

# Tightbeam 307

April 2020



Seer to Dragons  
By Angela K. Scott

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April 2020

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Regular short fiction reviewers Greg Hullender and Eric Wong publish at [RocketStackRank.com](http://RocketStackRank.com).

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Memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18; memberships with TNFF via email are \$6. Zines other than TNFF are email only. Additional memberships at the address of a current dues-paying member are \$4. Public memberships are free. Send payments to N3F, POB 1925, Mountain View CA 94042. Pay online at [N3F.org](http://N3F.org). Our PayPal contact is [treasurer@n3f.org](mailto:treasurer@n3f.org). If you join, please use the membership form, at least for your name and whichever address you use.

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# Editorial

In this issue we are trying something very different, namely a single long article from Jessi Silver on different sorts of anime, chosen to relax the viewer in these interesting times. Think of it as being non-caloric comfort anime. We also have fanzine reviews, book reviews, short story reviews, a sercon biography of Hal Clement, an interview with Paul Piatt by Tamara Wilhite, and Food from Famous Authors, a chocolate pie from Lois McMaster Bujold.

Your contributions and letters of comment will all be most welcome.

## Letters of Comment

Hi George,

Thanks a million! Looks GREAT ! Can't wait to look at it better later on.

Cheers,  
Jose

Penney  
1706-24 Eva Rd.  
Etobicoke, ON  
CANADA M9C 2B2

Dear George and Jon:

Many thanks for Tightbeam 305 and 306. As no ways, I am behind in so much, so here are comments on the latest two issues.

305... I have had some harsh words about our library system lately, and it hasn't gotten much better. I honestly do not have much reason to go to our local library, which I can see from my balcony, but I did need a particular book, and when I went there, I was informed that because I had not used my library card in the past two months, it was cancelled without telling me, and I would need to renew. Did I have any paper mail proving that I live where I do? Not on me, but I did have all my ID cards with me. Not good enough, I was told. I must return with some papermail proving my address, but my name has gone on a particular caution list, so if I am able to get a renewed card, I must use it more than I do to keep it. I feel like I am being punished.

Have there been any reviews on short stories found in past issues of Amazing Stories? We're always looking for feedback, especially to the publisher and editor-in-chief.

For Star Wars... I have seen Episodes I to VII. I was not satisfied with VII, and never saw any more after that, including Rogue One and Solo. Now that IX has come and gone, I am doing what many are doing and saying that I to VI are the movies of my life (As Tom Feller says, I am old enough to remember seeing the original Star Wars back in 1977), and I will be satisfied with that.

306... My loc... We were successful in getting a vendor's table at Anime North, and we are just now getting all the paperwork for it done. Soon, we should be getting invoices for the table and memberships, which could total about C\$300. Still this is our best show of the year, and even with those rising costs, we should still do very well.

The L. Jagi Lamplighter book sounds interesting. My wife Yvonne is a huge HP fan, so she might like this book. I'll have to find it somewhere around here.

I had no idea that Fredeic Brown worked as a proofreader...that's what I've done a good portion of my spotty work career, and it is the work I am chasing right now. There is always something new to learn.

Time to go...I've run out of both zine and time. Take care, all, and see you with the next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

## Anime

The Best Anime to Take Your Mind off Things  
Jessi Silver

Well, so I guess the title might be a bit deceiving. For a lot of people, anime is an aspect of their escapism, a way to forget the problems of the real world in favor of plunging headfirst into something funny and entertaining. For me, fiction is a way to help myself navigate very real feelings in a way that's relatively safe. Still, with what's going on out in the real world lately, sometimes I'm just in the mood for some goofy bullsh\*\*t or some material that doesn't mean to chip away at my fragile emotional state, and anime definitely has that covered too. Here are a few of my suggestions for shows that are just entertaining and don't necessarily require anything additional from the viewer.

Do you like action anime? Then you might enjoy Jojo's Bizarre Adventure.



I'm not sure that there's an anime fan alive right now who hasn't at least heard about Jojo in passing, although if they haven't watched any of it they might not realize why it's become so popular. In short, it's testosterone-fueled hyper-violent homoeroticism that operates on its own very specific brand of logic. Great swaths of the time the series takes itself exceedingly seriously, managing its soap-operatic twists and turns with the reverence one might use with Shakespeare, while in the same breath pitting its characters against friends and foes with

names like "Robert E. O. Speedwagon" and "Wham." Oh, and one can't ignore the fact that DIO, the series' iconic antagonist, is literally an immortal vampire because of... reasons. This series is dumb, brutal, and wildly entertaining. You can watch Jojo's Bizarre Adventure on Crunchyroll and VRV

You might also like...

Golden Kamuy – The violence is a little more real, and many of the characters are murderous in very sick ways, but at its core this is another highly entertaining series about an ensemble cast of goofy dudes (and a little girl) getting into trouble that's often far removed from anything scientifically plausible. – Find it on Crunchyroll and Funimation.



Do you enjoy space-faring adventure? Then you might enjoy Bodacious Space Pirates.

The space opera genre is often filled with political intrigue and social turmoil. This series, which stars a plucky teenage girl pirate captain, eschews most of that in favor of interweaving (government-approved) space piracy with the real-life concerns of being a high school student. Don't let the title fool you either – what sounds like yet another anime series about women with big...

well, you know, is actually about young women blazing their own trail through space. The relationship between Captain Marika – our intrepid protagonist – and her mother, a former space pirate, is great! You can watch Bodacious Space Pirates on Crunchyroll, HIDIVE, and VRV.

Do you enjoy sports anime? Then you might enjoy One Outs.

Sports anime is a tough category, since most sports-focused series are also about deep feelings and emotional situations, and we're not here to deal with that right now. That's where One Outs comes in, existing at the oddball intersection of Baseball and high-stakes gambling. The main character, Toua Tokuchi, is more gambler than baseball player, using his pitching talent to take advantage of other less talented gamblers. When he's scouted by an actual baseball team, he enters into a very strange contract – for every "out" that he pitches, he earns five million yen, but for every run he gives up, he loses fifty million. This series has an atmosphere that's more similar to Mahjong Legend Akagi than to any actual sports anime I can think of, which is why it's definitely worth seeking out. Unfortunately the series isn't streaming anywhere, but you can find it around if you're sufficiently motivated.



Do you enjoy short-form comedy? Then you might enjoy Inferno Cop.

Inferno Cop is probably one of my favorite series to troll people with. It's almost indescribable, being a series with 3 minute episodes about a skeletal police officer with a flaming head who literally travels to Hell and back. It's one of Studio Trigger's early efforts, whose influence can

be seen directly in the much-less-successful (in my opinion) *Ninja Slayer*, both being barely-animated in a way that only adds to the visual comedy. *Inferno Cop* feels like a situation where one person started a story, then handed it off to the next person, who then handed it off to the next... resulting in something completely over-the-top and ridiculous. Seriously, if you enjoy quick-shot absurdism and don't mind a little vulgarity, then check out *Inferno Cop* ASAP. You can watch *Inferno Cop* on Crunchyroll and VRV.

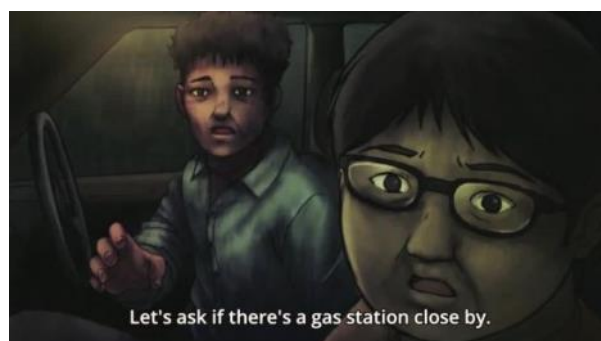
You might also like...



*Gakuen Handsome* – BL comes with its share of tropes, and this goofy series about a school full of “handsome” young men (with chins that could literally cut you) revels in them. If you enjoy BL or otome games, or are just familiar with their tropes, you will likely get a big kick out of this goofball series. – Find it on Crunchyroll.

Do you enjoy horror? Then you might enjoy *Yamishibai*.

I find anime-style horror to be pretty hit-or-miss (I'm just very picky about certain genres, and the fears I have are more based around real things rather than ghosts and ghouls). *Yamishibai* trades the long-game of cultivating atmosphere with short episodes that revolve around ghostly Japanese urban legends and traditional ghosts. If you don't enjoy one story, then the next one might be just your taste. The animation style (which attempts to partially mimic the kami-shibai paper puppet shadow theater from which the show gets its title) often adds to the creepy atmosphere. You can watch *Yamishibai* on Crunchyroll, HIDIVE, and VRV.



