

330
TIGHT BEAM
--National Fantasy Fan Federation--



ALAN WHITE

Tightbeam 330

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Some contributors have Amazon links for books they review, to be found with the review on the web; use them and they get a reward from Amazon.

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Letters of Comment

Dear George and Jon:

I'd like to ask in print about Angela Scott's cover for Tightbeam 329. This cover features a unicorn, which I have often seen mentioned as a symbol of purity, and for which I have seen expressions of absolute esteem from numerous fantasy fans on the net. It has also been described as a blessed creature in several stories I have seen in F&SF. The title of this cover painting suggests that both the unicorn and the lady are beauties, and the art seems like an archetypical portrayal of this concept of a unicorn being a blessed beast. I would like to know what is lovely and pristine about a unicorn, and I have never had this attitude explained to me, nor was I able to deduce anything about it from what I read. The stories always started with unicorns being fine as a given. Perhaps there are readers of Tightbeam who can explain this—though I suspect it would be out of key to write the artist and ask her. Why is a unicorn revered and what does a unicorn symbolize?

I am also taken with GrayJay's letter in which he discusses a mirror universe. It is so unlikely for there to be such a thing that it seems unworthy of scientific interpretation. It seems to be a concept without a justifiable origin, unless it comes from ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, the continuation of ALICE IN WONDERLAND.

It's not easy to make a film out of the tales in ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS, but it's nice to see that someone in Hollywood has managed it, as per the review by Caroline Furlong. I'm wanting to point out that Scheherazade is the teller of the tales, not someone making them famous, which is attributed to the compiler.

-John Thiel

Dear George and Jon:

Thanks for Tightbeam 329, and the grand catch-up is still on the go. Always will be, I suppose. I will try my best to offer a few comments.

Graham Darling's mention of "Journey to the Far Side of the Sun"...the movie is special for me in that it was the very first movie I ever saw in the theatres, released in 1969. I remember Roy Thinnes, Herbert Lom and Ed Bishop in this movie. I bought my ticket with my paper route delivery profits, and it probably cost about \$2.50 at the time.

Arthur C. Clarke has always been Yvonne's favourite author. When ACC died, she set up a book of condolences to somehow get the book through fandom as much as she could, and to ACC's brother Fred. We were the first signatories in the book, and we passed it through several SF conventions, with the hopes others would take it elsewhere. It was then directed through a couple of space conferences, and then got to Fred Clarke. I recall hearing that Buzz Aldrin got to sign it. Fred had announced that he was going to try to start a museum of his brother's work in Minehead. Then, Fred passed away, and we do not know the fate of the museum, or of the book, or anything else gathered for the museum. Does anybody out there know?

The list of ACC books is quite good, and may serve as a checklist. Yvonne recalls Childhood's End as one of the first SF books she read. Has anyone heard anything about a Rama movie or TV series?

Well, I tried...I think this may be it. Otherwise, I am stumped for more comments. Take care, and see you with the next one, and I am sure it will be much better.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Dear George and Jon:

Thank you for Tightbeam 328, and it's good to realize that I am not as far behind as I thought I was. Time is still tight, though, so here's a fast loc on the issue.

I think we need heroes more than ever, seeing we have a plethora of anti-heroes and so-called famous people who have few, if any, redeeming features. We need those heroes to set the example and be a good example to others. Otherwise, we might not have any good examples to emulate. Would we know how to act and treat others?

It is Lunar New Year's Eve as I write, so Gung Hey Fat Choy, happy Year of the Tiger! May we get

what we need, and after that, perhaps more than we deserve.

Looks like Will Mayo wrote the whole issue! I can't say much, but I did enjoy the Flash Gordon movie from some years ago, and all I can say is Brian Blessed makes the best Vultan you could imagine. The music is Freddie Mercury fabulous, and Flash Gordon kinda fades into the amazing background of the movie. Ming the Merciless is marvelous. I always did like the Planet of the Apes movies, and even some episodes of the TV series that came afterwards, but I have to say it's nothing I would care to see again today. I say that about a lot of older stuff on TV, too.

And Jon, a great biography for Damon Knight, one of my favorite authors. It is his centennial year, so reminding us of him is perfect. Would that we could all have such careers.

Segué to my own career...in December, I did a full edit/copyedit/proofread of a 488-page e-book. It is Empire's Gambit by D.J. Holmes, and it is available from Goodreads. This is the 12th book in his series, and it looks like I will do a similar job for his 13th book, which I gather he is working on right now. Also, I recently received some stories to edit/copyedit/proofread for an upcoming issue of Dreamforge Anvil Magazine. This is the busiest I have ever been as an independent editor, and I am loving it.

