

Madison foursquare

46

This issue of *Madison Foursquare* is brought to you by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704.

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Scott Custis [SC] and Jeanne Gomoll [JG]

August 2020 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* #410.

Comments on Turbo 409

Cover

[SC] Simply gorgeous, **Georgie!**

[JG] I love the rich colors of this image; also the lovely way that you drew the leaves and stems flowing from the face. Wow!

Lisa Freitag

[SC] I liked your catch-up comment zine, much like I did **Jeannie Bergmann's** last issue. They serve as a kind of time travel experience and as a different perspective on our past zines. Commenting on them from the perspective of several months past publication instead of the just one or two months afterward, you can view the evolution of our collective responses to the plague from the perspective of six months later. Interesting.

[JG] You are right about how unlikely it would be that the icicle in the *Grey's Anatomy* episode could actually stab and embed itself into a human body. The directors had to do some finagling to make it seem even halfway believable. The character walked outside and slipped on the ice right outside the door and was lying flat on her back when a giant icicle was jarred loose from the overhang and plummeted straight down into her abdomen.

If you can't find masks that tie around the back of your head, let me know and I will send you the Etsy link, which is where we bought the masks that Scott uses.

Re your comment to **Walt** about weeding out chain retail stores, it seems that the Pandemic is providing the knockout punch to many stores, which were already suffering because of the general decline of malls. Of course, small and independent businesses are suffering even more. Who knows what the retail landscape will look like on the other side of the pandemic.

I agree with you that the pandemic seems to be encouraging antagonism between the young and old. But I don't think it's likely that the elder population will isolate and become irrelevant. Well, maybe they will become irrelevant to many, but I don't think older folks will be *able* to isolate themselves: they ... er um ... I mean *we*, are totally dependent on a functioning civilization. If the virus rampages to the extent that essential services are interrupted because not enough healthy people are willing to risk exposing themselves to do the work, we will not survive, gated communities or not. However, I **DO** think that wealthy folks can and will create isolated pods in which they will attempt to extend their privileges. In the long run, though, I think that will be extremely destructive to society. If we don't figure out how to safely survive together, things will collapse.

Walter Freitag

[SC] Did it turn out that you were positive after all? I hope you have fully recovered by now. I'm not sure how you feel about it, but maybe a positive test result would be good. It would at least give you an answer as to what you suffered from. If you didn't have the Covid, what did you have?

[JG] The last line of your zine needs to be made into a t-shirt. Or a bumper sticker. "We're grown-ups. This is what we trained for."

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] Once again, Steve, I am impressed with the frankness and honesty of your post-surgery updates. I find them completely absorbing. I don't know anyone close to me who has had the sort of surgery you have had and I had no idea your recovery would be such an ordeal.

Beautiful lilies photo.



[SC] Scenes captured while biking

[JG] Sorry to hear that it's taking so long for you to recover, Steve! I also am frequently reminded that it takes much longer to heal at my age than when I was younger. They told me to expect my knee to be problematic for at least a year after surgery (November 2019), and they were correct. *argh*

Gorgeous lilies. The blue sky in the background of the photo provides the perfect color for the composition!

Greg Rihn

[SC] Since the end of the National Theater Live and APT shows, we have been meandering around our few streaming services looking for interesting movies. We have found a few. In the last month or so we watched *Togo* (which was fantastic and far superior to this year's *The Call of the Wild*).

[JG interruption] *Togo* is based on the real story of the famous 1925 dog musher team's heroic race to get serum from Fairbanks to Nome Alaska, during a diphtheria outbreak—including a crazy sprint across a bay while the ice was breaking up. Togo is the name of the extraordinary lead dog owned by Leonhard Seppala ("Sep") played by Willem Dafoe. Ironically, another mush team finished the final short distance, and the lead dog of that team, Balto, got all the publicity. (In fact there is a statue of Balto in New York's Central Park.) But *Togo* tells the real story that Alaskans know and love. It's a wonderful tale. If you paid for a subscription to Disney+ to see *Hamilton*, we recommend that you check out *Togo* while you still have access to its library.



