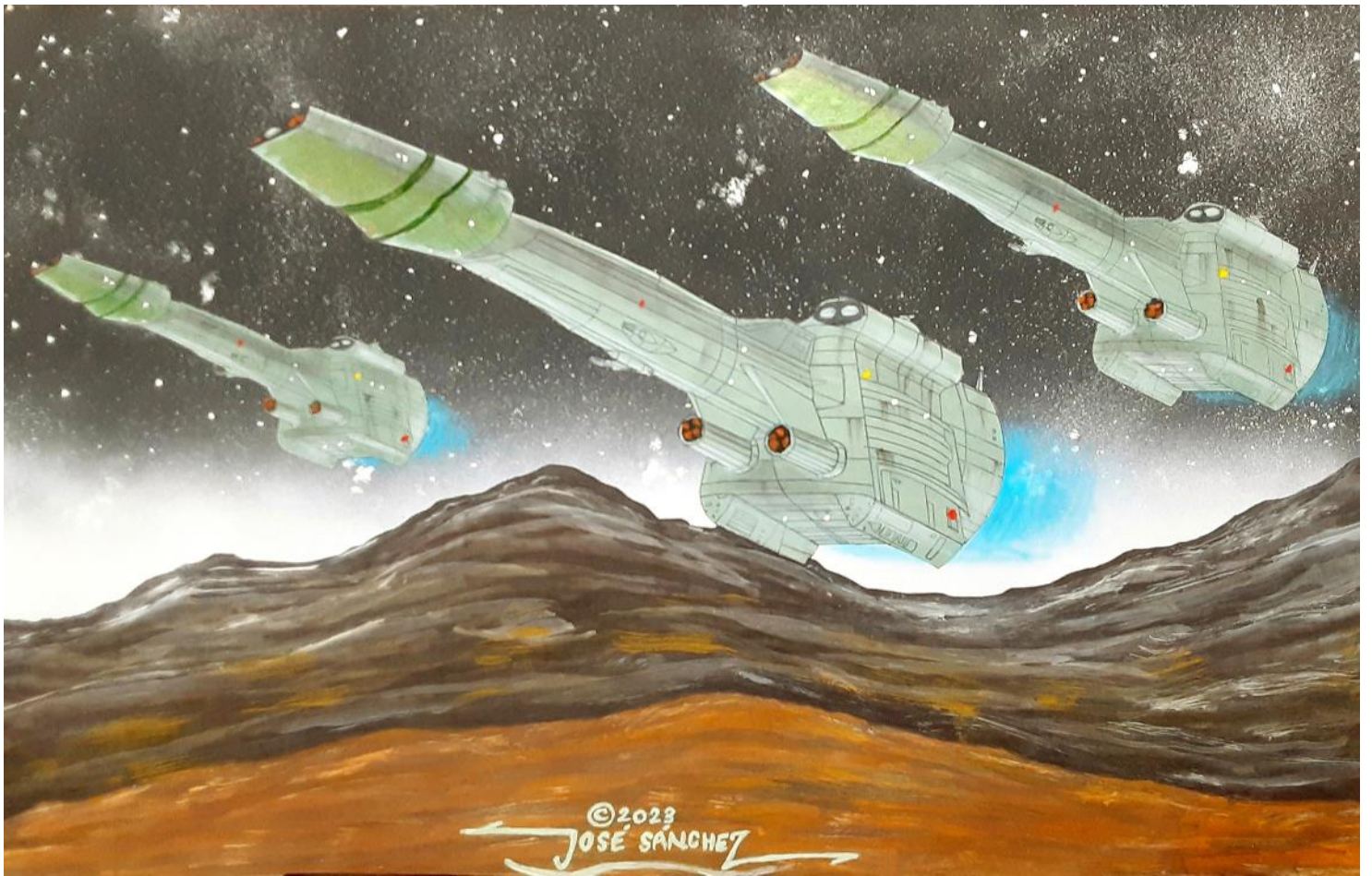


Tightbeam 346

July 2023



Armada by José Sanchez

Tightbeam 346

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What is Tightbeam? We are the N3F literary fanzine, not the novel and anthology fanzine, but the fanzine that tries to cover all tastes in fandom, such as anime, comics, cosplay, films, novels, biographies, poetry, music, short stories, food, ...

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The N3F offers four different memberships. To join as a public (free) member, send phillies@4liberty.net your email address.

To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines.

Memberships with TNFF via email are \$6; memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18. Zines other than TNFF are email only.

Additional memberships at the address of a current dues-paying member are \$4.

Public (non-voting) memberships are free. Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah NV 89049 . Pay online at N3F.org. PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org.

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Letter of Comment

Dear Neffers:

I have two issues of Tightbeam I need to catch up on, the May and June issues, and I hope to be in time for the July issue. So, here come comments on issues 344 and 345.

344... I hope to make the Laureate list again some year! My letter...the play I referred to Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, has indeed left Toronto after an abbreviated run. We will be assisting with a Harry Potter event north of Toronto next month, and we shall see if indeed the Waizarding World has run its course. I will ask a question of all the readers...has steampunk run its course? I think in Canada, it has, although there are many steampunk events in the US, and in the UK, I could go to an event just about every weekend if my wallet could stand it.

Mentions of anime conventions remind me that as our own Anime North fades into fond memory, there is yet another anime event coming up here, called Pretty Heroes. It is largely anime based, with some comics, but with an additional focus of female heroes, so Sailor Moon, My Little Pony, Miraculous Ladybug, and other strong female heroes, come to the fore. And, we will be vending there, and it is happening next weekend as I type.

