darkness (Macmillan/Square Fish, 978-1-250-61985-3, \$11.99, 482pp, tp, cover by Jim Tierney) Reprint (Holt 2019) young-adult fantasy novel, the first in the Age of Darkness trilogy.

Purdie, Kathryn **Bone Crier's Moon** (HarperCollins/Tegen Books, 978-0-06-279878-7, \$10.99, 453pp, tp, cover by Charlie Bowater) Reprint (Tegen Books 2020) young-adult fantasy novel, the first in a duology.

\*Riesman, Abraham True Believer: The Rise and Fall of Stan Lee (Penguin Random House/Crown, 978-0-593-13571-6, \$28.00, 394pp, hc) Biography of Marvel Comics creator Stan Lee, based on extensive research including over 150 interviews. Includes notes and index.

\*Riggs, Ransom The Desolations of Devil's Acre (Penguin Random House/Dutton, 978-0-7352-3153-5, \$22.99, 503pp, hc) Young-adult fantasy novel, sixth and final in the Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children series. Ebook also available. Simultaneous with the Puffin UK edition.

Roanhorse, Rebecca **Race to the Sun** (Disney/Hyperion, 978-1-3680-2482-2, \$7.99, 302pp, tp, cover by Dale Ray Deforest) Reprint (Rick Riordan Presents 2020) middle-grade fantasy novel based on Navajo legend. A Rick Riordan Presents book.

\*Robb, J.D. **Faithless in Death** (St. Martin's, 978-1-250-27274-4, \$28.99, 390pp, hc) SF romance/mystery novel, 52nd in the series featuring cop Eve Dallas. This includes a poster on the back side of the dust jacket. Simultaneous with the Piatkus UK edition. Ebook also available.

\*Romano-Lax, Andromeda Annie and the Wolves (Soho Press, 978-

1-641291699, \$27.00, 398pp, hc) Psychological/time-travel fantasy novel. A modern-day historian obsessed with Annie Oakley starts having out-of-body experiences parallel to events in Annie's life. Ebook also available.

\*Rosson, Keith Folk Songs for Trauma Surgeons (Meerkat Press, 978-1-946154-52-1, \$17.95, 189pp, tp) Collection of 15 stories, one new. Ebook also available. Meerkat Press, <www.meerkatpress.com>.

\*Ryan, Anthony **The Songs of the Dark** (Subterranean Press, no ISBN, \$125.00, 225pp, hc, cover by Kevin Zamir Goeke) Collection of four fantasy stories from the Raven's Shadow universe, including two novellas. Ryan provides a general introduction, plus a note on each story. This is a signed, limited edition of 400; a traycased edition of 26 (\$600.00) and ebook also available. Subterranean Press, PO Box 190106, Burton MI 48519; <subterraneanpress.com>.

\*San Filippo, Jennifer **Divided Fire** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt/Clarion, 978-1-328489197, \$17.99, 355pp, hc, cover by Jonathan Barlett) Young-adult fantasy novel set in a world where Songs are magic. Miren seeks to rescue her frail sister Kesia, a Fire Singer kidnapped for her magic. A first novel. Ebook also available.

\*Sartori, Giacomo **Bug** (Restless Books, 978-1-63206-274-1, \$18.00, 304pp, tp) SF novel involving intelligent robots, bees, and a family of misfit savants. Translated by Frederika Randall from the Italian **Baco** (Exòrma 2019). Restless Books 232 3rd St., Suite A101, Brooklyn NY 11215; <www.restlessbooks.org.

\*Schildiner, Frank The Last Days of Atlantis: The Soul of Soroe (Black Coat Press, 978-1-64932-046-9, \$22.95, 287pp, tp, cover by Mike Hoffman) Fantasy novel, the first in a series based on the novel The Last Days of Atlantis by Charles Lomon & P.-B. Gheusi. Introduction by Brian Stableford & Jean-Marc Lofficier. A print-ondemand edition. Hollywood Comics. com, PO Box 17270, Encino CA 91416; <www.blackcoatpress.com>.

Sebastian, Laura **Ember Queen** (Penguin Random House/Ember, 978-1-5247-6717-4, \$10.99, 462pp, tp, cover by Billelis) Reprint (Delacorte 2020) young-adult fantasy novel, third and final in the Ash Princess trilogy.

\*Shusterman, Neal Game Changer (HarperCollins/Quill Tree, 978-0-06-309480-2, \$17.99, 386pp, hc, cover by Jim Tierney) Young-adult football/fantasy novel about a teen who starts bouncing through alternate worlds after being hit by a football. This is a Barnes & Noble exclusive edition with an extra 32pp of author comments on his writing process. A trade edition (-199867-6) was announced but not seen; ebook also available. Simultaneous with the Walker UK edition.

\*Smejkal, Kim Curse of the Divine (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 978-1-328-63725-3, \$17.99, 436pp, hc, cover by Emilee Rudd) Young-adult fantasy novel, the second in the lnk in the Blood duology. Ebook also available.

Smejkal, Kim Ink in the Blood (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 978-0-358-34893-1, \$9.99, 442pp, tp, cover by Emilee Rudd) Reprint (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2020) young-adult fantasy novel, the first in the eponymous duology.

\*Smith, Luanne G. The Conjurer (Amazon/47North, 978-1542019606, \$14.95, 232pp, tp) Fantasy novel, third in the Vine Witch series. Sidra returns to her adopted home to try to prove

she didn't murder her husband, Ebook also available.

\*Smith, Nicholas Sansbury Sons of War 3: Sinners (Blackstone Publishing, 978-1-5385-5707-5, \$26.99, 372pp, hc) Postapocalyptic SF novel, third in the Sons of War series. A premium/ tall rack-size paperback edition (978-1-665019934, \$9.99) was announced but not seen; ebook also available. Blackstone Publishing, 31 Mistletoe Rd., Ashland OR 97520; <www.BlackstonePublishing.com>.

\*Spruell, Blue **Taro** (Out of the Blue, 9781735729213, 10.99, 261pp, tp, cover by Miya Outlaw) Historical fantasy novel about a legendary boy samurai in 1596 Japan. Illustrated by Miya Outlaw. Ebook also available. Out of the Blue Productions, 315 Sycamore Street, Decatur GA 30030; <www.outoftheblueproductions.llc>.

\*Sriduangkaew, Benjanun Now Will Machines Hollow the Beast (Prime Books, 978-1607015437, \$9.99, 116pp, tp, cover by Rashed Al-Akroka) Cyberpunk/dystopian novella. Ebook also available.

Stoker, Dacre & J.D. Barker **Dracul** (Penguin Random House/Putnam, 978-0-593-33119-4, \$9.99, 493pp, tp) Reissue (Putnam 2018) vampire novel, a prequel of sorts to **Dracula**, co-authored by Bram Stoker's greatgrandnephew. A discussion guide is included. This is a "special value" edition.

\*Swallow, James Star Trek: Picard: The Dark Veil (Simon & Schuster/ Gallery, 978-1-9821-5406-6, \$25.00, 321pp, hc, cover by Jim Salvati) Star Trek tie-in novel. Copyrighted by CBS Studios. Ebook also available.

\*Tadjo, Vérwonique In the Company of Men (Other Press, 978-1-63542-095-1, \$14.99, 143pp, tp) Historical novel with elements of fantasy about the West African ebola outbreak from 2014-2016, mixing facts with fictionalized accounts by those involved with the struggle against the disease, along with songs and legends, and narrated in part by a baobab tree and the virus itself. Translated by the author with John Cullen from the French En Compagnie des Hommes (Don Quichotte 2017). A French flap edition; ebook also available.

\*Tchaikovsky, Adrian The Expert System's Champion (Tordotcom, 978-1-250-76639-7, \$14.99, 188pp, p, cover by Raphael Lacoste) SF novella, sequel to The Expert System's Brother. Handry's band of misfits encounters a problem the ancient expert system can't solve. Ebook also available.

\*Teppo, Mark The Doom that Came to the Coffee Shop (Night Office, 978-1-63023-129-3, \$9.99, 116pp, tp) Horror novella in the form of a "educational assessment exercise"/choose-your-own adventure tale. Published in association with 51325 Books and Firebird Creative. A print-on-demand edition. Ebook also available. Night Office, <nightoffice.org>.

Trelease, Gita All That Glitters (Macmillan/Flatiron, 978-1-250-29554-5, \$11.99, 457pp, tp) Reprint (Flatiron 2019 as Enchantée) young-adult historical fantasy novel of the French Revolution, the first in the Enchantée series. This includes a reading group quide.

\*Trelease, Gita Everything That Burns (Macmillan/Flatiron, 978-1-250-29555-2, \$18.99, 381pp, hc) Young-adult historical fantasy novel, second in the Enchantée series about a teen using magic in revolutionary Paris. Simultane-

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#### **H** Books Received

ous with the UK (Macmillan as **Liberté**) edition. Ebook also available.

\*Vance, Ryan **One Man's Trash** (Lethe Press, 978-1-59021-735-1, \$12.00, 154pp, tp) Collection of 15 stories, six new. A print-on-demand edition; ebook also available. Lethe Press, <lethe-pressbooks.com>.

\*Victoria, Emily **This Golden Flame** (Harlequin/Inkyard Press, 978-1-335-08027-1, \$18.99, 380pp, hc, cover by Maciej Frolow) Young-adult fantasy debut about Karis, a servant forced to work at the mysterious Scriptorium, who accidentally awakens the long-dormant automaton Alix. Simultaneous with the UK (Hodder & Stoughton) edition. Ebook also available.

\*Wagers, K.B. **Out Past the Stars** (Orbit US, 978-0-316-41127-1, \$16.99, 384pp, tp, cover by Stephan Martiniere) SF novel, third and final in the Farian War trilogy, a sequel to the Indranan War trilogy. Simultaneous with the Orbit

UK edition. Ebook also available.

Webber, Heather South of the Buttonwood Tree (Tor/Forge, 978-1-250-19858-7, \$16.99, 334pp, tp) Reprint (Forge 2020) fantasy/magical realism novel. The author also writes as Heather Blake.

Wexler, Django City of Stone and Silence (Tor Teen, 978-0-7653-9729-4, \$10.99, 363pp, tp, cover by Richard Anderson) Reprint (Tor Teen 2020) young-adult fantasy novel, the second in the Wells of Sorcery trilogy.

\*Wexler, Django **Siege of Rage and Ruin** (Tor Teen, 978-0-7653-9731-7, \$19.99, 302pp, hc, cover by Amir Zand) Young-adult fantasy novel, third and final in the Wells of Sorcery trilogy. Ebook also available.

+Whiteley, Aliya **The Loosening Skin** (Titan Books US, 978-1789092332, \$14.95, 242pp, tp) Alternate universe SF mystery novel set in a world where people shed their skins, and their memories of love and relationships with

them. This adds a new bonus story set in the same world. Ebook also available. First US edition (Unsung Stories 2018, not seen)

Yep, Laurence **The Tiger's Apprentice** (HarperCollins, 978-0-06-305650-3, \$7.99, 192pp, tp, cover by Fiona Hsieh) Reissue (HarperCollins 2003) young-adult fantasy novel.

\*Youers, Rio **Lola on Fire** (Harper-Collins/Morrow, 978-0-06-300100-8, \$27.99, 390pp, hc) Associational thriller novel. Ebook also available.

\*Yu, E. Lily On Fragile Waves (Erewhon, 978-1-64566-009-5, \$25.95, 274pp, hc) Fantasy/magical realism novel. An immigrant family from Afganistan uses stories and dreams to help cope as they adjust to life in Australia. A first novel. Ebook also available.

Zdrok, Jodie Lynn **Sensational** (Tor Teen, 978-0-7653-9972-4, \$10.99, 332pp, tp) Reprint (Tor Teen 2020) young-adult historical fantasy mystery novel, sequel to **Spectacle**. ■

February 202	Year to Date						
	19	SF Novels	29				
Fantasy		Fantasy					
	23	Novels	47				
Horror Novels	4	Horror Novels	a 11				
Paranormal		Paranormal					
Romance	4	Romance	4				
Anthologies	7	Anthologies	12				
Collections	8	Collections	16				
Reference	1	Reference	1				
History/		History/					
Criticism	5	Criticism	8				
Media Related	4	Media Related	9 b				
	27	Young Adult	62				
SF 4	4	SF	7				
Fantasy 17	7	Fantasy	44				
Horror	1	Horror	4				
Paranormal		Paranormal					
Romance 3 Other 2	3	Romance	5 2				
	2	Other					
Omnibus	0	Omnibus	2				
Art/Humor	2	Art/Humor	5				
Miscellaneous	<u> 10</u>	Miscellaneous	1 <u>4</u>				
	14	Total New:	220				
Reprints		Reprints					
	<u>42</u>	Reissues:	<u>110</u>				
Total: 1	56	Total:	330				

#### Short Fiction: Rich Horton № p. 12

terrorist's brain state makes yo u guilty of his crimes. Anyway – as you can see, this all gets pretty tangled, perhaps a bit TOO tangled. Kyle is pushed to get help from underground actors and then to try desperately to stop another bombing. This is really exciting stuff and has some cool ideas, and though I thought it came just short of fully working, it's still neat neat.

Greg Egan's "Light Up the Clouds" is really cool new-fashioned old-fashioned SF set in a habitat that reminded me of Larry Niven's The Integral Trees. Tirell is a young man living in a floating forest orbiting a dim "Near Sun," and a lot farther away from the "Far Sun." His people live a simple-seeming life in these trees, but they remember dimly the "cousins" who left long ago. Tirell has become involved with a group of people who launch a glider into the clouds, hoping for better sightings of the "Far Sun" and even the stars. And now they have discovered a new group of "asteroids" that don't act like asteroids, they decide these are the cousins, returned in some sort of space vehicles. But how to contact the cousins? Soon Tirell and his fellows are designing an advanced glider to launch to the supposed ships of the cousins.... This is fun stuff - very much the sort of thing one might have read in the '70s, or even the '50s (including the extremely optimistic view of how fast an engineering project such as that shown here can advance) – but there's also a darker underside here.

Felicity Shoulders's novelette "Somebody's Child" is intriguing work. Irene McFadden is a young woman acting as a "kanga" – slang for a

sort of surrogate mother of a child whose gestation was "suspended." Her daughter Frances (slangily, a "roo") is the child of a girl who died in an accident - and now her parents (Frances's grandparents) are trying to claim a role in her life. So far, so intriguing... and this is complicated further because this is an alternate present - that is, this "suspension" technology has been around since the '90s at least, and there are other changes - Mitt Romney became President, for example. Then the story pivots – it turns out Frances's grandparents aren't related to her so who is her mother, really? I have to admit I found the answer to this not very interesting, and kind of off overegging the pudding, maybe. I thought the story never really sold the political aspects of the opposition to the program, and the way that became hate of the "kangas" and "roos." What worked was, mostly, Irene's personal story, which is involving throughout, and the central idea is interesting, too - perhaps at a few thousand more words it would work even better.

The short stories in this issue are a varied and pretty strong lot. James Patrick Kelly's "Grandpa +5C" is a sneakily dark story about a young woman in a climate-ravaged future whose Great Grandmother has returned – but boomers like her are the villains that messed up the world! Kali Wallace's "Mrs. Piper Between the Sea and the Sky" is a scary story about a woman in a world in which particularly evil aliens invaded during WWII who is tasked with kidnapping Mrs. Piper's husband – a traitor. "Flowers Like Needles" by Derek Künsken, portrays a fascinating landscape around a neutron star and an alien struggling to come to philosophical terms with an alternate way of life. Perhaps the best of these is

**A.T. Greenblatt**'s "**RE: Bubble 476**", an epistolary story of two close friends (roommates and perhaps (?) lovers) who have each taken positions in "bubble universes." The story is for a while (forgive me) "bubbly," but things get fraught when it becomes clear these universes are not stable. Sweet and interesting and scary, at the same time.

#### **Recommended Stories**

"Tail Call Optimization", Tony Ballantyne (Analog 3-4/21) "Memento Amicum", Marc A. Criley (Cossmass Infinities 9/20) "Light Up the Clouds", Greg Egan (Asimov's 3-4/21) "RE: Bubble 476", A.T. Greenblatt (Asimov's 3-4/21) "The First Woe", Virginia Elizabeth Hayes (On Spec #115) "Six Coins", Liam Hogan (Curiosities Winter '20)
"Glitch", Alex Irvine (Asimov's 3-4/21) "The Shadow of His Wings", Ray Nayler (Analog 3-4/21) "And the Faces Screamed in the Galleries" Konstantine Paradias (Curiosities Winter '20)

-Rich Horton

Semiprofessional magazines, fiction fanzines, original collections, and original anthologies, plus new stories in outside sources should be sent to Rich

Horton, 653 Yeddo Ave., Webster Groves MO 63119,

<rrhorton@prodigy.net>, for review. ■

#### Short Fiction: Paula Guran <u>₩ p. 13</u>

Starting with #101, Nightmare Magazine has also dropped reprint fiction. It now publishes an original piece of flash fiction and a poem along with two new full-length stories in each issue. E.A. Petricone's "We, the Girls Who Did Not Make It" is what I call a "dead girls" story. (There have been a lot of them in the last few years.) A number of women or girls – abused, tortured, raped, killed – speak to the reader from beyond the grave. Usually, some form of retribution takes place. In this case, there are fourteen of them and they confront society's fascination with serial killers and, to a lesser extent, the killers' victims. Even though these ghosts claim they can do nothing, in the end, they do. Stephen Graham Jones's "Hairy Legs and All" is 1500 stream-of-consciousness words contemplating life

and spiders that may or may not be hiding in a pair of long-unworn shoes. **Erica Ruppert**'s flash fiction "**And Lucy Fell**" is less than 600 words of madness and warped desired. All three are nice reading, but not exceptional.

Nightmare #102 begins with Woody Dismukes's "A Cast of Liches". (A lich – from Old English *līċ* meaning "corpse" – is a type of undead creature.) In this case, three liches observe as a dead boy tries to visit his mother, haunts a police officer involved in his killing, moves along to confront the racist wife of the cop who killed him, and wreaks terrible vengeance on the murderous cop himself. It's a well-intentioned but not entirely effective story confronting racial injustice. The life of the woman in Joanna Parypinski's "It Accumulates" has become cluttered and disorganized. She decides to start tidying things up, but things don't turn out

exactly as Marie Kondo would expect. Dark, yes, but also a delight. The issue's flash piece (1108 words) "That Which Crawls from Dark Soil" by Michael Kelly evokes both the lonely darkness of death and the bright, if brief, joy of youth.

Four pieces of fiction for Fantasy #64, two quite brief. Innocent Chizaram Ilo's "Flight" is the captivating (but uncomfortable) story of life and death among some parrots of the fishing town of Selemku. In "Kisser" by David James Brock, 34-year-old Bragg loses a tooth as he sleeps. Under anesthesia at the dentist's office, he suffers another mysterious tooth loss. To prevent further loss, he decides not to sleep. Things get interestingly surreal from there. "Of Course You Screamed" – flash fiction by Sharang Biswas – about the dark evolution of a witch abandoned on an island, contains quite a bit of story for so few words. Shingai Njeri Kagunda's poetic

"Blackman's Flight in Four Parts" is piercing flash fiction dealing with the enslaved, both dead and still living, disposed of from a ship at sea. Memorable. Fantasy #65: The party is not going well for teen Izzy in "The Code for Everything" by McKinley Valentine. After going outside to "get some air" she starts chatting with a cat. She's transported to a place where the rules are more explicit – all in less than 1,500 words. Cute fae tale. Mona, in "Close Enough to Divine" by Donyae Coles, is another awkward girl at another party. But she's not like all the other girls. The wings are the first clue. Cute, no fae. M. Shaw, in "Man vs. Bomb", writes of a world in which deer are the betting spectators as a man races

a bomb and then is confronted with a choice. "[T]his is the moment when we will see if you really are a winner, or just another bomb waiting to happen." Yes, humankind has much to answer for. In "Arenous" by Hal Y. Zhang, pieces of what seem to be yellow plastic start to flake from Sarah's head. No one, including the doctor, seems concerned. Things get worse: she seems to be turning to sand. Well, we've all been there, haven't we? Clever.

Co-editor Craig L. Gidney aptly describes the eight flash stories in *Baffling* #2 as being about "necromancers and poets and monsters, experimental stories, tales that nod towards the Big Idea ethos of '70s sci-

ence fiction and sweetly magical realist fiction. Body horror stories and sexy stories. In short, it spans the breadth of weird speculative fiction." I particularly appreciated A.B. Young's demon lover tale "Peat Moss and Oil for Burning" and "Vanity Among Worms" by Brent Lambert, in which Cletus visits a "seedy nightclub offering up some bizarre unique magical experience."

-Paula Guran

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#### **Short Fiction: Karen Burnham**

len Datlow and the fourth a vampire story edited by Jonathan Strahan. "Shards" by Ian Rogers is a cabin-in-the-woods story in which four friends violently murder the fifth friend, due to a demonic artefact. In the subsequent year they all suffer terribly and psychotically. From Richard Kadrey, we get a tale of a post-plague apocalyptic cityscape in "Across the Dark Water". The thief (there are few proper names here) hires a guide to take him to the Turk after the thief's wife disappears/leaves him. After many harrowing encounters and only a little bonding, they make it to the Turk's compound and we learn the secrets within. In "The Tyger" by Tegan **Moore**, Jules is a 12-year-old boy whose parents have divorced. A family wedding is held in his favorite part of the Natural History Museum, the "Path of Time." Unfortunately his mother is drunk and sobbing over everyone she can find, while also trying to get him to recite his award-winning interpretation of the famous William Blake poem. He's desperate to escape all of this, and is definitely scaring himself by encountering the familiar Path at night in a mostly closed museum. He's walking towards a known destination, a terrifying display of Arctodus, a giant bear from Pleistocene times, but as things seem to change and shift around him, what will he find when he gets there? Moore ramps up the tension inexorably.