[SC back again] We also saw *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* (also excellent and not what either of us was expecting), and *Holes* (which we both have seen but only I remembered) on our temporary Disney+ subscription. We watched *The Old Guard* on Netflix. Amazon Prime gave us access to *Kagamusha* and *Breaker Morant* (which Jeanne has seen, but I never saw. She was absolutely right about suggesting them.) We saw the new Tom Hanks movie *Greyhound* on Apple+, which we both enjoyed. Finally, Amazon Prime gave us access to last year's *The Report*, the political thriller starring Adam Driver about the fight to compile and release the congressional Torture Report.

Of the events you documented, I would have most liked to have seen the Mucha exhibit at the Payne center. Several years ago we saw a very good Mucha exhibit at the Czech museum in Cedar Rapids. That exhibit paired Mucha's prints with photographs of the studio in which they were painted, showing costumed models and props, which was fascinating. Part of the attraction would be to return to the Payne which we both enjoyed visiting when they were doing the Downton Abby costume exhibit. So when you said you had "timed tickets," did that mean at a particular time you and **Georgie** toured the show by yourselves? How did that work?

[JG] Scott and I reacted differently to the movie *The Old Guard*. I loved it; Scott was less impressed. I liked it in the same way that I liked *Unbreakable*, for its examination of how a human being might react upon learning that they had developed super-human powers. In the case of *The Old Guard*, the power is immortality, a very similar situation to that in *Unbreakable* actually, which is about a man who never gets sick and escapes all accidents unscathed. I don't want to offer any spoilers if you haven't seen *The Old Guard*, but I highly recommend the movie. Charlize Theron is excellent.

I'm so sorry for having dropped the ball on organizing a zoom discussion of APT's *An Improbable Fiction*. When we picked up our apa and ego-scanned it, I noted your interest and fully intended to follow up. But then



I forgot. Here it is, August 13th now. Scott finished reading the apa and making his comments, and now it's my turn to read and comment, and I've again come across your note saying that you'd be interested in a post-play discussion. Next time I come up with an idea like this, I will not attempt to organize it via the apa. I should have sent out an email to likely people. Did you like *An Improbable Fiction*? I did, very much. I especially liked the messenger. I laughed so hard when I recognized his looming silence in one scene as a recreation of his part as the ghost in *Hamlet*.

[This comment is also directed at **Carrie**, who mentions homeschooling pods.] Greg, you said that you didn't enjoy speculations about the post-COVID world. But I am rather hoping that people in the SF community do a lot of speculating about how the world might change during and after the pandemic. After we rid ourselves of an administration that is actively sabotaging all efforts to combat the virus, I think it will be very important to come up with creative ways to deal with the new reality. Science fiction writers and readers potentially have a lot to offer. I get really frustrated when I hear folks talk about the school dilemma (for one instance) as if the only choices are to go back to the traditional in-person classrooms, or go entirely or partly to video classes in which the teacher sits at their dining room table at home and talks at the screen while students stare at the talking head onscreen for 7 hours a day. The commentators dismiss it: "It just doesn't work!" I get frustrated because we've had the same teacher-standing-in-front-of-a-classroom model of school, with only minor twists, for CENTURIES. Surely we can come up with some new ideas given the new reality! I think about the amazing schools in *Ready Player One*. We should be willing to try different things. This morning on MSNBC I heard about an experiment in a school district where they decided to bring the *teachers* back to the classroom, but not the students. Using a so-called "Owl" video camera which follows movement, the school district basically set up a video studio in each classroom, where the teachers have access to their materials and the camera sees

the whole space, not just the teacher's head and shoulders. The screen is split between several views and accommodates the image of students who ask questions. It is apparently fairly easy to set up and very economical. And it seems much more lively and conducive to learning than the talking head approach.

The menu item I will most miss from Manna's Café are their poppy seed rugelachs. I've found a recipe for them and will try to make them for us one day soon.

Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] I agree with your comment about *Hamilton*: seeing the play provided more information than could be gleaned from listening! I must have listened to the soundtrack dozens of times before finally seeing the play in Chicago (a birthday present from Scott!). I downloaded the music a couple years before seeing it, and from first hearing it, I was entranced. I love it so much. I "saw" the play in my imagination and it felt as if I had access to the whole plot. There are, after all, only a few lines of dialog that are not sung, and thus not included in the soundtrack. I didn't know that at first. (Crucially, lines voiced by Laurens when Hamilton found out that Laurens had died.) But there were so many moments in which dance, or simple body language conveyed important plot information that I entirely missed by listening only. The biggest surprise for me was at the end of the play during the song "Who Will Tell Your Story," when George Washington hangs his head in shame when the country's failure to deal with slavery is mentioned.

