

# MT VOID 02/15/19 -- Vol. 37, No. 33, Whole Number 2054

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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
02/15/19 -- Vol. 37, No. 33, Whole Number 2054

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## Table of Contents

[Free E-Book of New Astronomical Science Fiction](#)  
[Parkinson's and Me](#) (comments by Mark R. Leeper)  
[TERRAN TOMORROW](#) by Nancy Kress (audio book review by Joe Karpierz)  
[PATRICK](#) (film review by Mark R. Leeper)  
[Golf](#) (letter of comment by Peter Rubinstein)  
[California](#) (letter of comment by Dorothy J. Heydt)  
[Theodore Roosevelt](#) (letter of comment by Jim Susky)  
[This Week's Reading](#) (PASSING STRANGE and THE JEWEL AND HER LAPIDARY)  
 (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper)  
[Quote of the Week](#)

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## Free E-Book of New Astronomical Science Fiction

DIAMONDS IN THE SKY, edited by Mike Brotherton, is available in various formats at:

[http://www.mikebrotherton.com/diamonds/?page\\_id=6](http://www.mikebrotherton.com/diamonds/?page_id=6)

DIAMONDS IN THE SKY includes fourteen original stories, by such authors as Mary Robinette Kowal, David Levine, and Geoffrey A. Landis.

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## Parkinson's and Me (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

This is the most serious column I have ever written for the MT VOID. Readers may have noticed that my writing of columns for VOID has become less eloquent and frequently more awkward. About thirteen months ago I started hitting writer's block. Also I was taking longer to write plain text. I did not know what was going wrong, but I was finding it harder to get my writing done. Frequently it just seemed to me to be loss of eloquence and attacks of writer's block. Seemingly unrelated was that when I would go out walking my left hand on its own would start twitching as if it were winding a mechanical wristwatch. (Does anybody remember wristwatches with springs?) In any case since I had seen people who twitched as they got older, I assumed I was just ageing and picking up twitches along the way. I had also picked up another ageing habit of drooling. I could not imagine that they had the same cause, but I watched it happen to me with certain amazement.

I had told my doctor about the twitch and he did not seem too concerned about it. I was not too concerned about it either. Several of my friends had reached their mid-sixties and had become ill from one thing or another. I was a lucky one and I did not seem to have any serious medical problems. I had been okay and I thought of the twitch to have some mild cause.

I told my doctor about the twitch a second time and told him that my balance also seemed less steady. That seemed to concern him a little more and his response was to refer me to a neurologist.

I went to a neurologist and if I remember correctly his first words to me were that I had Parkinson's disease. (a.k.a. PD, a.k.a. Parkinson's, a.k.a. Parkinson, a.k.a. Michael J. Fox Disease). I had heard of this condition before, but I just barely knew it existed. It turned out that every symptom I reported was actually also a known symptom of Parkinson. One, I am unconsciously drooling. Most people unconsciously swallow frequently when their mouth is moist. PD victims get the swallow signal only about half as frequently. With less spit swallowed, more comes out the front, hence the embarrassing drool.

PD is a progressive brain disease. That means that it will not get better with time and it will almost certainly get worse. There are drugs that allow some control of PD problems but they usually become less and less effective with time.

I can still do some writing, but the words have a much harder time coming. When I type I get a lot of single letters that become double letters or letters that I thought I had typed somehow never made it to the paper.

I will try to keep up with my writing for the VOID but the typing is a lot harder than it used to be and the muse may too frequently be out to lunch. [-mrl]

**TERRAN TOMORROW** by Nancy Kress (copyright 2018, Tor, 329pp (Kindle edition), ISBN: 0765390353, copyright 2018, Blackstone Audio, Inc. 10 hours 58 minutes, ASIN: B07HHGJKMH, narrated by Marguerite Gavin) (audio book review by Joe Karpierz):

It's not often these days that a major writer--any writer, for that matter--publishes two full-length novels in one year. 2018 saw Martha Wells publish \*three\* novellas in her "Murderbot" series (two of which I have read), but I suspect that like Kress and the last two books in the "Yesterday's Kin" series, she already had them in the pipeline. TERRAN TOMORROW, the third and final (or is it?) book in the "Yesterday's Kin" series brings the story she wanted to tell to a conclusion, but she has certainly left the door open for further exploration of the future of humanity.