Finally we have "Judge Dee and the Three Deaths of Count Werdenfels" by Lavie Tidhar featuring the recurring characters Judge Dee (vampire) and Jonathan (human servant/companion/ definitely not for snacking on). Wandering through 12th-century Europe, Tidhar skips over one adventure ("He tried not to think of the Monastery of the Old High Ones and the horrors that, well, no longer dwelled there. It had been a complex case and it ended inevitably in a shower of blood.") and moves on to the titular case. A vampire count has been murdered, and multiple people are claiming to be the murderer, hoping to inherit his estate: his wife, vampire hunter Chrétien de Troyes, and an ancient vampire from Roman times. Judge Dee has his hands full sorting out a likely sequence of events while the various parties are figuratively and literally at each other's throats. The story comes to a nicely clever and satisfying conclusion.

Beneath Ceaseless Skies #322 features an R.K. Duncan story, always a treat. In "Her Black Coal Heart a Diamond in My Hand" an artist buys a basket of ghosts from a girl at the train station, almost certainly kin of hers. He uses them and an abandoned house

to set up an artistic tableau highlighting the horrors of poverty. It becomes wildly successful, and he seeks out the girl again for more ghosts to use. While focused on the success that is finally in his grasp, he misunderstands and misjudges the girl very badly. I love the fantastic art forms and craftsmanship that Duncan imagines for his stories. Josh Rountree brings us another story from 19th-century central Texas in "The Guadalupe Witch". A woman has left her abusive husband years after her young son died. It turns out that the "witch hunter" sent after her had been a friend of her son's, although he is old enough now to have a young wife. In a very matterof-fact way she continues about her business and he ends up accompanying her. Her goal is to resurrect her son, but along the way she might also set this young man before her onto a better path in life. I admired her attitude and wisdom.

Issue #323 features a debut writer, Cori Hall, with "Rose Kissed Me Today". In a charming story, the kiss of the title starts a journey of transformation for a young woman from a very small village, one that will open up whole new worlds for her. We also have a rather complicated time-travel story from Filip Hajdar Drnovšek Zorko in "When Your Being Here is Gentler than Your Absence Hard". Ouin has been sent back in time to protect Fallon Deere, a woman who will end up both directing important forces in the war that is brewing and, in at least one timeline, becoming Quin's lover. There are a number of ways to be assassinated when magic can manipulate everything, and Quin expects this mission to end badly - but Fallon is just as wise and canny in this time as in Quin's.

Strange Horizons features two novelette or nearnovelette length stories from newcomers in February. The first is "The Demon Sage's Daughter" by Varsha Dinesh. Devayani is the daughter of the title, and her father will not teach her his most potent spell. When Kacha comes around to "study" with the sage (but also to spy for the same spell and woo Devayani as well), his presence unlocks options for her. The story hints at many different ways to tell the story, but in all of them Devayani's cleverness (and also impetuousness) shines through. Then we get a New Weird story, "Ootheca", from Mário de Seabra Coelho of Portugal. In a city suffering under cover of a sleeping elder god, where technology is unreliable and also may lure "hags" who can transform people in grotesque ways, Bilal and Joanna strike up a torrid relationship. She is unfazed by the fact that he now has cockroaches for teeth (and the author doesn't shy away from visceral descriptions of what that feels like for him), and in fact it turns out that

she might have a particular motivation for choosing him specifically to pursue. Like the best New Weird, within all these surreal elements lurks a deeply felt, wholly human story.

Aurealis is a magazine I don't get to as often as I'd like. The three stories in issue #137 all have a horror bent to them, but I especially appreciated "The Redemption of Declan Callahan" by Steve **DuBois**. Nick is a pro football (soccer) player who we quickly learn is deceased, and he's listening to the titular Declan glowingly eulogize him – although they hated each other intensely in real life. Their styles were completely different, Nick the scrapper who made up for a lack of natural physical talent by sheer grit and perseverance; Declan the golden playboy skating through on talent alone, until that wasn't enough. Now the ghost of Nick is faced with the real-life Declan and the memory of how he died; DuBois makes the sports metaphor pay off with a lot of layers.

Fantasy Magazine continues to find its footing after a hiatus and under a new editorial team. I found "Of Course You Screamed" by Sharang Biswas quite interesting. It's the story of a woman ostracized and abandoned on an island for sadly typical reasons. The series of endings makes it stand out. Innocent Chizaram Ilo gives us "Flight", a story of a colony of parrots in a city that has taken pest control to the next level, depriving them of the insects and grubs they need for food and threatening their society. Jekwu and Izu are partners, watching those they love get kidnapped and killed. A very moving tale.

#### **Recommended Stories**

"The Techwork Horse", M.H. Ayinde (Fiyah #17)

"Mercy and the Mollusc", M.L. Clark

(Clarkesworld 2/21)

"The Demon Sage's Daughter", Varsha Dinesh

(Strange Horizons 2/8/21)

"The Redemption of Declan Callahan",

Steve DuBois (Aurealis #137)

"Her Black Coal Heart a Diamond in My Hand",

R.K. Duncan

(Beneath Ceaseless Skies 1/28/21)

"The Memory of a Memory Is a Spirit",

A.T. Greenblatt (Lightspeed 2/21)

"The Failed Dianas", Monique Laban

(Clarkesworld 2/21)

—Karen Burnham

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#### Liz Bourke

diverse cast of compelling and relatable people, in a story that has a heart, a sense of humour, and plenty of banter. Particularly notable, and particularly pleasing, is Wagers's treatment of diverse gender experiences and a diversity of sexual orientations and orientations towards relationships: **Hold Fast Through the Fire**, like its predecessor, takes place in a world where bigotry regarding gender, relationships, and orientation is part of the past. It makes for a satisfying and rather reassuring reading experience. I can use more optimistic futures.

Hold Fast Through the Fire is an intense, exciting, and delightfully entertaining novel. I hope Wagers returns to this setting, and these characters, in the future, because I'd read many more books like this one.

-Liz Bourke ■

#### **Gary K. Wolfe №** p. 17

that takes center stage is the Athabasca River valley of "Two Watersheds", Robson's contribution to Ann VanderMeer's anthology of remote presence tales, Avatars Inc; in this case a gamer-turned-ecologist finds her gaming skills helpful in operating remote bots placing flow gauges along a dying river to help with restoration efforts after a controversial vote to divert needed water to the larger population center of Edmonton. In a relatively short space, it makes clear the tradeoffs involved in any sort of ecological management. It's perhaps the most hard-SF story here, even as it lacks the raw energy of Robson's more baroque settings. Similarly, the James Bond parody "So You Want to be a Honeypot", with its cast of glamorous spies, assassins, and seductresses, is mostly a hoot that asks the good question of what might happen if those Bond babes decided to proclaim their own agency. It's light fun, and about as far away in tone as you could get from the dark horror of "A Human Stain" or the too-real violence of "The Three Resurrections of Jessica Churchill". That impressive tonal and thematic range may be the simplest thing we can take away from this impressive first collection, except possibly for this: as eclectic as her settings and narrative modes might be, Robson consistently writes about characters who, within their limitations, simply want to do better.

Between the films of Bong Joon-ho (The Host, Snowpiercer, Parasite) and Yeon Sang-ho (Train to Busan, Peninsula) and its various series on Netflix (Kingdom, Sweet Home, Uncanny Counter, etc.), South Korea has lately become a significant player in SF/F media, but South Korean fiction has so far enjoyed far less visibility. A good general introduction was offered a couple of years ago in Readymade Bodhisattva: The Kaya Anthology of South Korean Science Fiction, edited by Sunyoung Park & Sang Joon Park (reviewed here in April 2019). One of the authors included was Kim Bo-Young, a leading SF writer whose "Between Zero and One" offered some striking observations about parenting, education, and time travel. Now her first two collections in English are appearing within weeks of each other: On the Origin of Species and Other **Stories** from Kaya Press (credited to Bo-Young Kim) and I'm Waiting for You and Other Stories from Harper Voyager (credited to Kim Bo-Young). While I've not yet seen the Kaya Press volume, there's a good deal that's impressive in I'm Waiting for You and Other Stories, even though it really consists of only two pairs of stories. "I'm Waiting for You" and "On My Way", translated by Sophie Bowman, are wildly romantic SF, depicting both sides of a marital engagement that inadvertently stretches into centuries, while "The Prophet of Corruption" and "That One Life", translated by Sung My, are posthumous eschatological fantasies drawn from Korean and Buddhist sources.

"I'm Waiting for You", which Kim tells us was written as an engagement gift for a friend, is almost structured as a rom-com of missed connections, although its tone is increasingly grim. Cast in the form of 15 letters written by a prospective groom to his bride, its central conceit involves using relativistic time-shifts to coordinate a planned wedding: the bride has left for Alpha Centauri with her family and won't return for several years, Earth time. To reduce his waiting time, the narrator takes advantage of a circumsolar voyage called the "Orbit of Waiting" essentially a trip to nowhere, designed to jump forward in time - in order to meet her for the wedding. The idea of using space travel as time travel to keep an appointment is hardly new – it was a plot point to bring two lovers together as far back as Joe Haldeman's The Forever War - and, not surprisingly, things begin to go wrong: her ship is delayed, he changes to another ship, then that one is delayed, and as a succession of missed connections takes us further and further into a bleak future, the story shifts tone from romance to elegy, with haunting images of a devastated Earth, centered around the landing port where they were supposed to meet (which eventually disappears entirely) and the church where the wedding was planned. While the groom finds himself increasingly isolated through the years – even spending years in a tiny one-person spaceship - the bride's experience, detailed in her own 15 letters in "I'm On My Way", is one of being surrounded by too many humans and AIs who can or will not understand her devotion. Together, the stories form not only a haunting if sentimental portrait of star-crossed love, but also a compelling vision of a decaying Earth and a sharp meditation on the hazards of both too much community and too much solitude.

"The Prophet of Corruption" and "That One Life", which is largely an appendage to the earlier story, are less compelling dramatically, if more dense with what might be called eschatological worldbuilding, or cosmology-building. Kim explains in a glossary - which might usefully regarded as part of the story – her idiosyncratic use of the term Prophet: "Any second-generation entity born from the division of the primordial universe is called a Prophet." Each shape-shifting Prophet occupies their own Bardo between incarnations in the Lower Realm, which may include anything from ants and mayflies to humans. Each Bardo, we are told, "represented a 'heaven' for each religion." The main conflict involves the Prophet Naban and a third-generation Prophet named Aman, who is Naban's offspring and who wants the Prophets to use their powers to alleviate suffering in the Lower Realm, and perhaps to grant the Lower Realm greater autonomy. This rebellious attitude is what Naban views as corruption. While the stories are rich in sensual detail, the overall effect is less one of a plotted tale than an emergent cosmology borrowing terminology from Buddhist and Chinese legend (Fuxi, Tushita, bardo) as well as from science and SF (spaceships, biopropellants, neural networks, entropy). If not quite a page-turner, it's an impressive imaginative performance, suggestive of a William Blake-style visionary cosmogony, and perhaps it's even more impressive on the part of the translator Sung Ryu. The book is rounded out by some very useful notes on the stories by the author and translators, the aforementioned glossary for "The Prophet of Corruption", and some utterly charming reminiscences from the married couple who originally commissioned "I'm Waiting for You" and "I'm On My Way".

Although it only marginally features any fantastic elements (mainly a rather ingratiating spirit), E. Lily Yu's luminous first novel On Fragile Waves has a lot to say about both the power of story and the limits of what stories can do. We first meet Firuzeh, the central point-of-view character, as a ten-year-old trying to escape with her family from a war-ravaged Afghanistan in which her earliest memories - rendered in a kind of impressionistic child-cenetered prose-poetry that oddly reminded me of the opening of Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man – are punctuated by the sounds of fiery explosions. As they make their way through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Indonesia toward what they view as the promised land of Australia, Firuzeh's mother Abay tries to keep her and her brother Nour entertained with stories of classic Persian heroes like Rostam and his powerful horse Rakhsh. Almost equally fanciful, although Abay doesn't know it yet, are her visions of a stressfree life in Australia, "a safe country...no bombs. No checkpoints. No soldiers or Taliban." The contrast between these kinds of stories is the contrast between memory and hope, between old heroic models of behavior and dreams of a more manageable future. I was tempted to add between fantasy (dreams from the past) and science fiction (dreams of the future), but there's really nothing to be gained by reading the novel in any sort of genre terms, unless you view the refugee survival tale as a genre unto itself, with roots as old as classical antiquity and as current as Britain's "Refugee Tales" project. For some years now, refugee literature has even been a course offering in various university English and humanities departments, a sure sign that a literature has not only arrived, but may already be on its way to ossification.

So the obvious question is what an American author like Yu, despite her meticulous research in Australia and Afghanistan, might have to add to a genre which, like Holocaust tales, often seems to favor testimony over fiction? And the answer is, that's the wrong question. On Fragile Waves is a gorgeously written, heartbreaking account of a family's hopes and terrors, but it's a literary novel, not an effort to replicate documentary realism, and it's the major achievement so far of Yu's restless fascination with literary voices and forms, evident in her short fiction over the last decade or so. Some of her more or less modernist techniques include bits of poetry and even sound effects as Firuzeh recalls her earlier childhood, a brief movie script she works out in her head, and dialogue without quotation marks - except when the point of view occasionally shifts away from the Afghans to external characters like a workingclass Queenslander, a teacher, or a visiting American writer who sounds a bit like Yu herself. (Folks who insist on quotation marks might be reminded that this technique dates back more than a century.) In terms of such details, it's a meticulously fashioned novel and, despite the occasional fragmentation of the narrative, the final effect is nearly seamless.

But to describe On Fragile Waves in such purely literary terms is a disservice to its deeply humane, suspenseful, and harrowing story. Firuzeh is observant and precocious, but her banter with her younger brother is lively and often funny, and her newfound friendship with another young girl refugee, Nasima, is both convincingly snarky and ultimately heartbreaking (it's also the novel's most direct nod toward fantasy). As the family's utopian adventure turns increasingly dystopian - a promised passenger ship turns into a crowded boat nearly swamped by a typhoon, the long-anticipated landfall turns out not to be Australia but a seedy detention camp on Nauru, and even the eventual arrival in Australia itself is fraught with poverty, racism, and imminent deportation - Firuzeh, growing into a teenager, finds herself almost reversing roles with her parents. Her father, an auto mechanic back in Afghanistan, barely scrapes by as a repair shop assistant increasingly dependent on Firuzeh's superior English skills, and Firuzeh herself begins to fall into the role of the family's anchor in this not-quite-welcoming new world. Signs of hope appear - a sympathetic nun takes on their case, Nour finds a place on a soccer team (though not a very good one), and Firuzeh begins to make new school friends. Despite an appalling tragedy that deeply unsettles the family, the novel ends with Abay sharing yet another folktale, this one involving sacrifice (the familiar motif of wearing out seven pairs of iron shoes), and with a grace note of poetry that echoes the opening. But by now Firuzeh is no longer the passive child following her parents's mysterious decisions. She's almost certainly the most memorable character Yu has yet created, and she reminds us that heroism can be far more complex than what those old stories tell us. Though relatively modest in scope, On Fragile Waves is densely inventive enough to leave us with the feeling that we've been through some sort of epic.

Naomi Kritzer's **Chaos on Catnet** is a direct sequel to her Lodestar Award winner **Catfishing on Catnet**, and it does exactly what a sequel should do: expand

the stakes, introduce a few important new characters, reveal some secrets and puzzles left over from the first novel, and deepen the tone a bit. The trick is to manage all this without retreading familiar plot points or losing the authentically breezy YA tone of the first novel. Catfishing on Catnet managed to keep that almost sunny tone intact while developing some pretty dark plotlines: the teenage Steph and her computer-genius mom moved from town to town in an effort to avoid being tracked down by her abusive and even homicidal father, never settling anywhere for long and never giving Steph a chance to develop friendships. Her social life took place almost entirely with a group of mostly geeky friends on a website called Catnet, which is actually managed by one of those friends, who (we learn) turns out to be a powerful AI calling itself CheshireCat, and who basically just wants to look at cat pictures and help out her new friends. Chaos on Catnet begins with Steph's father safely behind bars, and Steph and her mom finally settling into a more stable life in Minneapolis. But while the first novel featured a really scary father, this one features not one but two really scary mothers, a mad scientist programmer, a whole passel of doomsday cultists, and a rogue AI which seems to waffle between just wanting to look at flower pictures and trying to turn itself into Skynet. Fortunately, it also introduces a kick-ass grandma.

We could see that rogue AI coming at the end of Catfishing on Catnet, when CheshireCat received an anonymous and untraceable message saying "Iknow who and what you are. Do you know me?" That novel divided its first-person narratives between Steph and CheshireCat, interspersed with occasional discussions among Steph's "clowder" on Catnet. Chaos introduces a third narrator, Nell, a new schoolmate of Steph's whose cult-member mother has disappeared and who now finds herself living in her long-alienated father's polyamorous household, which includes his wife, her girlfriend, and his girlfriend. This is obviously appalling to Nell's more or less fundamentalist Christianity, and sets up one of the challenges Kritzer sets for herself: creating a credible voice for the conflicted Nell, who shares her mother's religiosity but has a girlfriend of her own, Glenys. She's not nearly as savvy or quick-witted as Steph and her Clowder friends (though she's sarcastic enough to refer to the adult women in the home as Thing One and Thing Two). When Glenys disappears, Nell needs to learn some degree of trust for people she has been trained to view as evil.

But there is more to the cult than even its creepy belief in deprogramming gays, and it may involve that rogue AI. A Pokémon GO-style website called the Mischief Elves sends its members on odd assignments gathering things, while the social media site used by the cult seems to be organizing something far more ominous and more violent, if a bit more far-fetched. This leads to Kritzer's second major challenge, and one she openly acknowledges in a brief afterword: setting a near-future novel involving urban violence and terrorism in a changing, post-George Floyd Minneapolis, a city described in such convincing detail that is almost seems like another character facing hard life choices. The choices Kritzer makes, like those of her characters, are essentially optimistic, and it's that resilient optimism - ranging from the possibilities of law enforcement reform to the power of friendship, even to the awesome potential of freewill AIs - that makes Chaos on Catnet as appealing and empowering as its predecessor.

–Gary K. Wolfe ■

#### <u>Adrienne Martini</u>

Welcome to Gora, which is an unspectacular planet that sits at the intersection of five wormholes. Because of that, it has become full of places for a weary traveler to rest and refuel before taking on the next leg of their journey. For those who grew up in the Mid-Atlantic US, think of it as the Breezewood PA of the Galactic Commons. I'm certain there are similar crossroads-based towns wherever you may be.

Three of the GC's non-human residents are passing the time between wormholes at Ouloo the Laru's Five-Hop One-Stop, where they'll do what one does on a long trip: use the restroom, have some snacks, and stretch whatever appendages they have. All goes as anticipated until a cascading technological failure takes out the satellite grid that transport and communications rely on. These five beings (Tupo, Ouloo's child, also turns up) are forced to interact while they

wait and, well, spoilers.

Short, non-spoiler version: the story is both very tense at times and also very chill. It all builds up to one moment that happens organically, but still made me gasp and read even faster so that I could know the outcome – which was surprising to me because of how comforting I find this series because those moments were the opposite of comfortable.

The Galaxy, and the Ground Within is a great way to close out this part of Chambers's writing life. It's a satisfying story well told and, by giving these characters much-needed closure, she shows them moving into the next phases of their own lives. Like in real human lives, the end of this particular part of one's own story is only prelude to what comes next. And "next" seems exciting indeed.

In A Psalm for the Wild-Built, which comes out just a couple of months after The Galaxy, and the Ground Within, Chambers leans in hard to this idea

of a comfort read – and reveals where she'll go now that the Wayfarers series has been closed. This novella introduces Sibling Dex, a monk who serves the God of Small Comforts. He decides to heed a call to become a tea monk, who travels Panga and offers a listening ear and, naturally, a cup of tea.

Time passes. After a lackluster start at his new job, Dex becomes a tea monk of great skill and standing. But a new call starts to ring in Dex's ears. Heeding it will take him into the wilderness and into the orbit of Mosscap, a wild-built robot on a mission.

Chambers, like she has done in her previous work, takes what could be unbearably twee – I mean, a monk whose ministry is tea and listening? – and turns it into an engaging work that is comforting without being saccharine. Some of that she does through humor, like a bit about apple spiders that feels like it came from *The Princess Bride*; some she does through moments of pure heart. Somehow, it all comes together delightfully.

—Adrienne Martini

#### Katharine Coldiron

All we can do now is use what happened for the future. That's what I'm doing. Getting data to build better buildings, stronger foundations. Bunkers for war, to protect soldiers. Even better bombs. And what are you doing? Wallowing in the past with them, and bringing nothing into the future. What's that worth?

Of course he's wrong. Anyone with a grasp of epistemology knows that anthropology is just as valuable as hard science, and maybe more so when human behavior affects the outcome of a world-changing event. But it's still difficult to study such things. As Emerson puts it, "Instead of the microscope of the world being trained on the Setback, everyone looked away." Anthropological study of the COVID-19 pandemic does not sound too appealing, either, but how we lived during this time matters a lot to our future, if we are to have one.

Although Premee Mohamed's vision of the apocalypse in **These Lifeless Things** is bleak, it is not as terrifyingly likely as other scenarios, and that makes this book a scary pleasure without being a chilling one. She upsets us only to a point. The core of the story is humanity and humanism – how critical it is that we study the former, feel the latter, and act as if both matter more than our individual safety. Hence, **These Lifeless Things** is an optimistic book, and a surprisingly heartfelt one.

Aliya Whiteley's Skyward Inn is a strange book,

a beautifully and deliberately lopsided novel with far-reaching concepts and multiple unexpected turns. It seems at first like science fiction – aliens, space travel, a nation divided in two by differing attitudes toward technology – but, without giving too much away, it has the unnerving sense of an ending that permeates post apocalyptic novels. Although it overlaps in certain ways with Daphne Du Maurier's **Jamaica Inn**, it is very much its own creature, all soft fur and sharp teeth.