Carrie Root

[SC] You have your books shelved by subject? My to-read shelf is organized by chaos, but our regular shelves are alphabetical by author's last name. I had to Google the "plate of shrimp" reference, which prompted a smile from me. I saw the movie long ago, but I didn't recall that scene.



[JG] I've been using the app, *PlantSnap* to identify plants. It's really easy to use and seems to work very well. It's free unless you want to pay for the ad-free version.

Marilyn Holt

[SC] I wish you well on both your effort to get traditionally published and, if you decide to, self-publish. I'm sure self-publishing is a heavy lift, but you have time, motivation and nothing to lose.

We also love the show *Hamilton*, even though the real Alexander Hamilton is not someone I would ever have voted for.

Although I still mostly read traditional books, Jeanne has gone almost exclusively to eBooks on her iPad or Audio books with earphones, and I definitely appreciate the advantages that she sees in going that way. I expect over time our large book collection will diminish. Maybe we will eventually even recover a bit of wall space from our book shelves for more art.

[JG] As Scott says, I tend to read books on my iPad, where I can enlarge the type size or listen to audiobooks. Mostly this is because my eye's prism (which causes my eyes to drift vertically away from one another so that, unless I concentrate or close one eye, I see two images, one above the other) has made it uncomfortable to read regular books for any length of time. So I was disappointed to find that *Low Down and Dirty Vote* wasn't available as an eBook. (I see it is available on Kindle, but I don't want to subscribe to the Kindle service, yet another monthly charge....) Damn.

But thank you so much for the link to Lin-Manuel Miranda's YouTube talk about the music in *Hamilton*! I loved the notion that he incorporated the AOL dial-up octave in one of the songs! LOL!

I will have to look up the book, *The History of White People*, by Nell Irvin Painter. (This is my reminder to myself to check it out.) Happily, I see that this book is available as an eBook.

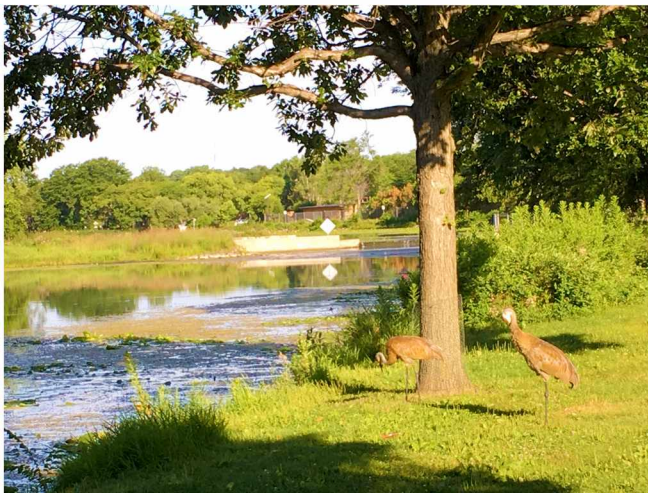
Andy Hooper

[SC] What a wonderful hodgepodge of stuff. Growing up in Eastern Iowa, I never got to see *Sir Graves Ghastly* but his story was certainly interesting and probably had elements in common with other creature feature hosts all across American TV-land in the 60s and 70s. I know we had *Vampira* or *Elvira* for a time, but I could not tell you who hosted earlier versions in my area of the country. In my limited experience, these shows were late night (usually Saturday night) programs, but it appears in your article that *Sir Ghastly* was on in the afternoon. That's interesting. I might have gotten hooked on it, too in that case.

I also have never heard "The Skye Boat Song" until now (I'm Googling it and listening to the *Outlander* version as I type). Why do I so often feel culturally deprived after reading your zines?

