



"Wireless" (1902)  
 "With the Night Mail [Aerial Board of Control 1]" (1905)  
 "As Easy as A.B.C. [Aerial Board of Control 2]" (1912)  
 "In the Same Boat" (1911)  
 Old Bridge Public Library, 7PM

Northern New Jersey events are listed at:

<http://www.sfsnnj.com/news.html>

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### My Picks for Turner Classic Movies for June (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

Each month I look over what films would I pick from the upcoming month to recommend for my readers. Not all months have a recommendation-worthy selection that I recognize, but I will do my best.

One film in June I can recommend even though the last third of the film is a mess. At least I can recommend the first 2/3 of the film. Sadly I think that BRAINSTORM (1983) will forever be remembered as that film that had to be re-written and repaired when actress Natalie Wood died under mysterious circumstances. And the last third of the film was less than rewarding. What will not be remembered is that the first two-thirds actually may be a top science fiction story. A device is invented as a new entertainment device gizmo. It can record human sensory experience and play it back into someone else's brain. It works like electronic telepathy. The viewer comes to realize that this device could forever change all human relationships. This is a story idea that could make a dozen good science fiction films and never deplete the concept. The last third of the film is a genuine disappointment that appears to have been shockingly assembled with parts from other films and would have made more sense if Ms Wood were present. Still there was enough of an idea here that the film is worth recommending.

[BRAINSTORM, Saturday, June 22 @ 06:00 PM (EDT)]

Back in 1969 director Guy Hamilton and producer Harry Saltzman were flush from the recent boxoffice smash of a film with the unlikely title of GOLDFINGER. They turned to another traditional type of film, a spectacular battle on land and in the sky. Britain was really up against a wall when the Luftwaffe was beginning its plan to prepare the way for and support the German invasion of Britain. But the British had a weapon more powerful than even they themselves realized. It was the quick to build and amazingly agile Spitfire. The RAF actually had more Hawker Hurricanes than Spitfires, but more wins were credited to the high performance Spitfire. For the film the filmmaking technical advisor for the German side Adolf Galland, the Nazi air ace who led the battle from the enemy side." When the film was made and they needed someone to do the other side he played his opposite number.

It may not be made to the very highest standard of war film, but it is entertaining and accurate, particularly for aviation fans.

[BATTLE OF BRITAIN, Thursday, June 6 @ 05:45 PM (EDT)]

Back in 1957 there were certain conventions of the horror film. They were almost invariably shot in monochrome. Black and white creates a mood that works well with horror. On the other hand color film somewhat distracts the eye and makes the proper mood harder to achieve. PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1925) had one scene in which the phantom appeared in bright red. SON OF FRANKENSTEIN was shot entirely in color, but they shade of green chosen for the monster just did not look very good. The film was released in monochrome. DOCTOR X and MYSTERY IN THE WAX MUSEUM were short in two-color Technicolor. The only horror film shot and sent to the screen in color was PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1943). It was shot in vivid color. It worked great in three-color Technicolor, but the color robbed the film of its horror effect. It was just a color spectacular as a background for a very mild telling of the story. The first horror film to effectively use color for horrific effect was a retelling of FRANKENSTEIN.

[THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1957), Tuesday, June 4, @ 11:00 AM (EDT)]

Now I need to pick the best film of the month. I guess I would go with:

[LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, Saturday, June 8 @ 04:00 PM (EDT)]

[-mrl]

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**REVENANT GUN by Yoon Ha Lee** (copyright 2018, Solaris, \$9.99 trade paperback, 427pp, ISBN 978-1-78108-607-0) (book review by Joe Karpierz):

REVENANT GUN brings to a close Yoon Ha Lee's terrific "Machineries of Empire" trilogy. It is a complex novel told from multiple viewpoints with multiple plot threads. There's a lot of ground to cover here which calls for all the different threads

and characters. In the end, it is a satisfying conclusion to the trilogy, but it's clear that there are more stories to tell in the Hexarchate universe (as evidenced by the short story collection coming out this summer from Yoon Ha Lee entitled "Hexarchate Stories").