Jem, the first-person narrator of the novel, runs Skyward Inn in what was once Devon. It is now part of the Protectorate, which has split off from the Coalition in order to pursue a more old-fashioned way of life. Jem's partner at the Skyward Inn is Isley, an alien from Qita, a planet explored and exploited by the humans of the Coalition. Jem's teenage son, Fosse, narrates some of the book in the third person. Another Qitan becomes trapped at the Inn, and this sets off a kind of infection (physical and ideological) that threatens the neighborhood. At the same time, a trio of dishonest folk settle at a temporarily unoccupied farm, and Fosse becomes darkly fascinated with them. Jem and her brother, Dom, a town leader, cope with these threats ineffectively. In the end, the town's residents must decide whether to divide and fail, or join and survive.

The novel moves at a meander through Jem's memories of visiting Qita, through Fosse's teenage spurts of passion and fury, and through the ideological struggle between passive Qita and aggressive Earth. "Meander" gives the impression that

Skyward Inn is a slow book, but this is not so. It's merely patient. The characterization unfolds gracefully, and the plot follows behind, secondary to the motivations and secrets of the characters. Whiteley sketches Fosse's unruly impulses especially well. In addition, she has a knack for finding rare truths in unexpected places. A passage late in the book about a simulation of the Protectorate demonstrates the lie of pastoral fantasies, how they make a rural area seem "clean and new and blameless," when, in fact, just as much malice penetrates those places as in large cities. Also, her description of a man dying of cancer digs at a particular truth:

Fosse... had hated sitting next to the thinning, grey streak of pain who had once been Mr Satterly in council meetings. He had not been quietly fading away but intensifying, getting sharper and sharper in agony to the point where it pierced Fosse simply to look at him

The real treasure of this novel, though, is its metaphorical power, which almost extends to allegory. The words "alone" and "together" and "separate" and "joined" take on a variety of literal and metaphorical meanings across the novel. These words grow more frequent and more significant across the pages, evolving into the book's central theme. Whiteley even shows her hand in this regard through Jem's narration: "Together, apart: these words are losing their meaning to me. Nothing is separate. Everything, together."

H

#### Katharine Coldiron

Moreover – although the publishing timeline makes it impossible that Whiteley fully intended this resonance – aspects of the novel echo Brexit and the past year's pandemic. It is agony to consider separating, or to remain separate, but togetherness leads to disease, as well as to a blurring of identity that chafes uncomfortably against our sense of individuality – this describes an underlying conflict in the novel, but it also describes what we have all

been living through since the spring of 2020. Yet togetherness, as Whiteley points out, invokes our most powerful emotions: "It's love, this is love, what I always imagined love to be: to be inside another, to know them and feel what they feel."

**Skyward Inn** attempts to render something ineffable about the human condition: what it means to us to maintain distance, of all kinds, from each other. However, the novel explains certain elements to much and other elements hardly at all. It remains enigmatic, even inaccessible. These qualities make it unusual in science fiction, and a bit frustrating on

a first read, but also likely to make it last. A series of metaphors as loosely interpretable as the ones in **Skyward Inn** make this a book to take solace in, a book to adapt to the conditions of a difficult world. Pedagogically, it could be a useful tool for decades; personally, it could help us to treasure what makes us human.

-Katharine Coldiron ■

#### <u>lan Mond</u> ₩ p, 21

the story's ominous tone on a long simmer, drawing tension from the couples' strained relationship playing out against a disgusting backdrop.

Revulsion also plays a vital part in "Gums", which, like "Gerardo's Letters", involves a couple on holiday. They head to the beautiful beaches of Lanzarote to celebrate their honeymoon; however, when Ismael, the husband, experiences pain in his gums, the story takes a lurch toward the horrific and Kafkaesque. There are two scenes that stand-out. One involves the nauseating consumption of limpets. "I'd think about leeches as I watched him chew the tough flesh... and which when raw, looked just like Ismael's infected gums." Later on in the story, the narrator kisses her husband, whose gums and teeth have mutated into something resembling an insect.

"He began some strange form of smooching that consisted of sucking in his cheeks to stimulate his salivary glands and transferring the putrid liquid to my mouth, making me salivate too."

"Gums" is undoubtedly **Rabbit Island**'s most graphic story, however there is a visceral, horrific quality to several of the pieces here. In "Strychnine", a writer grows a paw from her ear, which sprouts "toes with small mouths". The title piece is about a lonely man who brings rabbits to an isolated island to scare off the birds, only for those rabbits to become cannibals, feeding on their young. "Regression" gives us the startling image of an obese grandmother, smelling of burnt eggplant, floating in the corner of a room, while in one of my favourite pieces, "Myotragus", an Archduke's search for an extinct mouse-goat reveals his fetish to hunt down and rape young girls.

Navarro's best stories, though, twist our mundane

existence out of shape or, as Navarro puts it, the "vital strangeness" of everyday things, including our connection to other people. The powerful and poignant "Memorial" involves a woman dealing with the recent death of her mother, disturbed to find a Facebook page set-up in her mother's name (spelt backwards) featuring photos, intimate and personal, she has never seen before. And in the extraordinary, albeit bleak "The Top Floor Room", a woman employed at a hotel where she also lives, begins to share the confronting dreams of the people she encounters and works with.

While the stories in **Rabbit Island** do make for discomfiting, sometimes queasy reading, Navarro, with unvarnished and direct prose, compels the reader to see the world anew, to recognise and even embrace the surreal nature of our existence.

–Ian Mond ■

#### Colleen Mondor <u>M. p. 23</u>

a whole new way.

As the novel opens, Priya is reeling from having to leave college and return home because of Lyme disease. Her close friend Brigid is a lifeline of support, reaching out via text and chat, and although the two girls have never met, they are quite close, especially since Brigid is also ill. Together they end up joining a small chat group with several others who suffer from chronic illnesses varying from endometriosis to Ehlers-Danlos syndrome. Brigid is noticeably circumspect about her diagnosis, and it is not until she goes offline for several days that a concerned Priya drives to her house and discovers she is a werewolf. In the ensuing weeks the two girls, along with a friendly animal control officer, (Priya has to call someone for help during that first fateful

meeting!), try to figure out how to stop Brigid's transformations. But as anyone with a chronic illness knows, they can be very unpredictable, and Brigid is soon driven to take bigger and bigger chances at a cure, pushing everyone away in the process.

The inclusion of a werewolf is obviously the big hook here, but Lycanthropy and Other Chronic Illnesses succeeds on many levels beyond the bits about fang and fur. First, there's a lot of humor, some of which will ring quite true among anyone who has ever suffered from long-term sickness. (Also, Brigid transforms in an Olive Garden bathroom, which is just funny to even think about.) In many ways, O'Neal has written the ultimate coming-of-age novel, pulling together a group of characters who are all struggling (regardless of age) to determine how to navigate the world. Priya and Brigid have a great deal in common and both are committed to figuring out how to best handle their symptoms. They conduct

traditional research to better understand lycanthropy (lots of werewolf lore), run down a genetic mystery, and consider all manner of treatments. When things go awry (and you know they are going to go awry), doctors must become involved. And that's when their friendship really come through, just as often does with conventional illness.

O'Neal upends the traditional structure a bit by including texts and chat conversations, but they don't slow things down, and actually add to the emotional narrative. The novel does not zip along on a wild plot, but it moves at a steady pace as readers immerse themselves more and more into the lives of these wonderful characters. I have to say, **Lycanthropy and Other Chronic Illnesses** is the most realistic werewolf novel I have encountered and certainly the most heartfelt. O'Neal breaks new ground with this book and accomplishes something truly wonderful.

-Colleen Mondor ■

#### **Divers Hands**

language, and even food are all homecomings she has been trained to abhor, but now seeks out during her espionage missions. The character development alone shows the remarkable restraint Clark has as a talented and disciplined writer – I would have loved to see Touraine rebel sooner, but the slow unraveling was far more satisfying by the novel's end.

Despite the overwhelming evil perpetuated by the Balladaire Empire, C.L. Clark knows how to craft villains and actors that are worthy of praise. In the beginning half of the novel, for example, I never found myself rooting for just one character, as each one had some logic to their choices, and Clark's nuanced and accurate depictions of negotiations among warring parties was another strong element of the novel. Though **The Unbroken** is, in a strict sense, fantastical, that seemed like an inaccurate label to describe it as by the book's end. To be clear, this wasn't because of poor worldbuilding or lack of magical properties (all of those were present and well done). Rather, **The Unbroken** is such a realistic portrayal of colonialism's genocidal tendencies, that I

nearly forgot that I wasn't reading a historical fiction novel about Algerian freedom fighters, until magic entered the plotline.

Much like in **Queen of the Conquered** by Kacen Callendar, colonialism conditions its subjects to villainize their own cultures and adore the dominating class, regardless of how mediocre they might be While colorism isn't a central feature here in the way we imagine blackness and whiteness to be, there are clear hierarchies separating desirable populations from undesirable populations. The most interesting elements of the novel emerged when Balladairans desired to consume that which they tried to stamp out: magic and religion. The Qazāl magic in this story illuminates the unfettered desire a colonizing force has to consume and profit from its unwilling subjects. The same magic and religion that they outlawed would become their most valued resource.

This made the lustful dynamic between Luca and Touraine much more tantalizing to read. Their romance exemplified a dangerous kind of power dynamic that was both alluring and discomfiting. The lustful drama juxtaposed nicely with plenty of other queer, happy relationships throughout the novel and avoided the dreaded "bury your gays" trope. (Don't

get too attached to your favorite couples, though – this is still a rather dark fantasy).

The Unbroken also explores the psychological scars of colonialism's genocide-like impact on generations of families. In one heartbreaking scene, we learn of the ways that parents mourned their stolen children – an entire generation of Qazāls who may one day become their executioners. I will avoid saying more than that for now, but the reverence in this scene was one that I will remember for a long time.

With that in mind, Clark's depiction of anticolonial violence and war narratives was remarkably precise. (Clark also writes about violent conflicts and war narratives in a separate, academic blog). Even the less politically inclined (or politically burnt-out) reader will find that these dense topics made a solid springboard for the story.

Essentially, this is an epic fantasy novel that contains the information you'd find in a well-researched monograph. Occupation is a tricky topic to approach, as it rarely ever boils down to one good side vs. one bad side – people are trapped between multiple warring forces, and C.L. Clark masterfully engages all actors and viewpoints within this complex web of power. To be clear, though, there are some obvious

villains, particularly the military leaders who enforce such cruel treatment of conscripts and treat Qazāl subjects like shooting targets. Only, they aren't the driving force of the book – that's reserved for the relationship between Princess Luca, the occupying military forces, and Touraine.

-Maya James

#### RUSSELL LETSON

A Desolation Called Peace, Arkady Martine (Tor 978-1-250-18646-1, \$26.99, 496pp, hc) March 2021. Cover by Jaime Jones.

Arkady Martine's second novel, A Desolation Called Peace, no single genre label will quite capture it, because every time you look at it from a different angle, it changes its configuration – all the while feeling like a single, wide-ranging story whose parts belong together.

Of course, any narrative is constructed out of parts to be found in the Big Box of Story Components tropes and motifs and enabling devices and ideas and traditions - but the magic is in the hands of the builder. Some of the elements that Martine is deploying in this novel (and in its 2019 predecessor, A Memory Called Empire) have also featured recently in work by C.J. Cherryh, Walter Jon Williams, Elizabeth Bear, and Ann Leckie, resulting in an identifiable subgenreish body of work that might be called the space opera of manners, or the anthropological adventure, or the tale of imperial intrigue, or First Contact, or bildungsroman, or even SF romance, depending on the angle of view. Or maybe I'm just letting my taste for taxonomy and Venn diagrams get out of hand. In any case, Martine, like her colleagues, has built a story space (or a space-story space) that accommodates a complex set of narrative lines, character arcs, and genre machineries that get highlighted as the plot turns to reveal the book's facets.

The title is drawn from a famous line from Tacitus in which a Celtic "barbarian" characterizes the *pax Romana*: "they make a desert and call it peace." Like imperial Rome, the interstellar Teixcalaani empire is relentlessly expansive, elaborately hierarchical, extractive (of its conquered territories), and extremely well organized. Its legions maintain order and unity, often by bloody means, though it hasn't deployed "massive planetary strikes" for centuries. But now warships and frontier colonies are being wiped out by an undetectable alien enemy that "struck, destroyed, vanished without warning or demands," out in the sector near the territory of fiercely independent Lsel Station.

Five major viewpoint characters occupy four converging plot threads, each viewpoint operating in third-person-close mode, so we share a character's stream of thoughts, doubts, and emotions. (There are also Interludes in which we enter other viewpoints, including one that only gradually comes into clear focus.) Teixcalaani Fleet yaotlek Nine Hibiscus (whose rank I read as "admiral" with overtones of "theater commander") and her second-in-command Twenty Cicada confront an enemy that is not only technologically equal or superior but also uncommunicative and enigmatic. Nine Hibiscus is a supremely competent and successful commander - so successful and so beloved by her troops that there are those in the government who would not mind seeing her die heroically out on the frontier. And she finds among her own forces a captain who seems to be serving that faction.

On Lsel Station, there are some who would not mind seeing Teixcalaan's forces grind away at an endless war against inscrutable aliens instead of absorbing Station territory and resources and culture. In fact very green ambassador Mahit Dzamare (carrying two copies of the imago – the recorded memories and personality – of her predecessor in a brain implant) was

part of the process by which the empire was alerted to the threat on their frontier. On Mahit's return to Lsel Station, local politics are making her life more than uncomfortable, since one Councillor intends to remove Mahit's imago-machine and maybe arrange a fatal surgical accident in the process.

On Teixcalaan's capital world, the imperial heir, Eight Antidote, is a serious, curious, bright 11-yearold boy exploring the world he is being trained to rule – currently tracing the physical tunnels and back ways of the palace complex while observing the operations and rivalries of the imperial bureaucracies and departments. Elsewhere on the capital, Mahit's one-time government (and potential personal) liaison Three Seagrass is now Third Undersecretary to the Minister of Information and not entirely happy with her "exquisite prison of an office." So when she spots an emergency request from Nine Hibiscus, she snags the assignment of "first-contact specialist with diplomatic chops" and then takes the really adventurous (or dangerous) step of traveling to Lsel Station to recruit Mahit as a linguistic-diplomatic advisor, even if the stationer is a barbarian and possible security risk.

The story lines rotate through several genre territories: Nine Hibiscus's tactical and military-political problems; Mahit's need to escape the attention and schemes of hostile station politicians; Three Seagrass's desire to escape a bureaucratic treadmill and to find her way to Mahit; and Eight Antidote's growing grasp of the logistical and political machineries (and their accompanying intrigues) he will eventually inherit. And when Mahit and Three Seagrass are reunited, we also get to observe a cross-cultural love story from both sides. Meanwhile everybody, with their particular skill sets and predispositions, grapples with the overarching problems of communicating with very dangerous and very alien aliens and deciding whether, when, and how to wage war on them – all the while uncovering hidden and obvious agendas and untangling conflicting loyalties.

Back in 2019, I wrote that A Memory Called Empire was in part about belonging – having or finding or making a place for oneself in a cultural framework. It did so by juggling the roles of memory (personal-organic and recorded-implanted), tradition, and literary/artistic culture in holding together a polity or a personality. A Desolation Called Peace elaborates that theme, but with more attention to personal relationships and social role and identity. When it's not about space war and political intrigue and strange aliens, it's about connection, personal and institutional and cultural and perhaps more. Mahit and Three Seagrass; the yaotlek and her adjutant; Eight Antidote and the emperor; even the Lsel Station councillors with their implanted memory-lines and station history and stubborn independence – all come up against the limits of their roles and cultural frameworks and individual emotional makeups. At stake is the big-picture choice between desolation and peace and the character of the empire, but that fate is built up from the actions of individuals facing the mysteries of the Other – as well as the mysteries of each other.

-Russell Letson

#### ALVARO ZINOS-AMARO

Michael Bishop and the Persistence of Wonder: A Critical Study of the Writings, Joe Sanders (McFarland 978-1476671512, \$39.95, 202pp, pb) January 2021.

aul Di Filippo concluded his thoughtful review of Michael Bishop's The Sacerdotal Owl and Three Other Long Tales (2018) by recommending that Bishop be considered for a Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award, and I'd like to echo that sentiment here. Besides Bishop's rich body of work, Joe Sander's new book,

which provides a thorough discussion of Bishop's novels and major short stories over the last fifty years, serves as a persuasive exhibit in favor of such a nomination. Di Filippo, who shares nearly as many years of "comradeship," as he puts it, with Bishop, and with whom he has collaborated on two mystery novels published under the name of Philip Lawson, provides the Foreword to the current volume. Therein he cites Bishop's "questing spiritual intelligence," a useful phrase to keep in mind when evaluating Bishop's career. Sander's study contains two chapters on Bishop's short fiction (1970-1980; 1981-1994), two on the novels (1975-1980; 1982-1994), and a fifth on fiction from 1995 through the present. By alternating between short stories and novels, and, grossly speaking, proceeding in chronological fashion, Sanders is able to develop his critical insights in a contextually comprehensive way while also highlighting the thematic and structural connections between numerous pieces, as when, for instance, he remarks that "Dogs's Lives" (written 1974; pub. 1984) and "Life Regarded as a Jigsaw Puzzle of Highly Lustrous Cats" (1991) both consist of fragments in need of "assembly by readers." Given the story titles and Bishop's often dark sense of humor, that connection is perhaps not surprising.

One of the benefits of this overview is its wideranging scope, which brings key themes in Bishop's writing to the fore. Philip K. Dick Is Dead, Alas (1978) stresses that "writing and reading imaginative literature can make a difference," while the interpolated stories in Eyes of Fire (1980) illustrate how fiction provides "a way to discover shapes that let us grasp our confusing, disturbing experience." Along similar lines, one of the main concerns of Count Geiger's Blues (1992) is "our struggle to create art." Sanders's analysis of Unicorn Mountain (1988) reveals themes of "reconciliation and redemption," and a close reading of Brittle Innings (1994) leads Sanders to reflect that "lingering uncertainty about details but firm emphasis on becoming is characteristic of Bishop's work." A number of Bishop stories follow characters who fail to make responsible decisions or face the guilt of their consequences (e.g. "A Gift from the Graylanders" [1985] & "Cathadonian Odyssey" [1974]), who don't learn from "society's moral void" (e.g. Stolen Faces [1977]), or who generally "suffer the effects of broken barriers. They are forced to confront the power of empathy – potential transcendence of personal barriers...." This notion of barriers surfaces repeatedly. The Ur-Nu sequence, consisting of Catacomb Years (1979), a fix-up of seven short stories, and the novel A Little **Knowledge** (1977), most recently revised into the single volume The City and the Cygnets (2019), shows, according to Sanders, "two truths: People want to wall themselves off from others, but they also crave human contact; they are quite capable of creating a mammoth, soul-crushing system to subdue themselves, but at the same time they will stubbornly continue to discover ways to beat that system." Investigations into repression – And Strange at Ecbatan the Trees (1976) comes to mind – or the prying open of "issues of personal selfhood/autonomy" (e.g. "The House of Compassionate Sharers" [1977]) also abound. Sanders makes a compelling case for why the label "anthropological," often applied to the first phase of Bishop's career, doesn't quite do justice to the work's complexity. Two overarching observations, that Bishop "quietly but persistently demands sympathy for the unsympathetic, tolerance for the intolerable," and that his "great subject has been an exploration of what human beings need not want, not even crave, but need - to satisfy their full potential" are amply borne out by the individual case studies.

Sanders places much emphasis on the endings of Bishop's stories. In a way, this is ironic, for Bishop's

#### Divers Hands

work appears to never truly be finished, since he often revises and produces substantially new versions of stories years after their original publication, e.g. A Funeral for the Eyes of Fire (1975; re-imagined as Eyes of Fire in 1980; again rev. under the original title in 2015). As Sanders himself points out, Bishop's "laudable devotion to the craft of writing results in readers frequently having a choice of different versions of one story," one characteristic of Bishop's process that, perhaps more than any other, sets him apart from his peers. Sanders sometimes derives a work's relative worth by comparing the neatness of its resolution, e.g. "The conclusion of 'Blooded on Arachne' [1975] feels like a positive evolution of 'Cathedonian Odyssey' [1974] not because it necessarily is happier but because it is not so neatly pessimistic." Of Transfigurations (1979), Sanders writes "that the 'conclusion' is much looser and more confusing than readers may expect"; he also notes that readers may walk away from Ancient of Days (1985) "with the feeling that the conclusion has been left extremely loose." This strategy yields fascinating insights, but at times skirts a kind of reductionism that Bishop's work is expertly constructed to resist.

In general, Sanders is careful to separate out historical reception from what he personally thinks of a book's strengths and weaknesses. Ancient of Days, for example, unlike No Enemy But Time (1982),

garnered a "disappointing" critical response and won no awards, but Sanders argues that it's "one of Bishop's most satisfactorily developed novels." Though he acknowledges that No Enemy but Time was "a milestone" for Bishop, he doesn't hesitate to opine that it "doesn't quite ring true" and its "reach has exceeded its grasp." Brittle Innings, he declares, is "almost unquestionably... Bishop's very best book." I happen to know one Bishop adept who questions this. The recent Joel-Brock the Brave and the Valorous Smalls (2016) he considers "more of a laidback, episodic tall tale than a novel"; again, mileage may vary. Sanders's knowledge of Bishop's literary influences - Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ursula K. Le Guin, Robert Silverberg, Flannery O'Connor, among many others - keenly informs his assessments, which are often further enlivened by comparisons to other classic writers, such as Jonathan Swift, George Bernard Shaw, and Somerset Maugham.

Some of Sanders's assertions – e.g. "As a beginning writer, he [Bishop] was concerned that science fiction should be taken seriously, which meant that his early work tends to be mercilessly grim" – can be profitably examined for hidden assumptions; his generalizations (e.g. "good comedies have tragedies lurking inside them") may invite skepticism (I'm thinking of, say, P.G. Wodehouse as a counter-example); and in a few cases, such as when Sanders claims that **Unicorn Mountain**'s themes necessitate that the novel "bulge at the seams," arguments can feel strained. Also, since Bishop has gone on record

saying that he's felt as much a writer of mainstream fiction as of the fantastic varieties, it might have been nice to provide greater coverage of stories published in non-genre venues. Nevertheless, this is a consistently stimulating and ground-breaking study. Further, Sanders merits additional recognition for encompassing Bishop's non-fiction and poetry, his anthology ventures such as **Changes** (co-edited with Ian Watson; 1983), **Light Years and Dark** (1984), and **A Cross of Centuries** (2007), as well as for providing a short but telling Q&A with the subject himself.

