

LonCon 3
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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I did not attend Loncon 3 this year, but I do not see why that should stop me from writing a convention report.

Registration and Membership

One thing not attending saved me was standing in the registration queue for ninety minutes. Apparently there was one queue for everyone, pre-registered and new members alike. And there was no separate line for program participants--they had to stand in line just as long as everyone else, and then *after* registering they could get their program participant packages.

This was especially bad as this was the largest Worldcon ever, with over 10,000 total members, and over 8000 "warm bodies" on site. The membership size is due in large part to a substantial British/Irish/continental European membership, plus the fact that London, while expensive, is still the city in Europe most likely to draw American fans. In fact, checking the demographics shows that there were 4250 United Kingdom members, 4184 United States members, 1469 non-UK European members, 358 Canadian members, and 283 Australian members. This is the first time, I believe, that another single country has had more Worldcon members than the United States.

Hugo Awards

One of the biggest topics this year was the Hugo ballot. When the Hugo nominations (and Retro Hugo nominations) were announced, my reaction to the Retro Hugos was, "Well, They were not all my first choices, but they're all worthy selections." My reaction to the current Hugos was, "Who *are* these people?!"

So let's talk about the current Hugo nominations first.

First of all, almost 1600 nominating ballots for novel is amazing. Gone are the days of a couple of hundred nominating ballots. Even semiprozine got 411 ballots--and no one can figure out what a semiprozine really is. (A total of 1923 nominating ballots were received.)

But of the nominees for novel, I had heard of three of the five authors. It used to be inconceivable that something would make the ballot that I would not at least have heard of.

I was glad I was not voting this year, though, because Robert Jordan's "Wheel of Time" was one of the nominees. Not the final book of "The Wheel of Time", but the whole fourteen-volume series, with each volume approaching a thousand pages long, and totaling well over 4 million words. It seems to me that the series is indeed eligible under the "serialization" rule, though having a single "novel" that is fourteen volumes published over a twenty-two-year period is not quite what the framers of the rule had in mind. And in answer to the first question that came to everyone's mind, Tor announced, "In answer to many inquiries, we're happy to be able to say that the entire 'Wheel of Time' *will* be made available in the Hugo Voters' Packet." That was picked up by "Wheel of Time" fan sites, blogs, etc., which mentioned (nay, trumpeted) the fact that for a \$40 Supporting Membership, you could get an electronic copy of the entire "Wheel of Time" series *plus* all sorts of other stuff. This seems to have sent the Supporting Membership count for LonCon 3 soaring: LonCon 3 got 2,690 new Supporting members (i.e., Supporting members who had not voted in Site Selection), of which 345 had joined prior to nominations opening, 605 joined during the nomination period and 2,340 joined during the voting period.

(Some argued that the "Wheel of Time" fans already had it, but they probably didn't have it in electronic form. Of course, if the electronic form is PDF, then they may not be as eager...)

Anyway, a few more moments' thought lead me to think that "Wheel of Time" would almost definitely win the Hugo.

Why?

Because once people bought the memberships to get "Wheel of Time", it is not unreasonable to assume that they would vote for "Wheel of Time" for the Hugo.

However, it did not win. The final statistics did not let me calculate the exact number of ballots that gave "Wheel of Time" a first-place vote were Supporting Memberships purchased after the ballot was announced, and how many of those had no other votes marked, but it apparently was not more than a couple of hundred, if that.)

Moving along, in the novella category, there was some discussion over whether "Wakulla Springs" by Andy Duncan and Ellen Klages is science fiction/fantasy at all.

In the short fiction in general, I had heard of many of the nominees, and it was not unusual for a few unfamiliar names to show up even years ago. I have not done a precise count, but there seemed to be more gender balance, and more diversity in general, than way back when. Certainly the entries in "Related Work" would support this, with nominees such as *Queers Dig Time Lords, A Celebration of Doctor Who by the LGBTQ Fans Who Love It* and *We Have Always Fought: Challenging the Woman. Cattle, and Slaves Narrative*.

Once again, the "Short Story" category was only four entries because of the "5% rule" (a work must get nominated on 5% of the ballots cast in that category to make the short list). This is a problem with the "long tail", and this is caused by the vast number of short stories being published these days. (Someone said that the stats that flashed briefly on the screen at the announcement indicated that there were 865 ballots in this category containing 578 distinct entries!)

The category I feel most qualified to comment on is "Dramatic Presentation, Long Form". This had almost a thousand ballots, so it is not surprising that blockbusters such as *Iron Man 3*, *Pacific Rim*, and *Catching Fire* were on the ballot, but they were not my choices. My picks of *Frozen* and *Gravity* did make the ballot, but my first reaction was, "Where, oh where, is *Her*?", clearly (to me, anyway) one of the best of last year's films? The answer is that though it had a minimal release for Oscar eligibility (one week in one theater in Los Angeles and one in New York), it really did not get a wide enough release to make most fans' radar. My other two choices, *Jug Face* and *Life Tracker*, had miniscule releases, so I am not surprised that they were not there.

On the other hand, I am completely out of touch with "Dramatic Presentation, Short Form" (and "Graphic Story" as well), but the fact that there were four "Doctor Who"-related pieces and an episode of "Game of Thrones" is hardly unpredictable.

In fact, "Doctor Who" seems to be taking over the entire ballot, sort of like the Hugo equivalent of kudzu: four nominees in "Dramatic Presentation, Short Form" plus one each in "Graphic Story" and "Related Work".

Oddly, I found the editors' names more familiar than the authors', though it has been observed that this was the first time *ever* that *Astounding*, *Analog*, or its editor was not on the nominations ballot. In 1953-1956 and 1958, there was no short list, just a winner, and it won in 1953, 1955, and 1956, so that is really only 1954 and 1958 that it did not appear on the ballot. (Note: women are in the majority in the editor categories.)

Of the six professional artists, I recognized one name. Of the five fanzines, none. Of the seven fancasts, three. Of the five fan writers, none. Of the five fan artists, two.

At this point, Mark was sitting on the couch serenading me with the title song from *The Last Dinosaur*. And he may be right, because, boy, did I feel more comfortable in the Retro Hugo area.

Here the numbers were more traditional: 208 ballots for novel, 50 for fan writer, and so on, with 233 ballots total.

