



**Shambling Toward
Capclave**

**A Review of *The
Children of Kings &
Thunderlord***

**Should Small
Press Award
Finalists Be Limited
to Six Stories?**

**Review of *Bring
the Jubilee***

**Allergic to
Everything on the
Planet**

O, Those Martians

It's Cathy's Con

**A Rant about The
Planets TV
Program**

“Shambling toward Capclave”

There was some talk of books before the 7/7/17 July First Friday meeting. “Let’s get this truncated meeting done,” said President Bob. Sam S. said we have a little less than \$xxx). Year over year -\$xxx



For Capclave Present Sam S. said membership was up to xxx, a steady trickle but we need more, we’re about normal pace and need to be ahead of it. Shambling toward Capclave. Cap Future, Far Future, and 2020 not here. For WFC Sam S said we are up to xxx members. A number of guests have been announced with one or two more to come. It will be held at Renaissance Baltimore Nov 1-3, 2019.

Small Press Award Committee told people to read stories and vote. Trustees had nothing.
Talk SF: We will be discussing Hugo finalists this time.

Old business: Bylaws don’t mention small press award, the standing rules do and can be modified.

Intertivities: Pizza place in Multan Pakistan with robot waitress, business doubled.

Analog mentioned SPA in bio description of Martin L. Shoemaker.

Meeting switch – Secretary should contact webmaster.

No new business

Third meeting – Apurua Desai.

Mark announced a Song Circle next week.

Blame John for rain at Fourth of July.

Motion to adjourn 9:32. Passed unanimously

Attendance: Rodger Burns, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, David Keener, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Judy & Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Apurua Desai

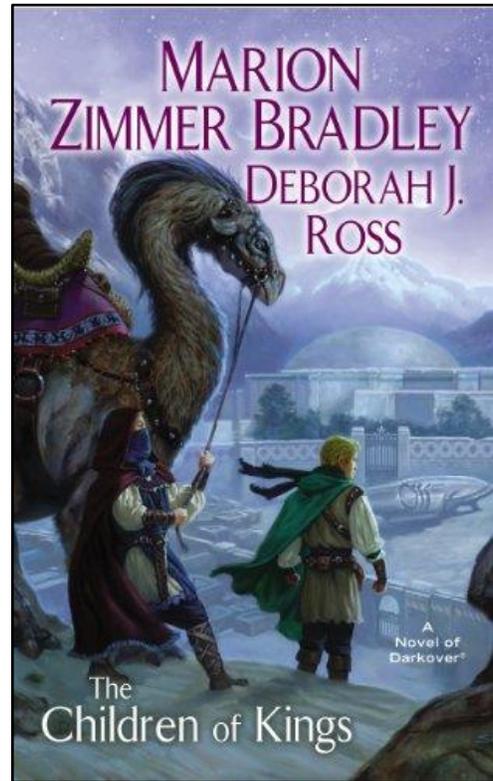
A Review of *The Children of Kings* and *Thunderlord* (Darkover) By Marion Zimmer Bradley & Deborah J. Ross Reviewed by Kim Hargan

I had been keeping an eye out for *The Children of Kings* (2013) in my local library since I had read the book before it (*Hastur Lord*). I guess I was looking in the wrong library, because when I went to a different branch, there it was on the shelves, along with *Thunderlord* (2016). I immediately checked them both out for reading. Immediate recommendation: not bad reads. I think most readers will enjoy them.

So, a brief recap for context. Ages ago the *chieri* (and since it is always in italics, I think the emphasis is that it is a word in their language), humanoid aliens with six-fingered hands, expanded out into space, built themselves something of an empire, and then, when it appeared to them that they had achieved everything they had wanted to as a race, they dwindled back to their home planet. Along the way they developed psionic power or talents called *laran* (apparently a *chieri* word also). On their home planet they live a seemingly simple life in nature, with something of the taste of Tolkien’s elves, but we are given glimpses of rather sophisticated infrastructure, some of it based on *laran*.

Fast forward a few centuries (or millennia) and a colony ship of humans crash lands on the *chieri* homeworld. The humans name it Darkover, perhaps because of the rather dim light of its primary sun, a dwarf red star. Under the influence of an intoxicating, aphrodisiac pollen “bloom” (blowing everywhere in clouds), some humans mate with and thereby manage to interbreed with some *chieri*, and their descendants inherit and pass on the capacity to use *laran*, and on occasion are born with six-fingered hands.