The thing that binds all the plotlines and characters together is, again, the hexarchate calendar. As the calendar is something of a complex idea, I think it bears repeating (from my previous reviews of NINEFOX GAMBIT and RAVEN STRATEGEM) that the calendar is "...a way of life, a belief system, a way to hold moral fabric together. And it can be a weapon." To quote Liz Bourke, a reviewer for Locus Magazine: "...the calendar is part of a system of belief and action that creates exotic effects in terms of physics in the space where a particular calendar is applied." Hence, the ability to be used as a weapon. (As an aside, Bourke hits the nail on the head with this description of the calendar. I've been struggling for three books to figure out how to describe the calendar and its effects, and Bourke provides it.)

So, at the end of my review of RAVEN STRATEGEM, I stated that the reveal at the end of the novel was something I did not see coming. That reveal, of course, was the disruption of the high calendar of the Hexarchate. That disruption is really the jumping off point for REVENANT GUN.

The Hexarchate is in shambles. Hexarch Kujen wants to restore the high calendar and thus the Hexarchate so that he may return to power. Kujen is at once both smooth and silky, and a nasty tyrant. He holds a secret that no one knows, both about himself and the high calendar. He is willing to go to any lengths to restore the calendar and Hexarchate to what they were before the events of RAVEN STRATEGEM. He thus enlists the help of one of the greatest military minds in history, Shuos Jedeo. But this Jedeo isn't who he appears to be or who we believe he really is. In addition, the revelation of \*what\* Jedeo really is turns out to be a nice treat, and opens up a whole realm of possibilities that is impossible to explore within the context of the novel.

The cast of characters in REVENANT GUN includes the former Kel Cheris, who wants to put a stop to Kujen's reign. Servitor Hemiola owes allegiance to Kujen, and this is on the other side. I could go on, as the cast is huge. But suffice to say that the size of the cast contributes to the political intrigue and complex machinations; there is enough going on here to keep a reader engaged well into a night of reading. It is a well-written and fast paced novel. Unlike NINEFOX GAMBIT and, to a lesser extent RAVEN STRATEGEM, even with everything going on it feels to me like a much easier novel to follow. I suspect that's because we as readers are now familiar with all the trappings of the "Machineries of Empire" universe, and thus don't have to try to figure out what is going on.

I mentioned in earlier reviews of this series that keeping things new and fresh is essential and, above all, interesting. It does have its drawbacks in that for something that is new and innovative, it takes time for the readers to immerse themselves in the universe, the storyline, and the characters. "Machineries of Empire" is no different, but now here at the end of it the payoff is delivered. We have been immersed in it all, and in some sense we are sorry to see it go.

All of the novels in "Machineries of Empire" have been Hugo finalists. REVENANT GUN serves as a perfect capstone to the series and deserves to be considered for the Hugo. It's that good. [-jak]

### **Tobacco, Alcohol, and Water** (letter of comment by Jim Susky):

In response to [Mark's comments on alcohol](#) in the 05/17/19 issue of the MT VOID, Jim Susky writes:

Thanks, Mark, for your usual subtle and detailed treatment of "policy" and cultural matters--this time concerning the world's two most popularpleasure drugs (and for touching on the water in NJ.)

As for the latter, it wasn't until I travelled, then lived, outside that I realized that not everyone has pure water.

In Anchorage, we get the chlorin- and floride-ation that is the usual American custom--the source is snow and glacier-melt, along with rain. Not only that, the water is "tempered" by waste heat from ML&P's Generator Plant 2A--thus reducing the household's cost for domestic hot water.

My habit, therefore, is to get bottled water when I travel.

While still a young engineer in 1984 I caught wind of San Francisco's then new (and possibly unprecedented) violation of property rights when they banned smoking in private workplaces. That was not then broadly fashionable but certainly is now--to the extent that Anchorage has for over ten years threatened to shake down (\$500/day) bar and restaurant owners for "allowing" smoking in their private spaces.