At the end of IF TOMORROW COMES, the diplomatic mission that went to World (or Kindred) departed that planet to head back to Earth without the great amount of help they thought they would have, as the people of Kindred were not as advanced as was originally thought. The remaining humans and 5 Kindred traveled to Earth to find the planet completely changed. It is 28 years later, as each one way trip had a 14-year time jump added into due to the technology of a ship that is an enigma to everyone.

What they find is devastation. More than 95% of the population of the planet has been destroyed by a radical group trying to purge the Earth of humanity in order to allow the planet to recover and start anew. There is no longer a United States government; order is kept by what's left of the military, which continually fends off attack from "New America". The Gaiists--the aforementioned radical group, unleashed a virus that killed most of the population. Some were immune--they can live in the outdoors, while the rest must live in domes and wear protective suits while travelling outside the domes. It is an uneasy way of life, to say the least.

There is surprise and disappointment at the travellers' return. Surprise that they even came home at all, and disappointment that there is no technological help coming with the Kindred. And of course, there is resentment of the Kindred because they are strangers and more mouths to feed in a time of low supplies; life is hard enough as it is, and now there are new folks getting in the way and using up what is already needed by every one else. And to top it all off, people are falling into comas, and no one knows why. Of course the returning folks and the Kindred are blamed.

I suspect that when you come right down to it, we've seen this story before, and multiple times. The idea of returning travellers being distrusted by those they came back to is nothing new in science fiction, literature in general, and just about any other form of entertainment.

Kress is playing a very long game here, I think. I had my "ah-hah" moment when the first coma victim awakened. There is so much we don't know about who built the spaceships--indeed, who is behind all the technology that is above the characters' understanding. We may have \*some\* idea at the end, but even that's not clear. There are also unanswered questions about the military government and New America. There are many reasons to believe that this is not the end of the story. It's the end of \*this\* story, but not the end of the \*STORY\*. I suspect there will be more to come. And for once, I'm actually curious as to what happens next.

As I said in my review of IF TOMORROW COMES, Marguerite Gavin is a delightful narrator, and I'm glad she was back for the third and final book in this trilogy.

TERRAN TOMORROW is another solid and satisfying outing from Nancy Kress. It's well worth your time. [-jak]

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**PATRICK** (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

**CAPSULE:** Just when it seems that no more can go wrong in Sarah's life she inherits Patrick, an extremely neurotic pug. Patrick has an almost supernatural ability to get in Sarah's way. Sarah wanted to bring someone new into her life, not this small wave of destruction. The plot is familiar and reminiscent of Disney films of the 1960s (updated perhaps), but the story is at least a little heartwarming. Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4) or 5/10

**PATRICK** is one of those pro-relationship films (can I call that a subgenre?) that says that any relationship you have is better than being alone or with a flawed relationship. That is the message of films as memorable as **THE ODD COUPLE**. But it is also the message of **PATRICK**. English Sarah (played by Beattie Edmondson) is losing control of her life. She has wanted to graduate law school, but that is not working out for her. She has decided to become a high school teacher (I think they call that "sixth form.")

Now there is a new problem for her. Her grandmother died and left her a hyperactive dog, a pug named Patrick. She has to be in school all day, but somebody has to take care of the dog all day or in the evening there will not be much of a home to come back to. Everything will be chewed, torn, or otherwise destroyed. But just having a pug has attracted the romantic attention of two men (Ed Skrein and Tom Bennett). Odd touch: Sarah has a hard time taking care of a dog, but seems to have no trouble caring for a boat.

All dogs are cute. A pug with its crushed in face is no exception. But pugs are well down on the list, so they rarely show up in films. "Pug ugly" is a commonly used expression. The film is being distributed in part by Disney Studios, and the film has a bit of the feel that Disney films had in the 1960s. It is in spirit more adult than films like **THAT DARN CAT**, but it has that sort of feel.