I am done for the moment...many thanks for all of this (I am not sure if I have missed an issue or not), and see you with the next.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

Anime

Winter 2022 First Impressions – The Orbital Children Review by Jessi Silver

Episode Summary: In a time where space, as everything else, has been filled to the brim with consumerism and advertisement, three children have won a contest to visit the first space hotel with facilities that cater to young people. Mina, an internet celebrity, her younger brother Hiroshi, and Taiyou, arrive at Anshin station excited to experience all of the wonders that corporate branding can provide in the world of space tourism. They're set to join two children who know nothing other than living away from Earth – Konoha and Touya, who were born on the moon. Both Konoha and Touya experience the effects of gravity differently and are under constant medical observation. Touya is also a bit of an AI nut, using semi-illegal means to "broaden" the abilities of his personal AI drone, Dark.

As the contest-winners arrive to the station, a situation begins to unfold from within Earth's orbit outside. A mysterious projectile is detected, and eventually station management learns that a comet is approaching the planet and the station. As the two groups of children meet and begin to work through some interpersonal and philosophical differences, they're suddenly forced to brace for impact. It may now fall on their shoulders to figure out how to survive using only the tools and know-how they can cobble together. But will they be able to team up long enough to make this a reality?



It seems as though nothing has changed in 20-some years.

Impressions: What do you do when, after 15 years, the creator of your favorite anime series finally returns with something new to share? I can't speak for anyone else, but for me the answer was to completely avoid the new piece of art as though it was some kind of trap. Sometimes loving media can feel like a bumpy road paved with cobblestones comprised of dashed hopes and disappointment, and one of the worst feelings is to go into a viewing with such high expectations that they couldn't realistically be met. So I set the show aside for a little while, dodging questions from friends and avoiding other reviews of the material until I couldn't

steer clear of the issue any longer.

Friends, this first episode introduces a lot of material. It speculates about the future of technology and its modern, depressing entanglement with capitalistic desires. It discusses the evolution of AI and



the way it may augment and intertwine itself in our lives. And it begins a discussion about bullying and disability that I hope it's able to follow through on. But as I was watching the first episode, experiencing the scene where Touya and Taiyou are fighting with one-another using their AI droids as they begin to fall down the station's main shaft, I started to feel a little bit choked up – it felt like I had somehow come home.

I think it's impossible not to compare this series to *Dennou Coil*, even at its outset. Its focus may be

slightly different, but there's a bit too much of an aesthetic continuity for those of us in-the-know to ignore. The hand smartphones, Hiroshi's AR glasses, the searchy-like droids... they're all design choices that assume a continuous thread between the previous and the current. It's such a mark of confidence that it's impossible to ignore, and yet this incarnation of it all feels somehow honed even sharper than the last.

I won't apologize for sounding like a fangirl gushing over something in a way that probably won't make sense to most people, but in an attempt to bring things back to Earth a bit (ha!) I'll try to be a little more coherent for a short time. This episode (and hopefully the remainder of the series), seems poised to touch on subjects that seem far off, but which are stealthily relevant in the here and now. I enjoy escapist entertainment as well as the next person, but I truly love entertainment that also serves as commentary – whether on politics, social issues, or other realities of the world. As the wealthy position themselves for space flight while the rest of us on Earth are forced to deal with much more mundane issues of survival, it's interesting to consider what a future based on this current present might bring.

Go watch *Dennou Coil*. And when you're done, watch *The Orbital Children*.

Pros: From a production standpoint, this is one of the better-looking shows I've seen in a long time. The character animation is great, especially considering that at times the characters are operating freely in three-dimensional space. It also reflects what appear to be a lot of well-thought-out design choices, ranging from the branding, the dots, and many surfaces that you might not expect, to the refined (yet thankfully not skin-tight) design of the characters' space suits.

I also appreciate how this nearly double-length episode manages to be judicious with how it uses this relative luxury (one of the benefits of being Netflix-only I suppose). I've complained in the past how most double-length episodes rarely feel justified, yet this one fills every moment with world-building, characterization, or plot – there's no wasted moment.

Cons: This is mostly my own disappointment rather than an actual “con,” but I'm sad that this series is only six episodes long. While I feel like anime series should be as long as they need to tell a story and perhaps this one only required a short time to get its point across, I feel as though a shorter length limits a series' opportunity to meditate on its quieter moments.

Content Warnings: Discussion of nuclear weapons. Discussion of disability prejudice. Characters in peril.

Would I Watch More? – I debated even keeping this section in this review, specifically because something really drastic would have to happen for me to skip this series. It's shorter to begin with, and beyond that the first episode shows so much promise and its creator brings with him so much proven skill that there's no way I'd miss it. Seriously. I hope that, as unsuccessful as I was for years tooting my horn about *Dennou Coil* that this new series and *Dennou Coil*'s new availability will manage to do what I could not.

Winter 2022 First Impressions – Delicious Party Pretty Cure by Jessi Silver



Streaming: Crunchyroll

Episodes: TBA (but these series generally run for a full year or so)

Source: Sequel of long-running franchise

Episode Summary: Yui Nagomi is an active girl who'd be right at home on the soccer team, but the reason she participates at all is for the delicious rice balls to be had afterward. As a resident of Oishiina Town she has her pick of delicious foods from around the world, and Yui wouldn't have it any other

way; as the daughter of a restaurant owner and someone who appreciates a scrumptious meal, she's definitely in the right place.