I remember meeting Robert Sheckley many years ago at a convention in Montreal. I knew he'd be there, so I brought a stack of Sheckley paperbacks along for a signature. He was so pleased to do it, I think because I might have been the only person at the convention to actually ask for an autograph, or even recognize him. I got my copies of Mindswap, Notions: Unlimited, The Robot Who Looked Like Me, and The People Trap autographed. After that meeting, I did get copies of Dimension of Miracles, The Alchemical Marriage of Alistair Crompton, Victim Prime, The 10th Victim and The Status Civilization. All wonderful stories, and all smiles.

345... The animated movie Turning Red did very well here, mostly because the movie took place in an animated Toronto. Add to this the recent episode of Star Trek: Strange New Worlds that took place in Toronto, and many movie watchers here are pleased that with all the movies and TV shows shot here, with our city portraying New York City, or Boston, or Chicago, or any other American city, Toronto is portraying itself, and it is a nice change.

I only have a few books by Cleve Cartmill, but his is a name that I long remember from short stories in anthologies. It's good to know more about him.

That is all I can say about issue 345, and that means this loc is done, and should head off into the aether, and over to where you are. So, that's what I will do, right now. Thanks for these, and I am sure the July issue will arrive soon.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Anime

Action Heroine Cheer Fruits Review by Jessi Silver

The “local heroine fighter” of a certain city became popular and a national star. Because of this, “local heroines” debuted in various other places, and their action live events became a hit trend



nationally. In Hinano City, high school girl Misaki Shirogane and other girls become local heroines (at the urging of Misaki's aunt, the prefectural governor) and vow to produce action live events.

Episode 1 Summary: Mikan Kise and her sister are huge fans of Kamidaio, a city heroine who's gone on to be famous across Japan. Nowadays there are many cities who utilize these mascot heroines to promote tourism in their area, but Kamidaio is by far the most famous. Now she's slated to come to Mikan's hometown of Hinano during the local Sakura Festival, and she's definitely not going to miss this chance. The day of the anticipated



performance, however, brings bad news; some sort of scheduling incompetence on the part of the organizers means that the Kamidaio show is canceled without any further explanation, and Mikan's sister is heartbroken. Mikan makes a hasty promise to bring Kamidaio's show back to the city in a week, but she's not quite sure how she'll accomplish such a thing. The answer lies in fellow student An Akagi, a former rhythmic gymnast and unabashed Kamidaio fan who seems game to put together a rollicking hero show for the local kids. Mikan and An work all week, practicing stunts, building costumes, and choreographing the show. At first the audience seems highly unimpressed, but eventually get caught up in the spirit of the show. After the home-made production gets put online, the girls get an unexpected call from Misaki Shirogane, student council president at their school and action heroine enthusiast. She'd like to help give Hinano City its own action heroines – and wants Mikan and An on board.

Impressions: Action Heroine Cheer Fruits is fun surprise wrapped in an initially unappealing package. Part “working women” tale a-la Sakura Quest or Shirobako, and part tokusatsu show,



the premise sounds pretty ridiculous on paper. It seems sort of as though the creators wanted to take advantage of the popularity of idol group anime like the ultra-successful Love-Live! and sprinkle in a bit of something creative to set it apart. The resulting production ultimately seems much less commercial and a great deal more kind-hearted than I would have expected.

Mikan and An have a fateful crash in the school hallway. Copyright 2017 (c) diomedea

The first episode introduces a couple of different relationships that I assume will probably maintain some degree of importance throughout the series. The first is the sibling relationship between Mikan and her younger sister. Mikan seems to go beyond simply caring for her younger sister out of sisterly obligation; she seems genuinely concerned with Yuzuka's happiness and well-being. She's heartbroken when the Kamidaio show doesn't happen, not so much because she missed it, but because Yuzuka was looking forward to it so wholeheartedly. While the characters themselves are pretty typical for an ensemble series, the way that their relationship is portrayed adds an extra dimension of kindness, which I really liked.



The other important relationship is the one that develops between Mikan and An. They might be fellow students at the same school, but they've never really interacted with one-another aside from knowing each-other's name and crashing into one-another in the hallway between classes, as this episode demonstrates. But as two people with different personalities, they seem fated by the anime-writing gods to mesh well in a team

setting and build upon each-other's strengths. Mikan brings the kindness, An brings the spunkiness athleticism, and together they create a winning combination. Again, on paper this all seems pretty obvious and neither character feels very fleshed-out yet (and with a promo pic crammed full of several other girls I feel like full-on characterization might not be this show's forte, in the

end), but I like how the conflict between the two is kept pretty minor and their interactions quickly turn into something very harmonious. I think it speaks well for the show so far that there's not a lot of time spent with the characters trying to struggle and assert their big personalities; with such a goofy title and premise, I think it's imperative that at least some facets work well from the get-go in order to keep the audience engaged.