Do you enjoy slice-of-life? Then you might enjoy *Tari Tari*.

I always think of this series as the best “B-grade” anime that I’ve somehow ended up watching several times over the years. It follows a group of five students (three girls and two boys) who form a school choir (to compete with the school choir that already exists... for reasons) and end up helping one-another navigate various personal situations. Their school is on the cusp of being closed,

and they decide to put on a performance to try to save it. The series has some catchy music and is unexpectedly funny, which helps to offset how corny a lot of it is. While a lot of slice-of-life seems more focused on a complete lack of anything happening, this series manages to keep things moving and provide a heartwarming (yet somewhat abrupt) conclusion. You can watch *Tari Tari* on Crunchyroll, HIDIVE, and VRV.

You might also like...

**Hyouka** – This series is often touted as a mystery anthology, but while the characters do get involved in solving (or attempting to solve) various low-impact mysteries related to their school, the show is really more about the characters and their experiences discovering the history of their literature club and preparing for their school cultural festival. There's some mild content related to bullying, but for the most part this is a beautiful, fascinating slice-of-life series that follows several characters throughout their school year. – Find it on Funimation.



**Laid-Back Camp** – Food, friends, and the outdoors – what more could you want? This series lives up to its name by cultivating a relaxing atmosphere. It showcases the beautiful natural world surrounding Mount Fuji, and the characters cook and eat delicious food. – Find it on Crunchyroll.

Do you enjoy supernatural stuff? Then you might enjoy Natsume's Book of Friends.

Granted, this might be slightly “heavy” for this list, but ultimately I think of this series as one in which kind people are good to one-another, to the benefit of all, so perhaps those overriding feel-good vibes might help offset the minor amount of melancholy feels there are throughout the several seasons of this show.

Natsume Takashi is a teenage boy who can see spirits, much like his grandmother could before him. This has caused him lots of problems; as an orphan who was passed around between many family members, he's attempted to hid this talent that has made other people uneasy. Now living with childless distant relations, he finally starts to have some stability in his life. He embarks on a quest to follow in his grandmother's footsteps, giving back the powers she earned from various spirits by force. This series has a great cast of characters (including a smart-ass talking cat) and ultimately succeeds because of its overwhelming air of kindness. You can watch Natsume's Book of Friends on Crunchyroll and VRV.



You might also like...

**How to Keep a Mummy** – This silly, heartwarming series follows a teenage boy whose globe-trotting father sends him a spooky sarcophagus containing what looks to be a little mini-mummy (or a sentient marshmallow). Soon his friends are taking care of their own little supernatural pets in this testament to the benefits of friendship. – Find it on Crunchyroll.

**Flying Witch** – A young witch in training travels to the country to finish out her mundane education while living with her cousins. The epitome of iyashikei (“healing”) anime, this series features light comedy, mild magical hijinks, and a super-catchy theme song, along with many cute characters. – Find it on Crunchyroll, Hulu, HIDIVE and VRV.

Do you enjoy romance? Then you might enjoy **My Love Story!!**



Anime romance tends to be full of (high school level) emotional turmoil, so it’s refreshing when I find one that’s more focused on fluffiness and comedy. Takeo is a high school student with imposing looks that give off the wrong impression to most people he meets. He’s really just a big cinnamon roll who’d like a girlfriend, but he assumes he has no chance with anyone. He then meets Yamato and rescues her from a pervert on the train. They continue to have interactions after that, until suddenly they’re dating.

The conflict in this series is extremely low (mostly based around whether or not the two leads will be able to hold hands or eventually even work up the courage to kiss), so it might not be for folks looking for serious romance. But you’re not reading this because you’re looking for something serious, right? If you like fluff and cuteness, this romantic comedy is unmatched. You can watch **My Love Story!!** on Crunchyroll, HIDIVE, Hulu, and VRV.

**Tsuredure Children** – If just one couple isn’t enough for you, how about several? This series follows several teenage couples as they navigate relationships for the first time, some more successfully than others. Some of them are complete disasters, but in most cases there are plenty of laughs to be had on the journey. – Find it on Crunchyroll, Funimation and VRV.



Do you enjoy comedy? Then you might enjoy **Nichijou**.

This category is especially ripe for times like these, but even with so many good series to choose from, my top selection is easy. **Nichijou** is perennially my favorite comedy anime, incorporating absurdist humor with incredibly-animated slapstick and surprisingly heartfelt character interactions into a package that’s completely unmatched in quality. This series has it all – sentient robots, talking cats, goofy cosplay, camping hijinks... it’s difficult to explain to those who haven’t experienced it, but those already in the know definitely understand. This series even manages to be funny without much dialog, when the situation calls for silence. Seriously, if you enjoy anime-style comedy, this



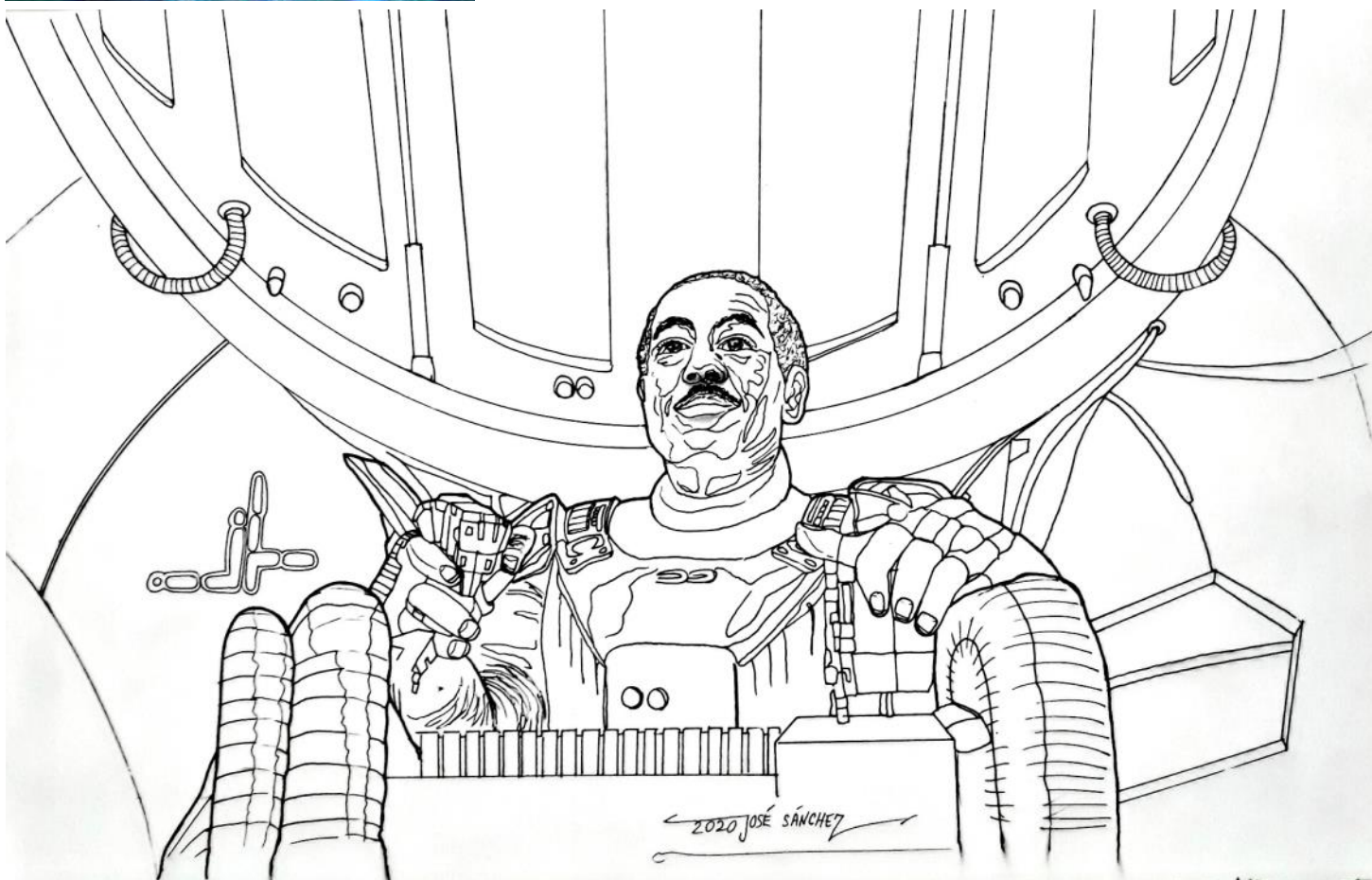
series rarely disappoints (although the second half definitely pays off more than the first). You can watch Nichijou on Funimation.