(My reviews and rankings of the fiction categories are at the end of this report.)

I have heard of all the novels. I have not read them all; I was not sure on some of them whether I read them back in college or not. For all the fiction categories, some of what I nominated made it and some did not, but I recognized all the authors' names.

Several categories were missing. For example, there was no "Dramatic Presentation, Long Form"--this was probably because there were only a half-dozen or so presentations that were even eligible in this category. Also missing were categories such as "Graphic Novel" (though comic strips might have qualified), "Semiprozine", and "Editor, Long Form".

Not surprisingly, "Dramatic Presentation, Short Form" consisted mostly of radio shows: three Mercury Theaters, a Campbell Playhouse (Mercury Theater under a different name), and one lone television show. Yes, they had rudimentary television in 1938. But the nominee, "R.U.R.", was a BBC production that aired once 75 years ago and has been lost, leading one to wonder on what basis the nominators chose it. (By the way, Orson Welles got four of the five nominations, quite possibly a record for most nominations for one person in a single category in a single year.) Alas, this meant that no episodes from "The Shadow" or "Lights Out" made the ballot. If "Treasure Island" had made the ballot instead of "R.U.R." it would have been a clean sweep for Welles. (For those who ask whether "Treasure Island" is even science fiction or fantasy, I would classify it as horror. And come to that, how is "Around the World in Eighty Days" any more eligible?)

In the "Editor, Short Form" category I recognized three of the names and predicted that John W. Campbell would win this category easily. In the "Professional Artist" again, I recognized three names and predicted either Virgil Finlay or Frank R. Paul would win.

I was unfamiliar with all of the fanzines, and in the "Fan Writer" category I suspected that name recognition would count for much more than the actual fan writing of these people (though they are all bona fide fans who did fan writing at the time).

[After I wrote this, I read a few columns and comments that indicate that seven of the nominees on the current year's ballot had been promoted in an on-line campaigns (see <http://file770.com/?p=16685>), and were basically a surprise even to fans much more in touch with the field than I am. On-line campaigns in previous years have put some lesser-known nominees on the ballot, but this year seems to have been some sort of tipping point. Does this mean that we have gotten to the point where the Hugo Awards no longer represent the consensus of the core of fandom--whatever that is--but merely the victory of whoever can put together the best Internet campaign?]

And speaking of the "Hugo Packet", it came out only nine weeks before the voting deadline, ten days less than the previous record low, and three of the five current-year novel nominees were *not* be in the packet, as was announced: "This year, Orbit--the publisher of Mira Grant's *Parasite*', Ann Leckie's *Ancillary Justice*, and Charles Stross's *Neptune's Brood*--have decided that for policy reasons they can't permit the shortlisted novels to be distributed for free in their entirety. Instead, substantial extracts from the books will be included in the Hugo voters packet."

Now my comments:

It should be noted that the three authors (Charles Stross, Anne Leckie, and Mira Grant) expressed their unhappiness with this decision.

Actually, the packet is most useful to the serious Hugo voter for the other categories, especially the related book and fan categories. Traditionally, the short fiction has been hard to find, though as everything goes electronic, it should theoretically become easier.

John Scalzi's and Charles Stross's blogs contain the authors' joint statement, as well as lots of comments. Culled from these comments is the information that many people were led to believe that if they bought a Supporting Membership, that would include all the novels, and that a thousand Supporting Memberships had been sold since the Hugo slate was announced. (Eventually, as I noted it would eventually be 2,340 Supporting memberships.) Several of these people had said (in the comments) that they bought the membership to get the "Wheel of Time" but had hoped to get the other novels to see what they were like. However, they would probably not get them separately, which could lead to a lot of ballots with a vote for "Wheel of Time" and nothing else in the Novel category (or any other category except maybe Dramatic Presentations). This would have two effects: "Wheel of Time" would win for Novel because the other works were not available (a couple of thousand first-place votes go a long way), and some categories might be eliminated entirely this year because of the rule that any category must be voted for on at least 25% of the total ballots submitted. Time would tell.

The Retro Hugo packet was not released until less than a month before the voting deadline. The novels in it were *Carson of Venus*, *Galactic Patrol*, and *Legion of Time*. Missing were *Out of the Silent Planet* and *The Sword in the Stone*. This is not surprising--these are the two that still have substantial sales today. Because they are still so popular, people should have had no trouble finding them. (Since the regular Hugo packet had only excerpts from three of its five novel nominees, in some sense this did better.)

Novellas included are "Anthem" and "The Time Trap"; missing were "A Matter of Form", "Sleepers of Mars", and "Who Goes There?" The latter is probably the most widely available of all the short fiction, so it was not a major problem, and "A Matter of Form" has also been widely reprinted. "Sleepers of Mars" has been reprinted only four times, the last twenty-seven years ago.

(I was not surprised to see that *Anthem* got nominated. It is certainly probably the best-known science fiction novella of 1938 among the general population, and is still in print, and Rand does have a large following. Large political followings seemed to be de rigueur this year for nominees in the regular Hugo categories, so I was not surprised to see it nominated in the Retros. "Who Goes There?" got 95 nominations, and ANTHEM 30, the first- and second-highest numbers in the category. But it came in fifth in the actual voting (it did beat "No Award").)

Novelettes included are "Werewoman", "Pigeons From Hell", and "A Link to Hollywood on the Moon". Missing were "Dead Knowledge" and "Rule 18". The former is available in a NESFA collection and most recently a British collection of the same name, but the latter remains basically unavailable to those who have no access to the original magazine publication. (It seems to have been reprinted once, from a minor publisher in Britain, in 1990.)

Short stories included were "Helen O'Loy", "The Faithful", "Hyperpilosity", and "Hellerbochen's Dilemma"; missing was "How We Went to Mars", which is available in the definitive Clarke collection, although nowhere else. Its first publication was in the magazine (fanzine?) "Amateur Science Stories", so I wouldn't count on finding that in your local library either.

I realize that they can only include what they get permission for, but this seems to indicate that it is harder to get permission for older works than for newer ones. This could be because a newer writer gets a big career boost from winning a Hugo, even for short fiction, while none of the Retro Hugo nominees were even still alive. Of the fiction nominees, Ray Bradbury (died 2012) had been the "last man standing," with Sir Arthur C. Clarke (died 2008) and Jack Williamson (died 2006) the runners-up.