Michael Bishop started publishing in 1970 with the story "Piñon Fall", and year after year he has produced, in an inimitable career of stunning stylistic range, provocative, subtle, often melancholy and disturbing tales that grapple with deep human questions of moral responsibility in the face of overwhelming inner and outer obstacles. Sanders does this work justice and wields his analytical apparatus with vigor and suppleness. More importantly, he makes one want to read or reread Bishop's wondrous accomplishments. In Transfigurations, the character of Elegy says: "The facts are many and open to multiple interpretations. Not only that, Ben, in some cases they're not even facts, just suppositions arising from our bewilderment." Substitute "facts" for "fictions" and you'll have an idea of what Bishop's consummately crafted and transformative work holds in store.

-Alvaro Zinos-Amaro ■

#### Amy Goldschlager

how to pronounce "Houston Street" in the Claire North novel).

I do applaud Hachette Audio's continuing efforts to inject music into their productions. Nevertheless, I doubt I will accompany Reinmar/Reynevan on further adventures; his story is too undirected, and his person too irritating, for me to go along.

*In the Empty Quarter*, G. Willow Wilson; Soneela Nankani, narrator (Brilliance Audio, \$1.99, digital download, 1.5 hr., unabridged) January 2021.

In this short story, Great Neck NY housewife Jean

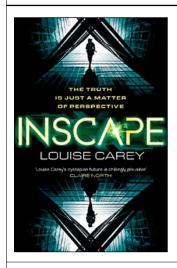
accompanies her oil exec husband to a city in an unnamed Middle Eastern country in the 1950s, believing that her self-perceived openness to the culture and her association with a local prince makes her superior to the other ex-pat wives. A foolish accident in the desert outside the city leads Jean to an encounter with someone whom readers of Wilson's novels Alif the Unseen and The Bird King will not only recognize, but will probably expect to turn up (at least, I sure did). This person brutally enlightens her about colonialism, racism, and feminism, shaking up Jean's self-image and potentially offering her a new way forward. Soneela Nankani, who also narrated S.A. Chakraborty's Daevabad Trilogy, turns in her usual excellent performance, believably evoking Jean's naivete; the complex mix of kindness,

exasperation, and contempt expressed by the prince; and the coolly detached viewpoint of the mysterious being Jean meets.

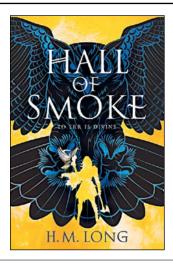
Whether or not you like this story depends on whether you enjoy narratives in which a 21st-century liberal and informed sense of ethics and politics has a blunt conversation with a considerably more blinkered perspective. There's nothing in that communication that an intelligent person of today wouldn't have thought, but Wilson is certainly excellent at putting it across, and those who agree will find it rousing. Others might find it didactic. I'm always glad for one of Wilson's works, but I look forward to one of her more ambitious and poetical efforts in future.

–Amy Goldschlager ■

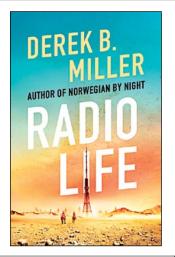
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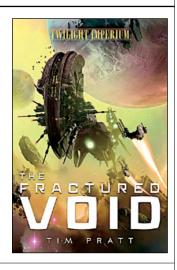
Compiled by Liza Groen Trombi & Carolyn Cushman. Please send all corrections to Carolyn Cushman, c/o *Locus*. We will run all verified corrections.



Abnett, Dan Warhammer 40,000: Lord of the Dark Millennium (Black Library 978-1-78999-833-7, £12.99, 669pp, tp, cover by Ignacio Bazan-Lazcano) Reprint



(Black Library 2020) gaming tie-in collection of 37 stories. An international edition with UK, US, EU, Australian, and Canadian prices; copyrighted by Games Workshop.



Abnett, Dan Warhammer 40,000: The Horus Heresy: Siege of Terra: Saturnine (Black Library 978-1-7899-308-0, £12.99, 465pp, tp, cover by Neil Roberts) Reprint (Black Library 2020) Gaming tiein novel. This has French flaps; an international edition with US, UK, EU, Canadian, and Australian prices.

- \* Andrews, Graham Elsewheres and Elsewhens: Four Space-Time Plays (FeedARead.com Publishing 978-1-83945-530-8, £10.25, 126pp, tp) Collection of four plays inspired by the Time Plays of J.B. Priestly.
- \* Annandale, David Marvel Untold: The Harrowing of Doom (Aconyte 978-1-83908-052-4, £8.99, 345pp, tp, cover by Fabio Listrani) Tie-in novel based on Marvel Comics. This is an international edition with US and UK prices. Ebook also available. Copyrighted by Marvel.
- \* Barker, R.J. Call of the Bone Ships (Little, Brown UK/Orbit 978-0-356-51184-9, £9.99, 512pp, tp) Fantasy novel, second in the Tide Child trilogy. Simultaneous with the Orbit US edition.
- \* Bear, Elizabeth Machine (Orion/Gollancz 978-1-473-20877-3, £16.99, 496pp, tp) SF novel, second in the White Space series. Simultaneous with the US (Saga Press) edition.
- \* Carey, Louise Inscape (Orion/Gollancz 978-1-473-23274-7, £14.99, 421pp, tp) Dystopian SF novel. Tanta's first mission ends in failure, and her investigation uncovers a sinister conspiracy. The author's first solo novel. Ebook also available.

Cast, Kristin **The Key to Fear** (Head of Zeus 978-1838933982, £18.99, 352pp, hc) Reprint (Blackstone 10/20) young-adult dystopian postapocalyptic SF novel about a society kept under strict control because of plague. [First UK edition]

\* Cline, Ernest Ready Player Two (Penguin Random House UK/ Century 978-1780897431, £20.00, 384pp, hc) SF novel, sequel to Ready Player One. Simultaneous with the US (Ballantine) edition. Ebook also available.

Davidson, Andy **The Boatman's Daughter** (Titan 978-1789095999, £8.99, 416pp, tp) Reprint (MCD X FSG Originals 2020) supernatural crime/horror novel. Ebook also available. [First UK edition]

Dowling, Terry The Complete Rynosseros: Volume I (PS Publishing/Drugstore Indian Press 978-1-786366-87-0, £14.99, 591pp, tp, cover by Nick Stathopoulos) Reprint (PS Australia 2020, not seen) collection/omnibus, the first in a three-volume series collecting all the Adventures of Tom Rynosseros (1990, with the 2003 introduction by Peter McNamara) and Blue Tyson (1992), plus stories "Marmordesse" and "The Library". A French flap edition. PS Publishing, Grosvenor House, 1 New Road, Hornsea, HU18 1PG, UK; <www.pspublishing.co.uk>.

Dowling, Terry The Complete

Rynosseros: Volume II (PS Publishing/Drugstore Indian Press 978-1-786366-88-7, £14.99, 639pp, tp, cover by Nick Stathopoulos) Reprint (PS Australia 2020, not seen) collection/omnibus, second in a three-volume series. This has collections Twilight Beach (1993) and Rynemonn (2007 as Rynemonn: Leopard Dreaming), plus two stories. A French flap edition. PS Publishing, Grosvenor House, 1 New Road, Hornsea, HU18 1PG, UK; <www.pspublishing.co.uk>.

Dowling, Terry The Complete Rynosseros: Volume III (PS Publishing/Drugstore Indian Press 978-1-786366-89-4, £12.99, viii + 153pp, tp, cover by Nick Stathopoulos) Reprint (PS Australia 2020, not seen) non-fiction collection, third in a three-volume series. This has mostly new material written for the PS Australia edition, with essays on writing the series, along with numerous photos and illustrations. Two lists give writing order and publication order for the stories. Appendices offer two reprint essays, one by Richard Scott. A French flap edition. PS Publishing, Grosvenor House, 1 New Road, Hornsea, HU18 1PG, UK; <www.pspublishing.co.uk>.

Ewing, Al **The Fictional Man** (Rebellion/Solaris 978-1-78108-818-0, £8.99, 345pp, tp) Reprint (Solaris 2013) SF novel.

- \* Ford, R.S. **Spear of Malice** (Titan 9781785653124, £8.99, 367pp, tp) Fantasy novel, third in the War of the Archons series. This is an international edition with US and UK prices.
- \* Harris, Carrie Marvel: Xavier's Institute: Liberty & Justice for All (Aconyte 978-1-83908-058-6, £8.99, 336pp, tp, cover by Anastasia Bulgakova) Comics tie-in novel. Copyrighted by Marvel. This is an international edition. Ebook also available.
- \* Kindberg, Tim Vampires of Avonmouth (Nsoroma Press 978-1838114206, £7.99, 332pp, tp) SF horror novel. A ship from West Africa arrives in 2087 Avonmouth, carrying a vampire that feeds on mental energy.
- \* Komarnyckyj, Andrew Ezra Slef, The Next Nobel Laureate in Literature (Tartarus Press 978-1-912586-30-1, £40.00, 259pp, hc) Fantasy novel, a parody/pastiche in the form of a biography about Russian novelist Slef, which gradually becomes a memoir by the author, a disgraced academic who makes a Faustian pact. Tartarus Press, Coverley House, Carltonin-Coverdale, Leyburn, North Yorkshire DL8 4AY, UK; <www.tartaruspress.com>.
- \* Long, H.M. Hall of Smoke (Titan 978-1789094985, £7.99, 414pp, tp) Viking fantasy novel. Hessa, a banished warrior priestess of the Goddess of War, seeks redemption but begins to question what the gods are really doing. This is an international edition with US and UK prices.

- \* McDermott, Will **Necromunda: Soulless Fury** (Black Library 978-1-78999-083-6, £8.99, 347pp, pb, cover by Neil Roberts) Gaming tiein novel based on the SF roleplaying game. This is an international edition with US, UK, EU, Canadian, and Australian prices; copyrighted by Games Workshop.
- \* McDonnell, C.K. The Stranger Times (Transworld/Bantam Press UK 978-1-7876-3335-3, £14.99, 420pp, hc) Humorous contemporary fantasy novel about a weekly paper covering weird and wonderful things, and the discovery that some of them are real, and terrifying. An export-only trade paperback was announced but not seen; ebook also available. This is a pen name for Caimh McDonnell.
- \* Miller, Derek B. **Radio Life** (Quercus/Jo Fletcher 978-1-52940-858-4, £16.99, 477pp, hc) Postapocalyptic SF novel/thriller about a clash between those who want to reclaim technology and those who want to destroy the ancient knowledge. Ebook also available.
- \* Mohr, Jacob Steven **The Unwel-come** (John Hunt/Cosmic Egg Books 978-1-78904-559-8, £7.99, 296pp, tp, cover by Kealan Patrick Burke) Horror novel. Kait discovers her ex-boyfriend really is a body-snatching evil entity. This is copyrighted 2019 but no previous version found. Ebook also available. John Hunt Publishing, 3 East St., Alresford, Hampshire SO24 9EE UK; <www.cosmicegg-books.com>.
- \* Pratt, Tim **Doors of Sleep** (Angry Robot 978-0-85766-874-5, £9.99, 251pp, tp, cover by Kieryn Tyler) SF novel, first in the Journals of Zaxony Delatree series about a man who always wakes in a new parallel universe. The character and his adventures are significantly changed from stories posted on the author's Patreon, a few fragments of which are incorporated here. This is an international edition with US and UK prices; ebook also available.
- \* Pratt, Tim Twilight Imperium: The Fractured Void (Aconyte 978-1-83908-046-3, £8.99, 345pp, tp, cover by Scott Schomburg) SF gaming tie-in novel. This has French Flaps; ebook also available. Copyrighted by Fantasy Flight Games.

Reilly, Matthew The Two Lost Mountains (Orion 978-1-4091-9439-2, £20.00, 404pp, tp) Reprint (Pan Macmillan Australia 2020) thriller/horror novel, sixth in the Jack West, Jr. series. Jack must get to one of the five iron mountains – two never found – and perform a mysterious feat. Ebook also available. [First UK edition]

\* Riggs, Ransom The Desolations of Devil's Acre (Penguin/Puffin UK 978-0241320938, £16.99, 503pp, hc) Young-adult fantasy novel, sixth and final in the Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children series. Ebook also available. Simultaneous with the US (Dutton) edition.

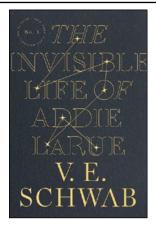
- \* Routley, Jane Shadow in the Empire of Light (Rebellion/Solaris 978-1-78108-834-0, £8.99, 339pp, tp) Fantasy novel about of intrigue in a family of powerful mages. A Solaris ebook came out 8/20; this is the first print edition.
- \* Sidor, S.A. Arkham Horror: The Last Ritual (Aconyte 978-1-83908-013-5, £8.99, 346pp, tp) Gaming tie-in novel. This has French flaps; an international edition with US and UK prices; ebook also available. Copyrighted by Fantasy Flight Games.
- \* Slatter, Angela The Heart is a Mirror for Sinners and Other Stories (PS Publishing/PS Australia 978-1-78636-562-0, £25.00, 331pp, hc, cover by Danielle Serra) Collection of four stories, two new, with notes on each by Slatter. Introduction by Kim Newman. A signed, limited edition of 100 (-563-7, £35.00) is also available. PS Publishing, Grosvenor House, 1 New Road, Hornsea HU18 1PG, UK; <www.pspublishing.co.uk>.
- \* Tidhar, Lavie **The Big Blind** (PS Publishing 978-1-7836-598-9, £18.00, 164pp, hc) Associational novella. A legendary cardplayer's daughter would rather be a nun, but enters a high-stakes tournament to save her convent. A signed, limited edition of 100 (-599-6, £25.00) was announced but not seen. PS Publishing, Grosvenor House, 1 New Road, Hornsea HU18 1PG, UK; <www.pspublishing.co.uk>.

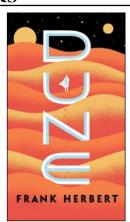
Wendig, Chuck **Wanderers** (Rebellion/Solaris 978-1-78108-847-0, £9.99, 800pp, tp) Reprint (Del Rey 2019) SF novel.

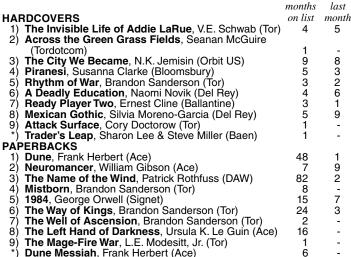
\* Williams, Liz Blackthorn Winter (NewCon Press 978-1-912950-79-9, £12.99, 343pp, tp, cover by lan Whates) Contemporary fantasy novel drawing on pagan folklore, sequel to Comet Weather. A signed, hardcover edition of 50 (-78-2, £25.99) and ebook also available. NewCon Press, 41 Wheatsheaf Road, Alconbury Weston, Cambs PE28 4LF UK. ■

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January 202 SF Novels	<b>21</b> 5	Year to Date SF Novels	5
Fantasy Novels	7	Fantasy Novels	7
Horror Novels Paranormal	3 4	Horror Novels Paranormal	4
Romance Anthologies	0	Romance Anthologies	0
Collections Reference	1	Collections Reference	1
History/ Criticism	0	History/ Criticism	0
Media Relate		Media Related Young Adult	_
	ָ י	SF 0	١
Horror (	1 )	Fantasy 1 Horror 0	
	Ó	Paranormal Romance 0	
Omnibus	0	Other 0 Omnibus	0
Art/Humor Miscellaneous		Art/Humor Miscellaneous	
Total New: Reprints &	25	Reprints &	25
Reissues: Total:	<u>8</u> 33	Reissues: Total:	<u>8</u> 33

#### **LOCUS BESTSELLERS**



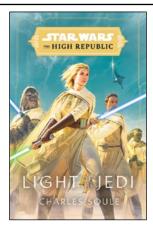




Coronavirus Edition: There is light at the end of the tunnel as the vaccine rollout begins. However, sales continue to be affected by in-store capacity limits,

out begins. However, sales continue to be affected by in-store capacity infins, and bookstores are continuing to offer online sales, mail orders, and curbside pick-ups. Remember to support your local bookstores when you buy books. On the hardcover list, **The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue** by V.E. Schwab moved to the top with a considerable lead over our second-place finisher, Seanan McGuire's **Across the Green Grass Fields**, book six in her Wayward Children series. Our new runner-up was standalone novel **Persephone Station** (Saga) by Stina Leicht. We had 34 nominated titles, up from last month's 28.





	months	last
TRADE PAPERBACKS	on list	month
<ol> <li>The House in the Cerulean Sea, TJ Klune (Tor)</li> </ol>	1	-
2) The Fifth Season, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit US)	48	1
Gideon the Ninth, Tamsyn Muir (Tordotcom)	6	5
<ol> <li>Leviathan Wakes, James S.A. Corey (Orbit US)</li> </ol>	29	-
*) Parable of the Sower, Octavia E. Butler (Grand Centre)	al) 8	6
6) The Dark Archive, Genevieve Cogman (Ace) 7) The Dark Forest, Cixin Liu (Tor)	1	-
7) The Dark Forest, Cixin Liu (Tor)	5	-
8) A Darker Shade of Magic, V.E. Schwab (10r)	23	4
*) The Mask of Mirrors, M.A. Carrick (Orbit US)	1	-
10) The Poppy War, R.F. Kuang (Harper Voyager US)	4	-
MÉDIA-RELATED & GAMING-RELATED		
1) Star Wars: The High Republic: Light of the Jedi,		
Charles Soule (Del Rey)	1	-
2) Star Wars: Thrawn Ascendancy: Chaos Rising,	_	_
Timothy Zahn (Del Rey)	4	5
3) Star Trek: Picard: The Dark Veil, James Swallow		
(Gallery)	1	-

The paperback list continues to be a bastion of old favorites, with **Dune** by Frank Herbert holding onto the top spot, followed by William Gibson's Neuromancer. There were no new runners-up. There were 50 titles nominated, up from last month's 28.

Recent release The House in the Cerulean Sea by T.J. Klune jumped to the top of the trade paperback list over perennial favorite and last month's top vote-getter N.K. Jemisin's **The Fifth Season**. **The Ruthless Lady's Guide** to Wizardry by C.M. Waggoner (Ace) was our new runner-up. We had 49 nominated titles, down from last month's 55.

On the media and gaming-related list, Star Wars: The High Republic: Light of the Jedi by Charles Soule, the first adult book of new prequel series The High Republic, claimed the number one spot. Timothy Zahn's Star Wars: Thrawn Ascendancy: Chaos Rising came in second. There were no new runners-up. We had 21 nominated titles, up from last month's 19.

Compiled with data from: Bakka-Phoenix (Canada), Borderlands (CA), McNally Robinson (two in Canada), Mysterious Galaxy (CA), Toadstool (NH), White Dwarf (Canada). Data period: January 2021.

CENEDAL DECTCELLEDC	CTCELLEDC													
GENERAL BESTSELLERS		NY Tin	nes Bk	Revie	W	Pι	ublishe	ers Wee	ekly	I	Los An	geles	Times	
HARDCOVERS	1/3	10	17	24	31	1/4	11	18	25	1/3	10	17	24	31
Ready Player Two, Ernest Cline (Ballantine)	<u>1/3</u> 2	<u>10</u> 2	<u>17</u> 4	<u>24</u> 11	<u>31</u> 11	<u>1/4</u> 2	<u>11</u> 5	<u>18</u> 6	<u>25</u> 11	<u>1/3</u> 2	<u>10</u> 2	3	<u>24</u> 9	<u>31</u> 9
The Awakening, Nora Roberts (St. Martin's)	9	11	13	-	-	9	11	10	15	-	-	-	-	-
If It Bleeds, Stephen King (Scribner)	11	7	-	-	-	6	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Midnight Library, Matt Haig (Viking)	13	-	9	13	5	-	12	15	4	3	4	2 8	3	2
The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue, V.E. Schwab (Tor)	14	13	2	-	7	13	2	19	10	10	3	8	8	4
Star Wars: The High Republic: Light of the Jedi,														
Charles Soule (Del Rey)	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	-	-
To Sleep in a Sea of Stars, Christopher Paolini (Tor)	-	-	-	-	-	22	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mexican Gothic, Silvia Moreno-Garcia (Del Rey)	-	-	-	-	-	24	21	-	-	4	6	4	7	5
Rhythm of War, Brandon Sanderson (Tor)	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>PAPERBACKS</u>														
The Overstory, Richard Powers (Norton) •	7	8	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	8	-	-	-
Ready Player One, Ernest Cline (Broadway) •	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Stand, Stephen King (Anchor)	13	10	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Institute, Stephen King (Gallery) •	15	12	-	-	-	4	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Outsider, Stephen King (Gallery) •	-	15	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-
The Stand, Stephen King (Anchor) •	-	-	-	-	-	7	13	22	-	-	-	-	-	-
Circe, Madeline Miller (Back Bay) •	-	-	-	-	-	9	7	11	16		-	-	-	-
The Water Dancer, Ta-Nehisi Coates (One World) •	-	-	-	-	-	22	24	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
Shadows in Death, J.D. Robb (St. Martin's)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
The House in the Cerulean Sea, T.J. Klune (Tor) •	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	10	13	-	-		-	-
Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury (Simon & Schuster)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-

Children of Blood and Bone by Tomi Adeyemi, How the King of Elfhame Learned to Hate Stories by Holly Black, Lore by Alexandra Bracken, Chain of Gold by Cassandra Clare, The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes by Suzanne Collins, Serpent & Dove by Shelby Mahurin, Kingdom of the Wicked by Kerri Maniscalco, Midnight Sun by Stephenie Meyer, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone: MinaLima Edition and The Ickabog by J.K. Rowling, A Sky Beyond the Storm by Sabaa Tahir, and Crave by Tracy Wolff made the hardcover YA list. There were no YA books on this month's mass market/trade paper list. See Locus Online for weekly charts of genre books on these and eight other general bestseller lists.