It's a fighting montage (montage!). Copyright 2017 (c) diomedea

It's fortuitous that the show wastes no time cultivating a fun atmosphere and making us all feel good, because there are some other technical areas where it's definitely not as accomplished. The production house, diomedea, has been involved in a long list of animation projects, but mostly as an in-between studio. Of the few times it's served as the headlining animation production studio, I'm only really familiar with



The Lost Village (which was much better than most people gave it credit for; I will fight you) and Girlish Number, which I've watched more recently. The latter seemed particularly well-planned, and it probably had to have been; in order to portray the main character's sour face and attitude, as well as the parody-style industry bits and the so-bad-it's-good anime series the characters are a part of, it takes some good animation chops. This show already has more of an action-focus than either of those previous series, but the production values and animation consistency already seem kind of middling. There's a lack of dynamic movement, as well as a few quality control problems with character animation in some of the slower-moving moments. The show seems a bit washed-out

most of the time, too. Part of me tends to think that anime original series are where production studios tend to shine, even if they might often be vanity projects; in this case it doesn't appear that that rings true.



Something worth mentioning, in the grand tradition of reviews on this website; due to the type of action being portrayed and the environment in which the characters are practicing their moves, there are a couple of up-skirt shots with underwear. I tend to think

Something worth mentioning, in the grand tradition of reviews on this website; due to the type of action being portrayed and the environment in which the characters are practicing their moves, there are a couple of up-skirt shots with underwear. I tend to think

they were more incidental than anything else, but I also believe they're always a choice in animation since someone made a storyboard and then someone else had to draw the frames. In a show where the characters read as being younger, I found it a little bit startling. Why choose to show underage girls in their underwear (or in the bath tub, hot springs, etc.) when you could choose to not show underage girls in compromising positions and potentially irritate fewer viewers? That has always been my question (and please don't answer it for me, I realize there's this notion that you "have to" include fanservice to love-bomb viewers into watching your show – I don't subscribe to it).

Criticisms aside, I left this episode with a really warm feeling. I love being pleasantly surprised by an anime about which I had only very basic expectations; often times anticipated shows turn out to be duds, so it's nice when it goes the other way! I think the show has a lot of heart and I always like the idea of girls banding together to accomplish some sort of goal, even if it's kind of a silly one. This might be a good option for folks who enjoy magical girls, but are not as huge of fans of the "dark magical girl" trope that's taken over in recent years. It seems very focused on its feel-good atmosphere and presenting the ideals of teamwork within a plot that's a little bit silly, but considering Japan's penchant for anime-related tourism, not entirely out of the realm of possibility.

Pros: The first episode is kind-hearted and feel-good; the conflicts are minor and reasonable to overcome. The character relationships are warm.

Cons: The production values are a little bit off. There are a couple of underwear shots that are made more distracting by how young the characters look.

Grade: B

Poetry

The 2019 Rhysling Anthology Edited by David C. Kopaska-Merkel Review by Jean-Paul Garnier



Readers will recognize David C. Kopaska-Merkel as a regular contributor to Eldritch Science. One of the things that I love best in poetry is when it is used as a form of storytelling. Speculative poetry tends to tell stories, not always, but often, and this is the reason that I gravitate towards reading and writing poetry with these themes. If you've read my reviews before you will know that I am somewhat biased in my views of fantasy and horror. I usually don't care much for the genres in general and typically just want straight science fiction. That being said I really enjoyed this collection even though most of the collection was not in my opinion sci-fi. If you're interested in speculative poetry I highly recommend this collection and looking up the SFPA (the organization that puts this collection together). While there are too many poets in the anthology to mention them all, here's a list of my favorite poems included in the anthology: Generation Ship by David Barber, Station Rain by Erik Burdett, Consumption by Jennifer Ruth Jackson, The Southern Lady by Marge Simon, Dead-Eye Girl by Holly Lyn Walrath, If You Would Seek a Seeress by Rebecca Buchanan, The Last Transport by Frank Coffman, Misstep by David C. Kopaska-Merkel & Ann K. Schwader, Atomic Numbers by D.A. Xiaolin Spires. And congratu-

lations to this year's winners: Beth Cato & Sarah Tolmie.

ProZines of Years Past

Review by Heath Row

Heath Row's work appears in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits*



Inspired by seeing the cover reproduction in *Science & Universe* (T&T #70) and Lee Gold's introduction to science fiction and fantasy, I sought out PDF copies of the January 1951 issue of *Fantastic Novels Magazine* and the 1954 edition of *Science Fiction* (see below). *Fantastic Novels* was a spin-off from *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* to concentrate on novel-length work and avoid serialization. The January 1951 issue is Vol. 4 #5 and includes two stories and a poem. H.P. Lovecraft's "The Cats of Ulthar" was originally published in 1926. It's a short piece and is very economical in its mood establishment and narrative. I've read this before multiple times, and it's always worth rereading. Arthur Leo Zagat's "Drink We Deep" is the book-length novel of the issue, equal parts outre lost-world fantasy and abstract sf story that concentrates on the conflict between two diminutive groups deep within the Earth. Told in an epistolary fashion combining journal entries, letters, depositions, and other forms of writing, it's an interesting story but wanders a little, in the end feeling over long.

But the letter column, "What Do You Think?" is where the action really is. Readers share their opinions on back issues and their stories, the decisions made by cover and other artists, whether the illustrations were better in the original or the reprint, whether new stories are better than reprints, and the history of fantasy fiction—one correspondent in her 70s first read Jules Verne in 1890. Letter writers also seek to buy and trade back issues, often trying to track down long-out-of-print stories.