(One may still see grownups doing grownup things in such spaces in other Alaskan cities.)

I don't recall smokers at that first job 1982-87--we had something like 60 employees. Perhaps smokers voluntarily took pains to limit their personal smoky proliferation.

Later, in a larger office, there were designated smoking areas-- with tight doors. This sort of self-regulation has always struck me as preferable to the gov't fist pummeling private prerogatives.

It was at that same office in 1984 when a mentor described DWI/DUI as "assault"--not so subtle an assertion, but an acceptable one by my lights.

Now, we hear of various municipalities that deign to restrict even outside smoking (and we have a "50-foot rule" in Anchorage). Your citation of "curtain(s) of tobacco" outside building suggests that parts of NJ do not regulate such transitory nuisances.

It is good news that (as you say) the proportion of auto-fatalities has halved since the early 80s--the news is better when one realizes that the incidence of such deaths has gone down even as the population and miles driven has increased. Partly this is due to the rise of the designated driver, who despite your skepticism, are often quite sober when helping their friends safely travel and escape police approbation. The latest example of this was last weekend when I offered my [22-year-old] son half a beer (having poured the other half for myself). He declined. I later discovered this was motivated by upcoming DD duty--thus showing himself to be far more diligent in this matter than I. [-js]

**"The Silly Season"** (letter of comment by Gary Labowitz):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on "The Silly Season"](#) in the 05/24/19 issue of the MT VOID, Gary Labowitz writes:

Thank you for the correction of Dann to Kornbluth. I offer as my first defense that I was only 11 when I read it ... and I liked both authors. All the authors' names being thrown at me from the distant past are making me very annoyed that I can't remember them as clearly as I would want. But they are my "magic" names that were spilling out that wonder stuff I saved my pennies to buy and build my collection of zines. I'm sorry now that I sold them (and lost the entire paperback collection in the war). I'm not sure what I would do with them now anyway, since I don't have the time and eyesight to reread them all anyway.

I worked on, and published, the N3F attempt at a pseudonym list of the authors then active in science fiction. Does anyone have or remember that publication?

My memories are really getting flawed. [-gl]

**Crabs and Inversion Theory** (letter of comment by Dorothy J. Heydt):

In response to [Mark's comments on crabwalks and inversion theory](#) in the 05/24/19 issue of the MT VOID, Dorothy J. Heydt writes:

That's an interesting take on it. I know just a tiny bit about the differences between the two lines, which doesn't particularly depend on how they walk and does depend on how they develop as very early embryos.

There are two lines of animals above the level of sponges and jellyfish: protostomes, and deuterostomes. If your Greek is up to it, you'll realize these mean "first mouth" and "second mouth."

You begin with a zygote, aka a fertilized ovum. It begins to divide, and for a bit it's an undifferentiated lump of cells, called a morula (Latin for "mulberry"). Then the morula hollows out, forming a ball one cell layer thick, called a blastula ("little ball"). Then the cells start to divide on one side faster than on the other, and the extra cells grow into the original ball, forming a shape two cell layers thick, with an opening at one end. Think of a volleyball or something that's been deflated and poked into a cup-shape. This is called a gastrula (little stomach) or blastocyst. For sponges and jellyfish, the process stops there; they grow from two cell layers. For everything else, a third cell layer develops between the first two -- and there's still that opening on one side.

For the embryos of protostomes, the mouth develops from that opening, and the anus (if any) from a new opening that forms at the other end. For the embryos of deuterostomes, the original opening because the anus and the new opening becomes the mouth. Deuterostomes include echinoderms (starfish, sea urchins, etc.) and vertebrates; protostomes include all other animal lines, including assorted worms, arthropods (including your crab), and mollusks.

About all that protostomes and deuterostomes have in common (once you get past the three cell layers) is that they usually have bilateral symmetry, at some point in their lives (as larvae, e.g.).