When Mari, a citizen of the Cookingdom, arrives in Oishiina Town in search of some missing recipe fairies, they soon encounter Yui who revives them with some food. But not far behind are members of the gang who've been trapping the recipeppis and using them for their own dastardly ends. Yui gets wrapped up in the battle, and there she transforms into Cure Precious, a hero powered by the energy of delicious food!



Yui might be good at sports, but she's just there for the after-game meal.

Impressions: It's difficult to talk about the magical girl anime genre without mentioning PreCure, the now long-running annual franchise that provides its heroes with clever and cute themed titles and powers. While I've never really watched any of the prior seasons through (though I did get about a third of the way through Heartcatch Pretty Cure back in the bad old days before streaming), I do appreciate their popularity and respect the animation and design craft that goes into creating them. Delicious Party is probably the incarnation that I'm now finding myself most interested in, though, because it

strikes right at the heart of one of the things I truly love in life – food and eating.

In fact, this aspect of the series is especially intriguing to me, because it seems to go against many of the storytelling “bad habits” I've seen portrayed in fiction, and especially in anime. I've lost count of how often girl characters have complained about gaining a little weight (or their friends have teased them about it); as with many things, anime doesn't always talk about bodies or their sizes in ways that reflect real-life diversity or the positivity we ought to be instilling in people. So it's perhaps a tiny bit revolutionary that Yui's unfettered love of rice balls (among other yummy meals) is treated as something cute rather than the pathway toward ruin. It even helps power the special finishing move she creates for herself as Cure Precious – a “500 kilocalorie punch.”

Aside from this positive spin on a subject that can be a touchy one for many, this episode really does what it needs to do to carry on the tradition of such a well-loved franchise. It's colorful and bubbly, with cute characters and creatures. The fighting has a very physical aspect to it that I've always liked. The heroine is clever and kind. It's very much the sort of anime comfort food that seems especially appropriate for a season that hinges many of its elements on such a concept. It's not complicated, but it's fun and seems to have a lot of heart. It might even be tasty enough to come back for a second helping.

Pros: For a series so closely revolving around food, it would be a shame if the food itself didn't look tasty. Luckily that's not the case here. While I would have liked to have seen the fillings in the rice balls Yui was inhaling in the early moments of the episode, I can forgive the omission. The omurice that made



A satisfying end to a satisfying meal of beating up on the bad guys.

its appearance in the second half of the episode definitely looked scrumptious, and I can only imagine that with any kind of world cuisine at her disposal we'll be treated to all manner of lovely dishes.

Cons: The only real issue I have with this and other series, is that there are always moments where it's very obvious that there will be toy tie-ins, and that tends to take me out of the action. Yui's transformation sequence is awesome and fun, but it's definitely a given that the little Kome creature is also something likely to be exploited endlessly for real-world financial gain. Alas! It just comes with the territory, I suppose.

Content Warnings: Yui's childhood friend jokingly calls her a glutton at one point. Mild cartoon peril and violence.

Would I Watch More? – With a lot on my plate (ha!) already, I'm not sure if I'll actually have the time to watch an entire year-long magical girl series, however cute and fun it may be. But I do definitely recommend it for those who enjoy the genre (or really like food!).

Film

The Matrix Resurrections Review by Jason P. Hunt

I will admit: going into the screening for *The Matrix Resurrections*, I didn't have very high expectations. Given how much press has been given to the retroactive application of modern cultural "standards" to just about everything from everywhen, I figured this would be like *Terminator: Dark Fate* or *Star Trek: Discovery* or *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* or...

Well.

It's not that.



The Matrix Resurrections is an actual sequel, not a reboot, not a remake or requel or preboot or any such convoluted thing. It's an actual sequel set many years after the events of the original trilogy. And yes, Neo (Keanu Reeves) and Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss) are back and it's actually them. Of sorts. There's an explanation that makes sense within the context of the overall story of what the Matrix actually is and how "The One" fits into it — mainly as to how the anomaly that creates "The

One" functions within the Matrix.

And there are a lot of people online speculating that this sequel turns Trinity into "The One" and undermines the original trilogy because of some feminist agenda or something. It doesn't. No spoilers, but what it does do is establish a new meaning for "The One" and why Trinity is so important to Neo — and to the concept of the Matrix in general. It's an interesting dynamic that gets introduced, and it puts Neo and Trinity's whole story arc into a new context that enhances rather than subverts what's been established.