You might also like...

My Neighbor Seki-kun – Speaking of series with minimal dialog, this comedy about a boy who messes around during class and the girl who watches him do it is full of mostly visual humor, supplemented by the female observer's internal monologue. The punch line is almost always the same, but it's the journey to get there that makes this series such a pleasure. – Find it on Crunchyroll, HIDIVE and VRV.



Haven't You Heard? I'm Sakamoto – Sakamoto is the coolest kid in class, who manages to wheedle his way out of almost any tough situation. One might speculate about what's up with this guy, but he's so mysterious that all anyone can do is wonder about how he acquired his almost supernatural skills at getting out of trouble. The comedic situations in this series are over-the-



Moff Gideon from Star Wars The Mandalorian

By Jose Sanchez



top and incredibly ridiculous, just the way I like them. – Find it on Crunchyroll, Hulu, HIDIVE and VRV.

**Amagi Brilliant Park** – Have you ever wondered about the secret lives of amusement park mascots? They might just be creatures from a fantasy world, shilling to make sure that they can survive in ours. This goofy series posits just such a thing, pitting a high school student against an apathetic public in a quest to make sure a failing amusement park sur-

vives. Kyoto Animation's artistic hand makes this series what it is, when it might otherwise just be too goofy. – Find it on Crunchyroll, Hulu, HIDIVE and VRV.

**Astro Fighter Sunred** – What happens when super sentai heroes retire? Perhaps some of them become useless layabouts like the titular character in this series. Sunred leeches off his girlfriend and plays pachinko all day, but when a local branch of an evil organization pops up in his town he uses his brute force and thuggish manner to put them in their place. This series is unfortunately not streaming anywhere, but it's definitely worth searching out if you're willing.



These series are some of my favorite “no (or very little) heavy thinking required” shows, but I bet readers out there have all sorts of great suggestions to add to the list. If you've seen any of these series, let me know what you think. If you have something good to add to the list, feel free to let me know in the comments!

## Fanzines

Askew (John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station TX 77845) I have before me issue 26 from 2018. The issue opens with some personal notes, a visit from the 2018 TAFF person, a very favorable review of Corey's Expanse series of books, a review of Nolan's 'The Airlords of Han' (Amazing Stories, March 1929), a letter of comment from Johan Anglemark that included a reference to N3F interest in the FAan awards, as well as letters from Ian Millstead and Jerry Kaufman. The later discussed methods of voting for the FAan awards. For more recent discussions of this topic, see the fanzines distributed by our franking service.

Broadcastograph #1 from Matthew Weitendorf, 1918 Broadview Court, Cleveland, OH 44109. A two-page zine including a film review (Riders to the Stars, 1954), a review of a novel (The Green Man and His Return by Harold Sherman, originally published in 1946-1947), a short story a few paragraphs long on an alien visitor in the Cambrian, and a few paragraphs on beliefs in reincarnation.

Last, but hardly least, Far Journeys #1, February 29, 2002, from our own Justin Busch, 308 Prince St #422, St Paul MN 55101. Available in trade for another fanzine, or send a large envelope with \$1.40 in postage. Far Journeys is that rara avis, an all-sercon fanzine. This issue opens with an extended interview, a dozen pages, with Philip Harbottle, author of *Vultures of the Void*, a history of British SF. Harbottle's great effort was as biographer of British SF writer John Russell Fearn; he succeeded in bringing back to print all of Fearn's SF novels as well as his mystery and western tales. Fearn wrote under a large number of pseudonyms, including Volsted Gridban and Vargo Statten. Harbottle with a little help from Fearn constructed a complete list of Fearn's pseudonyms. Harbottle in subsequent decades became literary agent and advocate for Fearn's works, notably his Golden Amazon series.

We then reach three pages on the role of romantic love, especially unsuccessful love, in Star Trek. Five pages lavishly illustrated in full color present artwork of Stanley Metzliff, now most known for his illustrations of game fish in its natural habitat, but in his earlier efforts a cover artist for SF and other authors. After 60+ years I still remember several of his covers as seen here.

Finally, a full two pages on the very first SF fanzine, The Comet, published in 1930 by Ray Palmer and Walter Dennis as the newsletter of the Science Correspondence Club, and a riddle game, identifying books from their first sentences.

## Novels

### No Choice by Mel Todd Review by Declan Finn



So, what happens when you are a cop in the middle of a bank robbery -- you're held hostage, a child is about to die.

You turn into a giant puma and kill them all, of course.

Officer McKenna Largo is having a very strange day.

But she has No Choice.

Book One in the completed Kaylid Chronicles. Over 500,000 words. Start the journey here.

Being a Cop – difficult but rewarding.

Cougar – WTF? But can be dealt with.

Targeted by drug dealers and dirty cops – Watch out, this cat bites back.

McKenna Largo loves police work and would rather no one focus on her. Transforming into a cougar in the middle of a bank robbery, is a shock. But when a video of the event goes viral, she becomes the reluctant public face of shifters appearing around the globe.

The police department uses her for “PR”, and the governor creates an inclusiveness campaign, putting criminals behind bars seems a million miles away. Trying to juggle the animal she now is, the strange attention, and a society changing faster than anyone expects, McKenna worries she might be a monster. When criminals capture her and innocent young shifters, the cougar and the cop combined must decide where duty takes them.

Will McKenna run scared from the animal inside, or will she save the day and set her inner beast free?

If you like strong characters, fast-paced action, and unique shifters, then you'll love Mel Todd's exhilarating novel. Buy *No Choice* to shift into a thrilling urban fantasy today!

But millions of people around the world are also changing, shifting into various and sundry furry predators.

And no one knows why.

Officer Largo and her partner are at the heart of the firestorm. Along the way, she has to deal with police regulations, media nutcases, and unwanted celebrity.

Mel Todd is really fairly awesome at this.

Imagine doing cops as well as Grimm or Blue Bloods.

AND doing media relations as well as Carrie Vaughn's *Kitty Norville*.

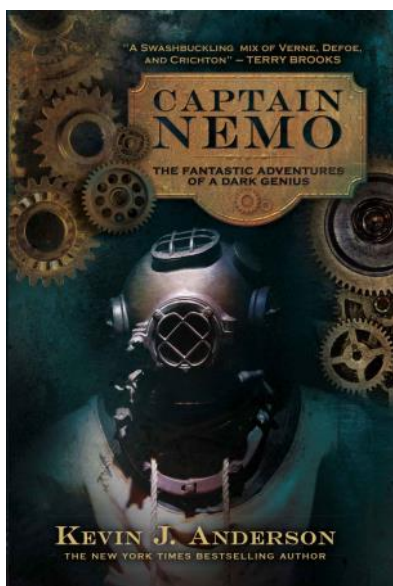
AND examining the full spectrum of cultural impacts of the supernatural twenty times better than the Anita Blake novels.

*No Choice* would be that book.

*No Choice* is book one. I got the entire set for \$.99, and this is more than worth it. I probably would have paid full price if I had heard of them in advance.

5/5 Stars. Easily.

## Captain Nemo by K.J. Anderson Review by Tom Feller



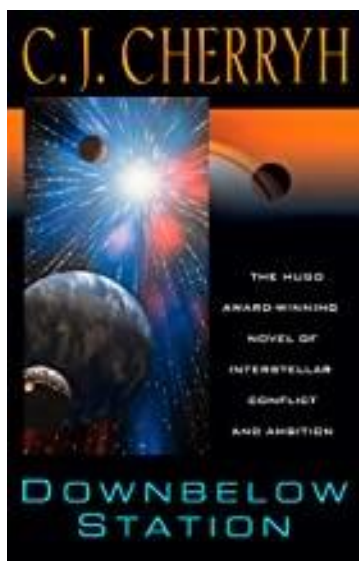
One of my favorite books as a boy was Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Verne is one of the main characters of Anderson's novel, and one of its premises is that his best friend from childhood was an adventurer named Andre Nemo. Verne's father was a lawyer in Nantes, France, and, according to this story, Nemo's was a shipbuilder who dies because of an explosion in the shipyard. They are in love with the same girl, Caroline Arronax, the daughter of a merchant. Nemo goes to sea at age 13, returns to France periodically, and tells Verne about his adventures. They include fighting pirates, being marooned on a mysterious island where he discovers a passage to an underground world where dinosaurs still live, ballooning across Africa for five weeks, serving in the French army during the Crimean War where he meets Florence Nightingale, becoming a slave in the Ottoman Empire, and building his own submarine. Meanwhile, Verne goes to law school, becomes a writer, and starts a family. Nemo describes his adventures to Verne, who uses them to write his most famous novels.