I had one problem that the reader may not. Some of the characters have thick British accents that just do not come across. The story is cute and pleasant enough, but the plot is stale material. I rate **PATRICK** a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale or 5/10.

Release date: **PATRICK** is in theaters on February 15th

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6542108/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/patrick\\_2019](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/patrick_2019)

[-mrl]

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**Golf** (letter of comment by Peter Rubinstein):

In response to [Evelyn's review of THE BULLY PULPIT](#) in the 02/08/19 issue of the MT VOID, Peter Rubinstein writes:

[Evelyn writes,] "in those days, golfers \*walked\* the course rather than rode around in a gold cart."

You may have a somewhat distorted view of the wealth of the typical golfer. I generally try to use the silver carts in order to save on expenses.

Evelyn responds:

Arggh! The problem with auto-correct is that it's perfectly happy with the \*wrong\* word as long as it \*is\* a word. Clearly, that should have read "rather than rode around in a golf cart." [-ecl]

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**California** (letter of comment by Dorothy J. Heydt):

In response to [Mark's comments on California](#) in the 02/08/19 issue of the MT VOID, Dorothy J. Heydt writes:

This year, actually, we're getting lots of rain on the lowlands and lots of snow on the Sierra ... and there's even been snow on some of the lower mountains. We drove to Concord this afternoon to look for a replacement toner cartridge (didn't find it), and Mount Diablo had patches of snow all over its upper third.

It's all going to fill the reservoirs and replenish the water table. What we need to do, and are beginning to do, is to find additional ways of storing water against years of minimal precipitation, and we're beginning to do that. E.g., when rain falls on farmland or orchards to the point of making puddles, rather than drain it off, leave it standing till it sinks in. More reservoirs, stronger dams on the reservoirs we've got (you probably read about the damage to the Oroville dam, which had to be repaired as quickly as possible while letting a lot of water drain past it). All this takes inventiveness, determination, and a

lot of money, all of which we've got.

So don't worry about us too much. [-djh]

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**Theodore Roosevelt** (letter of comment by Jim Susky):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on Theodore Roosevelt](#) in the 02/08/19 issue of the MT VOID, Jim Susky writes:

Thanks to Evelyn for another in her series of reviews on American History.

I am forever grateful to David Brooks for his notice of Morris' 1979 book THE RISE OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT--which made me realize \*why\* his visage appears on Mount Rushmore. In that bio (the first of three volumes) Morris may have cherry-picked TR's life--and thereby wrote a "hagiography"--but in doing so made me newly aware of an American Hero.

Actual heroes have warts, however, which make them all the more real and interesting, so Dr. Kearns' bio will soon grace my shelves.

When TR ran the navy as Assistant Secretary (while the titular Secretary stayed home tending flowers) he had indeed "never seen combat". Within 15 months of his appointment he and the First US Volunteer Cavalry Regiment (a.k.a. "Rough Riders") dodged bullets in Cuba in the Spanish-American War.

TR thus became the first in his immediate family to fire "shots in anger", as did his sons and theirs. Despite (or because of) that, he undoubtedly romanticized war. His brief work beefing up the Navy helped to later assure that Panama became a stable American client (over Columbia's objections). As a result Panama and the Canal became a Client of the World. Such was a salutary effect of military power. [-js]

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

PASSING STRANGE by Ellen Klages (ISBN 978-0-7653-8952-7) was filed in the fiction section of my library, rather than in the science fiction and fantasy section, and honestly, that's probably right. There are two small bits of fantasy in the main body of the novella, and a fantasy element in the framing story, but none of these is necessary for the plot. (In fact, the fantasy in the framing story seems more to provide a way to give a satisfying ending to the story than anything else.) There is also a meta-connection, with one of the characters being an artist for the pulp magazines.

This is a pity, because the main plot is strong enough to stand on its own. The evocation of 1940s San Francisco is good, and the characters are well-drawn. I recommend this for these elements, not for the fantastical component.

And just for completeness' sake, let me say that THE JEWEL AND HER LAPIDARY by Fran Wilde (ISBN 978-0-7653-8983-1) is another Tor novella (actually, it's really a novelette) that is not my cup of tea. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

I love being married. It's so great to find that one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life.

--Rita Rudner

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