• trade paper books on these and eight other general bestseller lists.

#### NEW & NOTABLE

Cristina Bacchilega & Jennifer Orme, eds., Inviting Interruptions: Wonder Tales in the 21st Century (Wayne State University Press 2/21) This anthology has a mix of 24 art and fiction pieces, with critical notes, each challenging our familiar fairy tale narratives of heteronormative happy endings. Contributors include Susanna Clarke, Nalo Hopkinson, Kelly Link, Sofia Samatar, Veronica Schanoes, Nisi Shawl, Shaun Tan, and more.

L.X. Beckett, Dealbreaker (Tor 1/21) In this thrilling near-future SF sequel to Gamechanger, humanity fights for a seat in the galactic governing body, but there are some species who think humans are still too dangerous to be let in. Does humankind deserve a second chance to correct its past mistakes?

Aliette de Bodard, Fireheart Tiger (Tordotcom 2/21) Set in a fantasy world inspired by precolonial Vietnam, this beautiful novella follows a princess, a fire spirit, and the politics that entangle neighboring kingdoms. "It is a quiet, powerful story of power and resistance, of control and affection, and of the nature of constraint and alliance in both politics and personal relationships." [Liz Bourke]

Namina Forna, The Gilded Ones (Penguin Random House/Delacorte 2/21) This YA feminist fantasy novel, set in a world inspired by West Africa, begins the Deathless series. A young woman's golden blood marks her an outcast in her village, but also reveals her to be one of the alaki: nearly

immortal, possessed of strange gifts... and useful to the emperor as soldiers.

Nicole Galland. Master of the Revels (Morrow 2/21) In this fast-paced adventure sequel to Galland & Neal Stephenson's The Rise and Fall of D.O.D.O., agents from the Department of Diachronic Operations fight to stop a powerful Irish witch from using time travel to reverse the evolution of all modern technology

Elizabeth Hand, The Best of Elizabeth Hand (Subterranean 2/21) Collection of 16 stories, including two Nebula and three World Fantasy Award winners, with notes on the inspirations of each. "It's hard to argue with an elegant masterpiece like this, or with the balanced overview of Hand's varied talents that the always-reliable editor Bill Sheehan has assembled here." [Gary K. Wolfe]

Alaya Dawn Johnson, Reconstruction (Small Beer 1/21) This debut collection from one of our most distinctive voices collects ten stories spanning her 15-year career, including Nebula Award winner "A Guide to the Fruits of Hawai'i" and two originals.

R.B. Lemberg & Lisa M. Bradley, Climbing **Lightly Through Forests: A Poetry Anthology** Honoring Ursula K. Le Guin (Aqueduct 2/21) This expansive anthology includes 63 poems, 50 of them previously unpublished, with work by poets including Stephanie Burt, Thoraiya Dyer, Mary Soon Lee, Brandon O'Brien, Charles Payseur, Sofia Samatar, Nisi Shawl, David Sklar, Rachel Swirsky, Sonya Taaffe, and Jo Walton, among others, all "in conversation" with Le Guin's work. It also features an article by Lemberg exploring Le Guin's own poetry.

Everina Maxwell, Winter's Orbit (Tor 2/21) This debut space opera novel, full of political intrigue and queer romance, concerns the Emperor's neer-do-well grandson, who's commanded to marry the widower of a prince in order to maintain a key treaty. "It's one of the most enjoyable space (or planetary) opera romances that I've had the pleasure to read, and I look forward to seeing more of Maxwell's work in the years to come. [Liz Bourke]

Sylvain Neuvel. A History of What Comes Next (Tordotcom 2/21) Neuvel launches the new Take Them to the Stars series, a science fiction historical set mostly in Europe during WWII, about an all-woman secret society that's been working for 99 generations to help humanity reach the stars... while dodging a mysterious, implacable enemy. Mia's mission: to steal rocket scientist Werner von Braun away from the Nazis and bring him to the United States.

Ben Okri, Prayer for the Living (Akashic 2/21) This ambitious collection by the Booker Prizewinning literary author includes 23 stories, a dozen of them new, plus a poem, with works mingling the realistic, the magical, and the metafictional. While first published in the UK by Head of Zeus in October 2019, it's now widely available in the US for the first time. ■

#### **SMASHWORDS** (EBOOK)\*

#### SCIENCE FICTION

- Hard Ground, Angela White Maternal Instinct, Rebecca Bowyer
- Crank Palace, James Dashner
- Spinward Fringe Broadcast 15: Pursuit, Randolph Lalonde
- The Captain's Oath, Rick Griffin Contaminant Six, Joseph R. Lallo This Corner of the Universe, Britt Ringel

- No Way to Start a War, Britt Ringel
- The Wrong Side of Space, Britt Ringel
  Mylomon: Warlord Brides, Nancey Cummings
- Loyalty to the Cause, Britt Ringel Last Measure of Devotion, Britt Ringel

- Kalen: Warlord Brides, Nancey Cummings
  Spinward Fringe Broadcast 14: Rebel, Randolph Lalonde Spinward Fringe Broadcast 16: Hunters, Randolph Lalonde
- Relics, Wrecks and Ruins, Aiki Flinthart
- The Calderan Problem, Joseph R. Lallo
- Spinward Fringe Broadcast 13: Warriors, Randolph Lalonde Nova Igniter, Joseph R. Lallo
- 19
- Star Crusader: Fall of Hyperion, Michael G. Thomas

- Swipe Right: Paranormal Mating Bundle, DJ Bryce
- Flames of Chaos, Amelia Hutchins
- Taunting Destiny, Amelia Hutchins
- Seducing Destiny, Amelia Hutchins Assassin's Choice, Monique Singleton
- Ashes of Chaos, Amelia Hutchins
- Bulletproof Damsel, Amelia Hutchins

- Pieces of Eight, Melissa Wright
  Lacuna, N.R. Walker
  Bound by Danger, Brenda K. Davies
  Born Human, Viola Grace 10
- The Frey Saga Book III: Rise of the Seven, Melissa Wright
- Crowning Destiny, Amelia Hutchins
- 15) 16)
- Wild Lands, Stacey Marie Brown Turn of the Moon, L.P. Dover The Dire Wolves Chronicles, Alyssa Rose Ivy
- Becoming his Monster, Amelia Hutchins
- Oaths, Lindsay Buroker
- Beckoning Fates, TurtleMe Disciple of War, Michael G. Manning
- About this list: Every month, Smashwords reports the Top 20 Bestselling Science Fiction and the Top 20 Bestselling Fantasy titles based on gross dollar sales. Sales from the previous month are aggregated across Smashwords's global network of ebook retailers and public library platforms, including Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Scribd, Gardners, OverDrive, Odilo, Baker & Taylor, the Smashwords store, and others. Smashwords is the world's largest distributor of ebooks by indie authors.

#### AUDIBLE.COM (AUDIO)

#### SCIENCE FICTION

- 1) The Midnight Library, Matt Haig, narrated by Carey Mulligan
- (Penguin Audio)

  2) Ready Player Two, Ernest Cline, narrated by Wil Wheaton (Random House Audio)
- 3) The Stand, Stephen King, narrated by Grover Gardner
- (Random House Audio)

  The Salvage Crew, Yudhanjaya Wijeratne, narrated by Nathan Fillion (Podium)
- 5) Dune, Frank Herbert, narrated by Scott Brick, Orlagh Cassidy,
- Euan Morton, Simon Vance & Ilyana Kadushin (Macmillan Audio)
  6) H.G. Wells: The Science Fiction Collection, H.G. Wells, narrated by Hugh Bonneville, Jason Isaacs, Sophie Okonedo, David Tennant, Alexander Vlahos & Eli Roth (Audible Studios) Ready Player One, Ernest Cline, narrated by Wil Wheaton
- (Random House Audio)
- 8) Leviathan Wakes, James S.A. Corey, narrated by Jefferson Mays
- (Hachette Audio)

  9) Jurassic Park, Michael Crichton, narrated by Scott Brick (Brilliance)

  10) Red Rising, Pierce Brown, narrated by Tim Gerard Reynolds
  (Recorded Books)

#### **FANTASY**

- 1) A Court of Silver Flames, Sarah J. Maas, narrated by Stina Nielsen (Recorded Books)
- 2) The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue, V.E. Schwab, narrated by Julia Whelan (Macmillan Audio)
- 3) **The Fellowship of the Ring**, J.R.R. Tolkien, narrated by Rob Inglis (Recorded Books)
- God's Eye: Awakening, Aleron Kong, narrated by Luke Daniels (Tamori)
  The Sandman, Neil Gaiman & Dirk Maggs, narrated by Riz Ahmed,
  Kat Dennings, Taron Egerton, Neil Gaiman, James McAvoy,
  Samantha Morton, Bebe Neuwirth, Andy Serkis & Michael Sheen (Audible Originals)
- 6) The Chronicles of Narnia Adult Box Set, C.S. Lewis, narrated by Kenneth Branagh, Alex Jennings, Michael York, Lynn Redgrave, Derek Jacobi, Jeremy Northam & Patrick Stewart (HarperCollins)
- Rhythm of War, Brandon Sanderson, narrated by Kate Reading & Michael Kramer (Macmillan Audio)
   Star Wars: The High Republic: Into the Dark, Claudia Cray, narrated by
- Dan Bittner (Listening Library)
  The Two Towers, J.R.R. Tolkien, narrated by Rob Inglis (Recorded Books)
  Star Wars: Light of the Jedi: The High Republic, Charles Soule, narrated by Marc Thompson (Random House Audio)

#### Ursula Vernon

have the characters and get them talking before I have any idea what the plot is.

"My career has had a weird progression. I was doing Digger, and then I got a literary agent by accident, kind of. I tell people to never, ever base any of their career decisions on what I did, because my path was very unusual. I didn't have a book, and I didn't query an agent. A friend of mine, romance writer Sabrina Jeffries, told a joke about me, her weird artist friend reading a romance novel, at a dinner while sitting next to my future agent. Everyone laughed, because I had never read a romance novel before, and she did a monologue on the non-romance reader discovering romance. The agent said, 'Artist, huh. Does she do graphic novels? Those are really hot right now.' My friend said, 'Yeah, she does comics. Here, let me give you her name.' Sabrina called me up and said, 'Do you want a literary agent?' She will never let me forget that my response was, 'Yeah, sure, what the hell.' I didn't know anything about it – all I knew was what I read in Writer's Digest back in the day, and in the '80s and '90s, agents were not such a big thing. A lot more publishers accepted unsolicited manuscripts back then, so you didn't need an agent nearly as much. I emailed back and forth with this nice agent who said, 'Do you have representation?', and I said, 'Yes? I pay taxes and do not live in Washington DC.' I was clearly lowering her expectations with every step. She said, 'I've looked at your artwork. I have looked at all the weird little stories you write underneath the art.' I was just putting stuff up on DeviantArt and writing little blurbs of descriptions that were sometimes like very short stories. She said, 'Do you think you could write a children's book?' I said, 'Sure, why not?' Finally she called me up on the phone and said, 'You are now speaking to an agent,' It was a month or so later when I said, 'Wait, are you my agent?' She was like, 'Yes.'

"That's how I got an agent without having written a book. She asked if I could write a book based on a painting of a little shrew in a boat made out of a snail shell, and I said yes. She asked how long it would take, and I thought, 'Okay, I don't want to take too long, because I don't want her to get bored.' I was used to the turnaround times on art at that point, because I was a freelance illustrator. I said, 'Can I have six weeks?' That's like twice as much as I need for illustrations. She said, 'Why don't you take eight?' I think she was being sarcastic in retrospect, but I had no idea at the time. I just thought, 'Great, that'll give me time for edits and revisions.' I sat down and wrote Nurk, my first children's book, in six weeks, and then sent it to her, so I had the two weeks for edits and revisions. I don't think she expected that. It's a very short book, so it's not like it took that long to do – it's only 15 or 20,000 words. Then she sold it. I went, 'Neat! Is that how this works?' She said, 'More or less, yes.' I came into the whole field from total ignorance. My friends Mur Lafferty and



Rattalope

Matt Wallace do a podcast called *Ditch Diggers*, which is basically about what happens after you get published: you have sold the novel, you are now an author, welcome to your life in the midlist, with all of the challenges that will present themselves, that do not get covered in any of the material for aspiring writers.

"If you reach your peak too early as a writer, that's when you get a pen name and stuff. That happened to a couple of friends of mine: you do well, and then your work stops selling, and then you reinvent yourself. In romance I think it happens a lot. It does happen in science fiction, too, but maybe we talk about it less. I've never had a breakout bestseller, but I do very solidly just because I know every book will sell. Certainly for the works I self-publish, I know they will sell more than enough to justify the writing. Of course, ask me again in ten years.

"Paladin's Strength just came out. It's the sequel to Paladin's Grace, fantasy romances set in the world of the Clocktaur books. I call them fluffy romance, and then everybody says fluffy romance doesn't have that many severed heads, but come on. Nobody spends a lot of time angsting, so clearly it's fluffy, right?

"I don't do art as much lately, and part of that is because the children's books, like Dragonbreath and Hamster Princess, were very art intensive. They had me on a pretty punishing schedule, doing two books a year. When I have to do 150 illustrations per book, even if they're little spot headshots and whatnot, they add up. I would do those, and also write selfpublished books, and I just burned out on the art part. I knew I was burning out while I was doing it, ironically, but it was one of those things where I thought, 'I am aware this is kind of killing me, but I need the money, because my elderly mother needs a house.' I still get royalties off the Dragonbreath books, and I couldn't live off them, but I'm not going to sneeze at a couple thousand a year. After doing the children's books, I was just burned out on art completely. Lately, because it's been a few years since all that, I have been getting back into art more, but it's really hard for me to do it for other people now, on commission or whatnot. I can do my own art, but if other people want something, that just kills the desire - which is not a great place to be as a commercial illustrator, so I'm glad the writing took over.

"I've been writing a lot of adult stuff lately. I finished up most of my contracted children's work, and then handed in a book that is now in a weird limbo, and I have sent in scripts for graphic novels with the understanding that someone else would draw them: 'I'll write as many comics as you want. You hire somebody else to draw them, and I will write you 50 million comics, not a problem. I just can't draw them anymore.' I haven't been doing as much of the children's stuff. I tend to work on multiple projects at once. In fact, there was a stretch where I would have a Hamster Princess book open on one side and a horror novel open on the other side in Word, basically two windows, and when I thought of something that happened on one I would switch to it and type a paragraph or two, and that would give me enough time to realize what happened on the other project, so I would switch back and write that. People say, 'Don't you get them confused?' Not really. I'm lucky that I can switch between the two, because at any given point I have five or six projects going, and sooner or later one hits a critical mass and then I think, 'I better finish this.' Some I self-publish, and others are contracted in advance. The horror novels usually are, and I'll know I have to write 1,000 words a day, four days a week, or the system collapses. I'll write my thousand words and then maybe I'll go write a few hundred on another thing. I just swap back and forth between projects, adding words, and if I get excited about something, I'll work on it really hard for a bit. I know that in most writing it's a truism that if you have a shiny new idea, you shouldn't go work on that, because it's a distraction from your work in progress. But for me, I will actually chase that shiny idea, and throw as many words at it as I can while I know what's going on. Then it might sit in a drawer for a while.

"My book that got that nice handwritten rejection note did get published by a small press, in a version called **Black Dogs**. I can say, as the critic, that it's young me writing a response to all of the fantasy novels that I'd been reading, except that older me went through and did a lot of editing. I think Terry Pratchett described one of his books like that, as a collaboration between his old self and his young self. There are parts of it that make me cringe because they're so desperately earnest and young and whatnot, but there are other parts I like. I kind of knew what I was talking about in a couple places. It's not high art, but it did get published.

"In the Clocktaur books, there are badger people, and they tend to be sort of pragmatic and they think humans are not terribly bright, but there are humans everywhere, so what are you going to do. My influences in terms of talking animals were Narnia and Watership Down at formative ages, and Tailchaser's Song by Tad Williams slightly later - it's a genius book. Much, much later, Diane Duane's The Book of Night with Moon was brilliant. Once I found furry fandom, I was like, 'Oh, hey, there's a lot of other stuff like this.' In comics, there have always been tons of talking animals. I started there and gradually added humans back. In the kids' books, the ones I had to illustrate, there are always talking animals, because drawing humans is hard. I told the publisher, 'I will draw you as many hamsters as you want. Dragons, sure. Humans, no.'

"The Hollow Places, under my T. Kingfisher name, is contemporary horror. I based it on The Willows by Algernon Blackwood, and I think it is recognizable as such – when I do a fairytale retelling or a horror novel based on pulp, it's the exact same process, using an old story that has certain recognizable elements. I just go at it think, 'If I was in this situation, what would happen?' The Willows has weird willow trees, and the characters are stuck on an island in the Danube. (This is not a spoiler – the book is over a century old.) The characters find these big conical depressions everywhere, and they can't get off the island. They see a boatman, and they're not sure if he's a real human or not. There are references to otters. A lot of The Hollow Places, if you've read The Willows, you'll recognize as an homage and reworking, and I try to be very upfront about that.

"The Willows was a big influence on Lovecraft. These days we call it cosmic horror, which is Lovecraft without the racism. Well, we try. Some of us try. Cosmic horror is in the weird borderland between science fiction and horror, because it's contemporary enough that people are trying to look at things scientifically – if a giant horrible portal to another dimension appeared in my backyard, I would not necessarily say, 'This is magic.' I would think, 'Okay, what's going on here? I have been huffing black mold spores, or this is an alien device, or the military is testing a weapon in my backyard for some reason?' Cosmic horror straddles the line between the fantastical and the science fictional, because you get people reacting to inexplicable things in a science fiction sort of context.

"The Lovecraft novella 'At the Mountains of Madness' has aliens, and one of them is a scientist, basically, and they dissect a human and a dog. They're like, 'What the hell are these things?', and it's kind of a funny juxtaposition, because the first thing the humans in the story did when they found the carcass of the alien scientist was dissect it to try to figure out what it was. Both parties were trying to figure out what's going on. The creatures in **The Willows** are more malicious, to a certain extent – they're like



**Bird Golem** 

a small child with magnifying glass, burning ants. There is also scientific element, though: let's take stuff apart and see how it ticks.

"My books always turn funny after a certain point. I wish I could say it was a conscious choice and that I sit down with a sliding humor meter or something. I can only sustain being serious for the length of a short story, and then I think, 'Somebody has got to make a fart joke.' That's my problem with a lot of horror. There are books where I think, 'This is scary, but the hero is such a sad sack, I just don't care enough to keep going.' My very favorite horror movie – and even though he's a terrible human being, I still think this is the one thing he did well – was Cabin in the Woods by Joss Whedon. Now we're back to the Orson Scott Card problem. I did not ever watch Buffy or any of Whedon's other work, really, but Cabin in the Woods is great, because the characters are sympathetic, I understand them and they're funny, and the setup is hilarious and full of references to things that I get. Whenever you get a joke or a reference or an Easter egg in a book or a movie or a video game, it makes the reader feel smart. In The Hollow Places I have a character named Algernon Woody, who provides some information and things like that. That kind of thing has to be accessible even if you've never read The Willows, because you don't want to assign a reading at the beginning of something, but if the reader gets the reference, they feel good.

"The T. Kingfisher pseudonym is brand separation, essentially. If I had been smart, I would have used a pen name to do the kids' books out of the gate. Then I wouldn't have had to do that thing where the book shipped a month earlier than they told me it would, and I had to get a new website coded basically overnight, so that if small children googled me, they would not see any art with nudes or anything, because I'd been an illustrator before that. My then

boyfriend, now husband, to his eternal credit, basically stayed up all night, coding me a new website from scratch. Now Ursula Vernon is a respectable children's book author, more or less.

"T. Kingfisher started when I wrote a novella, and my agent said, 'I like this, and editors like this, but none of us know how to sell this. We don't know what to call it. It's a novella. It's not really a children's book. Who the heck knows what to do with this?' It was called Nine Goblins, and I decided I could selfpublish. That was wild new territory to me. I had at the time been sort of snobbish about self-publishing, which I regret. I needed a pen name because I didn't want small children grabbing this book that was full of gore. Somehow a library got a copy of Black Dogs for a giveaway once when I was there. They had a drawing and gave the book to an eight-year-old boy, and I did this slow motion 'Noooooo' - because that's the book with all the torture and the lesbian elf sex. I managed to collar his mother and said, 'I happen to have a shiny new advanced reader copy of the next Dragonbreath book, and I will trade you. Don't let him read that one.' She was fortunately a really good sport about it.

"The hybrid approach is great because you can write the books that you really want to write and, at the same time, you have a house with an advertising budget for the stuff that is more mainstream. I've been lucky to have some very supportive publishers for that. To do it, you must either have the skills to self-publish or be willing to pay money to someone else who has the skills. I did everything wrong on the first one - I know I did. But I learned, and after four or five books you stop bursting into tears spontaneously at some point during the process. What I do is, I write a book, and if it's one of the fantasy romances, I know I'm going to self-publish it. Some of them I know I will self-pub, and my agent is really cool with me being a hybrid author. If anybody comes to me and says, 'We want to do an audiobook of your self-published book,' I say, 'Helen, this is now your problem!' She does all the foreign rights on them and things. It's all great as far as she's concerned. I write the book, and then I have an editor I work with who I pay what I know is not nearly enough money, but I once pulled her out of an empty swimming pool that was filled with algae, so she thinks she owes me. She had just bought a new house with a swimming pool, and the previous owners had decided to stop putting chemicals in it for about a year. We live in the South, so it was just nothing but algae and frogs and hundreds of tadpoles. She said, 'I am not going to kill all of these tadpoles, that is monstrous, so I need your help to bail the tadpoles out and we will take them to the pond next door.' I said, 'Okay, I will do this thing because you're a good friend,' We put on our bathing suits, but once she'd drained about half the pool, the algae was thick and slicker than grease. There were no steps, and she got in and said, 'It's fine. Come on in.' I said, 'Let's see if you can get out first.' She couldn't. She was trying to belly crawl through algae. I had to tie a rope to a tree, throw her the rope, and haul her out. Ever since then I have gotten a discount on editing. As I've said, do not ever attempt to follow my example. It really isn't a reproducible career path.