It was a lot of fun to read, although some of the science, especially the submarine's propulsion system, is rather dubious.

## Downbelow Station and Forty Thousand in Gehenna

by C. J. Cherryh

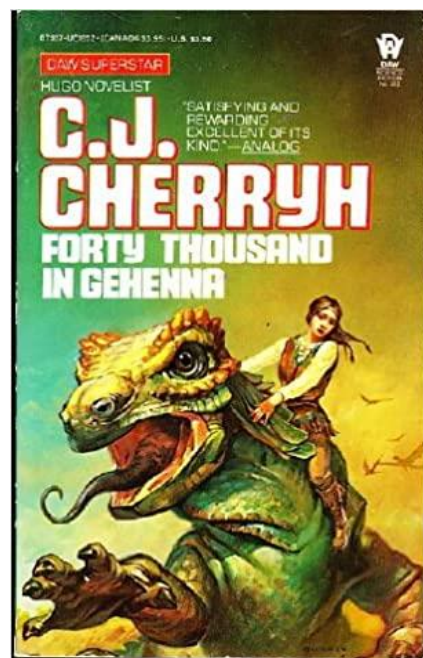
Reviews by Tom Feller



I have read most of the Hugo Award-winning novels, but one that has eluded me was Downbelow Station. It and Forty Thousand in Gehenna are set in Cherryh's Alliance-Union universe. It is a future in which humanity has invented faster-than-light travel and spread out to the stars. The colonies farthest out, calling themselves the Union, have rebelled against the Earth Company, the organization that originally sent out the missions that established the colonies. The Union has gained the upper hand by 2352 A.D., the time in which the first novel is set. The action of Downbelow Station centers on the Pell system, which has the closest Earth-like planet to Earth. Humans can live there, but require filter masks to breathe the atmosphere. It is inhabited by a species called the Hisa. They have little technology, are furry, gentle, and primate-like, but many of them have learned a kind of pidgin English while no humans have ever learned their language. A human space station orbits the planet, and the Hisa call it Upabove while humans call the planet Downbelow.

There are numerous point-of-view characters in the first novel. The space station is run by the Konstantin family. Angelo is the father and station master, Damon is his younger son and head of the station's legal system, and Emilio the older son and the leader of the human colony on Downbelow. Their main opposition is Jon Lukas, who is the brother of Alicia, Angelo's wife and the mother of Damon and Emilio. Elene Quen is Damon's wife, but she is not native to the Pell system. She comes from a family of merchanters, people who own their own starships and haul freight to and from other systems within human space. (The merchanters eventually form the Alliance.) Other than herself, her entire family have perished in the war. The Konstantins have tried to stay neutral in the Union-Earth war, but Lukas has allied himself with the Union. Signy Mallory is the female captain of the Norway, an Earth starship that carries smaller fighter ships and armed troops, and she is as tough as any man. Josh Talley is a Union prisoner-of-war who is released to the Konstantins by Mallory. In return for his parole, he agrees to be "adjusted", which means a near-complete memory wipe. Fortunately for him, he is befriended by Damon and Elene. Mallory also drops off 6,000 refugees from other star systems displaced by the war, which puts a strain on the station's resources. Their nominal leader is Vasily Kressich. Se-gust Ayres is an Earth Company representative sent out to negotiate peace with the Union.

The second novel begins a few years later, and some of the characters, such as Colonel James Conn, are veterans of the Earth-Union war. The Union secretly colonizes the planet Gehenna, a planet even more Earth-like than Downbelow. For example, people don't have to wear

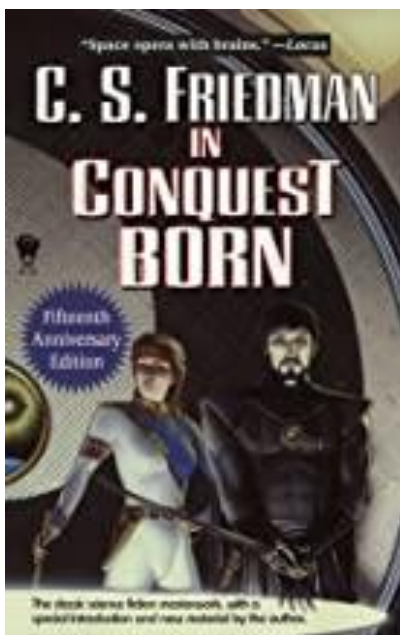


filter masks to breathe the atmosphere. The colony consists of 452 naturally born humans and 42,363 clones, who were all born in laboratories. Gehenna is inhabited by dinosaur-like creatures that human explorers have named Calibans and Ariels. Although the original explorers judged that they are not intelligent, the elephant-sized Calibans build mounds and the smaller Ariels play with stones. It turns out the explorers were wrong, because the natives are intelligent in ways different from human beings. This novel is a multi-generation story that spans about 300 years. The main characters of the first generation, besides Conn, are Gutierrez, a naturally born man who is biologist, and two clones, Jin, a man, and Pia, a woman, who get married. Although the colony was supposed to be re-supplied after three years, the Union abandons it, and it develops in an unexpected way. After 57 years, it is re-discovered by the Alliance. Several major characters in later generations are the descendants of Gutierrez, Jin, and Pia, such as Elai, the female leader of one of the two factions that original colony has developed.

I found that these nearly 40 year old novels hold up remarkably well. The human characters are quite interesting, although the Hisa in the first novel are very poorly developed. I found Cherryh's characterization of them disappointing in comparison to the aliens in Ursula Le Guin's *The Word for World is Forest*, which they somewhat resemble. On the other hand, she really improves in her handling of aliens in the second novel to the point that I would consider *Forty Thousand in Gehenna*, which was nominated for the Locus but not the Hugo, to be more Hugo-worthy than *Downbelow Station*. Both novels are very hard to put down as you get closer and closer to the end.

### In Conquest Born by C. S. Friedman Review by Tamara Wilhite

"In Conquest Born" by Celia S. Friedman is an engaging epic from start to finish. One young Braxi lord seeks to make his mark killing one of Azea's few trans-cultural translators for the Braxi language and culture, Anzha Lyu's father. That act propels his personal and political ambitions, while it triggers the girl's telepathic abilities at the youngest recorded age, leading to an epic personal and cultural clash almost two centuries later.



You witness a decades long conflict that propels each to the heights of their worlds while changing both them and their societies as each seeks to take the other - and their empires - down.

The two main cultures in C. S. Friedman's book have been at war for millennia, in a universe where human have been scattered to the universe so long that Earth is a theoretical explanation for all the human species today. The book gives us an in depth look of both alien cultures. Braxi is sexual and libertine free for all and advanced society with slavery, unified by conquering the stars and maintained by the spoils of war.

Azea is home to a genetically engineered human species programmed for moderation and gender equality, while Anzha Lyu is a genetic throwback to an unknown ancestor. At the death of her parents, she is left to the telepathic institute for education and study. Her quest for acceptance and vengeance leads her to unlikely contacts.

Every chapter brings the characters' personal development, progress toward their goals, revelations and action. Whether it is international intrigue on Dari, crossing the frozen wastes of another world, political drama on Braxi or internal struggles on the telepathic institute's home world of Llornu, we gain a glimpse of diverse human societies without side-tracking from the story. Details like a random remembrance of a very alien old saying or recognition of a neuroleash used to induce pain or kill slaves make the worlds more real than long descriptions of incredible things to make you feel like it is the future on an alien world.

The network of relationships in the book is incredible and intertwined. Braxi and Azea have intentionally become opposites of each other, to the point Azea remove the trait for facial hair from their men and changed their hair to white because the enemy's hair is black. Yet both sides face petty internal political squabbles and conflicts of culture and ethics. Anzha Lyu is driven by vengeance for the loss of her parents, the agony she lived telepathically for their deaths and recognition for her victories in a society to which she is apart in appearance, amazing abilities, political mandates put in place to punish her parents and deliberate engineering by those who raised her. The Braxi leader Zatar seeks to reform elements of his society while building a power base that shapes the known universe. Yet he himself harbors a fatal flaw that his rival can exploit.

Yet they are in many ways very human. Despite two century life spans and Anzha's great telepathic abilities, she is lonely, long-suffering and stubborn. Braxi lord, then Kaimera (political assembly leader) and then new single ruler plans so far ahead that minor characters become threads in the story throughout, creating a complete epic. While the foreshadowing hints in the book "In Conquest Born" prevent the ending from being a complete shock, I have reread it several times and only subsequently recognize hints dropped in the story that foreshadowed plot twists or later revelations.

