



Table of Contents

- [Pick for PBS This Week](#) (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper)
- [TITANIC: THE MUSICAL \(2023\)](#) (film review by Evelyn C. Leeper)
- [STARS IN MY POCKET LIKE GRAINS OF SAND by Samuel R. Delany](#) (book review by Joe Karpierz)
- [Hugo Award Finalists Announced](#)
- [This Week's Reading](#) (The Book of Acts) (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper)
- [Quote of the Week](#)

Editor: Evelyn Leeper, [evalynchinelisleeper@gmail.com](mailto:evalynchinelisleeper@gmail.com)  
All material is copyrighted by author unless otherwise noted.  
All comments sent or posted will be assumed authorized for inclusion unless otherwise noted.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, send mail to [evalynchinelisleeper@gmail.com](mailto:evalynchinelisleeper@gmail.com)  
The latest issue is at <http://www.leepers.us/mtvoid/latest.htm>.  
An index with links to the issues of the MT VOID since 1986 is at [http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back\\_issues.htm](http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm).

Pick for PBS This Week (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

On April 15, at 10PM, Channel Thirteen in New York will be running "American Masters: Art Spiegelman: Disaster Is My Muse". Spiegelman is best known as the creator of the ground-breaking graphic novels MAUS and MAUS II. I assume it will run on other public television stations as well. [-ccl]

TITANIC: THE MUSICAL (2023) (film review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

In honor of the anniversary of the sinking of Titanic on April 12, here is a review of TITANIC: THE MUSICAL (2023) (with commentary on books and reality as well):

TITANIC: THE MUSICAL is a filmed stage play rather than a film. I'm not sure the Titanic story needed a lot of singing and dancing. However, while it is careful to make sure all the famous people (the Astors, the Strauses, Lightoller, Ismay, etc.) are mentioned and featured, it is also accurate in its lesser characters. Edgar and Alice Beane were real passengers, as were the three Kates and Jim Farrell. I think even the minor characters were based on real passengers and crew. In any case, they are more realistic and representative of real passengers than Cal Hockley (Billy Zane) was in the 1997 movie. And they recounted some previously untold stories, for example, Ida Straus helping her lady's maid Ellen Bird on with her life jacket. (In real life, she also gave her her fur coat; in the movie, all this seems to happen after all the lifeboats have left, but in reality Bird did survive.)

The problem with color-blind casting is that the viewer doesn't know whether the "character" is, e.g., African-American or not. I mention this because in TITANIC: THE MUSICAL we see a group of second-class passengers including several characters from Ireland, central Europe, and other places, and one of the characters is played by an African-American. I thought at first the character was African-American, but then not only did she seem to be married to a white man, but she was dancing with the white first-class men and the white stewards, and I thought, "Well, either she's not African-American, or they're confused about the social conditions of the time."

Walter Lord's A NIGHT TO REMEMBER is a reasonable book for a general overview of the disaster. For those who want a more serious analysis of the disaster and its broader social implications, I would recommend Wyn Craig Wade's THE TITANIC: END OF A DREAM (which I reviewed in the 11/07/08 issue of the MT VOID).

And no "Titanic" review of mine would be complete without my commenting on Charles Lightoller, Titanic's second officer. During the evacuation from Dunkirk, he sailed a 60-foot yacht rated to carry 21 people from England and rescued 130 men on it. My personal opinion is that he remembered the half-empty lifeboats from the Titanic and swore it would not happen again.

This is not to say Lightoller was perfect. During the investigation, Lightoller complained that the officers should not have to stay in the same hotel as the crew. He also discounted the importance of binoculars, and did apparently did clear one lifeboat that had been filled entirely by men.

And Wade concludes his summary of the American hearing into the disaster by saying, " At the present writing, the prevailing historical verdict on the Senate's "Titanic" inquiry has gone no further than the judgment of Second Officer Charles Lightoller, who pronounced it, 'not but a complete farce, wherein all the traditions and customs of the sea were continuously and persistently flouted.' Indeed they were. Among the traditions flouted was the habit of driving full speed into known ice-floe areas. Among the customs was that of sailing with an insufficient number of lifeboats. The 'Titanic' not only embodied a lofty dream; its presumptuous innocence was akin to a fairy tale. And it had taken a 'fool' to look into the floating palace and declare that the emperor had no clothes." [-ccl]

[As their nod to the anniversary, Turner Classic Movies is running THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN (1964) at noon on April 12.]