Thanks also for the nature news. You are lucky to have such an accommodating pond nearby. We tend to get only the wildlife that chooses to make a pitstop in our postage stamp yard. I occasionally have wildlife interactions on bike rides. Last week I was riding through the arboretum. As I was about to round a sharp turn, I was met by a biker going the opposite direction who said in passing, "Birds ahead." I assumed he meant ducks or wild turkeys as they are both common out there, but as I rounded the bend I immediately spotted three cranes spread across half the road. Two adults and a younger one. The adults had different colorations, so I assumed it was a family group. I was at that point in the park where there are a few houses along Arboretum Drive, so I slowly pulled over into a driveway directly across the road from the birds, carefully and quietly got off my bike and began digging in my pannier for my iPhone. Just then, from around the same bend, now behind me, three young women came walking along talking very loudly. If they saw the cranes, they paid them no mind. They did not quiet down, did not slow down and carried on their way heading right for them. The cranes, for their part, did not panic. They must be familiar enough with humans to appreciate what they were up against as they calmly, and regally, turned and strolled off the road and into the brush. No photo for me that day. {I did get a good crane photo on another day however.}

I also enjoyed your Entropy Department entries this month, my favorite being Tom Perry's delightful zine.



Scott snapped this photo on a bike ride: Cranes along Wingra Creek near Henry Vilas Zoo.

[JG] I accidentally started watching *Outlander* a while back; I thought it was a different series, and ended up seeing the first three seasons on Netflix. The intro music is indeed hauntingly beautiful and I am glad to know about its origins. I am also curious as to how close to truth is the background history portrayed in *Outlander*.

Scott came across some herons during one of his bike rides. I wonder if **Jim Hudson** and Scott saw the same birds.

I was very excited to read about the proto-feminist utopia established by Queen Eudocia and Amalfrida that I apparently missed in your zine. Sadly, the account seems to have been partially deleted from my copy of the apa by time travel police intent on erasing the story from history. Does this happen to your work frequently?

What a great review of **Steven Vincent Johnson**'s zine! I'd like to turn the first two sentences into a Mad Libs game and insert titles of various serious works. Beyond that witty preface, I liked what you wrote about the entertainments and projects we pursue in order to distract ourselves from the apocalyptic world we currently inhabit. Getting caught up in *Outlander* certainly distracted me. Minus the extreme need for distraction, though, I think I would have stopped watching this bodice-ripper earlier than I did, after the third or fourth rape perhaps.

Good point to **Cathy Gilligan**, re the error of dismissing an entire genre, given that most people are likely to find at least something to like among a genre's variations. Nevertheless, I think that we all tend to gravitate toward the genres in which we've found a higher percentage of enjoyable items. It sometimes doesn't seem worth the time and effort to plod through dross to find an occasional gem.

I am eager to hear what people think of *Lovecraft Country*. Scott and I loved Matt Ruff's novel. It was a book discussion book some years back. Unfortunately we won't see the filmed version until it's done its time on HBO screens; we don't subscribe to HBO.

John D. Berry has such an elegant style. Thanks for the Rich Brown piece.

Joe Leslie Adams

[SC] Walking can be such an adventure in these cautious and paranoid times. Jeanne and I were in the neighborhood for a walk one day along the street in your beaver sculpture garden photo. I recognize the big house on the other side of the bike bridge with the mural on the side. Jeanne and I also ran into Jon when we were about to start a walk down your street one day. This week we ran into **Steve Johnson** on a walk over on his end of town. We get around.

[JG] Re your comment to **Jim** and **Diane**, re *their* comment to **Andy** on Kurosawa movies: We choose movies we've seen before to watch on Sunday night. Last week I suggested two movies that I remember seeing on campus, circa 1981, to stream: *Kagamusha* and *Breaker Morant*. *Kagamusha* was the first Kurosawa film I'd ever seen, but it inspired me to show up for as many Kurosawa films as possible. When recommending *Kagamusha* to Scott, I was remembering the achingly beautiful moment in which the king's double, a thief played by Tatsuya Nakadai, draws an arm rest/desk to his side and leans on it in exactly the way the dead king had, and everyone in the room suddenly/finally sees that the thief has become the king, Shingen. I was so glad to see it again. The moment was still gorgeous.

YES! I also attended Professor Doeppers' Cultural Geography class! I did a paper for him that was a joint production for Cultural Geography and Ray Olderman's contemporary English class – on *Catch-22*, focusing on geographical discontinuities in Heller's novel. Fun. Doeppers was very accommodating of my excitement but I don't think he entirely approved.