While the book centers on the two generals featured on the cover, there is a host of secondary characters key to the story and full of contrasts and conflicts that would be their own separate books in this universe if not for the writer's skill at keeping prose to a minimum but maximizing information. In these contrasts are a father and son rivalry that is suitable for Shakespeare, an interracial spy who fails himself and tries to redeem those who he harmed, and a leader at the institute who faces down the enigmas he created and loses everything he tried to improve upon. The book weaves in questions on the ethics of telepathy and social engineering and complex questions of identity when it is defined by genetics, culture and/or personal traits.

In the middle of this is a coming of age and saga of a strong female character who is brilliant, talented but flawed and suffering. Forget the bad-ass females who literally kicks ass with inhuman physical strength, speed and stamina. The central character outmaneuvers men, including the enemy's patriarchal culture and her own, restrictive culture, politically and militarily, while still remaining a relatable character.

In short, "In Conquest Born" is an intense, self-contained book, and it is a masterpiece. Though "In Conquest Born" was written as a self-contained novel, it did spawn a sequel.



C. S. Friedman's follow up book to "In Conquest Born" is "The Wilding". "The Wilding" is set two centuries later, where all the main characters of the first are dead. That book contains more clichés, characters who make truly stupid mistakes, has a weaker plot and fails to deliver a fraction of the quality of "In Conquest Born".

In my opinion, while "In Conquest Born" is a five star novel, the sequel "The Wilding" is hardly a three, a rushed work by an excellent author to capitalize on the readers who wished for another book as good as the first set in the same universe.

In that vein, I think you should read "In Conquest Born" as a standalone novel and, if you love the work, move on to Celia S. Friedman's other novels.

Tamara Wilhite is a technical writer, industrial engineer, mother of two, and published sci-fi and horror author.

## Poem

From Owen K L

Her blind date was a foreigner, from very far away.  
When she asked from where, he said from in the Milky Way.  
He had a funny looking roadster, jazzed up to the max,  
She calmed her qualms until he hit the gas and they made tracks!

She'd thought he was a joker, a sort of dashing, jaunty guy,  
But now she found herself star gazing from the sky!  
He took her on a wondrous jaunt around the zodiac,  
Dashing from star to star, and following a comet back!

The roadster, it was marvelous, an agile little zipper,  
Spiraling around the handle of the Little Dipper!  
He got her home a wee bit late, one A.M. was past,  
But she assured him with a kiss, the date had been a blast!

## SerCon

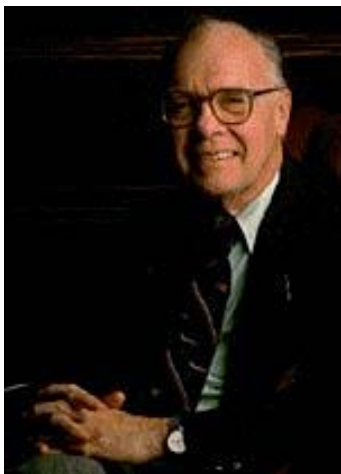
Hal Clement Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian

Harry Clement Stubbs (May 30, 1922 – October 29, 2003), better known by his pen name of Hal Clement, was a science fiction (SF) writer and a leader of what is known in the genre as "hard" SF. He also painted astronomical artwork under the pen name of George Richard.



Stubbs was born in Somerville, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard with a B. S. in astronomy in 1943. He also received an M. Ed. in 1946 from Boston University, and an M. S. in chemistry from Simmons College in Boston in 1963.

While at Harvard he wrote “Proof,” his first published science fiction (SF) story (June, 1942, *Astounding Science Fiction*). Additional fiction by him appeared in later 1942 issues of *Astounding*.

During World War II he served as an Army Air Force B-24 pilot, flying thirty-three combat missions in Europe with the 8th Air Force, for which he was awarded the Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters. He remained in the Air Force Reserve for over 30 years, attaining the rank of Lt. Colonel. In civilian life, he was a science teacher, with his SF writing only a hobby.

He married Mary Elizabeth Myers in 1952, and they had two sons and a daughter together. He died in Boston, Massachusetts from complications related to his diabetes.

In 1998 Clement was inducted into the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame; he was inducted into the First Fandom Hall of Fame in 1997; and he was named the 17th SFWA Grand Master by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, presented in 1999.

### Books

Needle (1950)  
 Iceworld (1953)  
 Mission of Gravity (1954)  
 The Ranger Boys in Space (1956)  
 Cycle of Fire (1957)  
 Close to Critical (1958)  
 Natives of Space (1965)  
 Small Changes (1969)  
 Space Lash (1969) [paperback reprint of *Small Changes*]  
 First Flights to the Moon (1970) [edited by Clement]  
 Star Light (1971)  
 Ocean on Top (1973)  
 Left of Africa (1976)  
 Through the Eye of a Needle (1978)  
 The Best of Hal Clement (1979)  
 The Nitrogen Fix (1980)  
 Intuit (1987)  
 Still River (1987)  
 Fossil (1993)  
 Half Life (1999)  
 The Essential Hal Clement, Vol. 1 (1999)  
 The Essential Hal Clement, Vol. 2 (2000)  
 The Essential Hal Clement, Vol. 3 (2000)

### Books Published Posthumously

Heavy Planet (2002) [reprint of The Essential Hal Clement, Vol. 3]  
 Men of the Morning Star/Planet for Plunder (2011)  
     [2 novellas by Edmond Hamilton and Clement & Sam Merwin Jr.]  
 The Moon is Hell!/The Green World (2012)  
     [2 novellas by John W. Campbell Jr. and Clement]  
 The Time Trap/The Lunar Lichen (2013)  
     [2 novellas by Henry Kuttner and Clement]  
 Hal Clement SF Gateway Omnibus (2014)  
     [Iceworld, Cycle of Fire. Close to Critical]

### Some Other Awards/GoH Appearances

1965 – Boskone 1, Lunacon 8  
 1969 – Skylark Award  
 1970 – Knight of St. Fantony  
 1971 – Mondo\*Con, Best Novel Hugo nominee  
 1972 – DeepSouthCon 10, Star Trek Lives!  
 1974 – Marcon IX  
 1975 – Balticon 9, Star Trek Lives!  
 1976 – Alpha Draconis, Fellow of NESFA  
 1977 – Philcon 1977  
 1978 – Maplecon I  
 1979 – Future Party ‘79  
 1980 – Chattacon V, Penulticon 3  
 1981 – Lastcon I  
 1982 – URCON IV, Unicon 82, Marcon XVII, Skycon 2, Hexacon 5  
 1983 – StellarCon VIII, Darkover Grand Council 6  
 1984 – Sunuvacon 1, I-Con III  
 1985 – Genericon I  
 1986 – NJAC 2, Genericon II  
 1987 – MidSouthCon 6, CactusCon  
 1988 – VCON 16, Genericon IV  
 1989 – Marcon XXIV, Genericon V, Raymond Z. Gallun Award, Noreascon 3  
 1990 – Tropicon IX, StellarCon XV, State of ConFusion, Life, the Universe, & Everything 8  
 1991 – Lunacon 34, Okon 13, Genericon VII, Chicon V  
 1992 – Forry Award  
 1994 – DucKon III, Rising Star 3  
 1995 – Balticon 29  
 1997 – Skylark Award  
 1998 – Toastmaster at Rivercon XXIII  
 1999 – Albacon 1999, ArmadilloCon 21  
 2001 – Balticon 35, EerieCon 3  
 2002 – Confluence 14  
 2003 – Readercon 15  
 2006 – Best Short Story Retro Hugo for “Uncommon Sense”

### Critical Comments

According to Tuck in his 3-volume reference work, "Hall Clement is known as the epitome of the 'hard science' writer, and is one of the few to transfer the scientific attitude and methodology to science fiction, making science fiction facts integral parts of his stories."

Fellow SF author Poul Anderson once wrote: "Hal Clement. . . is very much his own man, in writing as in everyday life. There's nobody like him. He's been a tremendous force in science fiction, receiving honors for it but not nearly enough."

### Some Conclusions

I've written this article twice, losing the first draft when my computer crashed. I had my younger son check it out, but he couldn't solve the problem. Since he graduated college Phi Beta Kappa in computer science, I don't think I'll be able to solve a computer problem that he can't solve.