"After she does her edit, I get a copy edit, from friends who will copy edit for either a nominal fee or large gift baskets at Christmas and whatnot. I still do my own cover art, because that is one of the few skills I have retained. Actually, being a good illustrator does not make you a good cover artist. The two skills are wildly separate. Kerning is the magic. Letters tend to be more widely spaced on professional design jobs – I don't know why. You go through like 20 iterations on any cover usually, and particularly when you're doing the first one in a series, because then all the others have to match. Once you've got a design for a series, life gets a

lot easier because you know what font to use and so on. But when you're first doing it, you'll spend three days in the font mines until letters have no meaning whatsoever.

"Remember when everybody had a guy in a cloak on the cover? A friend of mine and I would go out to lunch next to a Barnes & Noble, and we'd go in and look for cloak guy. Romance novels for a long time did a stretch where everybody was cut off at the chin. Honestly, I can see why they went there. The one time I tried looking into using stock photos for a cover and eventually gave up, I realized, 'These same five cover models are on every cover. This poor guy has been a shape-changing werewolf, a duke, a highlander, and a knight.' The reason romance covers looked the way they did for years was because nobody liked them except this one book buyer at a big chain, who was a dude who liked these Fabio guys and the bodice-ripping thing. A huge part of designing covers is telling the reader what kind of book they're getting. Even after the one guy who liked those romance covers went away or retired, that kind of cover was still how you told romance readers what to expect. You tell a science fiction reader what to expect with spaceships. The covers from Baen are a whole field in and of themselves, and whatever I might think of them artistically, they advertise very quickly exactly the sort of product you're getting. A lot of times people want great art for a cover, but having done a fair number of covers as the illustrator and not as the writer, let me tell you - no. Let marketing tell you what to do. Ninety percent of the time, marketing knows what it's doing. Occasionally, of course, they screw up. I did the art for Castle Hangnail, and I think it's a good cover, but we went through about 20 iterations in order to end up back at my original design. Make this bigger, make this smaller, we want a castle in the background, etc. Finally my agent, who was being CC'd on the back-and-forth and who was not used to this kind of thing, said, 'Do you want me to put my foot down and tell them they're being ridiculous?' I said, 'Oh no, this is how it always works. Trust me, we're like two changes away from getting back to what I thought we should do to begin with.

"I am working on another horror novel now, for a publisher that I believe will be announced soon. It is a southern Gothic, and it's not actually based on any pulp, but it does have vultures in it. I'm also working on the next Paladin book, which will hopefully be a novella... or at least I thought it was a novella when I started it. It could be a little longer than that. I have lots of other stuff hanging out in the background that I pull out occasionally and poke at. I gotta eat, and the writing game is not so profitable that I can just do a book every five years. I feel like I only really work two or three hours a day on the writing as it is, so if I wrote less, what would I do with my free time?"

–Ursula Vernon **■** 



**Society Quail** 

that's a crappy way to think, and my most precious audience is Filipinos. But at that time I wondered if anyone would get my work if they weren't from the Philippines. My instructors for the most part were pretty responsive and said, 'You have something.' In my one-on-one conferences, I would usually ask them, 'What do I do well, what can I do better, and what do you think? Is there anything here?' That's really what I was trying to get out of the experience – is there something here, or should I just stop trying? Not that any teacher is going to tell you to stop, but that's what I was looking for - a sign that I could do something with this. Many of them said quite clearly, 'If you keep writing, something will happen. I'm not going to say when, because it's hard to get published, but you've got something." It wasn't like everyone was praising me, but I took that feedback quite seriously. I can't assess my own work, but if Nalo Hopkinson or Karen Joy Fowler says, 'You've got something,' then I'll take that. I don't trust myself, but I trust them. There were some stories where they told me, 'You can send this out already.' That's what I did. Clarion is where I learned about the different publications. I did my research. I read at least one or two issues from every magazine after Clarion, to see which fit my taste. I followed everyone's advice and did what they suggested. Kelly said to try Ellen Datlow, and she rejected my story, but she said to try F&SF or John Joseph Adams. I submitted the story to JJA and he took it for *Nightmare*. That started everything. I sent a story to Tor.com's slush pile and waited seven months and got accepted - that's fast for them. I was prepared to wait a year. That's how much I wanted to get in. I know it's much more common to get a rejection at the end of the seven months. Carl Engle-Laird was a newer editor at that time, and he took my story. I am proud of those stories, and I was also very lucky the editors saw something in them. I got lucky right out of the gate.

"I've been writing since I was seven, and writing fanfiction since I was eight, and sometimes I think, 'Wow, you really lucked out,' and then I think, 'But I also have been working at this since I was in first grade.' So I guess I can also tell myself, hey, it's been a long time coming. You did work for it.

"I haven't lived in the Philippines since 2010. I go back every other year, essentially. My best friends are still there, and half of my family is there. But I am an immigrant, and there's this whole identity thing that has come up recently that is quite nuanced. Sometimes I get tagged as a Filipino American author, and I have to check myself - 'Am I going to correct them or not?' because I do not identify as Filipino American. I identify as Filipino. I hesitate to say that, because I feel like a Filipino American might say, 'Why, are you disowning me?', and that's not how I feel. I just don't think I'm Filipino American. I talked about this with my family recently, because I was trying to figure out why I don't accept that identity. First of all, I'm not a US citizen. I might be, in the future, but I'm not now, so I'm not American in that sense. Second of all, I have cousins who grew up in the States, and when people in elementary school asked them, 'Where are you from?' they didn't mean 'New Jersey.' They meant, 'What country are your parents from?' But when those cousins would go back to the Philippines, because of their accents, people would ask them where they were from, and they expected the answer to be New Jersey. I never had that experience in the Philippines, because everyone around me was Filipino. I grew up there, and moved here as an adult, halfway through college. I don't have the same... I don't know if trauma is too strong a word.... but whatever challenges you face in the States as an Asian American, that was not my experience growing up. By the time I got to college, it was fine. This is what I mean by 'I'm not Filipino American.' I am Filipino, I've lived in the States for ten years, and I care about the things that Asian Americans care about, but I just can't claim that identity for myself.

"When you grow up in the Philippines, you do have this feeling that foreign stuff is better. As a young writer in the Philippines, I was especially impressed by writers if they were published internationally. If you had a foreign book deal, I unconsciously placed you on a higher pedestal than a writer published in a local press. I had a stronger feeling of 'You have made it.' Bruno Mars is part Filipino, and he made it, because he's Grammy Award-winning. I mean, he's amazing, but we have amazing singers in the Philippines, too. Because they aren't recognized internationally, I didn't rank them as highly. We have this desire to be recognized on an international stage. If it's just local, it's not as impressive to us. That was my mindset heading into Clarion - 'Ooh, foreign people will read my stories, and I value their opinions a lot.' That changed because, when I began doing interviews, people would ask me identity questions, which I never got when I was in Manila – because we were all Filipino and the books were all by Filipino authors. Until I was part of the international speculative fiction scene, I never thought, 'I am a Filipino Author' - capital F, capital A. I was just writing. But when you become part of an international group, you start to think, 'Oh, I am other, I'm foreign,' and that brings with it certain responsibilities.

'I am a better writer since I moved to the States because I've evolved and widened my toolkit, etc., but what gives my work value isn't where it's published. My collection Never Have I Ever includes some stories that come from the Filipino publications, and Gavin Grant and Kelly Link at Small Beer Press were the ones who chose those. I chose mostly stories that had been published in the foreign publications, because I had more confidence that they have value, and that's a little bit messed up. I've been made more aware of those ideas, and I've also been made more aware of my privilege, like the fact that I got to go to Clarion. I lived in the UK for a year for work, so I got to meet a lot of authors in London, too. I got to meet a lot of authors in New York and San Francisco, because those are the two places where I have family in the States, California and New Jersey. If I want to attend a con, I can do that - plane tickets aren't cheap here, but it's not the same as flying from Southeast Asia to America. So I go to these things, where I am sometimes the only Filipino author present, and sometimes the only Southeast Asian author present, and I feel my privilege. I also feel my sadness that there are whole literary communities in Southeast Asia, but we're given more recognition, and our works are seen as more valuable, if we break into the Western hemisphere.

"Obviously I'm thrilled to death when one of the authors I admire says good things about my stories, but the comments that mean the most to me are from young Filipinos. Sometimes my work is taught in schools in the Philippines - I have friends who teach at university there, so some are just like hype people who want to teach my story because we're friends. But sometimes a student will email me and say, 'I read your story, I really loved it, I cried a lot.' Sometimes it's about the representation, but sometimes it's not – it's just about the story. When I get those, I feel like I've really done something meaningful in my writing. These days I am most worried about the opinion of Filipinos. I've kind of come full circle. I want to write for whoever can appreciate my stories, but it will hurt me the most if I've failed a Filipino reader. I can only write from my own experiences, but I want to try to represent something accurately with it, and they are the people who will be able to tell if I mess up. No foreign reader will fault me for a bad detail about Manila, but if you're from Manila and you see that I mess something up, you'll *know*. So that's important.

"My approach to crafting a short story is very unscientific. Honestly, I wish I was more scientific about it, but I just go with what I feel like doing. I always have ideas. I'll use a concrete example, 'A Canticle for Lost Girls', the last story in my collection. For a couple of years I wanted to write a story about a retreat house. After a few years, it evolved into a story about demon summoning and a retreat house. Okay, cool, religious imagery, something creepy, summoning demons. Then I realized, 'This is going to be a story about bullying in high school,' which went on a lot in my school. I wasn't the subject of bullying, but I saw it happening, and it was not good. I still remember how I felt seeing it happen to people around me and how I didn't want to intervene. I was complicit, too - I did not want to be bullied, so I just let it happen. How do I feel about that? We're all older now, so I could say that was in the past, but it's a bit concerning to me that I still understand how high-school me felt. It's so easy to be like, 'You should have intervened,' but what keeps you from stepping in? I wanted to explore all that in a story. It was really hard for me to write it, even when I already had all of those elements in mind. Finally, the thing that unlocked it for me was thinking, 'What if the main character has her own daughter, and her own daughter suddenly makes the issue tangible?' What if her daughter gets bullied, or a teacher starts to harass her? Then the mom's fear is no longer just about the high school stuff that happened around her, it's about, 'What if this happens to my own daughter, and the cycle of girls enduring shitty things happens again?' That's how an idea evolves for me. I get things like tone, point of view, and structure, and then I just try and try and try until I get the first section right. Usually if I get the first scene right, I'm okay. It can take many tries sometimes for the first scene to be right. I have tried a few times now to write something all the way through, even if the beginning doesn't feel right, and usually those are hard to fix. If they're not working when I finish them the first time, then I'm just lost. Increasingly, though, I have found that sometimes I will get to the end of a story I think is unfixable, and then I will read it and realize, 'Actually, it's okay. It needs revision, but it's okay.' That wasn't the case for many years, but in the last two or three years I've found that has happened more often.

"A Spell for Foolish Hearts" is another story in the collection. That one is about a gay witch boy in San Francisco who falls in love with his coworker who, spoilers, happens to be the San Francisco fog, or part of the fog. The main character is named Patrick, and the fog is named Karl - the locals call it 'Karl the Fog' - so that's kind of on the nose. I lived in San Francisco for two years, but I've lived in the Bay Area for most of the time I've been in the States, and I worked there. I work in tech for my day job, so I know what startup life is like. I wanted to write a story set in San Francisco, and, again, that's very vague - San Francisco, maybe tech, maybe a startup. Then I thought, maybe fog, fog boy, Karl the fog – hmm, something with fog. I was hanging out in the Mission one time, and the Mission is kind of kooky, with lots of cool things in it, and I thought, 'Huh, what if there is a boy that is a witch - not a wizard, but a witch.' I wanted that to be just a given – I wasn't going to explain it, but he's a witch. I imagine in real life, if a boy was like, 'I'm a witch,' people would say, 'How can you be a witch? You're a boy.' Sometimes that's how people react when you tell them that you're queer, or when you tell them that you're bi - if you say 'I'm bi,' but you're not dating anyone, people will be like, 'How do you know?' Okay, so he's a witch and he's gay, and in both of those identities, he is questioned a lot. Patrick is a very innocent character, but he ends up getting a crush on his coworker, this mysterious hot boy. I wanted to write a story that felt similar to a fanfic, where the relationship is the only drama that the piece needs. I started writing it, not totally sure where it was going, and it was long, a novelette. I thought, 'I'm not going to be able to sell this anywhere,' because the speculative element is not the most important thing, and novelettes are a hard sell in general. In first draft it was one of those stories I was unsure about, but when I reread it, I liked it a lot. I wasn't sure if other people would, and there were some sections that were not so strong. When I first sent my collection manuscript to Gavin, he asked me, 'Do you have any original stories we can include?' I decided to send that one along and see if they liked it, so first I revised it, and he accepted the revision with some more notes that I then incorporated.

"I honestly don't feel like my original fiction and fanfiction are that different. But with fanfiction, I already care about the characters so much, so I don't need to do any of the heavy lifting in attaching feelings to a character. As a fanfic writer, I like to adhere to canon, so one of the most important things for me is that I am representing the character the way they are in the actual original material. In some sense, fanfiction is easier because my brain already has all these scenes and ideas about the character, and most importantly, the feelings attached to them. With my original short stories, a lot of my characters just come to me like they already exist somewhere, and I'm just transcribing what's going on. I'm trying to write a novel right now, and that's different. It's been a huge effort just in terms of accessing how I feel about the characters and how to care about them. In terms of the actual writing, the way I attempt both forms is very similar. My voice is quite similar in fanfic and original writing, and I employ the same devices. Sometimes for a fanfic, I will be writing about a character death, and I think, 'Character death, sad, emotion, angst, here's the scene, go for it.' Similarly, with original fiction, my brain will be like, 'The tone of this piece is fun bachelorette party, so use millennial lingo, and then just go for it.' The process is quite similar. I will say, especially in recent years, the fanfiction has been easier, largely because I just care so much more about other people's characters than my own. That might be bad. I mean, I care a lot about my characters, especially in the longer stories, because I have to live with them so long, but in my shorter stories, I only have to live with them for a week or something. In fanfiction I've known them all for years.

"My collection is pretty broad. I am very multigenre. I like writing everything - horror, fantasy, SF. The collection is heavily weighted towards fantasy and horror, and that's why I feel like thematically it hangs together pretty well. Some of it is also Small Beer's editorial preferences – it was a collaborative effort to put together the table of contents. From the first draft that I sent them, five stories were changed. In a 13-story collection, that's a big chunk. The first manuscript I sent them was just my strongest work, without a thought towards theme or how the collection hung together. The five changes were for thematic reasons, but it left out some of the strongest work, like 'A Cup of Salt Tears' and 'How to Swallow the Moon'. 'A Cup of Salt Tears' is Japanese mythology and 'How to Swallow the Moon' is epic fantasy, and those were different from the rest. I thought 'A Cup of Salt Tears' needed to be in there I would feel odd if my first collection didn't have that story – so we had a conversation. They chose a pretty cohesive collection, but we made allowances to let in certain stories that maybe don't hang together as well, but show the range of what I can do. The book doesn't show my full range, but I'm happy where we ended up. I wanted the book to represent me and everything I'm interested in, but I also want it to feel like a cohesive reading experience.

"I was surprised they wanted 'Misty' in the collection. It's very weird, and I wrote it for a horror YA anthology in the Philippines. I already read one review that said, 'I don't understand what the hell was going on in that story.' I talked about it with Kelly and Gavin, and Kelly said, 'I like that one, and it should be the second-to-the-last story, because I like disorienting readers right before the final story.' I'm okay with having something be a little bit weird. 'Syringe' is another strange one. Very short. I submitted it to Interfictions Online, back when it was still turning out issues. They didn't take it, and I just never submitted it anywhere else, partly because I have a lot of stories about people dying of an illness, for real-life reasons. But that was the one Gavin and Kelly wanted. I had my own opinions about what to include, but when it comes to your own work, you kind-of like everything. You can make yourself justify the inclusion of anything, so if an editor I respect says, 'No, I like that one, let's keep it,' then I will follow them, to a degree.

"My writing definitely has changed. I don't know how good I will be at articulating how. In 2017 I didn't write at all. I was applying to grad school at that time, I had been promoted at work, and there were challenging things going on at home, too. But still, having to take a timeout from writing made me so sad and miserable. The year before I had written like 40,000 words in the Hurricane Heels series of stories, but I had to take that year off. In 2018, I took a long break before going to grad school, and at that point I thought, 'Who am I? What do I write about now?' I was not sure. I had put some stories on the back burner. Like I said, I always have ideas. I was pretty frustrated with myself for having taken the long break, even if I knew I had to. But that year, because I had this long break, I thought about what I wanted to write. I'd written a lot about grief - that's just an evergreen topic for me - but I wanted to explore different things. I realized it was only after Clarion that I started writing queer characters into my stories, and sometimes they were just backgrounded. I thought writing more explicitly queer stories would be a new and interesting challenge. For example, 'Hurricane Heels' and 'Only Unclench Your Hand' were both written in 2014 and published in 2016, and they have queer characters, somewhere along that spectrum, but they aren't the focus of the story. In 2018 I wrote 'A Spell for Foolish Hearts' and 'How to Swallow the Moon', bringing those characters to the forefront. That was nice. It was hard, and those stories are longer, but it was a good challenge to try and write something different. They're romantic stories. I've always written romantic fanfics, a lot of shipping fanfiction, which is what many really good fanfics are, but I didn't do much of that in my original fiction. I've been trying to write longer things, too. Every year I'm like, 'I want to write a novel,' but I had to try writing a novelette first, and then a novella. Now most of my short stories end up in novelette range, which is a bit concerning. That's one evolution.

"If you've been publishing for a while, you start to feel this pressure, and you're thinking more about publication ahead of the writing. I have to consciously ignore the thought in my head that's like, 'Where are you going to send this?' I don't want to think about that as I'm writing. When I was at Clarion writing all these other stories, I never thought about where I was going to submit them —I was just focused on the story. Now that I've been in the community for longer, I think, 'Where am I going to send it, who's the right editor, how does this

fit into my body of work' – all of these additional things that shouldn't come into play. That's affected my process, too. Just being part of the community affects your process.

"I also don't just want my words to be beautiful anymore. I want the story to work as well. Before, a big part of what I wanted to do was create effects with language. I like that, it's a great thing to do, and there are days I still enjoy writing like that... but I also now demand my stories do more. I used to think, 'Whatever, as long as it's pretty, it's fine.' Now, definitely not – pretty isn't enough. Sometimes I miss the me that could say, 'Let's make it pretty,' and that could be the whole focus. In some ways I'm not as impressed with my own language anymore. I don't know what to do about that. I think my writing has become a bit more plain, but I try to let every story be what it is.

"For me, the way to make a reader feel something comes down to precision. When I first craft a scene, I'm just trying to get the action down. It's like I have a video camera, and I'm trying to record what's going on. I do frequently use internal thoughts, and I'm often explicit about how the character feels, whether it's first person or close third. When I do my sentence-level revision, I read over those lines and ask myself, 'Is that accurate?' Is that actually what they're feeling in that moment, or am I being lazy and not digging hard enough to find the right word? Or am I just flattening it? Or am I unsure? Or is the character unsure, and therefore the text is unsure? Sometimes the character is unsure, but I need to communicate that properly, so that the reader knows it's not me, the author, being unsure, it's the character. I have to check with myself, so I won't read it a couple years later and think, 'I really copped out there.' You can evoke feelings in the reader if you get things right, from the scene down to the sentence to the word choice. I don't honestly know whether or not I'm able to do that in my original fiction. I know in my fanfiction I have gotten closer. I have had people say, 'This made me cry,' or 'This broke my heart, then it made me so happy, then it broke my heart again, then it made me happy again.' I have that skill somewhere in my toolbox - I want to try to bring that more into the original fiction.

One of the things that I've really struggled with over the years has been the transition from short fiction to writing a book. I haven't written a novel yet. I was so confused about writing for so long, and I remain confused as a short fictionist trying to write a book. If anyone else trying to write a novel has this feeling of, 'It's completely wrong, I have no idea what I'm doing, it's really bad' - that is just how it feels. I used to be a clean first drafter, so the idea of getting to the end of something so long, and knowing it's wrong, and that I have to do a massive revision, just broke me. For many years I was like, 'That can't be how it works.' Now that I'm getting closer to finishing a book - this might jinx me - I know that's just how it is. I have to accept that it's a whole big mess of a thing. A book is just so big that I cannot approach a novel emotionally the same way that I treat a short story. I needed to learn that. I don't know if you can learn that any way besides going through it, but if I could have told me from five years ago this, it would have helped me a little bit: accept that it's going to be a big freaking mess, and it's just hard and confusing the whole time. But you will get to the end, and you'll probably have to do it all over again, but the story will tell you each time more about what it needs to be. Just allowing things to be so messy would have spared me a lot of pain. I kept waiting to discover the perfect method or the perfect elements to come together the way they do for me with short stories, and I don't think that happens with novels. They're just not the same."

-Isabel Yap ■

#### **Stoker Awards Final Ballot**14 p. 6

O'Quinn (Shotgun Honey Presents Volume 4: Recoil); "Should Fire Remember the Fuel?", Kyla Lee Ward (Oz is Burning).

Superior Achievement in a Fiction Collection: Velocities: Stories, Kathe Koja (Meerkat); Children of the Fang and Other Genealogies, John Langan (Word Horde); The Cuckoo Girls, Patricia Lillie (Trepidatio); Grotesque: Monster Stories, Lee Murray (Things in the Well); Bloody Britain, Anna Taborska (Shadow).