The good news about the Retro Hugos was that these were fairly sure to all be given out (and they were). The bad news was that for the regular Hugos, things were not as certain. The "25% rule" says that any category not voted on by at least 25% of the ballots will not be awarded. The 2,340 new Supporting members for LonCon 3 since the nominees were announced were almost definitely due to interest in the Novel category (and in wanting to get the entire "Wheel of Time" series in the Hugo packet). It was not unlikely that most of those people, if they voted, would vote only in the Novel category and possibly the Dramatic Presentation categories. Normally low-drawing categories such as Semiprozine, Fancast, and Fan Artist could easily fail to get enough votes to be awarded at all this year. Many people were talking about wanting to expand the Hugo voting base, and this may well be an example of "Be careful what you wish for." With 3,587 ballots received, no category receiving fewer than 897 voters would be awarded.

Regarding ballots, LonCon 3 received 3,587 Hugo Award final ballots (from 8,784 eligible voters), almost 50% more than the previous record (Renovation's 2,100). They also received 1,307 Retro Hugo Award ballots, so 327 voters is the cut-off for those.

LonCon 3 also got 2,690 new Supporting members (i.e., Supporting members who had not voted in Site Selection), of which 345 had joined prior to nominations opening, 605 joined during the nomination period and 2,340 joined during the voting period. I would be curious to know how many ballots will end up with "Wheel of Time" given a first-place vote and everything else in Novel left blank.

The "irony" of all this is that nowhere along the line did anyone do anything contrary to the rules, or even to the customs, of the Hugo process. People have always recommended or suggested candidates for nomination. Publishers and authors have been solicited to provide copies of nominated works for the Hugo packet. Ironically, Tor is getting some flack for providing their entire nominated work ("Wheel of Day") this year, while Orbit UK is getting flack for providing only excerpts of their three novels. The result of Orbit UK's decision may well be that voters who bought a membership to get (and presumably vote for) "Wheel of Time" would actually have read the other novels had they been provided, but as it stands, probably will not.

The Retro Hugo Awards Ceremony was held on the first night of the convention and carried on ustream--well, sort of. It was supposed to start at 8 PM London time (3 PM EDT). For the first ten minutes all that was visible on the stream was a static slide of London. For the next forty minutes there was video but no sound. The chat stream was full of people asking, "Who is that?" and "Can anyone here lip-read?" I had to leave after about a half-hour, but reports are that the audio, when it finally kicked in, sounded like someone in the back row had the microphone in their clothes. This was particularly annoying for the Retro Hugos because, as was pointed out, there was no way to identify the winners by seeing who went up onto the stage to receive the award.

The Retro Hugo ballot also seemed to benefit from greater participation, and I was actually far more interested in the outcome there than in the current ballot. And the Retro Hugo Awards are (the numbers in parentheses are number of nominating and voting ballots, respectively):

- | Best Novel (208/1196): *The Sword in the Stone*, T. H. White (Collins)
- | Best Novella (125/1042): "Who Goes There?", Don A Stuart [John W. Campbell] (Astounding Science-Fiction, August 1938)
- | Best Novelette (80/839): "Rule 18", Clifford D. Simak (Astounding Science-Fiction, July 1938)
- | Best Short Story (108/963): "How We Went to Mars", Arthur C. Clarke (Amateur Science Stories, March 1938)
- | Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form (137/1058): "The War of the Worlds" by H. G. Wells. Written by Howard Koch & Anne Froelick; Directed by Orson Welles (The Mercury Theater of the Air, CBS)
- | Best Editor, Short Form (99/786): John W. Campbell
- | Best Professional Artist (86/704): Virgil Finlay

- | Best Fanzine (42/471): Imagination! edited by Forrest J Ackerman, Morojo, and T. Bruce Yerke
- | Best Fan Writer (50/812): Ray Bradbury

(If I'm reading the statistics correctly, in Best Editor 136 voters out of 786 ranked Campbell first and ranked no one else in the category, in Best Dramatic Presentation 185 out of 1058 ranked "The War of the Worlds" first and ranked nothing else, and in Best Fan Writer 153 out of 812 ranked Bradbury first and ranked no one else.)

The Retro Hugo Awards Ceremony was held on the first night of the convention and carried on Ustream--well, sort of. It was supposed to start at 8 PM London time (3 PM EDT). For the first ten minutes all that was visible on the stream was a static slide of London. For the next forty minutes there was video but no sound. The chat stream was full of people asking, "Who is that?" and "Can anyone here lip-read?" I had to leave after about a half-hour, but reports are that the audio, when it finally kicked in, sounded like someone in the back row had the microphone in their clothes. This was particularly annoying for the Retro Hugos because, as was pointed out, there was no way to identify the winners by seeing who went up onto the stage to receive the award.

During the Retro Hugo Awards Ceremony, the following special awards were also given out:

- | The First Fandom Hall of Fame Award: John Clute
- | First Fandom Posthumous Hall of Fame Awards: John "Ted" Carnell and Walter H. Gillings
- | The Sam Moskowitz Archive Awards: Mike Ashley
- | The Forrest J Ackerman Big Heart Award: Vincent Docherty

I imagine that moving these to the Retro Hugo Awards Ceremony was due in large part to pad it out, because there were only nine categories here, and seventeen for the regular Hugo Awards Ceremony. And the presenters of these awards cannot complain about being shunted off to an "Other Awards" ceremony, because the Retro Hugo Awards *are* Hugo Awards. But it is only a partial solution to the positioning of these awards, because there are not many more opportunities for Retro Hugo Awards (2015, 2016, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2027). (Has Sasquan decided whether to award Retro Hugos?)

In the regular Hugo Awards, LonCon 3 received 3,587 Hugo Award final ballots (from 8,784 eligible voters), almost 50% more than the previous record (Renovation's 2,100). The "25% rule" therefore said that any category which did not receive 897 ballots would not be awarded. Now apparently there was a campaign to give "No Award" for Best Fancast because the campaigners did not want anything to win that. There were 1177 ballots in that category, but 237 of them voted "No Award" first (and nothing else at all). Without those ballots there would have been 940 ballots, so it still would have been awarded, but the campaign came bizarrely close to being self-defeating.