Letters include the correspondents' mailing addresses to aid communication, and a couple of letter writers recommend fanzines. R.J. Banks Jr. suggests *Utopian* (of which #11, near this issue date, is available via Fanac). And Robert E. Briney recommends *Fan-Fare* (of which Vol. 2 #3, near this issue date, is available). Briney also mentions *The Cataclysm*, a poetry fanzine he co-edited with actor Del Close, co-founder of the *ImprovOlympic*. I haven't found any digitized issues of *The Cataclysm* yet, but it's mentioned in Kim "Howard" Johnson's biography *The Funniest One in the Room: The Lives and Legends of Del Close*:

In addition to his comic books, Del would devour the pulp magazines of the 1930s and '40s. He became pen pals with a boy he met in the pages of *Startling Stories*. Joined by a third boy in 1949, they began publishing their own science fiction poetry magazine called *The Cataclysm*. Robert E. Briney was the editor, while Del served as assistant editor and publisher, and it ran for eight issues. He even recruited Donna Fearing, his junior high girlfriend, to write some poetry for it. During his junior year of high school, an article in the school newspaper announced that he would coauthor *Fantastic Art*, with half of its eighty pages to present science fiction and fantasy artwork, some original and some reprints, but there is no way to confirm whether it was ever actually published.

Personally, I think it's a bit of a gamble for a magazine to offer so few stories, risking an issue's success on one or two stories' success, but the Lovecraft reprint, letter column, and artwork by Virgil Finlay, Hannes Bok, and Lawrence make this a solid issue even if the Zagat piece is une-

ven.



The 1954 edition of *Science Fiction or Science Fiction Stories* is more straightforward and stronger, though it lacks a lettercol. The issue includes eight short stories, all seemingly new at the time. Algis Budrys’s “In Human Hands” considers the impact of a robot separated from a human landing crew and its impact on another humanoid race on the planet Sathrea. It’s an interesting musing on the potential for individual initiative, the possible limits of one’s vision, and the help a little encouragement provides.

“Peace Agent” by M.C. Pease is a humorous social sf story positing a future human society in which individual laborers are challenged by “clans,” Hatfield and McCoy-like family units taking on specific roles in manufacturing or book keeping, for example. The clans compete with each other and haven’t yet claimed a comfortable place in the broader society. Francis O’Keefe, agent of the Census Bureau, helps mitigate a potential controversy between two

clans, as well as citizens who don’t support such family units. The overarching theme is one of individuality and free thinking, as well as the benefits of communal action.

Philip K. Dick’s “The Turning Wheel” is a highlight of the issue. Centered on a predominantly Asian population, it posits that caucasians are racially inferior and holds up the spiritual teachings of Elron Hu, which can help people move from being jangled to being clear. Not everyone follows Elron, however, and society is separated into different groups—bards or holy men at the top, poets, artists, musicians, workers, businessmen, warriors, farmers, and technos at the bottom. A bard sent to determine whether a rural techno cult is a threat overcomes his prejudice toward the “caucs” somewhat and recognizes the value of their science. The story is an enjoyable about-face in terms of race and class relations.

“To See Ourselves” by Robert F. Young reveals that humans and martians are surprisingly similar, except in a very specific way. Milton Lesser’s “Give Away” is another social sf story focusing on a society based on a very elaborate gift-debt-social standing structure. “And What Remains” by Winston K. Marks is an absolutely wonderful musing on a society marked by plenitude, the challenges posed by relying on others, and the importance of individual agency. It resonates with the Budrys and Pease stories above.

Theodore R. Cogswell’s “Barrier” considers gender relations in a spacefaring society. And “Husbands, Care and Feeding of” by Mack Reynolds is a clever time-travel tale that also considers gender relations. Even without a lettercol, *Science Fiction* is the more balanced and promising prozine, given its range of stories offered, story lengths, and topic matter. I quite enjoyed the focus on individualism and agency in several of the stories. (Interestingly, in addition to the Dianetics and Scientology references in the Dick piece, Ayn Rand’s “Anthem” was soon featured in the June 1953 issue of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries Combined with Fantastic Novels Magazine*.)

SerCon

H. Beam Piper Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3H Historian



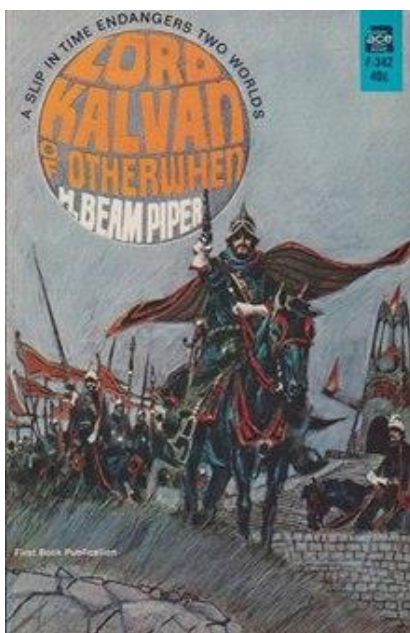
Henry Beam Piper (March 23, 1904 – November 6, 1964) was a science fiction (SF) writer. He was the only son of middle-aged parents, and had little formal education. He wrote many SF short stories and several novels, and is best known for his extensive Terro-Human Future History series of stories and his shorter series of Paratime alternate history stories.

He wrote under the name of H. Beam Piper. One source gives his name as “Horace Beam Piper” and a different date of death. His gravestone, however, says Henry Beam Piper. Piper himself may have been the source of part of the confusion; he often told people the H stood for Horace. On a copy of *Little Fuzzy* given to Charles O. Piper, Beam's cousin and executor, however, he wrote “To Charles from Henry.”