Released theatrically 04 November 2023.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/t28656527/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/titanic\\_the\\_musical](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/titanic_the_musical)

STARS IN MY POCKET LIKE GRAINS OF SAND by Samuel R. Delany (copyright 1984, Bantam Books, 368pp ISBN 0-553-05053-2) (book review by Joe Karpierz):

It has been a \*very\* long time since I've read a Samuel R. Delany novel. That novel was 1975's DAHLGREN, probably one of the most polarizing science fiction novels of all time (at least that's the way it seems to me, given the discussions I've had with folks who've read the book as well as opinions I've read over the years since I read it). I read DAHLGREN based on a review in one of the science fiction magazines of the day (the name of the reviewer as well as the name of the magazine is lost to me in the depths of time), which stated that DAHLGREN was the best science fiction novel of all time (or some such statement). Given that I was devouring as much science fiction as I could back in my teenage years-- I was "16" when I read it--I read it with interest. As an impressionable 16 year old, one who was not wise in the ways of ... anything, you might guess that I had absolutely no idea what I'd read. I've not read it since, and I don't think I ever will, at least not until I'm retired and can dedicate the amount of time necessary to try to understand it.

So, it's been fifty years since I've read DAHLGREN, or any other Delany novel, until now. I've had STARS IN MY POCKET LIKE GRAINS OF SAND on my book shelf (well, one of my bookshelves, anyway) for decades. I thought I'd bought it via the now defunct Science Fiction Book Club, but I can find no indication either on the dust jacket or in the book itself indicating that. I realize that doesn't matter, but it did surprise me once I picked it up. It was published in 1984, nine years after DAHLGREN. I'm 50 years older than I was when I read DAHLGREN, and while I think STARS is less dense and confusing than DAHLGREN, I'm not sure I was mature enough as a reader to understand this book and all its nuances. And that seems to be a lot of them.

The novel is broken into three sections, the first being "Prologue: A World Apart", in which we meet Korga, a slave on a relatively non-descript planet which appears to be cut off from the General Information (GI) service, a web of knowledge (as opposed to the Web, so hold that thought) that can be accessed simply by thinking about what you want to know. He has led a life of intensely physical and demanding labor. Korga undergoes the "Radical Anxiety Transformation" procedure, which makes a slave, but a happy one. Rat Korga, as he is called after that procedure, is owned by any number of masters until all life on his planet is destroyed. The destruction of the planet might be from a phenomenon called Cultural Fugue, and here I freely admit that I'm quoting the definition of Cultural Fugue from Wikipedia since I know of no other way to explain it, 'a process where "socioeconomic pressures [reach] a point of technological recompilation and perturbation where the population completely destroys all life across the planetary surface", or from an attack from a spacecraft in orbit around the planet. He should have died, but he survived deep beneath the surface of the planet in a refrigerated room.

The second section is entitled "Monologues: Visible and Invisible Persons Distributed in Space", which takes place on the planet Velm, where we meet Marq Dyeth, an "Industrial Diplomat", an "individual who helps manage the transfer of technology between different societies" (again, quoting from Wikipedia). We as readers don't actually read about Marq doing much, if anything, of that function. Suffice it to say that Marq a prominent and well-known Industrial Diplomat, as these things go in novels whether they're written by Delany or anyone else. Rat Korga is taken to Velm and is introduced to Marq. According to an associate who works for the Web, an organization that controls and manages information flow between planets, Marq and Korga are perfect sexual matches for each other.

Much of the Monologues is spent exploring the relationship between Korga and Marq, as well as the cult phenomenon that is growing around Rat Korga as "the only survivor of the destruction of the planet Rhyonon". Huge crowds appear where ever he goes, as the curiosity seekers come out of the woodwork to catch a glimpse of the man who survived.