Jim Hudson and Diane Martin

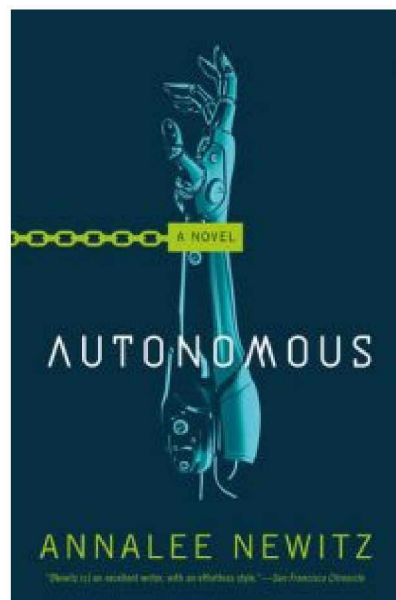
[SC] Thanks for the garden tour the last time we were there, and the currents. We made short work of those beauties. We recently made our second restaurant outing. We decided on the Ohio Tavern, just off Atwood Ave, for tacos. The Ohio Tavern is such a neighborhood-focused bar that they don't even have a

sign outside to tell you who they are. They have been serving very good tacos for a few years now and they recently set up a designated outside seating area in front of the bar in the parking spaces on Ohio Ave. In the late afternoon, the sun moves behind the building so the entire sidewalk and street are shaded. We managed to get a two-top table on the sidewalk next to the building and away from the rather tightly arranged four-top tables in the main seating area in the street. You order at an open window to the bar and pick up when they call. We each had two very nice tacos and I tried Mexican street corn for the first time (delicious.) I had a beer. Jeanne had a pina colada, but when we ordered they handed us an airline-sized bottle of rum. A little later we picked up the rest of the drink with garnish mixed in the bar and missing only the booze (“the most important part” the cashier reminded us). Jeanne decided to skip the booze and now I have an orphan little bottle of white rum at home looking for a job.

[JG] We also loved the National Theatre’s production of *Amadeus*. (I always want to call it *Salieri*, but then I remember and laugh: that’s the point I tell myself; Salieri’s story was eclipsed by Mozart’s.) I thought it was interesting to see that the movie and the stage play chose to excerpt different scenes from Mozart’s operas. I wonder if the script only says “Insert 2-minute excerpt here,” and lets the director choose? The acting was great, but we were also bowled over by the set which often required an orchestra AND operatic stage with singers on stage at one time. A stage on top of a stage. It was all handled beautifully.

America Players Theater’s *An Improbable Fiction* was great too. I really hope to see several more iterations as DeVita develops it. I loved the fact that all the dialog was taken from so many Shakespeare plays, with characters seeming to grab the most appropriate sentiment available even if the quoted line wasn’t originally *their* line or even *their* play. In spite of that, the dialog rarely felt awkward and it was easy to enjoy the whole play without trying to identify the source of each line. (Sorry again to you and to **Greg** for having forgotten to arrange a zoom discussion session on the play!)

Your mention of the sanitizing spray tech reminded me of part of Annalee Newitz’s novel, *Autonomous*, in



which furniture is all alive. When people leave the room, the house computers take advantage of their absence to water the furniture. The novel, set in a world devastated by global warming and dominated by Big Pharma has been on my mind a lot. There are hundreds of ideas in it that kept my mind buzzing throughout and still... And fascinating characters and exciting plot too. Recommended.

Catie Pfeifer

[SC] It’s tough to end up with a mixed reaction to a series you’ve invested so much in (including reading connected stories and playing games.) The closest thing I can think of to that is our investment in the *Expanses* series where we have hungrily consumed all the novels as they’ve been published, and are now adjusting our personal visions to the TV version. In our case it has been mostly positive. I’ve had several experiences with shows that initially drew me in but as the seasons went by the show gradually became disappointing. In a few cases a series built up to a hugely disappointing, even maddening, climax/end after many seasons of time invested (I’m thinking of *Lost*, here). But I have learned from reading a fair number of Stephen King novels over the years that sometimes the best part of the experience is the journey and not the end.

[JG] It’s good to know I’m not alone in disliking *Wuthering Heights*!

Jeannie Bergmann

[SC] Only since the pandemic have I felt the slightest urge to get a dog. We had dogs, cats and other animals at home when I was a kid, but I quickly came to appreciate the downsides of having pets and so I never got one of my own. Being retired now and stuck at home during the plague, a dog would be a very pleasant distraction but I keep reminding myself that the plague will end and we will resume travelling where a dog becomes difficult to bring along and hard to leave behind. Also, the story of dogs always end the same and much too soon. I think I will pass on the heartache for now.