Biography

Piper was largely self-educated; he obtained his knowledge of science and history “without subjecting myself to the ridiculous misery of four years in the uncomfortable confines of a raccoon coat.” He went to work at age 18 as a laborer at the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Altoona yards in Altoona, PA. He also worked as a night watchman for the railroad.

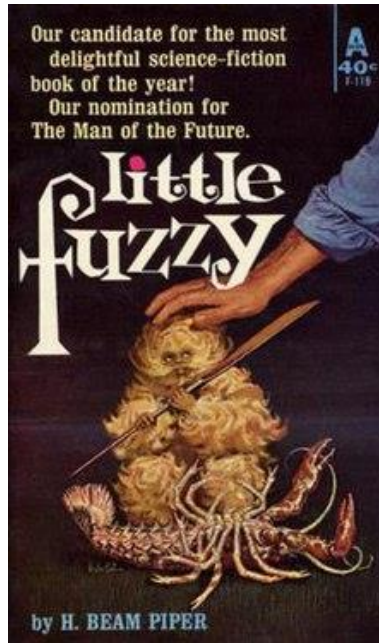
Piper published his first genre short story, “Time and Time Again,” in 1947 in *Astounding Science Fiction*; it was adapted for the radio program, *Dimension X*, and first broadcast in 1951; it was re-adapted for *X Minus One*, in 1956. Piper was primarily a short story author until 1961, when he started writing novels.



His Suicide

In 1964, his career declining, and prevented by reticence and his principles from asking anyone to assist him with his financial difficulties, Piper committed suicide. The exact date of his death is unknown; the last entry in his diary was dated November 5, but according to a Pennsylvania death certificate his body was not found until November the 8th.

According to Jerry Pournelle’s introduction to a reprint of *Little Fuzzy*, Piper shut off all the utilities to his apartment, put painter's drop-cloths over the walls and floor, and took his own life with a handgun from his collection. In his suicide note, he gave



the explanation that “I don't like to leave messes when I go away, but if I could have cleaned up any of this mess, I wouldn't be going away. H. Beam Piper.”

He had told friends of his plans to shoot himself years before he actually did so.

Speculations About His Suicide

Some biographers attribute his act to financial problems; others to family problems.

Editor George H. Scithers, who knew Piper socially, has stated that Piper wanted to spite his ex-wife. By killing himself Piper voided his life insurance policy, thus preventing her from collecting.

Pournelle wrote that Piper felt burdened by financial hardships in the wake of a divorce, and the mistaken perception that his career was foundering (his agent had died, without notifying him of multiple sales).

His works were eventually purchased by Ace Science Fiction, and reprinted in a set of paperbacks in the early 1980s. Many of these have since gone out of print, though his two best-known series were again reprinted by Ace in 1998 and again in 2001. Late in his career, Piper corresponded with Pournelle, who was the Ace editor who helped reprint some of his novels.

Piper Books & Related Works

Paratime Police Books:

Paratime
 Time Crime
 The Complete Paratime
 Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen
 Great Kings' War
 Kalvan Kingmaker
 The Hos-Blethan Affair
 Siege of Tarr-Hostigos
 The Fireseed Wars
 Gunpowder Wars

Terran Federation Books:

Federation
 Empire
 The Uller Uprising
 Four-Day Planet
 The Cosmic Computer
 Space Viking
 Little Fuzzy

Fuzzy Sapiens
 Fuzzies and Other People
 Fuzzy Ergo Sum
 Caveat Fuzzy
 The Last Space Viking
 Space Viking's Throne
 The Merlin Gambit

Awards/Nominations

Piper was nominated for several awards during his career, but did not win any while he was alive; however, *Little Fuzzy* (1962) was nominated for the Hugo Award.

He did, however, receive a posthumous 1999 Prometheus Hall of Fame Award (for *A Planet for Texans*), after being nominated four times for this particular award.

Critical Comments

According to a biographer, fellow SF writer John Carr, “Piper wrote in the vein of Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Mark Twain. Wonderful adventure stories that appealed to the ‘men’ in boys and to the ‘boys’ in men. First and foremost, he was a storyteller.”

Piper is considered by some genre critics to be one of SF's most “enigmatic” writers.

Concluding Comments

Piper collected guns and wrote one mystery about them, titled *Murder in the Gunroom*. One of the characters in this novel was a SF writer! When he began to have financial difficulties, he sold the guns in his collection.

He also worked on an historical novel, *Only the Arquebus*, but unfortunately the manuscript was lost.



Tigana Dragon by Artist Fish

Apparently, he took the idea of reincarnation very seriously, and it was the basis for some of his stories.

Piper's literary executor, John F. Carr, has published two biographies of Piper, in 2008 and in 2015. *Typewriter Killer* features a complete bibliography of Piper's published work.

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Note: In addition to the above, various Internet sites were consulted, including Fancyclopedia 3, ISFDB, and Wikipedia.

Television

Musings on Picard and the Star Trek Franchise Chris Nuttall

Picard failed to grab me.

It's hard to say why. Jean-Luc Picard embodies – or embodied – the ethos of Star Trek, in both his strengths and weaknesses. Picard is both a highly-intelligent and highly-moral man, but – at the same time – he has a tendency towards both self-righteousness and a pollyannaish view of the universe that undermine his character. Picard may be a better man than Sisko, in my view, yet I would sooner have Sisko in the captain's chair if hard decisions have to be made. Picard wanted to keep his hands clean. Sisko had fewer qualms about getting his hands dirty if necessary.