The final section is entitled "Epilogue", where in we learned more about the Web and the "experiment" that brought Korga and Marq together. Saying much more than that would give away the ending of the novel.

What I've described up until now is basically a summary of the story, such as it is. STARS is much deeper than all of that, exploring gender and sexual politics. One of the more jarring things of the novel is that everyone is considered female, and being a male is one of choice (I probably didn't even describe that correctly). There are times this distinction is confusing, as Delany calls certain characters both "he" and "she", and it is left to the reader to determine what Delany is trying to say. To be fair, there is a lot to discuss about the themes of this novel, much more than I am not only qualified to talk about, but probably much that I don't understand anyway. I once said of Gene Wolfe's novels that I needed to be a more mature reader to understand them, but Delany is taking it to a higher level for me. And really, there is no discernable plot to this novel, while that's usually a turn off for me, there are writers that can pull it off to suit my tastes--Kim Stanley Robinson for one. But not here.

I'm sure that this is a fascinating story for those who are willing and able to dig down deep into what Delany is trying to say here. While there are a number of influential people and publications that call this book a masterpiece, I will just say that it's just not for me. I do plan to read other Delany novels, but like DAHLGREN, I'm not likely to come back to STARS IN MY POCKET LIKE GRAINS OF SAND. [-jak]

Hugo Award Finalists Announced:

BEST NOVEL

- Alien Clay by Adrian Tchaikovsky (Orbit US, Tor UK)
- The Ministry of Time by Kalliane Bradley (Avid Reader Press, Scribner)
- Service Model by Adrian Tchaikovsky (Tordotcom)
- Someone You Can Build a Nest In by John Wiswell (DAW)
- A Sorceress Comes to Call by T. Kingfisher (Tor)
- The Tainted Cup by Robert Jackson Bennett (Del Rey, Hodderscape UK)

BEST NOVELLA

- The Brides of High Hill by Nghi Vo (Tordotcom)
- The Butcher of the Forest by Premee Mohamed (Tordotcom)
- Navigational Entanglements by Aliette de Bodard (Tordotcom)
- The Practice, the Horizon, and the Chain by Sofia Samatar (Tordotcom)
- The Tusks of Extinction by Ray Nayler (Tordotcom)
- What Feasts at Night by T. Kingfisher (Nightfire)

BEST NOVELETTE

- "The Brotherhood of Montague St. Video" by Thomas Ha (Clarkesworld, May 2024)
- "By Salt, By Sea, By Light of Stars" by Premee Mohamed (Strange Horizons, Fund Drive 2024)
- "The Four Sisters Overlooking the Sea" by Naomi Kritzer (Asimov's, September/October 2024)
- "Lake of Souls" by Ann Leckie in Lake of Souls (Orbit)
- "Loneliness Universe" by Eugenia Triantafyllou (Uncanny Magazine, Issue 58)
- "Signs of Life" by Sarah Pinsker (Uncanny Magazine, Issue 59)

BEST SHORT STORY

- "Five Views of the Planet Tartarus" by Rachael K. Jones (Lightspeed Magazine, Jan 2024 (Issue 164))
- "Marginalia" by Mary Robinette Kowal (Uncanny Magazine, Issue 56)
- "Stitched to Skin Like Family Is" by Nghi Vo (Uncanny Magazine, Issue 57)
- "Three Faces of a Beheading" by Arkady Martine (Uncanny Magazine, Issue 58)
- "We Will Teach You How to Read We Will Teach You How to Read" by Carolin M. Yoachim (Lightspeed Magazine, May 2024 (Issue 168))
- "Why Don't We Just Kill the Kid in the Omelas Hole" by Isabel J. Kim (Clarkesworld, February 2024)

BEST SERIES

- Between Earth and Sky by Rebecca Roanhorse (Saga Press)
- The Burning Kingdoms by Tasha Suri (Orbit)
- InCryptid by Seanan McGuire (DAW)
- Southern Reach by Jeff VanderMeer (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- The Stormlight Archive by Brandon Sanderson (Tor Books)
- The Tyrant Philosophers by Adrian Tchaikovsky (Ad Astra)