I've seen it compared to Wes Craven's *New Nightmare*, where the director stood the entire franchise up on its ear, and that might be an apt analogy, given the metatextual elements of both films. That comparison only goes so far, however. In that case, the actors were playing themselves in the "real world" as Freddy manages to get into our world. In the case of *The Matrix*, it doesn't get that meta (sorry Zuck),



Thomas Anderson, the designer behind the smash hit video game known as The Matrix. Throughout the Anderson Reality, there's a heavy dose of metaverse as Wachowski actually includes Warner Bros. and their demand for a sequel right in the middle of the sequel. It's at this point that I started seeing the film



(One could also read into this an observation about updating your operating system.)

This could be just me as the old man in the room, but *The Matrix Resurrections* feels like an indictment of so many things about our culture, and I found myself walking out of the theater wondering if Lana Wachowski was a conservative. I'm pretty sure that's not the case, but there were moments...



process experiences, both good and bad?



will get different things out of it. Just like the people in the Matrix — they're either fully invested (and dependent) on their false narrative/reality, or they're ready to break out into the real world and start living again — audiences will respond based on their perception of reality.

I also like that it's not a retread similar to *Terminator: Dark Fate*. Lana Wachowski isn't re-telling the same story here. It's a brand new story that builds on what came before, but also integrates elements of those films to synthesize a new narrative here.

Even Morpheus (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II) has a bit of an identity crisis, as he has to discover and process who he is and where he fits inside the Matrix. It's a clever plot device that gets us past the fact

but it does find a clever way to incorporate the original trilogy in a way that pushes the story along at the same time giving us a mix of nostalgia and context for what we see in the new installment.

It's a densely packed story, and there's quite a bit of exposition, but it moves at a steady pace as things begin to unravel for Neo, who's been trapped in the Matrix with no memory of anything other than being

in a completely different light, and I'm not sure whether that's intentional or not, but I started to notice several pieces of this film not only playing with the idea of sequels, but also commenting on the modern era Technology Class, those people who are so wired into the social media, along with the proliferation of bots and online personae and this notion that our entire reality is unreal and there are plenty of us who are OK with that.

The idea of revisiting the Matrix came after the death of Wachowski's parents, and it's a movie that probably could not have been done any earlier. It's definitely a more evolved filmmaking style, relying less on fancy visual effects (although there are plenty of those) and more on ideas. How do we know what's real? What is the value of relationships? How do we

It's an approach that's actually enhanced by the amount of time it's taken to make this sequel, and those of us who were around for the originals are likely to have an appreciation for that passage of time, as we've all gone through life between then and now, and it's going to affect how we see this film.

I found myself liking this movie a lot more than I thought I would, and I think part of that is the fact that it tells an entertaining story first, with characters that have layers that get peeled back to reveal not only more about the character, but the layers of subtext within the story itself. Any kind of "message" is there for you to take or not, as you like. And I'm sure different people



that Laurence Fishburne's Morpheus was killed in *The Matrix Online*, a MMORPG launched by Warner Interactive in 2005. It only lasted a few years, but the Wachowskis were involved in the game's development. So if the game is canon, the original Morpheus is dead.

So this Morpheus, in addition to figuring out who he is and his place in the Matrix (and out of it), also has to deal

with getting Neo back to being Neo, back to remembering what came before. It's a scene that has plenty of callbacks, and they're perfectly placed and organic to the story. At no point during the film did I feel Wachowski was waving jazz hands and memba berries in the air with big neon "remember this?" floating in front of me.



Besides the new Morpheus, we also meet Bugs (Iron Fist's Jessica Henwick), the hacker who finally locates Neo inside the Matrix. And with her character, one can make a comparison to *The Force Awakens* in that where Luke Skywalker and the Jedi had somehow fallen into legend (did it actually happen?) after only thirty years, Bugs has managed to piece together legend and scraps of evidence

after even longer than that. Probably easier to do in a world made up of data and information, but when the machines are trying to hide something, it takes a bit of effort to unearth it. And while Bugs displays a bit of hero worship upon finding Neo, she doesn't let it get in the way of her mission to retrieve him.

The less I say about the characters played by Neil Patrick Harris and Jonathan Groff, the better the reveal will be when you watch this. I will say, however, that they each deliver a terrific performance, Harris especially with his Analyst — giving you just enough to wonder just what role he plays in all of this, until the "aha" moment when it clicks. His observations about people in general is very...meta, let's say. Groff has layers, and his reveal has already been spoiled, but if you think of him as that friend who works to present online a life that's different from reality, I think that may help you miss Hugo Weaving a bit less. He and Abdul-Mateen both have big shoes to fill, and I think they handle themselves well in addition to bringing something new to their respective characters.

And I do recommend that you watch in. In the theater. On a big screen. Maybe not IMAX, which doesn't really do much one way or the other. In fact, the only real quibble that I have on this one is the same one I had with *Thor: The Dark World* — the camera gets too close to the fights. Wachowski and director of photography John Toll have developed a visual style coming out of their collaboration on *Cloud Atlas* and *Sense8*, and it's a very fluid way of moving with the performances. (It's actually similar to the way I shot my romantic comedy many moons ago...) But that fluid movement actually works against the fight choreography. When the camera is given a little more distance, it's easier to keep track of where everyone is in the space.