Programming

As you could tell from Joe Karpierz's and Dale Skran's convention reports, the suitability of room size varied wildly. The bottom line is what has been dubbed "The First Law of Convention Rooms": No matter how many times convention planners are reminded, and no matter how many conventions they have attended, they will never remember that science panels are way more popular than they expect. (When the "What's New in maths" panel audience exceeds the room size, you know science panels are popular!)

(When I worked at Burroughs, and had to do an estimate for how long it would take to write a program for a salesman's requirements, there was one salesman for whom I would take the normal estimate, double it, and add a week. This new estimate seemed to be amazingly accurate.]

Reports indicate various glitches such as poor sound for the opening ceremonies, and a room for the

Mark Protection Meeting that turned out to be locked (and no one could find the key).

Other than the Hugo Awards, I did attend one programming item: the 200th episode of "The Coode Street Podcast":

The Coode Street Podcast
Jonathan Strahan, Gary K. Wolfe, Robert Silverberg, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Jo Walton
MP3 at <http://tinyurl.com/void-coode-st-200>

There is quite a discussion on the current state of the field, with Silverberg's views (as summarized in Joe Karpierz's convention report last week) as well as Robinson's and Walton's, compared and contrasted. Silverberg said he did not want to be a praiser of things past, which he then said came from a good Latin phrase, if anyone knew Latin anymore. The Latin phrase is "laudator temporis acti"--use it on him next time you see him.

Silverberg expressed his underlying discontent as being that science fiction used to be a village where everyone knew everyone else, and now it's a megalopolis. Walton suggested that his mistake was in confusing "community" and "network". Science fiction used to be both, but now is too large and diffuse (geographically) to be one's community.

Also, it used to be that one read all the good stuff because one read *everything* (and could easily do so). Now there is too much for one to read everything. Walton suggested using the Internet to find the good stuff, which Silverberg seemed to interpret as finding the good stuff on-line, when what Walton meant was reading reviews, blogs, etc., to hear what people are talking about. This of course becomes the question of finding out which reviews, blogs, etc., to read.

Later, this exchange occurred on the distinction between science fiction and fantasy:

Silverberg: "There are science fiction writers who say that writing fantasy is like playing tennis without a net."

Robinson: "Yes, but the science fiction writers are playing tennis with the net up but they've got this magical thing that whenever the ball goes at the net, the net opens up and let's the ball right through, so it's not the toughest game around."

Walton: "There's wormholes in the net."

Wolfe: "Let's just flog this metaphor to death, why don't we?"

Robinson: "It's a heroic simile, goddammit!"

Wolfe: "Postmodernism is playing tennis without the ball."

Silverberg: "The truth is that fantasy and science fiction are both parts of the same form--non-realistic fiction--and they're both played without a net because we just make it up! We make up both of them."

Robinson also summarizes some of his talk on "Time in the Novel" ("This talk begins with a brief unpublished correspondence between Virginia Woolf and Olaf Stapledon. It reveals that Woolf was an admirer of Stapledon's STARMAKER. This admiration seems to have had an impact on her later novels, as she tried to incorporate Stapledon's deep time into her stream-of-consciousness "moments of being," arguably a bad fit. From here, the talk shifts to more general considerations of time in the novel, including calculations of narrative pace ranging from Edgar Rice Burroughs to Marcel Proust, and beyond; this will provide a new way of looking at fiction and literary history, and require a final dive into the shallow end of the digital humanities, which will be defined and misused.")

The entire 75-minute panel/podcast is *well* worth listening to.

WSFS Business Meeting

The proposals:

Passed for the second time; now in effect:

- | Two-Thirds Is Good Enough, Part 1: replaces 2/3 with 3/4 to make objection to consideration more difficult to pass.
- | Two-Thirds Is Good Enough, Part 2: replaces 2/3 with 3/4 to make objection to consideration more difficult to pass.
- | A Matter of Trust: electronic documents need no longer be opt-in.
- | WSFS Accountability Act of 2013: all financial reports submitted include information about the organization that sponsored the original event
- | Best Fan Artist: Specifies types of non-professional display
- | In the Zone: Removes geographic references for MPC membership
- | We Don't Need Another HEROW: Permanently bestows Hugo eligibility extended status to works not originally published in the US.

Passed for the first time; must be passed next year as well to take effect:

- | Popular Ratification: requires full Worldcon membership to ratify changes following second passage at a Worldcon business meeting.
- | A Story by Any Other Name: specifying that the fiction categories are open to audiobooks and e-books as well as traditionally published fiction.
- | Hugo Finalists: reserving the title of finalist for those shortlisted for the Hugo Award.
- | Membership Types and Rates: Specified that voting rights needed to be tied to membership rates at a specific level.

Failed:

- | Hugo Nominating for NASFIC Members
- | Best Fan Performer Hugo

Not surprisingly, Kansas City won the bid for 2016, and MidAmeriCon II will be held August 17-21, 2016.

Another mini-review, as much about fandom as about Worldcon, by a first-time Worldcon-goer, can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/mnanox4>.

Appendix

Reviews and Rankings of the Fiction on the Retro Hugo Ballot

[Written before the convention]

Since I am not a member of LonCon 3, I am not eligible to vote on either the Hugo Awards or the Retro Hugo Awards this year. And I cannot say I am sorry, with several nominees on the ballot due to bloc voting, and one of the nominees in the Novel category being the entire fourteen-volume "Wheel of Time" series.

But the Retro Hugo ballot does look promising--and manageable--so I figured I would tackle it just for the heck of it.

One problem with the Retro Hugos, at least those given out 75 years after the eligibility year, is that the chances of anyone nominated still being alive are slim. Of the fiction nominees, Ray Bradbury (died 2012) had been the "last man standing," with Sir Arthur C. Clarke (died 2008) and Jack Williamson (died 2006) the runners-up.

For the short fiction I have given the source that I read it from.

Best Novel (208 nominating ballots)

For people who complain that everything is trilogies now, I will observe that everything in this category except THE LEGION OF TIME is part of a series. However, it is true that novels were shorter then. I've given the page-counts for the five novels; the page-counts for the current year's nominated novels are 336, 416, 512, 624, and 11,916 (no, that is not a typo!).