Clement has been described in print as having a "genial personality." This personality was not on display, however, when I tried to talk with him at a local con several years ago. He refused to chat with me, although it didn't look like he was doing anything at all at the time. I was a Ph.D. psychologist, licensed by the state to help people, so I didn't hold it against him then; and I don't hold it against him now. All of us have bad days, and he may have been having one -- although it may be that my personality wasn't as engaging then as I thought it was. [GP: And your other editor can confirm that he did have a charming personality, at least when I was in his vicinity.]

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Currey, L. W. *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors*. Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1979.

Smith, Curtis C. (ed.). *Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers*. NY: St. Martin's Press, 1981.

Swartz, Jon D. *Pseudonyms of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Authors*. Little Rock, AR: The National Fantasy Fan Federation, 2010.

Tuck, Donald H. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy, Volumes 1-3*: Chicago, IL: Advent, 1974 - 1982.

Dragon and Unicorn

By Angela K. Scott

Note: In addition to the above, various Internet sites were consulted.

## An Interview with Paul Piatt

### By Tamara Wilhite

Paul Piatt and I were both contributors to the “MAGA 2020 & Beyond” short story collection. He’s had stories published in the Planetary Anthology Series, zombie anthologies and more. And I had the opportunity to interview him.

Tamara Wilhite: You’ve written military science fiction, urban fantasy and classic horror. What genre have you been most successful in?

Paul Piatt: This is a deceptively tough question, so thanks for that. The truth is that I’ve achieved extremely modest sales with each of my novels. I’ve only sold a few, but the reception has been overwhelmingly positive, and the reader reviews are virtually all 5-star. From a dollars-and-cents perspective, the answer is none. However, I judge my success by people telling me they loved my latest work and can’t wait for more. From that perspective, the answer is all.

Tamara Wilhite: Do you know why the “Places Beyond the Wild” anthology by Daniel Humphreys is your best-selling work on Amazon as I write this. (Disclaimer – I’m a red shirt in his latest Z-Day novel.)

Paul Piatt: I was incredibly fortunate to be included in that anthology. Dan has established a dynamite zombie apocalypse franchise, and when he offered the chance for other writers to share in his success by publishing the anthology, it was a no-brainer for me to submit a story. Any success I enjoy from my story appearing in his anthology is a direct result of his hard work creating the universe and writing a truly outstanding series.

Tamara Wilhite: And what novel or story was the most fun for you to write?

Paul Piatt: “Redcaps Rising” was the most fun to write. It’s my very first novel, it’s urban fantasy/humor, and it’s hilarious. It’s the first of the Walter Bailey Misadventures series, about a nobody going nowhere until he returns to the small Mississippi town where he was born and discovers a whole world of magic. When I wrote it, I had no idea what I was doing, and I only had the faintest idea where the story was going. Every day when I sat down to write, I re-read what I wrote the previous day. If it didn’t make me laugh, I rewrote it until it did. It’s not technically perfect, but it’s unrelenting zaniness. There’s this old saw that says to write the novel that you want to read. With “Redcaps Rising”, I did. Believe it or not, it turned out surprisingly well.

Tamara Wilhite: What books or movies have influenced your writing career?

Paul Piatt: This is another toughie, because both lists are long. From a storytelling perspective, “Pulp Fiction” is probably the most influential film. In “Pulp Fiction”, every character is the star of his/her own story, and that’s an important lesson and skill to master.

For the book, we have to jump into the way-back machine and arrive in 1978. That was the year “The Five Fingers”, written by Gayle Rivers and James Hudson, was first published. It’s a mil-fic story about a secret mission into China to assassinate General Vo Nguyen Giap during the Vietnam War, and it hit me right in my thirteen-year-old guts. The action is intense, and the description of how the soldiers on the mission bond with each other is sublime. I’ve read it a mil-

lion times, but when I'm looking for something comfortable and familiar to get lost in for a couple hours, "The Five Fingers" has been a go-to for forty-plus years.

There might be people out there wondering why I don't mention sci-fi or fantasy works as most influential, since I'm writing in those genres. In my view, the genre doesn't matter when characters are paramount. Vivid characters weave great stories in whatever genre they get dropped in, and a powerful theme will shine no matter where the story is set.

Tamara Wilhite: Does your real-life experience impact your writing?

Paul Piatt: No question. I retired after twenty years in the Navy and spent four years as a government contractor, and I draw on those experiences in my writing. I think veterans and people who have spent a lot of time around the military/government or large bureaucracies will find themselves nodding at some of the situations my characters face.

Tamara Wilhite: I know you're working on at least one science fiction novel. Can you tell me about your current projects?

Paul Piatt: Right now, I have two main projects underway. "Heretic's Fork" is the third Walter Bailey Misadventures novel in my urban fantasy/humor series. Main character Walter Bailey and his friends travel from Dandelion, Mississippi to a colloquy in Heretic's Fork, Pennsylvania, to discuss the deteriorating situation in the Kingdom of Magic. Along the way, they encounter bizarre characters and have crazy adventures. I expect to publish it early this summer.

The other project is a stand-alone untitled science fiction thriller centered on an alien race hunting the survivors of the 1947 UFO crash in Roswell, New Mexico. A secret government program reveals their existence and sparks a cross-country pursuit. It's very close to being finished, and it will be the next novel I publish.

I'm being vague with plot details, because I want readers to be pleasantly surprised when they read those novels. I've had people read large sections of both projects, and the reception has been universally positive.

I've also started my third military science fiction novel in the series which follows main character Abner Fortis of the International Space Marine Corps from his earliest days as a cherry second lieutenant to his eventual retirement and beyond. It's early, but the novel is coming along. Working title is "China Mike."

Tamara Wilhite: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Paul Piatt: Thank you for the privilege and pleasure of this interview. I'm a little guy in this business and I'm just starting out, and this is a great opportunity to get my work out in front of the N3F community. I work hard to write the best stories I can, and I only ask that people give them a go. I think they'll be happy they did. Thanks again.

Tamara Wilhite: Thank you for speaking with me.

## An Interview with Denton Salle

### By Tamara Wilhite

Denton Salle is the pen name of a professional scientist. He has a Ph.D. in Chemistry, an MBA, and a few other degrees. In his professional capacity, he has over two hundred publications and presentations, including a best-selling technical book. He's worked in oil and gas, polymers, aerospace, instrumentation, academia, and consulting. He has taught a wide range of classes, from graduate classes to industrial training. To separate his fiction writing from his professional life, he adopted the pen name Denton Salle. And I had the opportunity to interview him.

Tamara Wilhite: What influenced your writing?

Denton Salle: In some places, it was the fact that the history I was taught – most of which we get from the British – did not match the truth. We are seeing this now in several books on the Eastern Roman Empire that contradicts Edward Gibbons, author of the famous *"History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"*.

Tamara Wilhite: What else?

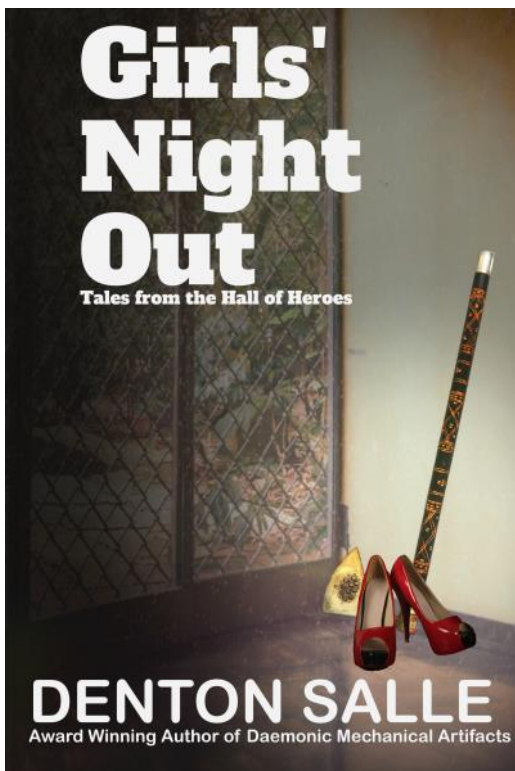
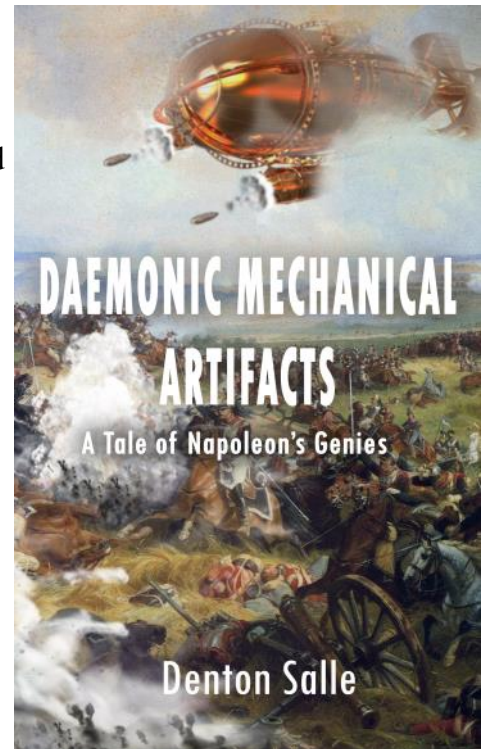
Denton Salle: We see it in some translated stuff on the Moorish Oppression in Spain, the Myth of Andalusian Paradise. It's been going on for a while. Even Charles Williams wrote about the distortions of the Spanish Inquisition. Then there's what people do to martial arts, metalwork, and some other crafts in fiction. So rather than scream at books and throw them at the dogs, I started writing.