This film is going to be so much more than people expect, and yet it's going to be so different from what everyone expects. Some critics are going to hate it for the same reasons they hated *Ghostbusters Afterlife* (see my review here), but those very same elements are what make this sequel work, and I think the audience score is going to be a lot higher than the critics score. Because this sequel gets it right. It doesn't revisit everything in order to change it all. It doesn't supplant what happened prior. It's a natural progression of the original trilogy, and the older fans especially are likely to appreciate what this sequel does.

The Wisdom of Walt Disney: The Themes, Ethics, and Ideas of His Greatest Films by David Breitenbeck

Review by Caroline Furlong

First published on Upstream Reviews.

The Disney Corporation's spiral into bland, banal storytelling while pushing tired talking points on viewers is a sad sight indeed. What is there to like about Walt Disney? Plenty, if one knows where to look, as this collection of essays demonstrates.

In this short book, one will reconnect with the foundational films produced by Walt Disney himself. From *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* to *Sleeping Beauty*, there is no way a reader will walk away from this book and see the movies described herein the same way again!

A collection of essays written on a variety of early Disney movies, *The Wisdom of Walt Disney* explores not only the animated features that made the man and his company famous, but the live action films as well. From the breakout hit that was – and remains – *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* to *Song of the South*, *Old Yeller*, and *Bambi*, each chapter offers penetrating insights into the stories that provided a nation suffering from the Great Depression and the specter of modern war with diversion and hope. This is particularly interesting since most of the live action films Disney created in his lifetime are ignored in favor of the animated ones.

In this collection a reader is brought through the films *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* as well as the aforementioned *Old Yeller* and *Song of the South*. The original *Treasure Island* and *Swiss Family Robinson* Disney films are discussed in detail as well, providing overviews of the language film has to use in place of the written word. A movie has to accomplish through visual presentation in a short amount of time what a novel can achieve in a longer time frame and with more depth. Disney couldn't just slap together costumes and sets to go with a script that, necessarily, had to cut scenes and dialogue from the books he chose to adapt. He had to create scenes and costumes to emphasize the themes and ideas that were in the books, which he then had to transmit for a film-going audience.

None of this is to say that the animated films do not receive the same type of care. They manifestly did. Ever wonder how a children's film like *Bambi* could be so dark and leave such an impression of foreboding in viewers? What about the symbolism inherent in *Sleeping Beauty*? The core conflict between Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*? The strange yet mesmerizing madness of Captain Nemo in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*? What about the further messages embedded in *Cinderella*? Is there a theme and a message to the myriad animated tales in *Fantasia*, or is it a chaotic series of musical videos strung together for no reason?

Mr. Breitenbeck takes a reader on a swift, pleasant journey through these films and more to look at the mind of the man who created them. In the process, readers will find themselves experiencing – or re-experiencing, as the case may be – the quiet serenity and the simple joy of a good story well told.

The characters

The characters are all Disney's, but they are not dissected within the essays. Rather, the author points out what made the characters in these films engaging on an instinctive level for the audience, allowing a reader and fan of Disney to appreciate them more. One will never look at Princess Aurora or the other cast members in *Sleeping Beauty* quite the same way. Even the largely silent characters in *Fantasia* are given a voice through these dissertations, making them more memorable and better understood than they might have been on a first or a millionth viewing of that beloved film.

The world

Each world Disney created or brought to life is given time and attention. Again, these settings are not vivisected for the author's amusement. A reader is simultaneously transported to and shown the vibrant symbols that make the worlds of the movies turn. It is an enjoyable look at an era that, while it may be past, still has some gentle admonishments to provide for the present.

The politics

There are no politics in this book. Only the timeless stories remain, to be enjoyed for themselves and reflected upon in peace.

Content warning

There is absolutely nothing objectionable in this book.

Who is it for?

Fans of Walt Disney and of the stories he transliterated for film will love this book. Anyone who has read the classics that he brought to the screen will find a new appreciation for them as well as for Mr. Disney's work. Those who wish to learn more about the craft of storytelling and fiction in general would be remiss in their education if they passed it by, while those who seek to learn the art of critique will be served well by reading it. Anyone interested in the history of film, or the history of American culture and the United States, will find this book enjoyable.

Why read it?

It is a serene, reflective, calming read. In this climate, that is recommendation enough!

Music

Will Mayo Reviews Ozzy Osborne's Mr. Crowley

Another notable work of fantasy is Ozzy Osborne of the band Black Sabbath fame's song Mr. Crowley. This is his homage to Aleister Crowley, notable Satanist (deemed at the time of his death to be "The Wickedest Man In The World" by The New York Times), with such lines as "Did you speak to the dead?" and "Did you ride my white horse?" This song conjures up not only Ozzy's fascination with this historical figure but an air of unspeakable longing as well. I urge you to tune in and give Osborne a listen. His is a work of the fantastic if nothing else is.