I looked up all this stuff a few years ago because I was ticked off at an otherwise very good episode of Doctor Who, "The Lazarus Experiment." An elderly scientist invents a machine that makes him young again, with which he intends (a) to make a whole lot of money and (b) never to die. But there's a bug in it somewhere, and he keeps morphing into a gigantic scorpion-

like thing with a human face. And the Doctor says he's reverting to a common ancestor.

The common ancestor of humans (deuterostomes) and scorpions (protostomes) is so far back that no one has ever found a fossil example of one; and if anyone has reconstructed anything resembling its DNA, I haven't heard about it. They've given it a name, though, the Urbilaterian, which was probably some kind of wormlike think with bilateral symmetry. Dr. Lazarus would have had to go back \*that\* far to turn into a scorpion, and since his machine had air in its chamber, his Urbilaterian form would probably have dried out and died in the machine before it could turn into anything. [-djh]

### **Old Movies, Crabwalks, and Burt Reynolds** (letter of comment by John Purcell):

In response to various items, John Purcell writes:

Happy Memorial Day! In honor of our fallen heroes, and family members who have served in the military, it seems right to me to write a letter of comment to a fanzine with a strong bent for old movies.

Of course, in such spirit TBS is showing nothing but Star Wars movies all day. I guess they're agreeing that the USA needs a Space Force to defend our home planet from invading aliens. I'm surprised that channel isn't showing "Independence Day" and its ridiculous sequel today. Oh, they're planning that for July 4th weekend. That makes sense. The only channel that is showing a real sequence of war movies today is TCM, and two of my favorites are being broadcast during the day: THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE (1951) and MEN IN WAR (1957), and another movie that sounds interesting, which I have never seen, is THE STEEL HELMET (1951). I may have to watch that one tonight.

I have seen all but MEN IN WAR. I may try it. STEEL HELMET is directed by the respected SAM FULLER. Not the best Fuller film but worth watching.

Your comments about "Crackpots and Crabwalks" sparked an interesting parallel thought in my awakening brain this morning: a progressive dinner crab walk. It would be much like a pub crawl, where a group of people spend a day, afternoon, and evening progressing from one bar/pub to another in an increasingly insane display of lack of self-control with alcohol. The same sort of progression could be done with seafood restaurants: go from one to another while creating a seven-course seafood dinner in the process, beginning with appetizers (crab cakes or some other kind of seafood finger food), and move right on up through a cup of seafood gumbo, crab salad, crab legs entree, or lobster, sides of scallops and shallots, then top it off with some kind of desert that likewise includes some kind of seafood. Such a plan may wreak havoc on one's cholesterol level, but what a way to go. I'd do it.

Shellfish cholesterol is supposed to be healthy. [Google "is shrimp healthy for you to eat".]

Burt Reynolds may not have been a great movie star, but occasionally he carried off a role very well. The reviews of "The Last Movie Star" stated that he did a credible and compassionate performance, and I might just watch this sometime. For a while-- during the 1970s--the man had a string of hit "Smokey and the Bandit" movies. They may not have been great cinematic fare, but they were fun summer entertainment. Come to think of it, BOOGIE NIGHTS (1997) was pretty good, too.

Anyway, many thanks for another interesting issue. [-jp]

### **Crabs and Inversion Theory, "Citadel of Lost Ships", "The Proud Robot", "Symbiotica", Caster Semenya, MUNCHAUSEN, Vaccination, and UNCLE TOM'S CABIN** (letter of comment by Taras Wolansky):

Taras Wolansky writes:

Here are some comments on issues of MT VOID, recent and not so recent.

5/24/19:

Mark's story about body plan "inversion theory" reminded me of the Burgess Shale fossil, Hallucigenia, which was called that because it seemed to be walking on spiked legs. Eventually they figured out they had it upside down: it was actually a worm with spikes on its back, protecting it from early predators like Anomalocaris (whose body parts were originally classified as three different animals).

That continental drift was rejected by the scientific community for decades, even generations, is a sobering warning about accepting current doctrine as "settled science", no longer to be questioned. In John McPhee's BASIN AND RANGE, we meet North American geologists in the late 1960s who are still reluctant to accept continental drift (plate tectonics) because at the time it did a poor job of accounting for North American geology.