Carson of Time by Edgar Rice Burroughs (ISBN 978-0-441-09200-0) (192 pages): This is the third in Burroughs's "Venus" series. I have not read the first two, but apparently they are more about adventure, while this is more about politics, warfare, and espionage. This, more than any of the other novels, has to be read in a 1938 frame of mind or much of Burroughs's intent will be lost. It is, in fact, a thinly disguised story about the Nazis (called the Zanis in the book). Their evil leader is Mephis; I thought this was to evoke the idea of Mephistopheles, but one critic claims that one should reverse the syllables ("Hismep") and then shift the 's' down one letter to 't', the 'm' up one to 'l', and the 'p' down one (not counting 'q') to 'r' to get Hitler. Take your pick.

Everyone uses the greeting "Matlu Mephis!" ("Hail Mephis!") constantly. One character is named "Musso" (Mussolini), another is Sefphon (Himmler, though no conversion formula is given). The Korvans (the Zanis are the political party, the Korvans the race, and doesn't "Korvan" sound like ... well, you get the idea) hate and kill their enemy, the Atorians, because the Atorians have big ears and the Korvans want to keep Korvan blood pure.

There is also a very odd gender-reversal society early in the book, where the women are the hunters and warriors, and the men do all the making of "sandals, loincloths, ornaments, and pottery," giggling and gossiping the whole time. Burroughs explains this by having Carson say, "They had been kicked around so much all their lives and had developed such colossal inferiority complexes that they were afraid of everybody; and if they weren't given too much time to think, would obey anyone's commands; so they came with me."

On the one hand, this could be seen as an attempt to explain away the obvious subservience (and ditziness) of the men without allowing that they might be inherently inferior. On the other, it also could be taken as an explanation of why women in 1938 America seemed subservient and ditz, an attitude encouraged by the then-popular "screwball comedy" genre. Since a common feeling (among men, anyway) at the time was that women were by nature inferior, not as intelligent as men, etc., this could be taken as fairly enlightened. (It was less than two decades earlier that women finally got the vote on a United States-wide basis--and in Britain, it still had not happened.)

The political parallels are a bit heavy-handed, and things are often contrived, but it is certainly an enjoyable enough book. (I would suggest starting with the first novel in the series--*Pirates of Venus*--rather than here in the middle, though, as each depends on what has come before.)

Galactic Patrol by E. E. Smith (ISBN 978-1-8829-6811-4) (237 pages): This is the longest of the Retro Hugo novel nominees, and still only about two-thirds the length of the *shortest* of the regular Hugo nominees. Now described as the third book of the "Lensman" series, it was the first published.

For starters, it has more techno-babble than even "Star Trek". This is often done as footnotes, I can only presume to look more impressive and authentic (much as Smith's author credit always listed his degree). I think what really convinced me that this was written with different literary assumptions,

though, was after a chase at many times the speed of light with super-advanced weapons, the actual battle at the beginning seems to be decided by someone wielding a "space-axe", which is about as low-tech as you can get (short of a rock).

Here's a sample:

"A crushing weight descended upon his back, and the Patrolmen found themselves fighting for their lives. From the bare, supposedly evidently safe rock face of the cliff there had emerged rope-tentacled monstrosities in a ravenously attacking swarm. In the savage blasts of DeLameters hundreds of the gargoyle horde vanished in vivid flares of radiance, but on they came; by thousands and, it seemed, by millions. Eventually the batteries energizing the projectors became exhausted. Then flailing coil met shearing steel, fierce-driven parrot beaks clanged against space-tempered armor, bulbous heads pulped under hard-swung axes; but not for the fractional second necessary for inertialess flight could the two win clear."

As for gender roles, why is it that a man leaving a room in anger storms out, but a woman flounces? (A woman does not even show up until page 167, and then we get a full page of her physical description. Of Kimball Kinnison, we are not given a clue as to whether he looks more like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Cruise, or Peter Dinklage. All this may have been characteristic of the period, but I don't have to like it.)

It may be a classic, but as with *First Lensman* (nominated for a Retro Hugo in 2001), I found *Galactic Patrol* unreadable and gave up after 89 pages.

The Legion of Time by Jack Williamson (ISBN 978-0-312-94283-0) (82 pages): They said this was a novel, but even with a generous estimate, my omnibus edition (a "Galaxy Magabook") seems to have only about 35,000 words for "The Legion of Time". But it cannot be the omnibus of "The Legion of Time" and "After World's End" together that is the actual nominee because, although both have a 1938 copyright, the latter was first published in a magazine with a 1939 cover date. And although Galaxy Magabooks had the bad habit of cutting the novels they printed, without actually indicating that they had done so, someone with access to the original serial says it comes in at 34,668 words. Since the leeway for the novel category is 5000 words, this should actually have been in the novella category. For what it's worth, I appear to be the first--and perhaps only--person to point this out. [As it turned out, had the Williamson been properly placed in the Novella category, H. L. Gold's "A Matter of Form" would have been dropped from that category, but nothing would have been added in the Novel category due to the 5% rule.

The Legion of Time starts with a team, or rather, a leader and three sidekicks, which was very common in fiction at the time (particularly in such popular series as Doc Savage, which first appeared in 1933). We have four Harvard students: Dennis Lanning, blond and wiry; Wilmot McLan, a mathematician; Lao Men Shan, a Szechwan engineer; and Barry Halloran, "gigantic red-haired All American tackle." Then we get a couple of pulp adventure princesses, one good and one evil, before going on to an aerial battle in 1930s China. It seems as though Williamson wanted to include in this every type of pulp fiction there was. And in fact *The Legion of Time* is really just a pulp adventure novel, with the time travel aspects really minimal. When I am reading about our heroes fighting mutant ant-men in the future with knives and axes, it is hard to read this as hard science fiction. Yes, they are trying to make sure that the "good future" is victorious over the "bad future" (and guess which one has the mutant ant-men?), but other than a few convenient rays, there is not much futuristic about any of this.

Williamson seems fairly prescient when in this book (written in 1937) he describes someone as being blown up in 1940, fighting to save Paris. But when he also references "Las Alamos" as having secrets, which makes no sense in 1937 (even assuming "Las" is a typo for "Los", which it must be for proper Spanish), and mentions uranium and hydrogen bombs, then I begin to wonder if the version I read was updated in 1963 when Galaxy reprinted it. And guess what? Someone with access to the original

publication text confirms that while the 1940 reference *was* present in the 1938 version, none of the others were. Galaxy strikes again!