SerCon

Isaac Asimov Bio-Bibliography

by

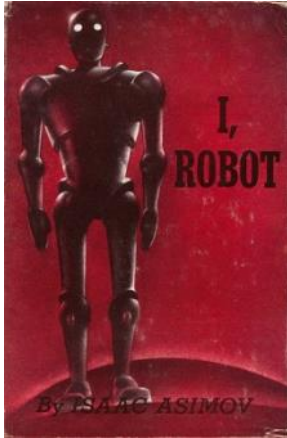
Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian



Next to A. E. van Vogt and Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov (January 2, 1920 -- April 6, 1992) was the favorite writer of my group of teenage science fiction (SF) fans growing up in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Asimov was unique for the time because he was a SF writer but also a professional scientist, which seemed the ideal life for me and my friends, most of whom loved SF and wanted to grow up to be scientists. Asimov was a prolific writer who wrote or edited more than 500 books and an estimated 90,000 letters and



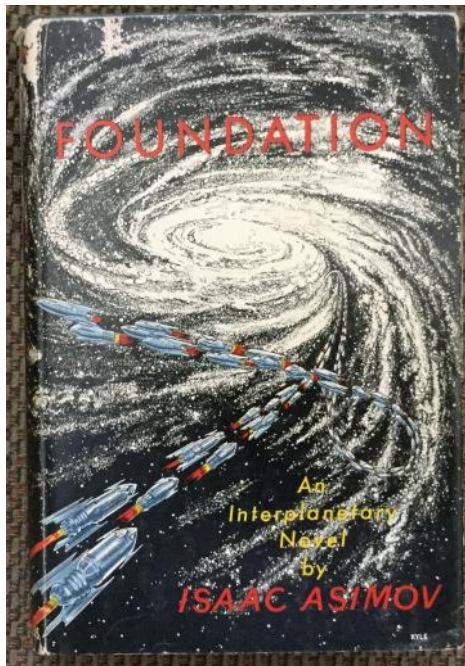
postcards. His published books were listed in 9 of the 10 major categories of the Dewey Decimal Classification system used by libraries.

Asimov wrote what was known as “hard” SF. Along with Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke, he was considered one of the “Big Three” SF writers during his lifetime. Asimov's most famous work is his “Foundation” series; his other major series are his “Galactic Empire” and “Robot” series. The Galactic Empire novels are explicitly set in the earlier history of the same fictional universe as his Foundation series. Later, beginning with Foundation’s Edge, he linked this distant future to his other series.

Reading order for Asimov’s three major series of books:

The Caves of Steel (1954) His first Robot novel.
 The Naked Sun (1957) The second Robot novel.
 The Robots of Dawn (1983) The third Robot novel.
 Robots and Empire (1985) The fourth (and final) Robot novel.

The Currents of Space (1952) His first Empire novel.
 The Stars, Like Dust (1951) The second Empire novel.
 Pebble in the Sky (1950) The third (and final) Empire novel.



Prelude to Foundation (1988) His first Foundation novel.
 Forward the Foundation (1992) The second Foundation novel.
 Foundation (1951) The third Foundation novel, comprised of 5 stories originally published between 1942-1949.
 Foundation and Empire (1952) The fourth Foundation novel, comprised of 2 stories originally published in 1945.
 Second Foundation (1953) The fifth Foundation novel, comprised of two stories originally published in 1948 and 1949.
 Foundation's Edge (1982) The sixth Foundation novel.
 Foundation and Earth (1983) The seventh (and last) Foundation novel.

Non-Fiction

During the late 1950s and 1960s, Asimov decreased his fiction output (publishing only four adult novels between his 1957's *The Naked Sun* and his 1982's *Foundation's Edge*, two of which were mysteries). He greatly increased his nonfiction production, however, writing mostly on science topics – probably because the launch of Sputnik in 1957 had caused public concern over a “science gap” between Russia and the United States.

Asimov recalled in 1969 that “the United States went into a kind of tizzy, and so did I. I was overcome by the ardent desire to write popular science for an America that might be in great danger through its neglect of science, and a number of publishers got an equally ardent desire to publish popular science for the same reason.”

Autobiographies

Asimov wrote three autobiographies: *In Memory Yet Green* (1980), *In Joy Still Felt -- The Autobiography of Isaac Asimov, 1954–1978* (1981), and *I, Asimov: A Memoir* (1994). The first two are detailed accounts of his life, while the third is a series of short essays on people and things that had mattered to him during his life. His final autobiography was the most interesting and entertaining of the

three – at least for me.

Personal Life

Asimov married Gertrude Blugerman on July 26, 1942. The couple lived in an apartment in West Philadelphia, as Asimov was then employed at the Philadelphia Navy Yard (where two of his co-workers were fellow SF authors L. Sprague de Camp and Robert Heinlein). The Asimovs moved to Boston in 1949.