BEST GRAPHIC STORY OR COMIC

- The Deep Dark by Molly Knox Ostertag (Graphix)
- The Hunger and the Dusk: Vol. 1 written by G. Willow Wilson, art by Chris Wildgoose (IDW Publishing)
- Monstress, Vol. 9: The Possessed written by Marjorie Liu, art by Sana Takeda (Image)
- My Favorite Thing Is Monsters, Book 2 by Emil Ferris (Fantagraphics)
- Star Trek: Lower Decks: Warp Your Own Way written by Ryan North, art by Chris Fenoglio (IDW Publishing)
- We Called Them Giants written by Kieron Gillen, art by Stephanie Hans, lettering by Clayton Cowles (Image)

BEST RELATED WORK

- "Charting the Cliff: An Investigation into the 2023 Hugo Nomination Statistics" by Camestros Felapton and Heather Rose Jones (File 770, February 22, 2024)
- r/Fantasy's 2024 Bingo Reading Challenge (r/Fantasy on Reddit), presented by the r/Fantasy Bingo team
- "The Structural Failure of the Star Wars Hotel" by Jenny Nicholson (YouTube)
- Speculative Whiteness: Science Fiction and the Alt-Right by Jordan S. Carroll (University of Minnesota Press)
- Track Changes by Abigail Nussbaum (Briardene Books)
- The 2023 Hugo Awards: A Report on Censorship and Exclusion" by Jared M. Barkley and Jason Sanford (Genre Grapevine and File770, February 14, 2024)

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, LONG FORM

- Dune: Part Two
- Flow
- Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga
- I Saw the TV Glow
- Wicked
- The Wild Robot

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, SHORT FORM

- Fallout: "The Beginning"
- Agatha All Along: "Death's Hand in Mine"
- Doctor Who: "Dot and Bubble"
- Star Trek: Lower Decks: "Fisurre Quest"
- Star Trek: Lower Decks: "The New Next Generation"
- Doctor Who: "73 Yards"

BEST GAME OR INTERACTIVE WORK

- Caves of Qud
- Dragon Age: The Veilguard
- The Legend of Zelda: Echoes of Wisdom
- Lorelei and the Laser Eyes
- Tactical Breach Wizards
- 1000XRESIST

BEST EDITOR SHORT FORM

- Scott H. Andrews
- Jennifer Brozek
- Neil Clarke
- Jonathan Strahan
- Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas
- Sheila Williams

BEST EDITOR LONG FORM

- Carl Engle-Laird
- Ali Fisher
- Lee Harris
- David Thomas Moore
- Diana W. Pho
- Stephanie Stein

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST

- Micaela Alcaino
- Audrey Benjaminsen
- Rovina Cai
- Maurizio Manzieri
- Tran Nguyen
- Alyssa Winans

BEST SEMIPROZINE

- The Deadlands
- Escape Pod
- FTYAH Magazine of Black Speculative Fiction
- khnx60
- Strange Horizons
- Uncanny Magazine

BEST FANZINE

- Ancillary Review of Books
- Black Nerd Problems
- The Full Lid
- Galactic Journey
- Journey Planet
- Unofficial Hugo Book Club Blog

BEST FANCAST

- The Coode Street Podcast
- Eight Days of Diana Wynne Jones
- Hugo, Girl!
- Hugos There
- A Meal of Thorns
- Worldbuilding for Masochists

BEST FAN WRITER

- Camestros Felapton
- Abigail Nussbaum
- Roseanna Pendlebury
- Jason Sanford
- Alasdair Stuart
- Örjan Westin

BEST FAN ARTIST

- Iain J. Clark
- Sara Felix
- Meg Frank
- Michelle Morrell
- Alison Scott
- España Sheriff

BEST POEM

- Calypso by Oliver K. Langmead (Titan)
- "Ever Noir" by Mari Ness (Haven Spec Magazine, Issue 16, July 2024)
- "there are no taxis for the dead" by Angela Liu (Uncanny Magazine, Issue 58)
- "A War of Words" by Marie Brennan (Strange Horizons, September 2024)
- "We Drink Lava" by Ai Jiang (Uncanny Magazine, Issue 56)
- "Your Visiting Dragon" by Devan Barlow (Strange Horizons, Fund Drive 2024)