“Eft” was wonderfully icky, but I liked “Familiar” much better. The story felt more complete. The lush language of

“Envoy” was fun to read aloud. Good luck with the Rhysling Award.

[JG] The *Lāadan Dictionary* seems to be selling fairly well. I hope the SFPA has begun to see some income from it!

Re your comment to **Georgie**, it would be interesting to compare today’s kids socialization in isolation with the kids who went through similar trauma in 1915.

I was really intrigued by the story fragments, “Eft,” and “Familiar.” The feeling they evoke reminds me of Ellen Klages stories because her fiction also infuses magic into childhood memories.

Hope Kiefer and Karl Hailman

[SC] Big news from you guys this month! Congratulations on the car purchase. I think you are right about it being a good time to buy. I like the photo, it’s cute with the masks. Also, Hope is driving out to the West Coast and back. Very cool. Very complicated. I could see a drive out west during the plague meaning carefully negotiating bathroom, gas and meal breaks and motel stops being one thing, but can you get all the way out and back without being forced to quarantine for 2 weeks somewhere? Things are so bad out in western America just now that the rules could change on you while you are on the road. What are you going to tell them if they stop you when you enter a new state, “Just passing thru”?

[JG] I also wish you the best of luck on your trip, Hope. I just read an article from *The New York Times* advising travelers to carefully plan their trip and consult with health regulations of states along their route. Beyond the safety issues, I hope you have fun and some great conversations with Dee Dee and your sister.

What’s New Knee Tales

[JG] My left knee is more or less working fine since its replacement, but my right knee is acting up. I knew when I had the left knee replaced that I’d need to have the other one worked on soon. But then the pandemic happened and elective procedures were mostly cancelled. Also, I’d rather avoid hospitals as much as possible for the duration. So now I am dealing with right knee problems. With the left knee, pre-surgery, it would get painful after use. But the right knee seems to be affecting my calf muscles, which becomes an issue when I sit down or get up off a low chair. I’ve

been using a cane for a few months and recently I’ve started using knee braces, which have helped a lot. The only advantage here is that when walking with a cane everyone tends to give me the right of way. The “Power of the Cane”!

BEZIER Forever!

[JG] One day after a walk in a faraway neighborhood, Scott and I returned to our car and I stared at our license plate. Something was wrong. Our license plate is *supposed* to be BEZIER, like the French mathematician and more importantly to me: like the awesome drawing tool in Adobe Creative Suite software. When we chose it many years ago (after Scott shot down the idea of PIXEL), a couple local computer graphic artists told me that they’d tried to get the BEZIER vanity plate for themselves and wondered if I’d sell it to them. No way José. But as we walked back to the car my eye was caught by our license plate. It was SPELLED WRONG! We’d recently had to reorder the plate and it came back as BEIZER. ****BEIZER!!?!**** Beyond the horribleness of this error, one of my first thoughts was that all my friends, knowing about my terrible spelling ability, would assume that the misspelling was my fault! And then I worried that those avaricious graphic artists might be able to steal BEZIER. Scott is in charge of all communications with the Department of Transportation, due to his previous employment there, and I urged him to immediately call and find out what had happened and get a corrected plate. Luckily, we are still listed as the proud owner of the vanity plate, BEZIER; the error was DOT’s and they promised to send us new plates. It’s been several weeks since then, and no plates have arrived yet. So every time we go to the car I glare at the plate and scornfully mutter, “BEIZER!”

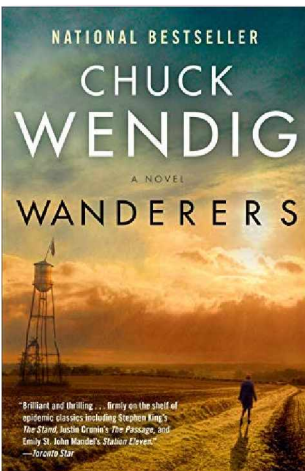




Gardening Madness

[JG] Possibly inspired by all the gorgeous gardens and yards we are seeing during our neighborhood walks, Scott has thrown himself into yard work lately. He did some major pruning of our yard's many lilac bushes, including cutting down and digging up the roots of several bushes. And we ordered a Very Large Pile of wood chips to spread around the chastened lilacs.