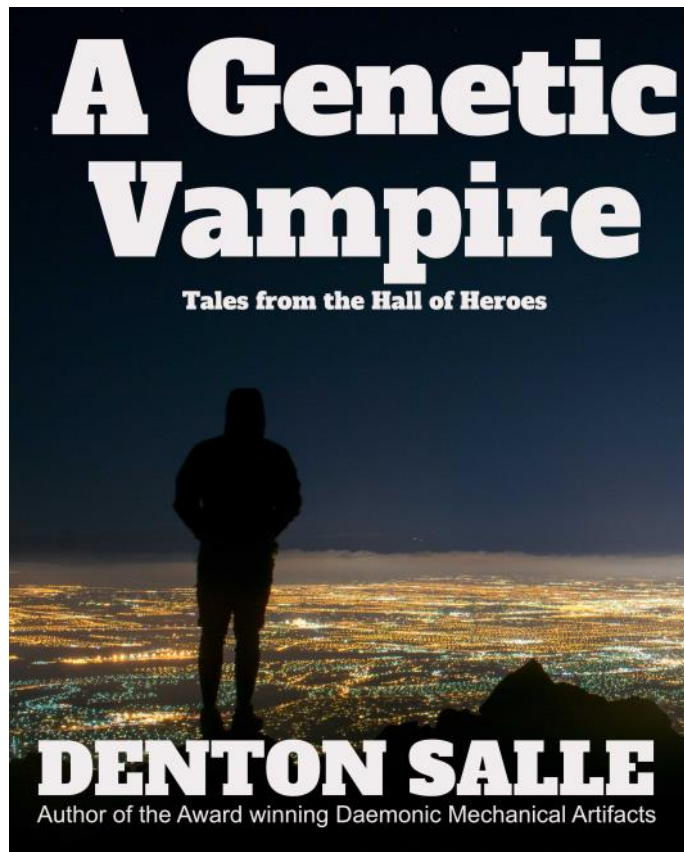
Tamara Wilhite: Is that what led to your novel *"Daemonic Mechanical Artifacts: A Tale of Napoleon's Genies"*?

Denton Salle: Kinda of. France's never recovered from the Battle of the Nile. What if that didn't happen? What if the French won? Then it became: how could they? It, like Waterloo, was a near thing. So supposed France didn't kill its scientists in the Terror. And off we go.

Tamara Wilhite: Can you tell me about that steampunk novel?

Denton Salle: Set years after the destruction of the British fleet by airships at the Battle of the Nile, France is winning and the man responsible for the steampunk science that causes that was kidnapped. His assistants, a young Swiss master-at-arms, and the mathematician daughter of the most beautiful woman in France, try to





find him. There's airships, golem robots, sword fights, female aircrews (less mass to move), and a helping of romance. It is the Scarlet Pimpernel meets Jules Verne and Dumas. That's a quote from a beta reader.

Tamara Wilhite: Will there be a sequel to it?

Denton Salle: I have a sequel set in New France as well as a prequel. I already have a couple of short stories in the same world done that may be out soon.

Tamara Wilhite: I know you have a short story coming out in "*Planetary Anthology Series: Sol*", currently slated for November, 2020. Can you tell us about your contributions to that sci-fi anthology?

Denton Salle: It's based on a discussion about psychoactive drugs and sanity. What are your actions if you are, in Pratchett's words, knurded? It means to be so sober as

to have no illusions left. And there is an evil no one else sees.

Tamara Wilhite: Where else have you had short stories published?

Denton Salle: I have one story in the *Impossible Hope* anthology edited by A. M. Freeman about a genetic vampire. I have a story coming out in Jagi Wright's and Chris Nuttall's *Magical Schools* anthology. It deals with paying for the Deep School, Satan's school of magic, according to Wellman. It's a bit dark.

Tamara Wilhite: I know about Chris Nuttall's work. I reviewed his novel "*The Zero Blessing*". What are you working on now?

Denton Salle: I have a couple of collections of stories coming out. *A Genetic Vampire* is about a man with a genetic predisposition for it. *Girls Night Out* contains several stories about women in a Texas town haunted by Slavic myths. I'm working on a novel and another short story collection in the same world. There's another novel about Rus Vikings in Tang China in a world where magic works. I'm kinda like a panda. I bounce around as I work.

Tamara Wilhite.: You said you've done martial arts from childhood and taught savate, a Chinese martial art. That is in addition to being in medieval recreation groups. You're probably unique for being able to actually apply that knowledge. Thank you for speaking with me.

Denton Salle: Thank you for taking the time to visit.

# Short Stories

## A Solitary Crane Circles Cold Mountain

by Gregor Hartmann

Review by Greg Hullender

Cool characters in a chilling setting. Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction issue 03-04|20.

(Dystopia) Lili's Foundation is close to launching their generation ship if Lili can figure a way to make the society stable and if the world government can be convinced it doesn't undermine harmony. (6,025 words; Time: 20m)

Pro: On the surface, the plot is about Lili finding a way to get the generation ship launched despite the awful totalitarian government. Separately, it's about Lili and Victor finding a way to be together despite the huge differences between them.

The intellectual problem is a real one: how could you design a generation ship with any hope that it would still be functioning after hundreds of years? Even if you staff it with the best and brightest, people tend to revert to the mean; there's no reason to believe the next generation will produce enough rocket scientists to run the ship. But if you automate everything, giving the people little purpose, won't they eventually revolt?

The separate problem is that the global government is essentially a religious dictatorship where the religion is based on preserving the environment, and sending a ship to the stars violates their principles in all kinds of ways.

I found it very uplifting, then, that Lili's solution worked for the ship, it worked for the government, and it even let her and Victor be together. It very nicely brought all the pieces of the story together.

Con: It was actually kind of horrible that the colonists agreed to have most of their minds erased in order to regress them to the level of Tang-Dynasty peasants. Yes, it was a solution, but it's bad if you think about it too closely.

There were several hints that the world was on the verge of a civil war between the two main factions, but nothing was ever done with that.

## Midstrathe Exploding, by Andy Dudak

Review by Greg Hullender

Really cool setting, interesting characters. "Midstrathe Exploding," by Andy Dudak appeared in Analog Science Fiction and Fact issue 03-04|20,. (Future Fantasy) Two-hundred years after the bomb, tourists come from all over to stand behind the slowly expanding temporal wave-front and witness the slow-motion destruction of Midstrathe. (3,190 words; Time: 10m)

Pro: Despite the mentions of science in the story, I opted to read this as fantasy to avoid the scientific problems with it. In that spirit, it's a cool piece, and the biggest attraction is the slowly exploding city itself.

Teen-age Ciaran gets by on the work he does (plus some stealing), but he clearly wants to live a more normal life somewhere else. His attachment to Modwen and to what's left of his mother tie him to Midstrathe though.

The ancient tourist who simply wants to die in the arms of her ex relieves Ciaran of his burden, since having let her mess up Far Infrared's setup, he's forced to flee the town. His goodbye to his mom, who abandoned him to join/lead a crazy death cult is poignant.

Con: If you insist on taking the science seriously, the contents of the city will be red-shifted down to radio waves, so nothing will be visible except possibly the core of the explosion itself. Anyone trying to get across the temporal barrier will just lose whatever limbs they manage to push into it. Oh and the light from outside shining in will be blue-shifted to gamma rays, so there shouldn't still be anyone alive on the inside.

### One Hundred, by Sean Monaghan Review by Greg Hullender

"One Hundred," by Sean Monaghan appeared in Analog Science Fiction and Fact issue 03-04|20.