Evelyn: "'Citadel of Lost Ships' by Leigh Brackett ... What is more problematic is the lack of subtlety in its essentially

libertarian message dressed up in science fiction trappings." The message would have seemed much more surprising and original in 1943, when there was no libertarian movement in the modern sense of the word. In fact, back then "libertarian" was a euphemism for anarcho- communist.

Evelyn's reviews of "The Proud Robot" and "Symbiotica" seem to impose 21st-century attitudes on stories written almost 80 years ago. For example, it's pretty hard on Eric Frank Russell to hold him to task for being only 30 years ahead of his time on race!

5/10/19:

I got interested in Caster Semenya while watching the Summer Olympics. The announcers said she had been permitted to compete in spite of having ten times the normal level of testosterone for a woman. If any woman can compete with the men, I figured, it would be she. (Turns out, her gold medal time would have put her dead last in the first heats of the men's 800 meters.)

Only later did I learn what the media were holding back. The reason for that high testosterone level is that Semenya's chromosomes are XY. In fact, those "controversial" regulations on testosterone levels apply only to XY athletes competing in women's events. The regulations hope to give XX women at least a fighting chance.

"The Washington Post" is a case in point. Even as it carefully avoided mentioning that pesky Y chromosome, it presented a hypothetical--and probably nonexistent--example of an XX athlete competing with the men. On the other hand, "The Economist" was more forthcoming.

5/3/19:

Like Paul Dörmer, I found I liked MUNCHAUSEN more than I expected, when I saw it at Balticon a few days ago, in glorious Agfacolor. (I had previously seen a miserable black-and-white print on PBS.)

I was also pleased to discover that it was anything but Nazi propaganda. Munchausen is fighting for Russia (Nazi Germany's enemy by this time) against a tyrannical Turkey (which was in a nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany); while Italy (Nazi Germany's ally) is a place of murder and repression. Nor is the Baron anything like the ideal National Socialist man: he is basically a louche hedonist, pursuing wine, women, and song.

When the film was made, the war was still going very well for Germany, so the Nazi censors didn't come down too heavily. No doubt, the nude women in the harem scenes were justified as letting the boys know what they're fighting for!

3/29/19 (This got lost in my inbox until now):

The anti-vaxxer movement, personified by Bobby Kennedy, Jr., and actress Jenny McCarthy, is mixed up with environmentalism and natural foods and distrust of big business, especially "Big Pharma".

Some years ago, in "The New York Review of Books", there was a major article that argued that the great American novel about slavery was not HUCKLEBERRY FINN, but UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. I heartily concur. It got less respect than it deserved, partly because it was written by a woman and, I suspect, partly because college English departments after the Civil War filled up with educated Southern gentlemen who had lost their, er, property.

There were quite a few Southern novels "answering" Stowe. I wonder if any of them are any good. [-tw]

Evelyn responds:

I recognize that applying 2019 standards to a 1943 story is unfair, but I still have to admit that reading some of these stories is cringe-inducing. I didn't necessarily down-rate them for "being of their time", but they often have the additional problem that I noted of their being original then and trite now. This is part of the reason that the Retro Hugo Awards are problematic. Are we supposed to vote as we feel in 2019, or as we think we would have felt in 1944?

I'm not sure the claim is that HUCKLEBERRY FINN is the great American novel \*about slavery\*; it is called the great American novel, period. (Competing, I should add, with MOBY DICK.) There is much in HUCKLEBERRY FINN that makes it readable and enjoyable today--the story of the journey down the river, the humorous interludes, and so on--while UNCLE TOM'S CABIN is more focused on its single topic. Going back to MOBY DICK as a parallel, if Melville had written a novel just about the dangers of whaling, MOBY DICK would have ended up with Richard Henry Dana's TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST as a side note in literary history. [-ecl]

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

Okay, we have finally gotten to the Short Story category on the Retro Hugo ballot.