Books!



[JG] Scott and I really enjoyed the September selection for the Science Fiction Without Borders book club. *Wanderers* by Chuck Wendig is a big book (800 pages in hardcover; 3,453 pages on my iBook). Lets see: it's a dystopian, apocalyptic story about a plague, global warming, lots of science vs. fake news. It's also an action-packed, always

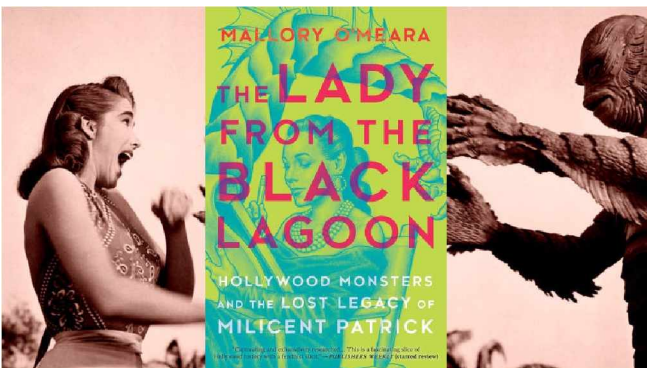
surprising story. Amazingly it came out in early 2019, well before the city of Wuhan began featuring in the news. Nevertheless, the novel's epidemiological science

seems ripped out of current news. *Wanderers'* plague isn't our plague, but there's enough overlap in societal reactions and scientific responses that it's incredibly on point nonetheless. And as I said, it's got a really good story. I'm looking forward to hearing what others in the reading group have to say about it.

September's book is a non-fiction book: *The Lady from the Black Lagoon: Hollywood Monsters and the Lost Legacy of Milicent Patrick* by Mallory O'Meara. (Sounds like an Andy Hooper essay!) We will be discussing it on September 15 via zoom. Send me an email if you'd like to join us!

Artwork for CoNZealand

[JG] This year Spike and Tom Becker were in charge of the virtual exhibit hall (also known as "Squid Hall" for reasons I was never clear on) for the virtual worldcon—CoNZealand. They asked me to create a landing page map for the Exhibit Hall, that could be made into a clickable directory, capable of sending folks to appropriate pages. "When do you need it?" I asked. "Well, um, in a week, or maybe tomorrow?" Turned out to be a fun project and I got it done in two days, a compromise. They asked for a robot dinosaur and so I made them an Apple™ Robosaur ... an iRobosaur? (Notice the iPhone-like control pad.) And since the site selection voting was already closed, I thought I could be a little fanciful about the actual candidates and make a COVID joke along the way. When I sent Spike and Tom the drawings they only had a few corrections: Squids staffing welcome desks are apparently *pink* in color, not blue, which was how I originally painted my squid person. And Tom thought that the smoke from the Hobbit house should rise above/through the display frame. OK, easy enough in a virtual world. It was kind of exhilarating to do a rush job on deadline again, especially because it was a fun cartoon job.