They had two children, David (born 1951) and Robyn Joan (born 1955). In 1970, they separated and Asimov moved back to New York, this time to Manhattan, where he lived for the rest of his life.

After his divorce from Gertrude, he began dating Janet O. Jeppson, M.D. They were married on November 30, 1973.

Awards/Honors/Other Accomplishments

Asimov won six Hugo Awards: the 1966 Best All Time Series Hugo, the 1973 Best Novel Hugo, the 1977 Best Novelette Hugo, the 1983 Best Novel Hugo, the 1992 Best Novelette Hugo, and the 1995 Best Non-Fiction Book Hugo. Moreover, he was nominated for several other Hugo Awards.

He was Worldcon Guest of Honor at the Clevention, and toastmaster at Pittcon, Detention, Tricon, Discon, and Philcon II.

He was president of the American Humanist Association, The asteroid 5020 Asimov, a crater on the planet Mars, a Brooklyn elementary school, and a literary award are named in his honor.

The October, 1966, issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (Vol. 31, No. 4) was a Special Isaac Asimov Issue.

He was a member of the Trap Door Spiders, and the “discoverer” of Thiotimoline. He also gave his name to Isaac Asimov's *Science Fiction Magazine* and helped to guide it in its early years.

Critical Evaluations

Although Asimov had many fans throughout the world, he also had some critics, both of his writing and his Three Laws of Robotics. Robert Silverberg, among others, thought his writing style featured a lot of talking, with little action. James Gunn complained that “virtually all [his] plot develops in conversation.”

Asimov did favor dialogue over narration in many stories, and he liked to complicate his stories by rearranging the events in non-chronological ways. He could and did provide character development when the need arose, as is evidenced by the character Susan Calvin in the robot stories.

His stories had very little of the sex and aliens prevalent in much of SF literature today. Damon Knight complained that Asimov wrote detective stories rather than SF. Along with the lack of sex, Asimov's early works were sometimes criticized for their lack of strong female characters; but strong women were not as easy to find then as they are today, especially in SF.

Some Conclusions

Overall, much of the criticism surrounding Asimov's work seems to be because his books are now somewhat old and show their age in today's society. On the other hand, they are still being published in new editions. Why? Because of one thing: most of them are very good stories and people still like to read them.

My SF-reading friends and I loved Asimov's robot stories most of all, with his *Foundation* stories a close second. We had many of the books in these series in paperback editions, and even a few in hardback.

I believe the first SF hardback I ever owned was his *Pebble in the Sky* (1950), that had a “glamor photo” of him on the dust jacket. I was especially thrilled when one of his stories was dramatized on NBC radio's *Dimension X* (1950 - 1951), which I listened to every week until it went off the air. Two

of his stories broadcast on Dimension X were “Pebble in the Sky” and “Nightfall.”

Three of his stories were heard later when NBC’s X-Minus One (1955 – 1958) was broadcast, including “Nightfall,” “C-Chute,” and “Hostess.”

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

Verse

Will Mayo Reviews HP Lovecraft's Poem Where Once Poe Walked

In HP Lovecraft's poem “Where Once Poe Walked,” he tells of a visit to a graveyard, presumably in Lovecraft's native Providence, Rhode Island, fit with mounds of tombs, where, among the remains, he “spies a shade of Poe.” This may be something more than conjecture in as much as in the time before Poe's own delirious death EA Poe often paid visits to his fiancé in Providence where the two of them would go for long, romantic walks in the local burial ground only for Edgar Poe to be spurned by his love when he returned to his drinking. So perhaps Lovecraft is onto something here. Listen to him here as he speaks of “leaves that sing of departed days...”

Will Mayo Reviews Emily Dickinson's Poem Because I Could Not Stop For Death

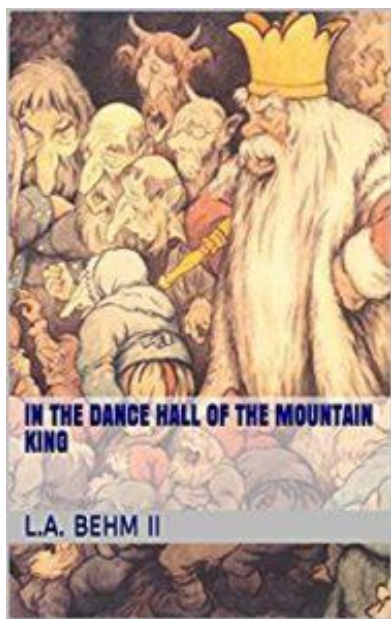
At times, I am given to think of Emily Dickinson's poem that begins, "Because I could not stop for Death, he kindly stopped for me" and then goes on to show the reader a mad ride in a coach through the countryside that can only end at the grave. Inside, as she puts it, there is only "us and immortality."

Sometimes this wild ride with Death is taken figuratively. While at others, especially in one recent TV series devoted to Miss Emily's life, it is taken literally as a ride with Death personified as himself. As one feminist scholar likens it to a symbolic rape scene.