Before I start, though, I have some general comments. There are too many categories and/or too many finalists in each category. And having a Retro Hugo ballot in a given year makes this totally ludicrous.

The Hugo voting method works best (or perhaps works only at all) when the voter ranks every finalist in a given category. Currently this means that a voter needs to read six novels, six novellas, six novelettes, and six short stories to vote on just the fiction categories. Oh, wait, there are also six series. Actually, that category alone is impossible for most voters--certainly impossible in the time between when the finalists are announced and when the ballots are due.

And that is just fiction. There are eighteen categories altogether. And unlike awards like the Oscars, there is no overlap. For the Oscars, if a voter watches GREEN BOOK she has seen four finalists, but there is no such help with the Hugos.

I had hoped to read all the Retro Hugo fiction finalists and the current short fiction finalists. This is not going to happen. Life is short, and I have a lot of books I want to read that are not Hugo finalists.

So while I will comment on the Retro Hugo Dramatic Presentation finalists, and I \*may\* read the current Short Story finalists, that's it, except for my strong suggestion that they either cut down the number of categories or finalists in each category, or devise a voting system that works better if people are not familiar with all the finalists.

And having read (almost) all the Retro Hugo fiction finalists, I have to say that 1943 was the year that everyone seemed to have embraced the twist ending.

"Death Sentence" by Isaac Asimov is a positronic robot story from Asimov, but with a difference. For starters, there is no mention of the Three Laws, and indeed, they cannot exist in the world of this story. As with many Asimov short stories, there is a twist in the ending, though I am not sure this one bears close examination.

"Doorway into Time" by C. L. Moore is one of the many finalists in ISAAC ASIMOV PRESENTS THE GREAT SF STORIES 5 (1943). There is a certain irony to his introduction, which says in part, "[Moore's] stories seemed 'masculine' because they didn't deal with the petty fripperies that readers expected of women authors," followed by the story, of which the first three paragraphs are spent describing the main character's robe, followed by more paragraphs about jewels and other "fripperies." This is yet another story in which the humans are secondary characters (or in some cases, what the reader was supposed to assume were the aliens).

"Exile" by Edmond Hamilton is another story whose ending, possibly surprising at the time, is oh so predictable now. And I know the meaning of "queer" has changed a lot in 75 years, but it sure was popular back then: in "Death Sentence" Theor Realo is called "queer" (twice), and here Carrick is called "a queer chap."

"King of the Gray Spaces" (a.k.a. "R is for Rocket") is, I suppose, poetic. The problem is that it seems written almost exclusively for teenage boys in rural Illinois in the early Twentieth Century. The closest I come is that I lived in rural Illinois in my pre-teen years.

"Q.U.R." by H. H. Holmes (Anthony Boucher) is of interest mainly in how off-base its assumptions are. In particular, Holmes/Boucher seems to assume that robots will start out as humanoid in form, and only later become more specialized. In reality, robots started out entirely "usuform" (e.g., robots on automobile assembly lines), with any humanoid robots merely gimmicks that barely worked. One need only watch the M.I.T. robot competition for robots that need to climb stairs and do other specific tasks to see why insisting on a humanoid robot is a foolish requirement. Of course, there is also the same emphasis on drinking that one found in "The Proud Robot". (Other stories on the Retro Hugo ballot have everyone smoking as well.) There is also a not-so-subtle parallel to the racism of the time. It is ironic that some stories have this sort of parallel as a negative comment on the attitudes of the time, while others seem to unconsciously reflect them. Should I add then women rarely appear in these stories at all?

"Yours Truly - Jack the Ripper" by Robert Bloch was well-written but, like so many of the Retro Hugo finalists, has not aged well. More than that I do not want to say.

Rankings: "Death Sentence", no award, "Yours Truly - Jack the Ripper", "Q.U.R.", "Doorway into Time", "Exile", "King of the Gray Spaces" ("R is for Rocket")

[-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

A fool always finds a greater fool to admire him.  
--Nicholas Boileau

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