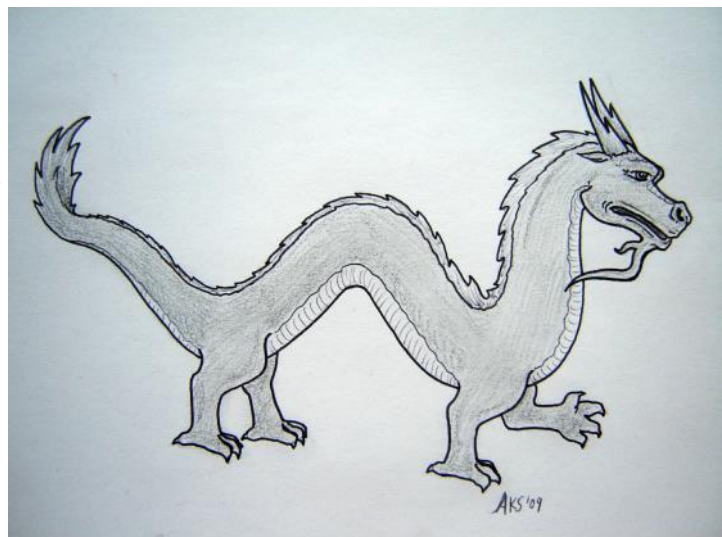
(Mars Colony) Cam sticks out as the only teenage boy on the Mars colony, but it's been years since anyone heard from Earth, so he works as hard as anyone to keep the place going. (6,011 words; Time: 20m)

Pro: The hundred desperate survivors of the Mars base struggle to hang on. As the youngest, Cam has the most to lose, but also the most to gain by finding a way forward. As the story starts, no one has been born on Mars yet; Cam was brought here with his parents as a baby some 18 years ago.

This tells how, following a disastrous fire, Cam and other young people started disregarding the rules and trying to find new solutions to the base's problems. How they moved from just trying to hang on to trying to move forward.

Although the ending was kind of predictable, I was still surprised how much it moved me.

Con: It's hard to believe it took them 18 years to reach this point.



Chinese Dragon

By Angela K. Scott

Realistically speaking, people on Earth would have decades if not a century of advance warning of an asteroid impact of the magnitude described in the story.

### Cooling Chaos, by Gregory Benford Review by Greg Hullender

"Cooling Chaos," by Gregory Benford appeared in Analog Science Fiction and Fact issue 03-04|20.

(Climate SF) When Sandra almost dies fighting a wildfire in the California Sierras, she gets an inspiration for a better way to fight fires in the future. (3,539 words; Time: 11m)

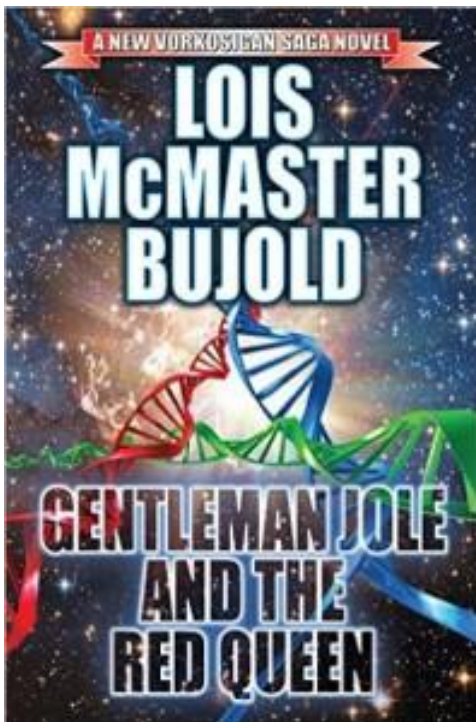
Pro: It's a fairly realistic description of the sort of geo-engineering measures that might be used to cool the planet if we can't control CO2 emissions.

Con: It's a sequence of infodumps. There's no plot to speak of, and the result is really dull.

## Food of Famous Authors

### Lois McMaster Bujold's Bug Butter Pie By Cedar Sanderson

I have to admit, being able to write this post gives me a fan-girl moment. I asked in Baen's Bar and she actually took the time to answer me and suggest a dish. Lois McMaster Bujold has long been one of my favorite authors, and possibly the most influential one in my life, so I'm tickled pink to be able to include her in this series.



And in the department of timing being everything, she has a brand-new release this week, the book that I have been looking forward to since she made me cry shamelessly at the end of Cryoburn. Gentleman Jole and the Red Queen is the return of Cordelia Vorkosigan and I am gloating over it on my Kindle and waiting for a good time to read it. I'll be publishing a list of books starring feisty old (at least middle-aged) ladies in the next week or so – I expect this one will lead the list for me. I already know that her Paladin of Souls will be on that list, at least. Speaking of that, I just found that the Curse of Chalion is only \$1.99 at Amazon. You must buy it if you haven't got it already. I rarely say this, but you must. Caz is my First Reader in a lot of ways – I know that isn't a sales point for most of my readers, but it's also one of the best fantasies out there.

Anyway, getting back to the food! This recipe stems from one of the funniest scenes and subplots in her work, the infamous Bug Butter from A Civil Campaign. She tells me that for those of us who haven't got access to the real thing, you can use yogurt, or as in this recipe, silken tofu instead.

## Bug Butter Chocolate Pie

12 oz (1 bag) of bittersweet chocolate chips  
(note: if you use coffee liqueur, use milk chocolate instead)

1/3 c maple liqueur (use coffee liqueur if you can't find that)

1 tsp vanilla extract

11 oz extra-soft or silken tofu

2 1/2 tbsp Maple syrup

a prepared pie crust



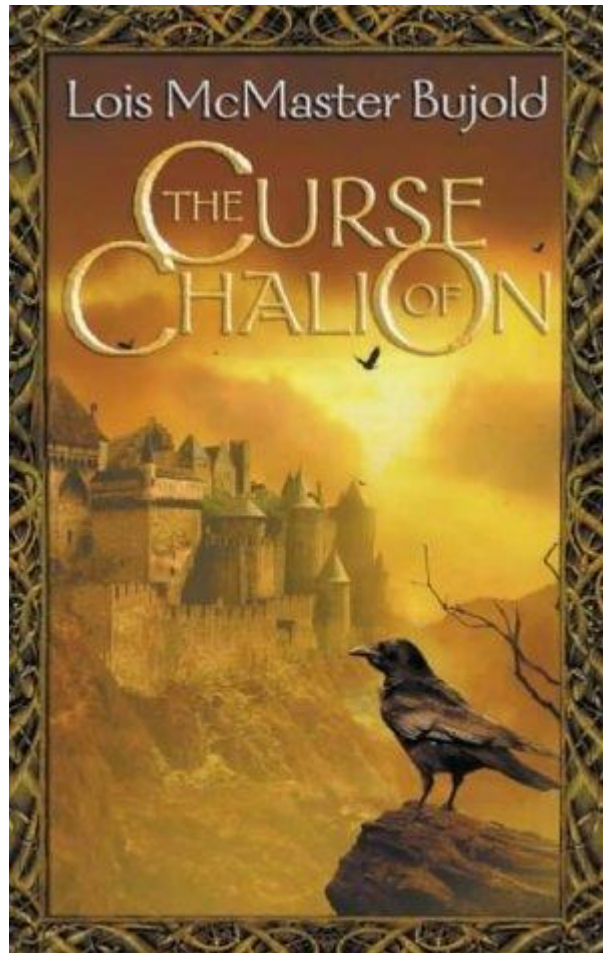
Put the chocolate chips, liqueur, and vanilla in a microwave safe bowl (I favor a Pyrex 8-cup measure or mix-and-pour). Microwave for 30 seconds, stir, microwave another 30 seconds, stir, repeat until the mixture is all melted and smoothly combined.

In a blender, put the tofu, maple syrup, and then the chocolate mixture. Process until smooth and completely combined, which only takes a minute or two. Pour the filling into the crust. Slide the pie into the fridge and grab one of the great books I listed above. Read

for an hour or so, and this pie will set up to be a potent wedge of chocolaty, silky goodness that you won't believe has tofu bug butter in it!

Note: I used a premade graham cracker crust I had on hand, that was a mistake. This pie deserves better. I've linked to the recipe I usually use for pice crust, but really, you could just put this stuff in a parfait glass or wineglass and it would be delectable and elegant. If you can do lactose, whipped cream would be a lovely finishing touch, but it's wonderful as-is.

The First Reader proclaimed it 'too chocolaty,' so there's that for you, too. He's not fond of chocolate.





Reilly of Regiment 41  
by Jose Sanchez