This alone, however, is not enough to kill a show. A series about a character who learned better – or reshaped the universe to suit himself – would have to start with a character in a poor position. The real problems, however, are deeper. To understand why, we must ask ourselves a simple question. Why did Star Trek go mainstream in the first place?

I think the answer is fairly obvious. The original series consisted of a number of individual episodes (there was only one two-part episode) that touched upon a wide range of themes, ranging from battles with hostile powers to humour, love stories and encounters with strange – and very inhuman – aliens. If you didn't like one, you might like others. Star Trek itself embodied the IDIC principle, for better or worse. The Next Generation followed the same basic idea, with a new crew and a new ship that did ... well, pretty much the same as the original series. There



were a number of two-part episodes, but – by and large – you didn't need to follow the series from the start to understand what was happening. By the time all good things – hah – came to an end, this formula had played itself out. The next series would have to be different.

Deep Space Nine was different – it was set on a space station, ensuring the crew could never drop into warp and outrun the consequences of their actions – but, for the first two seasons

(and for some considerable distance afterwards) it remained bound to the episodic formula. There was a story arc, but that arc didn't become all-consuming until the final two seasons. It worked, because of the arc; the arc had time to take root because of the episodic formula. In theory, *Voyager* could have gone the same way. There was no way the crew could drop in to a handy shipyard and patch the holes in the ship. In practice, it didn't do so well. The writers seemed incapable of producing either a retreat to the *Next Generation* formula or striding boldly into the unknown. That is not to say *Voyager* was bad, but the rot was starting to set in. *Enterprise* failed for pretty much the same reason as *Voyager*, with a twist. The fans wanted something that was both completely different (because it was set in the pre-federation universe) and the same (because it had to live up to the carefully drawn out timeline the fans held in their hearts). It stumbled and fell.

At this point, it became clear the producers no longer understood their own show – or what made *Star Trek* great in the first place. The rebooted movies might have been spectacular, but they were not *Star Trek*. They were conventional action movies that alienated fans without drawing in any new fans. The producers themselves had reached the limits of the overall formula.

It isn't easy to write stories set in utopia. Iain M. Banks wrote the *Culture* novels, set within a far more advanced universe, but most of his stories featured the *Culture*'s enemies, the *Culture*'s misfits, or the *Culture*'s immigrants. Only one novel can truly be said to feature mainstream *Culture* citizens. It isn't a coincidence that this happens when the super-advanced *Culture* is facing an Outside Context Problem, an issue it can't solve with super-technology. In some ways, *Star Trek* has the same problem. It's not easy to write stories when there is relatively little at stake.

Discovery had all of *Enterprise*'s weaknesses, but added a few of its own. It was a series of interlocking episodes, each one telling part of an overall story. None of them were stand-alone. Viewers had to start at the beginning, or be hopelessly lost. This, combined with a flawed premise, badly weakened the show. It might have done better if it hadn't been *Star Trek*. Again, like the movies, Discovery alienated fans without drawing in any new fans. This was, I think, quite predictable, even before the political BS started. It might have been wiser to set a story in the post-DS9 universe.

Picard should have been that story. However, it managed to copy most of Discovery's mistakes. On one hand, it started another series of interlocking stories that locked out fans who didn't get interested right from the start. On the other, it played political games and overrode common sense in a bid to make political points. It's not unreasonable, for example, for the average Federation citizen to have qualms about providing a new home for members of a race that has been both an enemy and an ally over the last two hundred years (particularly as they had an empire themselves, with plenty of spare room). The logistics of shipping billions of people across interstellar space would have been daunting, even without the political concerns. And then we have the problem of feeding and caring for the refugees. In theory, the Federation could handle it. In practice, again, there would be issues. It is easy to reduce the real-like migration crisis to politically-correct soundbites, but such soundbites rarely acknowledge the problems caused by uncontrolled migration.

Jean-Luc Picard himself suffers from a degree of character assassination. It was in character for him to take a political stand, but unwise of him to stake his career on an all-or-nothing ap-

proach. (Really, Picard should have been dishonourably discharged for failing to destroy the Borg when he had a chance.) He should have realised this was a dangerous path to take, instead of being surprised when his superiors accepted his resignation. This is also true of the Federation itself. Why does it – now – discriminate against artificial life forms? Why does it discriminate against ex-Borg? Picard himself is an ex-Borg. It feels, very much, as though the Federation has fallen into darkness.

Perhaps it got better. But it wasn't Star Trek.

It might have been better to develop a completely new show. It wasn't as if there wasn't room. A starship patrolling the post-war universe? Perhaps trying to sort out the mess caused by the war? Dealing with political factions, insurgents, terrorists ... and other threats, trying to move into the former enemy space. Hell, why not just turn the New Frontier books into a movie? We could have had the grim awareness that life isn't perfect, mingled with the dream of a rosy and idealistic future.

And, at the very least, it wouldn't have alienated so many fans.

Short Stories

F&SF May/June 2023

Review by Heath Row

Heath Row's work appears in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits*

On the way to Portugal, I read the May/June 2023 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. When I read the prozines, I tend to read the departments first; then the poetry, if any; before turning to the short stories; and saving the longer pieces for last. Given that I read this entire issue in that manner, this writeup isn't necessarily in the order of reading, though I will break it up by sections.