LODESTAR AWARD FOR BEST YOUNG ADULT BOOK

- The Feast Makers by H.A. Clarke (Erehwon)
- Heavenly Tyrant by Xiran Jay Zhao (Tundra Books)
- The Maid and the Crocodile by Jordan Ifueko (Amulet)
- Moontorn by Yoon Ha Lee (Delacorte Press)
- Sheine Lende by Crocie Little Badger (Levine Querido)
- So Let Them Burn by Kamilah Cole (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers)

ASTOUNDING AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER (sponsored by Dell Magazines)

- Moniquill Blackgoose (2nd year of eligibility)
- Bethany Jacobs (2nd year of eligibility)
- Hannah Kaner (2nd year of eligibility)
- Angela Liu (2nd year of eligibility)
- Jared Pecharok (1st year of eligibility)
- Tia Tashiro (2nd year of eligibility)

NOMINEES RULED INELIGIBLE. The following nominees received enough votes to qualify for the final ballot, but were found to be ineligible:  
Best Series: The Singing Hills Cycle, by Nghi Vo (fewer than 240,000 words in total)  
Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: Dune, the Musical (first performed in 2023)  
DECLINED NOMINATION. The following nominees received enough votes to qualify for the final ballot, but declined nomination:  
Lodestar Award: Compound Fracture by Andrew Joseph White (Peachtree Teen)  
Best Semiprozine: Beneath Ceaseless Skies

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I'm doing more solo driving these days and, needing something to listen to, have gone back to old podcasts. Having listened to Mike Duncan's "History of Rome" for the third or fourth time, I have started mining "Classical Stuff You Should Know". I just listened to #33 ("The Odyssey: Part 1"). In it I think they said that the word "polutropos" occurs in the Book of Acts (and of course it's impossible to find something like that again in an audiobook or podcast), and talked about how there are other references to the Odyssey, but the only place I could find it in the New Testament is at the beginning of the Letter to the Hebrews. Was this just a slip of the tongue? And they also seem to be referring to "Luke Acts"; am I just not parsing what I am hearing, or is "Luke Acts" a meaningful term?

In any case, all this led me to read the Book of Acts, and I have a couple of observations, or maybe two instances of the same thing: padding. I know the author wasn't being paid by the word, but why then would he spend all of Chapter 7 recounting the story of the Hebrews from Abraham through Moses and the Exodus? And then in Chapter 10, he first relates the story of Cornelius:

- 1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,
- 2 And he was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.
- 3 And he saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.
- 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.
- 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:
- 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

Then after Cornelius goes to Simon Peter's house in Joppa, we get Cornelius relating this same story to Simon Peter:

- 30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,
- 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.
- 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

Maybe it's a stylistic thing in the Greek of the time (sort of like the repetitious adjectives in the Iliad and the Odyssey, e.g., "the wine-dark sea", which is a common phrase there because it is the right meter to fit in the poem when one wants to talk about the sea.

(Of course, in science fiction, the first example would be called an info-dump.)

While I was reading, I ran across Acts 15:29 (also repeated in Acts 21:25):

29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

These days Christians, even the strict ones, seem to be eating rare steaks, to say nothing of blood pudding and blood sausage. While modern science (which these folks eschew when it contradicts their beliefs) tells us that the red liquid from rare steaks is myoglobin and not blood, I'm pretty sure the first century Judeans thought it was blood, and that is part of what was prohibited. So how do modern scholars explain why it is okay for Christians to eat blood pudding and blood sausage? All the explanations I found seem to be that Paul wanted to avoid offending the Jews of the time as much as possible, so he put these strictures in as a nod to all the laws of kashruth, but they weren't really laws from God. But for reasons passing understanding(\*), of the four prohibitions, the second gets to be ignored, while the fourth is considered super-important.

(\*) A wonderful phrase which comes from Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." [-ccl]

Satellites watched the residue of gas and energized particles strike the surface and rebound. There was no heat or momentum transfer.  
--Peter F. Hamilton, PANDORA'S STAR)  
(as noted in ANSIBLE 211, Feb 2005, Magical Physics Dept)