But there's no disregarding the sheer horror of it all. Save the peace at poem's end when, Miss Emily there at the grave, recalls "when first I surmised the horses' heads were turned toward eternity." Doubtless, this is a poem to remember.

Food of Famous Authors

L.A. Behm II's Lebanese Meatballs Cooking by Cedar Sanderson



Lloyd, who writes as L.A. Behm the second, which I can never remember, has a biting sense of humor I hugely enjoy in life, and in his fiction. He's also a poet, but that's not the book I wanted to talk about today. In the Dance Hall of the Mountain King is part of his series surrounding the weird world he's built following an apocalypse of sorts that brought magic to our own world, and the way life unfolds in the chaos that it brings in its wake. It's funny, though – laugh-out-loud fare, and light-hearted, so you shouldn't think this is some post-apoc dystopia. Just like you shouldn't assume the meatloaf is going to be a leaden anchor in your stomach...

Because I didn't make meatloaf. I was going to, but the temperature was in the nineties, and so was the humidity and I couldn't face it. So I made some tweaks, and wound up with a fantastic meal that was perfect on a hot summer evening. I don't think Lloyd will mind at all – his characters improvise frequently and with flair, so I know he thinks along those lines! So grab your copy of the book (which is also, like this meal, a light and short read, great for relaxing on the porch after dinner and enjoying the cool of the evening) and get cooking!

Ingredients

- 1 lb Ground Lamb
- 1 lb lean Ground Beef
- 1 lb Ground . . . Pork, turkey, chicken, what ever you'd like (if you want a smaller meat loaf/fewer meatballs, leave this one out)
- 1 cup finely chopped/minced green onions
- ½ cup white or yellow onion minced (this is usually half a fist sized onion)
- ½ to 1 cup whole wheat bread crumbs
- 2 cloves or equivalent roasted garlic
- 3 cloves or equivalent garlic
- 4 tbs dried mint
- 1 tsp cumin
- ¼ tsp ground allspice
- 1 tbs ground mustard
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 2 Extra Large or 3 Large Eggs

Optional –

- 1 tsp oregano or basil (or both) if you're going to be using the meatballs in tomato sauce.

Preparation–

Prepare two baking sheets with racks (half sheet pans with stainless steel racks) – spray the racks with non stick spray otherwise the meatballs will stick (if making meatballs) or loaf pan if making meatloaf.

Set oven to broil (meatballs) or 400 degrees (meat loaf – note our oven runs hot, so we usually use 375 for meat loaf, so your mileage may vary)

Meatballs –

Mix meat, eggs, and spices. Then use a tablespoon to spoon out meatballs, rounding by hand and placing on cookie sheet. Broil for 3-5 minutes (depending on your oven) then remove first pan from oven and put in the second pan. While the second pan is cooking turn over the meatballs in the first pan, then return to oven for another two minutes when the second pan has cooked 3-5 minutes.

Wash, rinse repeat until done.

Two to three pounds of meat makes about three to four dozen meatballs. And they freeze wonderfully – we usually eat one dozen that night, and freeze the remainder in bags of a dozen for future use.

Meatloaf –

Mix as above, place on pan (or in loaf pan)

Cover with

2 tbs tomato paste

2 tbs dark brown or muscovado sugar

1 tsp to tbs chili powder (to taste)

¼ tsp cayenne pepper (to taste)

Stir the above together, smear on meatloaf and bake at 400 for one hour or until probe thermometer reads 165 internal temperature.

Sauce for Meatballs –

Ingredients –

28 oz can diced or petite diced tomatoes

2 8 oz (or 6 oz) cans tomato sauce

1 6 oz can tomato paste

1-2 cups water

3 tbs mint

1 tbs garlic powder

1 tbs/clove garlic

1 tsp each of the following – cumin, ground mustard, coriander



Preparation –

Put ingredients in medium sauce pan, heat on medium until it reaches a simmer. Add meatballs and simmer for ten minutes, reduce temperature to low and keep warm while you prepare either rice or noodles for under the meatballs and sauce.

I think the yield for me, using my small disher for consistency, was 4 dozen. Plenty in the freezer with plans for using them already being bandied about!

I made up naan, tzatziki sauce, and a greek salad to serve the meatballs as a sort of meatball gyro – there was some discussion about making the meatloaf and shaving it up like gyro meat, but this worked beautifully and I have no regrets.



Naan, sheep's milk feta, greek salad, meatballs, tzatziki... a feast without being too heavy.

The flavor of the meatballs is fantastic. I used a pound each of ground beef, lamb, and pork. I could taste the lamb if I ate just a meatball, but it was very subtle. I think I can get away without it next time (and at \$8 a pound it's definitely an indulgence). But the herbs, garlic, and onion work so well, and it's certainly got that Middle Eastern taste to it. I've already been told I'm making this again!



Thull
by José Sánchez