Sheree Renee Thomas's Letter from the Editor draws parallels between collecting small rocks as mementos of places you've visited and finding excellent stories while reading. Charles de Lint's review column "Books to Look For" comments on the Netflix series *Wednesday* as well as a handful of recent books, including Garth Nix's *The Sisters of Saint Nicola of the Almost Perpetual Motion vs the Lurch*, which seems particularly promising.

In the movie review column by David J. Skal, he considers most of the recent movie and mini-series adaptations of Frank Herbert's *Dune*, perhaps freeing me from writing such a comparative review myself—or at least allowing me to focus on lesser-known adaptations not addressed in his column. Alex Jennings contributes a speculative poetry column, considering collections and poems published in prozines. And Paul Di Filippo finishes the issue with a one-page *Curiosities* column that concentrates on a 1920s fantasy adventure. This column is always a highlight of reading F&SF.

The issue features five pieces of speculative poetry, offering work by Gretchen Tessmer, Shaoni C. White, and J.A. Pak. Tessmer's "Silverlocks" resonates gently with one of the short stories, Melissa A. Watkins's "Knotty Girl." White's poetry is particularly strong, especially the almost-visual poem, "The Wren in the Hold."

Of the dozen short stories in this edition, I especially enjoyed four. Lark Morgan Lu's "In Time, All Foxes Grieve Westward" is about a young woman meeting the mother of an old god, the woman an even older god. The piece reminded me slightly of "The Ruby," by Beverly Suarez-Beard from *Realms of Fantasy* Vol. 1 #6 (August 1995, .

Zig Zag Claybourne's "For the Benefit of Mr. Khite" focuses on the dissatisfaction of a post-singularity artificial intelligence that operates a spacecraft. Readers of Iain M. Banks (*Snow Poster Township* #10) will appreciate Claybourne's portrayal of the dilemma facing the AI.

"I Paint the Light with My Mother's Bones" is K.J. Aspey's first published story. Though short—three pages—it succeeds at planting seeds for ideas and emotions surprisingly efficiently. And Watkins's "Knotty Girl" approaches the telling of Rapunzel from a new angle. The story is utterly delightful. Other stories also struck my fancy: Kiran Kaur Saini's meditation on senior care and home robotics, "Amrit;" Dr. Bunny McFadden's outer space lesbian bar adventure, "The Lucky Star;" Margaret Dunlap's cautionary tale about AI and customer service, "We Are Happy to Serve You;" and Ria Rees's "Titan Retreat."

I don't always make it to the longer stories before a subsequent issue arrives. In this issue, Fatima Taqvi's novelet "A Truth So Loyal and Vicious" is an absolutely wonderful story about the giving and earning of names, fortune and misfortune, and telling the truth. This Pakistani author is worth looking for. And Matthew Hughes's cover story "The Dire Delusion," while one of the more straight-forward fantasies in the prozine, still serves up an intriguing story about crime, memory, and guild politics. I could see this as a novel or series of stories, even though I haven't read his Raffalon and Baldemar stories.

It's not common that I'm able to read all of an issue of F&SF. The experience was enjoyable enough that I shall definitely try to do so again soon. If you haven't read an issue in a while, consider picking one up; it'll be well worth the reading.

Television

Fantastic Television: Travelers Review by Heath Row

Heath Row's Work Also Appears in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits*

S2E5: "Jenny" This episode is fascinating to watch in these post-COVID-19 times. When it first aired in Canada on Nov. 13, 2017—first streaming in the United States on Dec. 26, 2017—the closest comparison to the virus outbreak in the show was Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which appeared in China in 2002. Seeing healthcare professionals, law enforcement, and the National Guard mobilize to address and contain the virus is an emotional experience. COVID-19 broke out in early 2020.



That is the backdrop for the show. After Philip was used to download some sort of chemical formula, another traveler arrives to review the output—before



departing to synthesize it. Meanwhile, the team receives a mission to pick up an antiviral treatment another team is distributing to travelers, to inoculate themselves against the rapidly spreading infection.

They also receive a mission to prevent the infection of—or to inoculate—three notable transmitters. Carly worries about her son’s health (he’d been running a fever) and debates with Jeff who should take him to the babysitter. Marcy instructs David to stay home, but he takes to the streets to care for his official and unofficial cases. And Grant’s wife has a medical appointment that suggests her pregnancy is improving.

A traveler doctor stops by the headquarters to go over the chemical formula Philip downloaded, and Philip doesn’t remember doing so. Team members check on the couple distributing the antiviral; they’re dead. Philip goes to see what he can learn from Jenny, only to find that she’s overdosed on pills.

Back at HQ, they revive Jenny, who informs the team that Philip didn’t download an antiviral agent, but a compound designed to accelerate the virus’ mutation. She also reveals that when the Director was reset, they lost the ability to send travelers back to the 21st century, so the faction found a way to send back everyone else remaining—using the device that found hosts for Forbes and the other recent arrivals.

The team realizes that all of their recent missions have been faction missions, not Director missions, and that the faction hopes to end overpopulation, now deemed the biggest threat to the future. About 30 percent of the world’s population would die.