Superior Achievement in an Anthology: Miscreations: Gods, Monstrosities & Other Horrors, Michael Bailey & Doug Murano, eds. (Written Backwards); Black Cranes: Tales of Unquiet Women, Geneve Flynn & Lee Murray, eds. (Omnium Gatherum); Worst Laid Plans: An Anthology of Vacation Horror, Samantha Kolesnik, ed. (Grindhouse); Not All Monsters: A Strangehouse Anthology by Women of Horror, Sara Tantlinger, ed. (Rooster Republic); Arterial Bloom, Mercedes M. Yardley, ed. (Crystal Lake).

Superior Achievement in Non-Fiction: The Science of Women in Horror: The Special Effects,

The Data File

Ivory's Story, Eugen M. Bacon (NewCon); "All I Asked For", Anne Charnock (Fictions: Health and Social Care Re-Imagined); "Red\_Bati", Dilman Dila (Dominion); "Ife-Iyoku, the Tale of Imadeyunuagbon", Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki (Dominion); "Infinite Tea in the Demara Cafe", Ida Keogh (London Centric); "Isn't Your Daughter Such a Doll", Tobi Ogundiran (Shoreline of Infinity #18).

Best Non-Fiction: Ties That Bind: Love in Science Fiction and Fantasy, Francesca T Barbini, ed. (Luna); The Unstable Realities of Christopher Priest, Paul Kincaid (Gylphi); Science Fiction and Climate Change, Andrew Milner & J.R. Burgmann (Liverpool University Press); It's the End of the World: But What Are We Really Afraid of?, Adam Roberts (Elliot & Thompson); "Books in Which No Bad Things Happen", Jo Walton (Tor. com 3/20/20); "Estranged Entrepreneurs and the Meaning of Money in Cory Doctorow's Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom", Jo Lindsay Walton (Foundation Winter '20).

Best Artwork: "Shipbuilding Over the Clyde", Iain Clarke; Covers for Robot Dreams, Fangorn (NewCon); Cover for Club Ded by Nikhil Singh, Ruby Gloom (Luna); Cover for A Strange and Brilliant Light by Eli Lee, Sinjin Li (Jo Fletcher); "Four Black Lives Matter Murals in AR", Nani Walker.

The awards will be voted on by members of BSFA and the British Annual Science Fiction Convention (Eastercon). The winners will be announced during ConFusion, to be held online April 2-5, 2021. For more: <br/>bsfa.co.uk/the-bsfa-awards-2020-shortlist>.

**Audie Awards Finalists •** The Audio Publishers Association has announced the 2021 Audie Awards finalists, recognizing excellence in audiobooks and spoken word entertainment. Finalists of genre interest follow.

<u>Audiobook of the Year: *Piranesi*</u>, Susanna Clarke, read by Chiwetel Ejiofor (Bloomsbury).

Science Fiction: Ruins of the Galaxy, J.N. Chaney & Christopher Hopper, read by R.C. Bray (Podium); Axiom's End, Lindsay Ellis, read by Stephanie Willis & Oliver Thorn (Macmillan Audio); Aliens: Phalanx, Scott Sigler, read by Bronson Pinchot (Blackstone); The Deep, Rivers Solomon, Daveed Diggs, William Hutson & Jonathan Snipes, read by Daveed Diggs (Simon & Schuster Audio); Heaven's

Stunts, and True Stories Behind Your Favorite Fright Films, Kelly Florence & Meg Hafdahl (Skyhorse); 1000 Women in Horror, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas (BearManor); End of the Road, Brian Keene (Cemetery Dance); Women Make Horror: Filmmaking, Feminism, Genre, Alison Peirse, ed. (Rutgers University Press); Writing in the Dark, Tim Waggoner (Guide Dog/Raw Dog Screaming); The Streaming of Hill House: Essays on the Haunting Netflix Adaption, Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr., ed. (McFarland).

Superior Achievement in Short Non-Fiction: "The Beloved Haunting of Hill House: An Examination of Monstrous Motherhood", Rhonda Jackson Joseph (The Streaming of Hill House: Essays on the Haunting Netflix Adaptation); "I Need to Believe", Cynthia Pelayo (Southwest Review 105.3); "Lost, Found, and Finally Unbound: The Strange History of the 1910 Edison Frankenstein", Kelly Robinson (Rue Morgue 6/20); "Final Girl: A Life in Horror", Christina Sng (Interstellar Flight 10/20); "Speaking of Horror", Tim Waggoner (The Writer 11/20).

Superior Achievement in a Poetry Collection: Whitechapel Rhapsody: Dark Poems, Alessandro Manzetti (Independent Legions); A Complex

**River**, Dennis E. Taylor, read by Ray Porter (Audible Originals); **Star Wars: Thrawn Ascendancy: Chaos Rising**, Timothy Zahn, read by Marc Thompson (Penguin Random House Audio).

Fantasy: The Last Smile in Sunder City, Luke Arnold, read by the author (Hachette Audio); Raybearer, Jordan Ifueko, read by Joniece Abbott-Pratt (Blackstone); The City We Became, N.K. Jemisin, read by Robin Miles (Hachette Audio); The House in the Cerulean Sea, TJ Klune, read by Daniel Henning (Macmillan Audio); The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue, V.E. Schwab, read by Julia Whelan (Macmillan Audio).

Fiction: *The Midnight Library*, Matt Haig, read by Carey Mulligan (Canongate UK/Penguin Random House Audio US).

<u>Literary Fiction & Classics</u>: *The Death of Vivek Oji*, Akwaeke Emezi, read by Yetide Badaki & Chukwudi Iwuji (Penguin Random House Audio); *Pew*, Catherine Lacey, read by Bahni Turpin (Brilliance).

Thrillers/Suspense: *The Only Good Indians*, Stephen Graham Jones, read by Shaun Taylor-Corbett (Simon & Schuster Audio); *If It Bleeds*, Stephen King, read by Will Patton, Danny Burstein & Steven Weber (Simon & Schuster Audio).

Short Stories/Collections: Burnt Tongues, Chuck Palahniuk, Richard Thomas & Dennis Widmyer, eds., read by Christopher David, Jordan Killam, Pete Cross, et al. (Dreamscape); Inside Jobs: Tales from a Time of Quarantine, Ben H. Winters, read by Scott Aiello, Kevin T. Collins & Ellen Archer (Audible Originals).

Young Adult: *Poisoned*, Jennifer Donnelly, read by Rosie Jones (Scholastic Audio); *A Song Below Water*, Bethany C. Morrow, read by Jennifer Haralson & Andrea Laing (Macmillan Audio).

Middle Grade: King and the Dragonflies, Kacen Callender, read by Ron Butler (Scholastic Audio); The Good Hawk, Joseph Elliott, read by Fiona Hardingham & Gary Furlong (Brilliance); We Dream of Space, Erin Entrada Kelly, read by Ramon de Ocampo (HarperAudio); Shuri: A Black Panther Novel, Book 1, Nic Stone, read by Anika Noni Rose (Scholastic Audio).

Audio Drama: Doctor Who: Stranded 1, Matt Fitton, David K Barnes, Lisa McMullin & John Dorney, read by Paul McGann, Nicola Walker, Hattie Morahan, Rebecca Root, Tom Price & Tom Baker (Big Finish); Frankenstein: A Stage Adaptation, A.S. Peterson, read by Jared Reinfeldt, Euriamis Losada, Henry O. Arnold, Kim Bretton, Morgan Davis, Matt Rose, Micah Williams,

Accident of Life, Jessica McHugh (Apokrupha); Into the Forest and All the Way Through, Cynthia Pelayo (Burial Day); A Collection of Dreamscapes, Christina Sng (Raw Dog Screaming); Cradleland of Parasites, Sara Tantlinger (Rooster Republic).

Superior Achievement in a Graphic Novel: The Masque of the Red Death, Steven Archer (Raw Dog Screaming); Spectre Deep 6, Jennifer Brody & Jules Rivera (Turner); Road of Bones, Rich Douek & Alex Cormack (IDW); Mary Shelley Presents, Nancy Holder, Chiara Di Francia & Amelia Woo (Kymera); Her Life Matters: (Or Brooklyn Frankenstein), Alessandro Manzetti & Stefano Cardoselli (Independent Legions); Lonesome Days, Savage Nights, Steve Niles, Salvatore Simeone & Szymon Kudranski (TKO Studios).

Superior Achievement in a Screenplay: Color Out of Space; The Haunting of Bly Manor, "The Altar of the Dead"; The Invisible Man; Lovecraft Country, "Jig-a-Bobo"; Lovecraft Country, "Sundown".

Voting is now open to HWA members until March 15, 2021. Winners will be honored at a gala during StokerCon 2021, to be held May 20-23, 2021 at the Curtis Hotel in Denver CO. For more: <www.thebramstokerawards.com/front-page/the-2020-bram-stoker-awards-final-ballot>.

Brooks Bennett, Austin Olive & Garris Wimmer (Oasis).

Best Female Narrator: *The City We Became*, N.K. Jemisin, read by Robin Miles (Hachette Audio).

Best Male Narrator: The Glimme, Emily Rodda & Marc McBride, read by Andrew Scott (Bolinda). History/Biography: J.R.R. Tolkien: The Making of a Legend, Colin Duriez, read by Simon Vance (Oasis)

The winners will be announced at a virtual awards ceremony on March 22, 2021. For more: <www.audiopub.org/uploads/pdf/2021-Audie-Finalists-Announcement.pdf>.

Black Creatives Fund • We Need Diverse Books has launched a new program, the Black Creatives Fund, starting in Spring 2021. The program, sponsored by Penguin Random House, is devoted to "supporting emerging and established Black writers and illustrators," with plans including a workshop on revision, mentorships, and marketing education in association with The Brown Bookshelf (<thebrownbookshelf.com>), a group devoted to promoting children's literature by Black creators. The revision workshop will include stipends for a dozen writers and the opportunity to submit manuscripts to PRH. For more: <diversebooks.org/programs/black-creatives-fund>.

**SFWA News** • Sascha Stronach and Yilin Wang will guest edit issues of SFWA's *The Bulletin* for 2021. Stronach will edit issue #218 (September 2021), and Wang will edit issue #219 (December 2021). SFWA editor-in-chief Michi Trota said, "I've admired Sascha's and Yilin's work in SF/F and am excited they'll be bringing their unique visions and perspectives to shape their issues of *The Bulletin*." For more: <a href="https://www.sfwa.org/2021/02/25/announcing-2021-guest-editors-bulletin">www.sfwa.org/2021/02/25/announcing-2021-guest-editors-bulletin>.

World Conventions News • DisCon III, the 79th Worldcon, to be held in Washington DC, released an update on March 14, 2021 regarding the bankruptcy filing and permanent closure of the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, one of the convention's contracted venues:

We are working with our legal counsel to move closer to a resolution, with a hearing expected to happen in April. We hope to provide you more concrete information as the process progresses.

The convention previously announced that, "for

legal reasons," the bankruptcy situation "means we cannot give any updates regarding the dates of DisCon III." For more: <discon3.org/news/3-14-hotel-update>.

The 2021 World Fantasy Convention has announced Brandon O'Brien as Special Guest, joining guests Owl Goingback, Yves Meynard, John Picacio, André-François Ruaud, Nisi Shawl, and Christine Taylor-Butler. WFC 2021 will be held November 4-7, 2021 in Montréal, Canada. The theme is "Fantasy, Imagination, and the Dreams of Youth." Attending memberships are currently \$150. For more: <a href="www.wfc2021.org/index.php">www.wfc2021.org/index.php</a>>.

Publishing News • Children's publisher Egmont UK, which became part of HarperCollins UK in May 2020, is now being renamed as Farshore: "With our new name and brand identity, we remain firmly committed to our mission and purpose—to make every child a proud reader. This mission underpins our broad and inclusive portfolio of child-friendly picture books, fiction, non-fiction and brands. We aim to inspire reading for pleasure for all ages, from the most reluctant readers to the most enthusiastic. Whether it's a popular brand brought to life on the page or a brilliant new series by a debut author, Farshore brings a vast range of diverse stories and amazing worlds to children and teens." For more: <www.farshore.co.uk>.

There have been big changes at Quirk Books. Brett Cohen has resigned as president and publisher, ending a 20-year career there, with owner/founder David Borgenicht returning as publisher and Jhanteigh Kupihea promoted to publisher. Nicole De Jackmo rises to the new position of senior vice president of sales, marketing, and publicity. Megan Dipasquale was promoted to vice president of finance, Andie Reid to art director, Jane Morley to managing editor, Mandy Sampson to senior production and sales manager, and Kelsey Hoffman to senior publicity and marketing manager. Moneka Hewlett has departed her position as vice president, director of sales. The company plans to hire four new members.

**Workshop News** • The Odyssey Writing Workshop has announced that its summer 2021 classes will be held online. The six-week course is normally held at Saint Anselm College in Manchester NH, though the 2020 session was also held online due to COVID concerns. Odyssey director Jeanne Cavelos said.

Odyssey brings together adult students of all ages from across the globe. Many may not have the opportunity to be vaccinated by summer. If one student tests positive, it's likely that at least a third of the students-and possibly all the students-would need to be put into isolation for ten days. This would be extremely disruptive for the workshop. Each student would have to remain within a separate apartment, with three meals a day left at the door, attending the class online. Imagine if, two weeks later, another student tests positive and more students need to be put into isolation. Odyssey is an intensive, demanding program, and putting that additional stress on students would make it very difficult for them to get the most out of the experience.

The 2021 workshop will be held June 7 – July 16, 2021. Deadline for applications was April 1. For more: <www.odysseyworkshop.org>.

**Contest News** • The QueerSciFi.com Flash Fiction Contest is open now through April 30, 2021, with the theme this year of "Ink":

Tell us about ink (and the stain it leaves) on your characters, the culture, and the world, for better or worse. We'll be accepting works from across the queer spectrum, and would love to see more entries including lesbian,

trans, bi, intersex and ace protagonists, as well as gay men. We also welcome diversity in ability (physical and mental) and in race.

Stories must be no longer than 300 words, incorporate a speculative element, and include "at least one queer character and/or obvious queer content."

For more: <www.queerscifi.com/flash-contest-

Announcements • Jackie Fallis is the recipient of this year's Working Class Writers Grant, presented by the Speculative Literature Foundation (SLF). The \$1,000 grant is given annually to assist working class, blue-collar, poor, and homeless writers who "have been historically underrepresented in speculative fiction, due to financial barriers which have made it much harder for them to have access to the writing world." Jackie Fallis is from Ontario CA. They write speculative literature as well as essays on disability and scifi. Recently they've had a short-short published by Doug Weller and they have an essay in ATB Publishing's upcoming book on Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. Their favorite (but most stressful) writing experience is the 48 Hour Film Festival, which they've developed scripts for the last eight years in a row. Jackie has a BA in Creative Writing from the University of Central Florida. For more: <www.facebook.com/speculativeliterature/ posts/4093744770650235>.

Shreya Ila Anasuya, Eleyna Sara Haroun, and FS Hurston are the 2020 recipients of the Otherwise Fellowship (formerly the Tiptree Fellowship). Each winner will receive a \$500 grant, and work produced as a result of this support will be recognized and promoted by the Otherwise Award. "The Otherwise Award celebrates works of speculative fiction that imagine new futures by exploring and expanding our understanding of gender roles. Through the Fellowship Program, the Award also encourages those who are striving to complete works, to imagine futures that might have been unimaginable when the Award began." Honorable mentions went to Timea Balogh, Wren Handman, Jasmine Moore, and Kailee Marie Pedersen. The selection committee was composed of Devonix, Betsy Lundsten, Martha Riva Palacio Obón, and Kiini Ibura Salaam. For more: <otherwiseaward.org/2021/02/2020-otherwisefellowships-announced>.

Awards News • The Norma K. Hemming Award, "given to mark excellence in the exploration of themes of race, gender, sexuality, class or disability in a speculative fiction work (e.g. science fiction, fantasy, horror) by Australian citizens and/or residents," will not be held in 2021. "This decision has been made due to several factors, including COVID-19, juror fatigue, and administrative changes. Please note that all 2020 and 2021 publications will be eligible when the Awards next run." Current award administrator Tehani Croft has resigned her post. More information will be provided "in the coming months about the new Administrator, under the guidance of the new ASFF committee." For more: <normakhemmingaward.org/2021/02/22/2021norma-k-hemming-awards>.

Author Charles Yu, in collaboration with *TaiwaneseAmerican.org*, has created the Betty L. Yu and Jin C. Yu Creative Writing Prizes, "intended to encourage and recognize creative literary work by Taiwanese American high school and college students, and to foster discussion and community around such work." Submissions are open to fiction, poetry, or creative non-fiction, and "must be from writers of Taiwanese heritage (or writers with other significant connection to Taiwan), or have subject matter otherwise relevant to the Taiwanese or Taiwanese American experience." The deadline for the inaugural prize is March 31, 2021. Judges

are Shawna Yang Ryan and Charles Yu. Winners will receive a total of \$1,500, publication on *TaiwaneseAmerican.org*, consideration for publication in *Chrysanthemum*, and mentoring opportunities with the contest judges. For more: <a href="www.taiwaneseamerican.org/2021/02/national-book-award-winner-charles-yu-establishes-prize-for-young-taiwanese-american-creative-writers">winner-charles-yu-establishes-prize-for-young-taiwanese-american-creative-writers>.

The results of the annual *Clarkesworld* readers' poll for best story and cover art of 2020 were announced in the March 2021 issue. <u>Best Story</u>: Winner: "AirBody", Sameem Siddiqui (4/20). 2nd Place: "The Translator, at Low Tide", Vajra Chandrasekera (5/20). 3rd Place: "To Sail the Black", A.C. Wise (11/20). <u>Best Cover</u>: Winner: "Ancient Stones", Francesca Resta (10/20). 2nd Place: "Home Planet", Beeple (4/20). 3rd Place: "Alien Scout", Arjun Amky (11/20). For more: <clarkesworldmagazine.com/clarke\_03\_21>.

Winners of the New England Science Fiction Association (NESFA) SF/F short story contest were announced at Boskone 58, held online February 12-14, 2021. Prizes included certificates of achievement, books from NESFA Press, and free membership to a future Boskone convention. Winner: "The Last Prophet", Nicholas Marconi. Runner-up: "What We Take from Each Other", Sam Ruhmkorff. Honorable Mentions: "You Told Me To", John Dulak; "Letter to Death", K.S. Shere. The contest administrator was Steven Lee. Judges were Joe Abercrombie and Kim Stanley Robinson. For more: <a href="www.nesfa.org/awards/short-story-contest/past-winners/">www.nesfa.org/awards/short-story-contest/past-winners/</a>.

Results of the 2021 Peter Lang Young Scholars Competition in Science Fiction Studies have been announced. World Science Fiction Studies: "From Wilderness to Anthropocene: The Frontier in African Speculative Fiction", Michelle Clarke. Utopian Studies: Winner: "Zone Theory: SF and Utopia in the Space of Possible Worlds", Alexander Popov. Runner-up: "The Rebirth of Utopia in 21st-Century Cinema: Cosmopolitan Hopes in the Films of Globalization", Mónica Martín. For more: cpeterlangoxford.wordpress.com/2021/02/24/winners-of-the-2021-peter-lang-young-scholars-competition-in-science-fiction-studies-iafa\_tw-sfranews-gerrycanavan-tpmoylan-sfritzsc-sf-sciencefiction/>.

Vagina Dentata, a Swedish network for horror creators identifying as women, has announced film director Frida Kempff as the winner of the Vagina Dentata Award, and author and editor Kelly Link as winner of the International Vagina Dentata Award. Other nominees were author and illustrator Jonna Björnstierna and author Camilla Sten. Winners receive a "Golden Pussy" statue created by artist Titti Winbladh. For more: <www.facebook.com/v.d.skracksystrar>.

The Mabati-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature has announced the Nyabola Prize for Science Fiction, for speculative fiction written in Kiswahili by authors aged 18-35. The award is designed to promote and popularise a Kiswahili vocabulary for technology and digital rights, in order to empower citizens in Kiswahili-speaking communities to participate in broader conversations on the issues. First prize will receive \$1,000, second prize \$500, third prize \$250, and the top ten stories will be published in an anthology. Entries must be originally written in Standard Kiswahili and 2,000 to 2,500 words long. Submissions can be emailed to <kiswahiliprize@ cornell.edu> with the subject "Nyabola Prize for Science Fiction entries". Deadline is May 31, 2021. For more: <twitter.com/KiswahiliPrize/status/1369 212179883364355?s=20>.

The Romantic Novelists' Association has announced winners for the 2021 Romantic Novel Awards, including **Echoes of the Runes** by Christina Courtenay (Headline), winner of the Fantasy Romantic Novel Award. For more: <romanticnov-

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#### The Data File

elistsassociation.org/news\_article/winners-for-the-2021-romantic-novel-awards>.

The International Union of Writers (IUW) announced the winners of several awards during Aelita 2020: the XXXVII International Literary Festival of Fiction, held online December 18-20, 2020. Aelita Award: Michael Swanwick. Bugrov Award (named after V.I. Bugrov): Sergey Volkov. Aelita-Start Award: Leon Smith. Hyperboloid Award: Sasha Krugosvetov. Order of the Knight of Science Fiction Award (named after I.G. Khalymbadzhi): Nikolay Kalinichenko. The literary festival combined the Aelita Convention, Second International Literary Festival named after Alexander Pushkin, and the "New Tale" All-Russian Literary Award given in memory of Pavel Petrovich Bazhov. Swanwick is the first American recipient of the award, and is president of the IUW. For more <inwriter.org/news/ the-aelita-award.html>.

Baen Books has announced the ten finalists for the 2021 Jim Baen Memorial Short Story Award: Gustavo Bondoni, Deborah L. Davitt, C. Stuart Hardwick, Scott Huggins, José Pablo Iriarte, William Paul Jones, Leigh Kimmel, Wendy Nikel, Kurt Pankau, Russell Pike; The Grand Prize winner will be featured on the Baen website. The author will be given a trophy and paid professional rates. Grand Prize, second, and third place winners each receive free admission into the 2021 International Space Development Conference and a year's membership in the National Space Society, as well as an assortment of Baen Books and National Space Society merchandise. The winners will be honored during the virtual International Space Development Conference, to be held May 27, 2021. Judges were Les Johnson and the editors of Baen Books. For more: <www.baen.com/prjbmss2021finalists>.