All in all, this was a disappointment. I was hoping for a more traditional "time patrol"-type story, and maybe that is being unfair, but there you have it.

Out of the Silent Planet by C. S. Lewis (ISBN 978-0-743-23490-0) (159 pages): This is the first book of the "Cosmic Trilogy" (a.k.a. "Space Trilogy") and was followed by *Perelandra* (1943) and *That Hideous Strength* (1945). The last was also nominated for a Retro Hugo, but lost to *The Mule* by Isaac Asimov (itself part of the "Foundation Trilogy").

It is claimed that *Out of the Silent Planet* was inspired by David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus*, but frankly I saw the imprint of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* all over it, particularly Swift's "Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms". This was especially noticeable in the first paragraph of Chapter Nineteen:

"They were much shorter than any animal he had yet seen on Malacandra, and he gathered that they were bipeds, though the lower limbs were so thick and sausage-like that he hesitated to call them legs. The bodies were a little narrower at the top than at the bottom so as to be very slightly pear-shaped, and the heads were neither round like those of hrossa nor long like those of sorns, but almost square. They stumped along on narrow, heavy-looking feet which they seemed to press into the ground with unnecessary violence. And now their faces were becoming visible as masses of lumped and puckered flesh of variegated colour fringed in some bristly, dark substance... Suddenly, with an indescribable change of feeling, he realized that he was looking at men. The two prisoners were Weston and Devine and he, for one privileged moment, had seen the human form with almost Malacandrian eyes."

This is amazingly similar to Gulliver's reactions to other humans when he returns to England from the land of the Houyhnhnms.

Out of the Silent Planet is clearly science fiction and does an excellent job of describing an alien planet, alien races, and so on, but it is also thinly disguised polemic (particularly Chapter Twenty-One), and suffers for that. It is true that *The Sword in the Stone* has a message to deliver, but it does it with a lighter touch (in my humble opinion, of course).

The Sword in the Stone by T. H. White (first part of *The Once and Future King*, ISBN 978-0-441-62740-0) (204 pages): One note here: The text of *The Sword in the Stone* by T. H. White has been modified from the original 1938 text. First it was edited for its American publication, and then further modified when published as part of *The Once and Future King*. Supposedly, stand-alone editions of *The Sword in the Stone* retain the original American edition. Be that as it may, I am reading the 1958 text.

The best description I can come up with for this is Thomas Malory meets Mark Twain, except of course, Twain did it first with *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. By this I mean that both authors take the King Arthur story, set in some unspecific time, and gave it a modern twist in language and attitudes. Twain did it by adding a modern man to the mix; what White did was to bring it up to date to 1938 by making it totally anachronistic. This is clearly intentional; White says so on page two when he has a character talk about sending Kay and Arthur to Eton, and then writes, "It was not really Eton that he mentioned, for the College of Blessed Mary was not founded until 1440, but it was a place of the same sort. Also they were drinking Metheglyn, not port, but by mentioning the modern wine it is easier to give you the feel."

So when characters talk about Indians with bows and arrows, and turkey feathers, and such, we are supposed to understand that they are talking about something else entirely. This makes things a lot easier for White, because he does not have to worry about being accurate.

I just wish White would be consistent. In Chapter 3, he refers to a bunch of turkey feathers in Merlyn's upstairs room (along with dozens of other anachronistic items), but in Chapter 15, he says there was no turkey for Christmas dinner, because "this bird had not yet been invented."

However, White also seems to have decided he has to use every arcane medieval-sounding word: gad, goshawk, snurt, craye, swivel, varvels, rufter, merlin, tiercel, mute, asting, yarak, austringer, rouse, sounder, gore-crow, warrantable, fewmet, libbard, brachet, mollock. And those are just from the first two chapters! Maybe this is to counteract the modernity of some of the imagery so that you remember you are in an earlier time.

The big difference between Twain and White is that while Twain's goal is to show the reader the darker side of the whole medieval "myth," White shows its foolishness by cranking it up to the ridiculous: "In the spring, the flowers came out obediently in the meads, and the dews sparkled, and the birds sang. In the summer, it was beautifully hot for no less than four months, and, if it did rain just enough for agricultural purposes, they managed to arrange it so that it rained while you were in bed. ... And, in the winter, which was confined by statute to two months, the snow lay evenly, three feet thick, but never turned to slush." (Or as paraphrased by Alan Jay Lerner, "The rain may never fall till after sundown / By eight the morning fog must disappear.") In fact, all of Chapter 15 is like this and it, along with the joust in Chapter, are the two tours-de-force of the novel.

(This reminds me of what I always say, that I do not mind if it snows, as long as it snows only on the lawns and not on the roads and driveways.)

My ranking: *The Sword in the Stone*, *Carson of Venus*, *Out of Silent Planet*, no award, *The Legion of Time*, *Galactic Patrol*

Best Novella (125 nominating ballots)

Anthem by Ayn Rand (ISBN 978-1-434-44089-1): Though of novella length, this is always published as a stand-alone book. The edition I have is the version re-edited in 1946 for its first American publication, and the foreword says, "This story was written in 1937. I have edited it for this publication, but have confined the editing to its style; I have reworded some passages and cut out some excessive language." Once again, the difficulty of fairly voting the Retro Hugos, when so many of the works seem to have been re-edited in the interim, is demonstrated. (People are complaining that this year's regular Hugos are a problem because Orbit is allowing only excerpts of their three novels to be included in the Hugo packet, but even with complete works, one has the question, "Complete as of when?")

Ayn Rand talks about "collectivism" in her foreword. I am not clear whether she means what we would call "socialism", or what we would call "Communism" (or whether she would recognize a difference). (For that matter, it is curious that those on the right these days no longer attack "Communism" but rather "socialism".)

Rand's book pre-dates George Orwell's 1984, but this does not mean she invented the concept: Yevgeny Zamiatin's *WE*, written in 1924, is generally considered to have strongly influenced the many dystopias that came after it.

Is "We are one in all and all in one" supposed to be an only slightly modified version of "E pluribus unum"?

Rand (or her narrator) says, "It is a sin to give men names which distinguish them from other men." But that is what "Equality 7- 2521" and "Liberty 5-3000" do, just as much as "The Golden One" and "The Unconquered". And later, he says, "There were men whose famous names we knew," which is surely evidence that there were names which distinguished people.