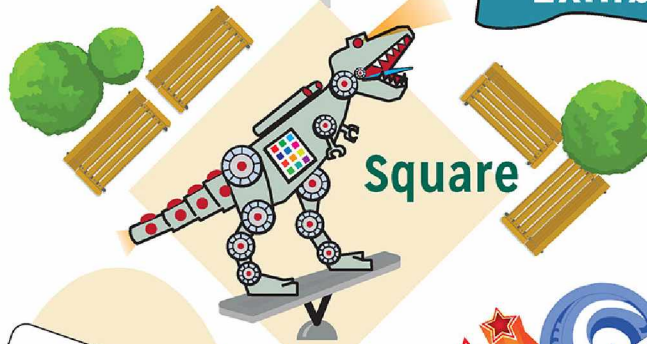




Art Show



Exhibits Desk



Square

Guests of Honor

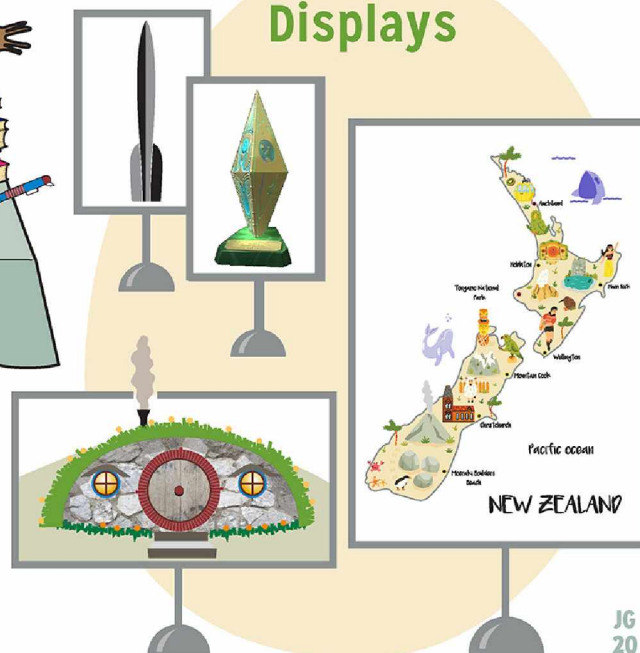


Site Selection
(closed)



Dealers Hall

Displays



JG
20

A Letter of Comment to Lucy Huntzinger, 1994, by Jeanne Gomoll

What a relief it is to hear that long, shapely fingernails are listed on the *optional* list in the “Female Code of Essential Accouterments.” (FCEA. A witty, pronounceable acronym is needed here, but it’s amazing enough that I’m actually writing you a Loc. So let’s move on.)

It’s a relief about the fingernails thing (thanks, Joe) because I’ve never had much luck with fingernails and I’d hate to think I’d failed as a Woman because of it.

I bit my nails to the quick as a girl—at least into high school—for something to do, I think. When I decided to stop, I just stopped. It didn’t seem to be a problem. But by then, I had turned into a potter (of ceramics), and—when not broke—my nails tended to collect clay dust. And of course, I needed to keep them trimmed short to prevent unplanned patterns from being scored onto the sides of my pots.

One day—as I worked on a bowl—I reached into the water container next to the spinning bat of the wheel. I meant to sluice a handful of water onto the spinning cylinder of clay, but instead of water, my hand came up with a needle dowel protruding from under my right thumbnail.

A needle dowel is a pencil-sized wooden stick with a 4-inch steel needle poking out the end. Potters use this tool to slice off the rims of pots as they spin on the bat. How many times had my teacher reminded me to return it needle-down into my water container? How many times had I said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah?”

The needle part of the needle dowel had penetrated all the way under and past the quick of my nail and it hurt like the blazes. I believe my expletives spewed fluently. But the memory of how the needle was extracted, how the wheel was cleansed of blood to its former gray, muddy self, and the fate of the bowl I had been making, is foggy. I do know I left the art lab with some gauze and tape binding my thumb. I know I walked down the hallway to my next class, PhysEd, where the growing pink stain on the gauze exempted me from that day’s

activities which was gymnastics, trampoline jumping. I know I spotted other jumpers from the edge of the tramp, and helped to collapse the trampoline for storage at the end of the hour, which is when the remnants of my right nail were torn off my thumb by the elastic bungee straps as a result of a hasty classmate’s desire to hit the showers. After that I forget again.

I wonder if they’re still using the trampoline canvas with the big, dried spurt of blood on it? It might have clashed with the school colors, blue and gold, but the stain’s position just below the picture of our school’s mascot—a fierce Viking—would seem appropriate.

In any case, it took years before that nail ever grew back normally, during which time I tended to hide my nails. Every once in a while, when they got in the way, I’d trim them with a nail clippers. And that still pretty much describes the extent of my nail maintenance routine. I’ve never worn rings, since I dislike the feeling of things attached to my hands. They get in the way. The relatively recent phenomenon of graphics computers saved me from a fatal Xacto-blade injury, but I can point out several scars of less-than fatal Xacto-blade mishaps. My hands are definitely high risk work sites. If I ever draw workman’s comp I would quote high odds on a hand injury as the cause.

Even as I type, I’m nursing that same old right thumb by pushing the space bar with my left thumb. I cut my thumb in the chain of my 10-speed yesterday, and it still hurts. Which is probably why I recalled this history when I read about your conversation with Joe Wesson.

So you can imagine my relief.