The Bookseller has announced the shortlists for the 2021 British Book Awards, including several titles of genre interest. Pageturner: False Value, Ben Aaronovitch (Daw; Gollancz); Darkdawn, Jay Kristoff (St. Martin's; HarperVoyager UK). Fiction Book of the Year: The Midnight Library, Matt Haig (Viking; Canongate). Children's Fiction: The Danger Gang, Tom Fletcher & Shane Devries (Puffin); The Ickabog, J.K. Rowling (Scholastic; Little, Brown Books for Young Readers UK); Dragon Mountain, Katie & Kevin Tsang (Sterling Children's; Simon & Schuster Children's UK). Audiobook Book of the Year: Piranesi, Susanna Clarke, narrated by Chiwetel Ejiofor (Bloomsbury); The Sandman, Neil Gaiman & Dirk Maggs, narrated by Gaiman, Riz Ahmed, et al. (Audible); The Midnight Library, Matt Haig, narrated by Carey Mulligan (Penguin Audio; Canongate). Also called the "Nibbies," the British Book Awards "honours and celebrates the commercial successes of publishers, authors and bookshops" with nominees in a variety of categories, including AudioBook of the Year, Editor of the Year, and Independent Bookshop of the Year. Winners will be honored on May 13, 2021 during a virtual event. For more: <www.thebookseller.com/british-bookawards-2021/about>.

The Neukom Institute for Computational Science at Dartmouth College has announced the shortlist for the 2021 Neukom Institute Literary Arts Award for Playwriting: Some of Us Exist in the Future, Nkenna Akunna; Roll Play, Julia Blauvelt; NOISE: A Teenage Panic Attack on National Themes, Ezra Brain & J. Andrew Norris; Omen Road to Starrville, Erik Champney; BETA, Christian Durso; Meet You at the Galaxy Diner, Gina Femia; Edit Annie, Mary Glen Fredrick; wad, Keiko Green; UX, Jason Gray Platt; Bounded in a Nutshell, Jason C. Stuart; The Moderate, Ken Urban; Atlas, the Lonely Gibbon,

Deborah Yarchun. The award considers works that address the question, "What does it mean to be a human in a computerized world?" The winner will receive \$5,000 and "support for a two-stage development process with workshops at VoxLab and Northern Stage." Results will be announced in spring 2021. For more <sites.dartmouth.edu/neu-kominstitutelitawards/2021/03/10/neukom-institute-announces-2021-playwriting-shortlis>.

The finalists for the 2021 Aspen Words Literary Prize has been announced, including these titles and authors of genre interest: The New Wilderness, Diane Cook (HarperCollins); The Night Watchman, Louise Erdrich (Harper); If I Had Two Wings, Randall Kenan (Norton). The winner will be announced during an online ceremony in April 2021. The \$35,000 prize is awarded to "an influential work of fiction focused on vital contemporary issues." Finalists and winner are chosen by jury. This year's judges are Emily Bernard, Sarah Ladipo Manyika, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Daniel Shaw, and Luis Alberto Urrea. Aspen Words is a program of the Aspen Institute. For more: <www.aspenwords.org/programs/literary-prize/finalists>.

The YA Book Prize 2021 shortlist includes genre titles **Wranglestone** by Darren Charlton (Stripes/Little Tiger) and **Hold Back the Tide** by Melinda Salisbury (Scholastic). The £2,000 YA Book Prize is awarded to a YA title written by an author living in the UK or Ireland. Finalists and winners are selected by a panel of judges: Caroline Carpenter (chair), Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff, Rachel Fox, Will Hill, Layla Hudson, and Sanne Vliegenthart. The Pioze is organized by book trade magazine *The Bookseller* and run in partnership with Hay Festival. For more: <www.thebookseller.com/shortlist-yabook-prize-2021>.

Nominees have been announced for the Splatterpunk Awards, "honoring superior achievement for works published in 2020 in the sub-genres of Splatterpunk and Extreme Horror." Best Novel: Pandemonium, Ryan Harding & Lucas Mangum (Death's Head); **Tome**, Ross Jeffery (The Writing Collective); Dust, Chris Miller (Death's Head); Slaughter Box, Carver Pike (self-published); Gone to See the River Man, Kristopher Triana (Cemetery Dance); They All Died Screaming, Kristopher Triana (Blood Bound); The Magpie Coffin, Wile E. Young (Death's Head). Best Novella: The Slob, Aron Beauregard (self-published); Bella's Boys, Thomas R Clark (Stitched Smile); Juniper, Ross Jeffery (The Writing Collective); Red Station, Kenzie Jennings (Death's Head): True Crime. Samantha Kolesnik (Grindhouse); The Night Silver River Run Red, Christine Morgan (Death's Head); How Much 2, Matt Shaw (self-published). Best Short Story: "The Incident at Barrow Farm", M Ennenbach (Cerberus Rising); "Full Moon Shindig", Patrick C. Harrison III (Visceral: Collected Flesh); "Phylum", Tom Over (The Comfort Zone and Other Safe Spaces); "Footsteps", Janine Pipe (Diabolica Britannica); "Next in Line", Susan Snyder (**Devour the Earth**);
"My Body", Wesley Southard (**Midnight in the** Pentagram); The God in the Hills, Jon Steffens (Filthy Loot). Best Collection: War of Dictates, John Baltisberger (Death's Head); Cerberus Rising, M Ennenbach, Chris Miller & Patrick C. Harrison III (self-published); The Essential Sick Stuff, Ronald Kelly (Silver Shamrock); Rhapsody in Red, Peter Molnar (Stitched Smile); Visceral: Collected Flesh, Christine Morgan & Patrick C. Harrison III (Death's Head); The Comfort Zone and Other Safe Spaces, Tom Over (NihilismRevised); Blood Relations, Kristopher Triana (Grindhouse). Best Anthology: Chew on This!, Robert Essig, ed. (Blood Bound); Brewtality, K. Trap Jones, ed. (The Evil Cookie); Welcome to the Splatter Club, K. Trap Jones, ed. (Blood Bound); Worst Laid Plans, Samantha Kolesnik, ed. (Grindhouse); Crash Code, Q. Parker, ed. (Blood Bound); If I Die Before I Wake Vol. 3: Tales of Deadly Women and Retribution, R.E. Sargent & Steven Pajak, eds. (Sinister Smile); Psi-Wars: Classified Cases of Psychic Phenomena, Joshua Viola, ed. (Hex). The J.F. Gonzalez Lifetime Achievement Award will be awarded to John Skipp. The awards will be presented at the 2021 KillerCon, to be held August 2021 in Austin TX. For more: <www.briankeene.com/home/hnz133gxxxv2nnkcfr6tcle13hvr20>.

**Financial News** • The US Census Bureau's preliminary report on retail for January 2021 shows bookstore sales of \$797 million, down 17% from January 2020. All retail was up 11%.

The AAP StatShot figures for all of 2020 show book publishers' sales were essentially flat, up a very slim 0.1% over 2019, a far better outcome than most would have predicted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sales for adult books actually rose 12.0% over the previous year's, and Children's & Young Adult books rose 6.4%. The biggest declines were in educational materials, particularly K-12 Instructional Materials, down 19.6%. By format, Adult books saw year-over-year increases in hardcovers (up 18.9%) and trade paperbacks (up 7.8%), while mass-market paperbacks fell 2.5%. Downloadable audio rose 15.3%, making up 10.3% of all adult sales, a slight gain over 10.3% in 2019; ebook sales were up 11%, but their share of sales fell a little, from 17.2% in 2019 to 17% in 2020. In Children's/YA sales, hardcovers gained 5.6% and paperbacks rose 3.2%, but board books outshone both, up 18.2%; ebooks vaulted up 70.5%, but still only made up 5.5% of Children's/YA sales; downloadable audiobooks rose 37% for 7.9% of sales. Back in April and May, the AAP had noted a sharp drop in returns, raising concerns that a flood of returns later on might cause problems, but so far no such surge has occurred. For the year, total returns were down 20.2% from 2019. The figures are based on data from 1,354 publishers reporting to the Association of American Publishers.

Scholastic reported sales down 26% in their third quarter ending February 28, 2021. Book fairs were again their hardest-hit segment, thanks to so many schools limiting in-person learning; sales dropped 73% compared to the same period the year before. Book club sales fell 8.4%. In contrast, trade sales were up 2.6% at \$79.3 million. Cost-cutting measures resulted in an operating loss of \$24.2 million, an improvement on the previous year's loss of \$60.0 million.

Hachette Book Group in the US saw sales for last year gain 3.9%, while UK sales rose 9.9%, helping offset declines in France and Spain/Latin America, according to parent company Hachette Livre (part of Lagardère), which saw its overall revenue drop 0.4% to EURO2.37 billion (around US\$2.82 billion), but earnings went up 11.8% to EURO246 million (\$293 million). The improved US sales were credited in part to Stephenie Meyer's **Midnight Sun**, Andrzej Sapkowski's Witcher series, and 1,000 children's/YA titles acquired from Disney Publishing Group.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's revenue fell 25.8% in 2020, a decline blamed on both the pandemic and restructuring charges. Revenue was \$1.03 billion, with a net loss of \$480 million, more than double the previous year's loss of \$213.8 million. That loss includes one-time charges of \$312.6 million, \$33.6 million of that due to severance payments as a result of 525 jobs lost to reorganization. Trade group sales actually rose 6.5% to \$191.7 million, with a net income of \$4.2 million, after the previous year's loss of \$8.1 million. Book sales were essentially flat, with both adult and children's groups down for the year. No comments were made on efforts to sell trade division HMH Books & Media, put up for sale in the fall.

Simon & Schuster ended 2020 with a strong fourth quarter, reporting sales up 17% over the same period in 2019. For the entire year, revenue was up 10.7% to \$901 million and operating income up 11% at \$141 million. All formats were up in 2020, with digital sales bringing in 28.5% of total revenue. Adult sales did well, particularly in Trump-related titles. Children's sales were flat. Parent company ViacomCBS expects the sale of S&S to Penguin Random House to be finalized this year, pending government review.

International Rights • French rights to Robert Sheckley's A Collection Of Short Stories sold to Editions Argyll, and French rights to The Journey Beyond Tomorrow and The Status Civilization went to Goater, via Megan Husain of Anna Jarota Agency. Chinese rights to Dimensions of Sheckley sold to Chengdu Eight Light Minutes via Gray Tan of the Grayhawk Agency on behalf of Katie Shea Boutillier of Donald Maass Literary Agency for Cameron McClure.

Estonian rights to Jim Butcher's Death Masks and Blood Rites sold to Kirjastus Fantaasia via Maša Ivanović of Prava i prevodi in association with Jennifer Jackson of the Donald Maass Literary Agency.

Norwegian rights to N.K. Jemisin's **The City We Became** sold to Samlaget via Elin Rydner of Lennart Sane Agency on behalf of Lucienne Diver of the Knight Agency.

Polish rights to Duke of Caladan, The Lady of Caladan, and The Heir of Caladan by Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson sold to Tomasz Sponder at Rebis via Nora Rawn of Trident Media Group on behalf of Robert Gottlieb and John Silbersack, and Czech rights went to Baronet via Marta Soukopova of Andrew Nurnberg Associates on behalf of Jennifer Helinek of Trident Media Group for Gottlieb and Silbersack. Spanish rights to Dune: House Atreides sold to Merce Nerin at Plaza & Janes via Rawn on behalf of Gottlieb and Silbersack.

Iranian rights to Brandon Sanderson's Warbreaker sold to Houpaa via Susan Velazquez of JABberwocky Literary Agency, and Spanish rights to Dawshard to Ediciones B via Montse Yanez of Julio F-Yanez Agency on behalf of Velazquez.

Farsi rights to The Cloud Roads by Martha Wells sold to Porteghaal Publishing House via Michael Curry for Jennifer Jackson of the Donald Maass Literary Agency. French rights to Fugitive Telemetry sold to L'Atlante via Megan Husain of Anna Jarota Agency in association with Jennifer Jackson of the Donald Maass Literary Agency.

Italian rights to Rudy Rucker's The Fourth Dimension sold to Adelphi via Daniela Micura of Daniela Micura Literary Services on behalf of John Silbersack and Amelia Hodgson of the Bent Agency.

French rights to Tamsyn Muir's Gideon the Ninth, Harrow the Ninth, and Alecto the Ninth went to Actes Sud in a pre-empt via Megan Husain of Anna Jarota Agency in association with Jennifer Jackson of the Donald Maass Literary Agency.

Hebrew rights to Anne Bishop's Written in Red and Murder of Crows sold to Alma Books via Beverley Levit of the Israeli Association of Book Publishers Ltd. in association with Jennifer Jackson of the Donald Maass Literary Agency.

Czech Republic rights to Shannon Messenger's Keeper of the Lost Cities: Neverseen and Keeper of the Lost Cities: Lodestar sold to Gorila via Martina Knapkova of Kristin Olson Literary Agency on

behalf of Taryn Fagerness Agency and Laura Rennert of Andrea Brown Literary Agency. Spanish rights to the first three Keeper of the Lost Cities books went to Penguin via Jordi Ribolleda of Sandra Bruna Literary Agency, while German rights to books four through eight sold to Ars Editions via Roswitha Kern of Agence Hoffman, all on behalf of Taryn Fagerness Agency and Rennert.

Italian rights to Jack Campbell's Fearless and Courageous sold to Mondadori via Maura Solinas of Piergiorgio Nicolazzini Literary Agency on behalf of Susan Velazquez of JABberwocky Literary Agency.

Japanese rights to Blood Cruise by Mats Strandberg sold to Hayakawa via Hamish Macaskill of The English Agency on behalf of Jenni Brunn of Grand Agency.

Brazilian rights to The Final Girl Support Group by Grady Hendrix went to Intrinseca via Tassy Barham of Tassy Barham Associates on behalf of Susan Velazquez of JABberwocky Literary Agency.

French rights to Cherie Dimaline's Empire Of Wild sold to Maylis de Lajugie at Buchet Chastel via Celia Long of Anna Jarota Agency on behalf of Hana El Niwairi of Cooke International for Rachel Letofsky and Dean Cooke of Cooke McDermid.

Taiwanewse rights to Carlos Ruiz Zafon's The City of Vapors sold to Eurasian via Gray Tan of the Grayhawk Agency on behalf of Hilde Gersen of Antonia Kerrigan Literary Agency.

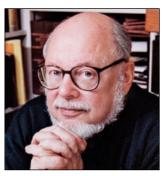
Greek rights to Jane Austen & Seth Grahame-Smith's Pride and Prejudice and Zombies went to Christina Theocharis at Brainfood Media via Evangelia Avloniti of Ersilia Literary Agency on behalf of Katherine McGuire at Quirk Books. ■

#### **OBITUARIES**

uthor NORTON JUSTER, 91, died March 8, 2021 at home in Northampton MA of complications following a stroke. Juster was best known for his first book, children's classic The Phantom Tollbooth (1961), illustrated by Jules Feiffer and later adapted as a film and a stage musical. Other books include The Dot and the Line: A Romance in Lower Mathematics (1963), collection Alberic the Wise and Other Journeys (1965), AS: A Surfeit of Similes (1989), The Hello, Goodbye Window (2005), Sourpuss and Sweetie Pie (2008), and The Norton Juster (2010s) **Odious Ogre** (2010, with Feiffer).

Juster was born June 2, 1929 in New York City. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, studying for his career as an architect. He joined the civil engineer corps of the Navy in 1954, and after his discharge began his career as an architect and teacher. After first working for other firms, he founded his own architecture company in 1970. That same year he began teaching architecture and environmental design at Hampshire College, where he remained until his retirement in 1992. He was predeceased by his wife of more than 50 years, Jeanne Ray, who died in 2018.

Artist and author DEAN MORRISSEY, 69, died March 4, 2021 in Marshfield MA. He was a prolific cover illustrator, and also wrote and illustrated his

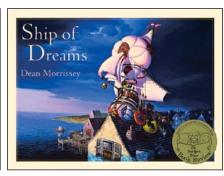




Morrissey's first cover

own acclaimed children's books, including Ship of Dreams (1994); The Great Kettles (1997); The Christmas Ship (2000); The Moon Robbers (2001) and The Winter King (2002), both with Stephen Krensky; The Monster Trap (2004); The Crimson Comet (2006); and The Wizard Mouse (2011). His honors include four Chesley Awards and a Spectrum Gold Award.

Dean Walter Morrissey was born October 1, 1951 in Quincy MA. He was self-taught as a painter, and renowned for his realistic renderings of fantasy scenarios. He began his professional illustration career with a cover for *Dragon* magazine in 1978, and by the mid-'80s was regularly painting book covers for genre publishers. In the '90s he shifted focus to creating and illustrating his own stories. He is



Morrissey's first children's book

survived by Shan, his wife of 33 years, and daughter Ani; daughter Kate predeceased him.

Editor and illustrator MICHAEL G. ADKISSON, 65, died February 7, 2021 in Plano TX. Adkisson founded, edited, and published SF magazine New Pathways, produced from 1986-92, and also provided artwork for the early issues.

Michael George Adkisson was born March 19, 1955 in Houston TX. He attended Eastfield College and the University of Texas in Arlington, graduating with a finance and marketing degree. He spent his career working for various companies as a technical and marketing writer. Adkisson is survived by his wife and son. ■

Dear Locus:

I wish to let publishers and agents know that I am welcoming expressions of interest in Barbarians of the Beyond, a sequel to Jack Vance's iconic series, The Demon Princes, authorized by Jack's son, John.

I have been sending out ARCs to generate wordof-mouth buzz and have already harvested some

#### LOCUS LETTERS

laudatory blurbs from George R.R. Martin, David Gerrold, Robert J. Sawyer, Glen Cook, and Kurt Busiek. Two major mainstream literary critics, both Vancephiles, have committed to review the book post-publication in mass-circulation newspapers.

I believe this novel will cause a stir in the still vibrant community of Jack Vance fans. Interested parties should contact me at <himself@ archonate.com> or John Vance at <john@ jackvance.com>.

-Matthew Hughes ■

inally, the vaccines are rolling! Caught myself singing "There's a Light" from *Rocky Horror*.... I looked at my editorial from last year, and we were in the "told everyone to stay home and work from there" part of the scenario, full of fear and anxiety. I had just gone to FOGcon, where people were bumping elbows but not wearing masks yet – the very beginning of it all. I think as a community we have done a great job of making online events work and finding ways to support each other remotely, but I know we all miss seeing people in person and Zoom burnout is real. Did I mention I even miss hotel food now? This last weekend I attended virtual ICFA, which is extra nostalgic since ICFA is (at least for me) deeply branded in its tropical location and poolside socializing. But I went to several readings and panels with people I would not have gotten to hear speak otherwise, and moderated one with Sheila Williams, Neil Clarke, Mike Allen, Francesca Myman, and Brian Evenson on the state of speculative publishing. It was great to hear how different publishers/editors/creators are dealing with everything at this point. And the Flash Plays! Love them! Our full write up and photos will be in the next issue.

I do think we'll end up keeping some of the new online functionality we've all been forced into by shelter-in-place, even as we begin to be able to move and travel more freely. For

#### **EDITORIAL MATTERS**

example, I don't know how many of the *Locus* staff will end up going back into the office. Though I will, at least part-time, because I am a deeply starved people-person! I'm so grateful we're finally seeing things turn around.

### LOCUS AWARDS DEADLINE IS COMING – VOTE TODAY!

Don't forget to vote in the Locus Awards! We need your opinion to have a strong set of winners so please chime in. Go to poll.voting. locusmag.com and sign on for your personal voting link. You will fill out a much-shortened survey (compared to previous years), and then vote for the best books of the year. Subscribers will get a free issue added to their subscription as a reward for voting. Deadline for voting is April 15, 2021 11:59 p.m. PDT.

We are ramping up our Locus Awards planning – it will be virtual again this year since we're not there yet with vaccines and want to keep everyone safe. You can purchase tickets to attend the Locus Awards at <locusmag. com/2021-locus-awards-weekend>. Memberships are \$45 and include the awards events, an ebook bag, choice of one of three t-shirts – a new Locus Awards 2021 t-shirt or one of our standard two designs – plus a free six-month digital subscription to *Locus*. Events will include online readings, panels, the donut salon,

a hangout space, and, of course, the Locus Awards Ceremony, emceed by Connie Willis. Panels will be live on Zoom. Readings will potentially be a mix of live and recorded. The awards ceremony is planned for 3:00 p.m. PDT on Saturday, June 26, 2021. More schedule details to come; keep an eye on that webpage!

#### THIS ISSUE/NEXT ISSUE

I loved getting to talk to Ursula Vernon about her career and writing, and Arley interviewed Isabel Yap; both great authors with much to say. We have the Nebula Awards Ballot (congratulations, all!), the British Fantasy Awards winners, and the British Books summary for 2020, which was deeply impacted by the pandemic and shipping problems, plus commentary by Kameron Hurley and all our usual news and reviews, etc. It's also my 18th anniversary issue with the magazine, which LinkedIn helpfully reminded me. I'm kind of shocked at how quickly that time has passed. And almost 12 years since Charles died, and I became editor in chief. I still miss him. I know he wasn't everyone's favorite person, but he had a deep knowledge of the field, a love of laughter and telling stories, and he was a good friend.

Our next issue has a planned interview with Nnedi Okorafor, commentary by Cory Doctorow, ICFA coverage, and (fingers crossed) the Hugo Awards Ballot, and more. See you then!

-Liza Groen Trombi ■

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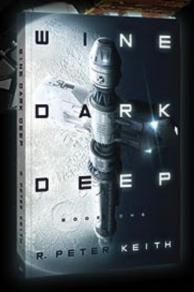
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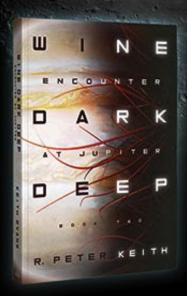
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WITH AN ADMIRABLY REQUECEFUL HERO."

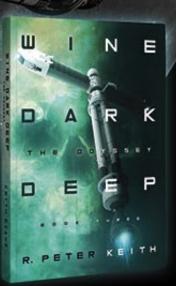
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