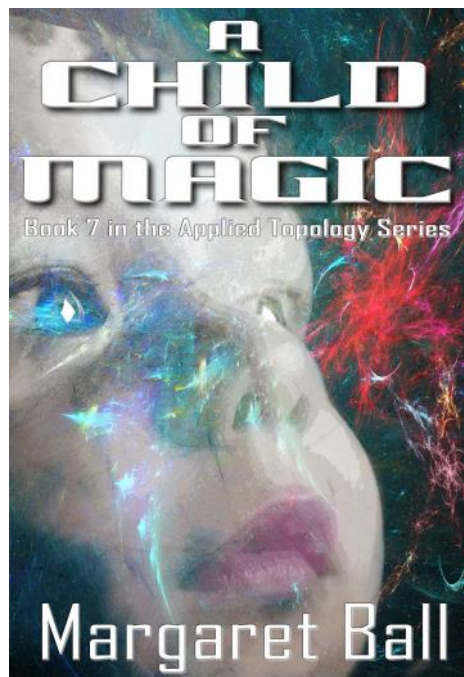
Subplots include Marcy talking to Carly about whether they’re now more than the sum of their identities before their arrival in the past, echoing previous episodes. Carly seems to think she is, having found a new protective maternal instinct with her son.

And Marcy learns that she didn’t readily agree to be overwritten but thought she had a choice and wanted time to consider it—because of David. Her call to David initially, made after looking at pictures of herself and him—zooming in on him—suggests an interest in reconnecting and trying to find just what it was she’d discovered that made her want to stay the same self.



The plotline involving Jenny, who breaks up with Philip after the download, tossing him enough vials of the eyedrops to last several months, seems to have come to a head. The faction has grown in strength and influence, and it’s even more challenging for travelers to know who their friends—and enemies—are. With so many characters showing signs of the virus, and so few proving immune, I’m curious how it’ll all shake out.

Food of Famous Authors

Eat This While You Read That: Margaret Ball
Cooking by Cedar Sanderson

A while back I noted that I had a commenter by the name of Margaret Ball. “Can’t be,” I told the First Reader. “Must be a common name.” I followed the blog link in her username and found a lovely fabric artist’s blog. “It’s not her...” I was wrong. It was indeed that Margaret Ball, and I had a small fangirl moment when I discovered that not only did she follow my blog, she was writing and releasing books Indie. Her Applied Topology series has a special connection for me – I did the covers. So when I asked if she would be willing to take part in this series, it wasn’t a surprise that she said yes.

And it shouldn’t have been a surprise, given the character’s background in that trilogy, that what she gave me was a Greek specialty. Thalia Kostis in the books is a fiery young woman who will tell you emphatically that it’s not magic, it’s simply math, no matter what it looks like to an observer. The books are delightful reads. I found myself giggling over the first one, devoured the second, and have the third fairly

high in my TBR pile with some regrets for lack of time to read like I want to. You’ll want to pick up a copy of Pocketful of Stars to start out on the trilogy, and if you are anything like me, you’ll appreciate that the whole series is available for immediate binge reading.

Baklava is one of the First Reader’s favorites, and I’ve always meant to try my hand at making it. I am not, as I assured Margaret when she sent me the recipe, crazy enough to try making my own fillo (phyllo? filo? spellings vary) dough. I’ve worked with that stuff before and whew! It would be like making paper. So I was delighted to dive into this recipe.

Baklava

- 1 lb. phyllo pastry, thawed
- 1 lb. finely chopped nuts (traditionally walnuts, but sometimes I use pecans) [Cedar’s note: I used pistachios, since I have a JMS who doesn’t like nuts but said she’d try it with pistachios]
- 1 cup butter, melted
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- 1 T lemon juice

Mise en place is very important for this recipe, as you will have to work fast once you open the fillo dough.

Preheat oven to 350 Butter an 8 x 11 or larger baking pan. [Cedar's note: I seem to have lost my 9x13 baking pan in the move. So I wound up using a jelly-roll pan, which is something like 11x17, the exact size of the filo dough I had]

Mix ¼ cup sugar, ground cinnamon, and chopped nuts.

Unroll the phyllo and cut through all layers to fit your baking pan; you should wind up with two stacks of phyllo sheets and some scraps.

Lay down 4-6 phyllo sheets, brushing each with melted butter.

Ground pistachios. I could have used more nuts, because of how large a pan I used.

Now repeat until you run out of nuts:

 Sprinkle ground nut mixture over phyllo

 Lay down two more buttered sheets

(Work fast – the phyllo will try to dry out and go crumbly)
butter, layer, sprinkle...

Finish with 4 buttered sheets of phyllo. With a sharp knife, cut through all layers to create small squares or diamond shapes.

Bake for 40 minutes at 350 degrees. [Cedar's note: I had a very thin baklava, so it only took ~20 minutes]

Thin, and fun to cut neatly. By fun I mean tricky, and a bit of a PITA.

While pastry is baking, simmer water, lemon juice, cinnamon sticks and remaining sugar until the resulting syrup coats a spoon when you stir it. [Cedar's note: I added about 1/4 cup honey. It didn't seem right without honey.]

Pour syrup over the baked pastry, cover the baking pan and hide it for at least six hours to give the syrup time to soak in.

It baked up perfectly and soaked up all of the syrup in about 4 hours – all the time I could give it!



The Baklava was both perfect, and different. Not having honey in the original recipe I worked around – the First Reader wants me to make it again in a smaller pan, i.e. thicker, and with honey only. Also, he wants me to omit the lemon. I really liked how the acid cut some of the sickly-sweetness baklava can have, but he didn't. So tastes vary! But it was so good. Like candy. And as we had guests over the weekend, this pan full lasted through more than 20 people trying it out, some

for the first time, and some who had more than one piece because they couldn't help themselves!



Big Splash by Tiffanię Gray