Rand's use of a modified grammar is interesting, although it does at times make understanding the book a bit tricky. I suppose the dystopia might have seemed new to readers unfamiliar with *Zamiatin*. And the whole House of Scholars sub-plot may have inspired a similar sub-plot in *Planet of the Apes*. But it is hard to judge this with 1938 eyes, and influential though it might have been, as a science fiction story it does not hold up, particularly with its descent into exhortation at the end. It could be that the problem is that *Anthem* carries its dystopian premises to extremes, undercutting its believability while 1984, for example, maintains a more realistic/believable level and so still holds up as a novel.

"A Matter of Form", H. L. Gold (Astounding Science-Fiction, December 1938; Frederik Pohl's *Assignment in Tomorrow*): This is a fairly good "mind-transference" story which even today could be made into a relatively low-budget family science fiction film. The idea has become more familiar with time, but Gold was probably one of the earlier authors to use it, and writes a quite readable story.

"Sleepers of Mars", John Beynon [John Wyndham] (Tales of Wonder, March 1938): I had forgotten how good a writer John Wyndham was; this reminded me. This needs to be read with not only a 1938 frame of mind, but also a British one. The fact is that in 1938 the idea that the first two rockets to Mars would be Soviet and British was not such a ridiculous idea. Wyndham operates against expectations by making the Soviets his main characters, not the British. Wyndham does an excellent job of conveying the emotions and feelings of the situation, and although one might dispute the hand-waving of the "hypnotic translator" to solve the communication problem, he does have a believable scenario.

The entire novella is infused with that resignation, lack of high expectation, and yes, downright pessimism that seemed to characterize English fiction for decades after World War I. One sees a bit of this sort of attitude in "Who Goes There?", but in general American science fiction was full of amazing inventions, far-flung explorations, and success after success. This can be attributed to the fact that England had suffered the entire four years of World War I (including being bombed), while the United States had come in for only the last eighteen months. (England lost 908,000 men, or about 2% of her population to the war; the United States lost 116,000, or 0.13%.) Works such as J. R. R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" were a response to the technological, industrialized means of war in the twentieth century. "Sleepers of Mars" also looks with a critical eye on the belief of intelligent beings in technology, and the failure of that technology to improve life.

"The Time Trap", Henry Kuttner (Marvel Science Stories, November 1938; Brian Aldiss's *Evil Earths*): As with *The Legion of Time*, this is more a pulp adventure story with barbarian princesses et al than a scientific time travel story. And not just barbarian princesses, but *nude* barbarian princesses. The heroine gets her clothes ripped off and ends up nude *six* times, including one time with a reference to her "utter nudity" and another to her being "utterly nude." (And this is only a novella!) One thinks of a modification of *The Wizard of Oz* lyric, "She's not only merely nude, she's really most sincerely nude." The villainess also takes off all her clothes at two different times.

The hero speaks the ancient root Semite tongue, a pre-Columbian South American dialect, and Chinese. And just to emphasize all this, Kuttner uses traditional pulp punctuation: lots of sentences ending in dashes, and lots of exclamation marks.

What was it in 1938 with sleepers in suspended animation in glass tubes? Two of the five novellas have them.

"Who Goes There?" by Don A. Stuart [John W. Campbell] (Astounding Science-Fiction, August 1938; Ben Bova's *Science Fiction Hall of Fame 2A*): This is consistently voted among the best, if not *the* best, science fiction novella of all time, so unless the logical positivists mount a really strong campaign, I cannot see anything beating it, and I would not be surprised to see it win on the first round.

However, I will say that because this has been adapted into three movies (*The Thing from Another World* (1951), *The Thing* (1982), and *The Thing* (2011)), it is important to judge this story on its own, and not based on recollections of the films. The story has no love interest, no reporter, no misguided scientist subplot, and no humor. The characters are all hard-boiled types, without the snappy banter of the 1951 film. It does have a fairly unenlightened view of aliens--pretty much all the humans decide this one is evil because it is ugly.

My ranking: "Sleepers of Mars", "Who Goes There?", "A Matter of Form", no award, "The Time Trap", *Anthem*

Best Novelette (80 nominating ballots)

The novelette category is the most problematic of the fiction categories (and indeed had the fewest nominating ballots) because, of the five stories, three are pretty much unavailable now, having either no reprints, or a single reprint in something almost as unobtainable as its original 1938 publication. One wonders how the nominators chose them. Given that when I scanned the list of stories eligible from 1938 in this category it was a pretty obscure lot, my suspicion is that they were chosen on the basis of the author's reputation rather than the story itself.

"Dead Knowledge", Don A. Stuart [John W. Campbell] (*Astounding Stories*, January 1938; John W. Campbell's *Who Goes There?* [Hyperion Press]): While "Who Goes There?" has been reprinted all over the place, this Don A. Stuart story is almost impossible to find. I was able to read it because I noticed a friend had a copy of the Hyperion Press collection *Who Goes There?* on her shelf and when I mentioned I would like to read a story from it, she offered to lend it to me.

"Dead Knowledge" has a three-man team, which made me think of the Arcot, Wade, and Morey stories that were my introduction to Campbell (*The Black Star Passes*, *Islands of Space*, and *Invaders from the Infinite*), but other than this trope there is little similarity. There is, however, a resemblance to "Who Goes There?" in the notion of a menace that is not a being like ourselves, but rather a more inchoate, insubstantial, amorphous/polymorphous being.

[One quibble: The story keeps referring to the sun setting in the east on this distant planet. I would expect that east and west would be defined on other planets by how the sun rose and set, or rather, east would be the direction of rotation, and west would be the opposite.]

"Hollywood on the Moon", Henry Kuttner (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, April 1938; PDF at varietytsf.org): This is available, but apparently only as a hard-to-read PDF of the original, and one that cannot even be downloaded to a Kindle. This is also apparently part of a series, though of short stories, not of novels. It is pretty lightweight stuff, the sort of thing that one saw in many "madcap" comedy films in the 1930s, with wise-cracking film producers, a stowaway actress, a telepathic kangaroo, and so on. I suspect it is the Kuttner name and the sparseness of the novelette field in general for 1938 that put this on the ballot.

"Pigeons From Hell", Robert E. Howard (*Weird Tales*, May 1938; Robert E. Howard's *Pigeons from Hell*): You can tell from this that Howard was a wordsmith; it is not an "oak door," but an "oaken door." One thing that might make this less popular with the voters is the repeated use of the N-word. But this would be a mistake, because though it is used repeatedly, it is the Southern sheriff who says it. The narrative voice uses the word "negro", which was the polite term at the time. I would not use this to postulate any special progressiveness towards race on Howard's part, but to note that his language here is not a reason to reject the story.

The descriptions of the pigeons make me wonder if Daphne du Maurier was partially inspired by it, though I admit it is unlikely. One definite influence is the term "zuvembie", invented by Howard and used in comic books from 1954 to 1989 instead of "zombie", because the Comics Code Authority forbade the use of that word. But the story is a fine example of Southern Gothic even without any

influences it may have had.

"Rule 18", Clifford D. Simak (Astounding Science-Fiction, July 1938): unavailable

"Werewoman", C. L. Moore (Leaves #2, Winter 1938; Robert Hoskins, *The Edge of Never*): The initial publication of this story was in a small-press magazine--so small, in fact, that only sixty copies were printed! True, that would have been more than enough for everyone at the 1939 Worldcon to get a copy, but I am sure that did not happen, and this is another example of a story that would not have been nominated if regular Hugos had been given out in its eligibility year. Does that mean one should not vote for it because one is voting as if it were that year? I don't think so, and the existence of the electronic Hugo packet is evidence that availability should not be considered a factor.

Be that as it may, "Werewoman" is one of C. L. Moore's "Northwest Smith" stories. I have a quibble with the title: the prefix "were-" comes from the Old English "wer", or "man", so a "werewoman" would be a man who turns into a woman. This is not what is happening in the story. But apparently this is a term widely used to signify a woman who shape-shifts rather than a man. "Werewoman" is strong on atmosphere, but a bit weak on plot.

My ranking: "Pigeons from Hell", "Dead Knowledge", no award, "Werewoman", "Hollywood on the Moon". (I am not including the novelette I have not read. If I were actually voting, this would effectively place it *below* "Hollywood on the Moon", but since I am not actually voting, it does not matter. On the other hand, somewhere in the back of mind is the thought that if it was any good at all, it would have been reprinted more widely in the last 75 years.)

Best Short Story (108 nominating ballots)

It is interesting that they managed to have five nominees in this category, since three times in the last four years the regular Hugos have had fewer, due to the rule requiring any nominee to be on 5% of the nominating ballots. However, this is just a function of the vastly larger number of short stories published in 2013 than in 1938.

This category, more than any other, is an example of the above-mentioned problem with the Retro Hugos: people nominate on the basis of name recognition rather than actual knowledge of the works themselves. (This is also true of the Simak novelette and R.U.R.) They are all very early stories (often the first story) of authors who went on to become major names in the field. So how could you nominate something else? But in 1939, I bet a lot of science fiction fans would have chosen an entirely different slate of short stories.

(And what is it with the letter 'H'? Four of the five nominees start with an 'H'.)

"The Faithful", Lester del Rey (Astounding Science-Fiction, April 1938; *The Early Del Rey*): This was del Rey's first story, and may well have served as inspiration for Clifford Simak's "City" stories, being a story of men and dogs in the far future.

"How We Went to Mars", Arthur C. Clarke (Amateur Science Stories, March 1938; *Collected Stories of Arthur C. Clarke*): This was Clarke's third published story, and nominated either because it was an Arthur C. Clarke story that was eligible, or because the British convention members have a different sense of humor than I do. By that I mean that the humor in it seems distinctly British, and the problem I have is that there is just too much of it. What was funny for a page or two wore a bit thin after seven pages. Then again, the British like Benny Hill. The story is written in that "we are all buffoons, but we don't know it" style. (I am reminded of a Bertie Wooster, only more so.)

"Helen O'Loy", Lester del Rey (Astounding Science-Fiction, December 1938; Robert Silverberg's *Science Fiction Hall of Fame*): This was del Rey's second story, and one much imitated by subsequent authors. The best-known would probably be the "Twilight Zone" episode "The Lonely", written by

Rod Serling. This, more than most of the other stories, is still effective and is the most readable of the batch. Yes, the gender roles in it are dated, but that is part of the the point--they are to a great extent created by the then-current pop culture images of them.

"Hollerbochen's Dilemma", Ray Bradbury (Imagination!, January 1938; Sam Moskowitz's *Horrors Unseen*): This was Ray Bradbury's first published story, and at under a thousand words, the shortest story on the ballot. (Indeed, Moskowitz's introduction is over half the length of the story itself.) It is one-third shorter than Kij Johnson's "Ponies", previously the all-time shortest Hugo nominee. At this length, it is "flash fiction" and so short that it can be little more than a gimmick story, but well-done. Whether something this flimsy should win a Hugo is the question, of course. I mean, "The last man on Earth sat alone in a room. There was a knock on the door," is the ultimate catchy flash fiction, but I don't think most people would give it a Hugo either. (Frederic Brown's "Knock", in case you are wondering.)

"Hyperpilosity", L. Sprague de Camp (Astounding Science-Fiction, April 1938; Groff Conklin's *Omnibus of Science Fiction*): Conklin at least gives you a footnote that says, "The original opening of this story has been eliminated, with the permission of the author, since it seemed to weaken its impact somewhat." That is a refreshing change from editors that do not tell you when a story has been changed, but it also means that yet another Retro nominee is not really available in its 1938 form. This is the problem people have often claimed occurs in the artist, fancast, and other categories--votes are cast based on something other than the works from the year in question. People listen to the latest 2014 "Jovian Overlords Training Sessions" podcast and then rank the 2013 nominee on the basis of that.

I read "Hyperpilosity" without noticing where it was first printed, and found myself thinking, "Typical *Analog* story." Sure enough, it was first published in *Astounding*. It is nothing extraordinary, but a good, competent story of the sort one found then.

My ranking: "Helen O'Loy", "Hyperpilosity", "The Faithful", no award, "Hollerbochen's Dilemma", "How We Went to Mars"

(Though if you ask me tomorrow, I might swap "Hyperpilosity" and "The Faithful".)

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