The *chieri* history is given in dribs and drabs as backstory. Marion Zimmer Bradley’s set (I’m not going to call it a series; why should be clear soon enough) of Darkover novels begins “chronologically” with the crash landing of the colony ship. Humans set themselves up with the foundations of their own technology plus *laran*, develop a fairly highly-technological society, bring it all crashing down in a set of wars made horrendous by the use of *laran*-based weapons from which weird scars remain in the landscape, rebuild themselves as essentially a high medieval society under the Compact which forbids the use of weapons that don’t bring you into the reciprocal reach of your enemy (i.e., no more *laran* weapons, but swords and arrows are OK) while the capacity to use *laran* dwindles. They then have to deal with the Machiavellian politics of humanity’s Federation when it “rediscovers” Darkover and decides that the Federation needs to have a spaceport there because of its strategic location, and finally with the collapse of the Federation and the threat of possibly being sucked into the conflict by one faction or another.



This setup essentially allowed Marion Zimmer Bradley to have it all. Science fiction, sword and sorcery (well, not really sorcery, but *laran*, which is genetic – some people have it, most don’t, and some have more and others have less; besides telepathy, it manifests itself as specific “gifts” which are passed down in certain bloodlines), interstellar politics and all that. The first published Darkover novel was *The World Wreckers*, coming some time after the “rediscovery” by the Federation. The novels in the set have since ranged over the entire timespan, from the original human arrival to the conflict following the collapse of the Federation.

In Marion Zimmer Bradley’s last years a younger novelist, Deborah J. Ross, befriended her and became a collaborator on Darkover novels, helping to organize Bradley’s outlines and notes, jointly writing several novels, and now writing further novels on her own, but crediting Bradley in the first line as main author. In Ross’s introductory Notes to *The Children of Kings*, she comments that writing new Darkover novels is like writing historical fiction, by which I think she means making sure to keep all the clans or Houses located in the right places and in the correct (whether good or bad) relationships with each other, not stepping outside the internal chronology between and among previous books, keeping track of who is descended from whom, and so on.

Now, *The Children of Kings* and *Thunderlord*. Although *The Children of Kings* was published earlier, it is much the “later” book in Darkover’s internal chronology. It takes place after the Federation’s withdrawal from the spaceport and while the factional fighting/warfare is going on “out there” among the stars, and

so probably counts as the farthest “forward” story in the Darkover universe so far. The protagonist is Gareth Marius-Danvan Elhalyn y Hastur, Heir to the Comyn and the Seven Domains. Not that anyone takes him seriously – the Elhalyn line is known for mental instability and even madness. A few years back (in *Hastur Lord*), he allowed himself to be manipulated in an unsuccessful power play by his Elhalyn grandmother, and his actions then convinced everyone that he was just another batty Elhalyn. The government is still well-governed by a regent, and both the regent and his son and heir (likely the next regent) are dear friends to Gareth. Nevertheless, rights to family lines still count in a medieval fashion, and there are any number of oily personages pushing their marriageable age daughters at Gareth for the position that would gain for them.

Even as a young adult, Gareth would like to get out from under his stifling situation and have adventures like the heroes in song and ballad (or in his case, an imported Federation TV spy series). He gets them. He travels to Carthon disguised as a lensmaker’s apprentice, with fine glass lenses to sell. Carthon is a trade town between the Comyn and the Seven Domains and the Dry Towns. Much of Carthon’s culture is Dry Towns, but it still is able to tolerate Comyn culture. The Dry Towns farther on are not so tolerant – they have a culture based on honor and response to insult, making the men macho in their outlook and very touchy. The Dry Towners, with their different culture, language and possibly even genetics (they look different from most of the people of the Seven Domains), might represent a later human colonization from a different world.

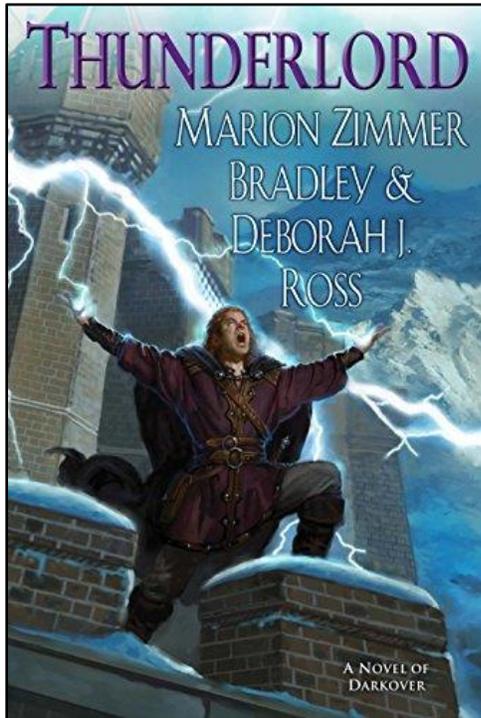
Gareth hears some disquieting news suggesting someone is providing off-world blasters to at least one desert tribe on the far side of the main Dry Towns. He sets off to look into it with a trusty companion, who is a strong-willed young woman much used to looking after herself in Carthon. They find weapons smugglers whose main concern is actually getting weapons to one of the factions in the post-Federation conflict, but who are also handing out almost-used-up blasters to certain locals to keep them happy. Gareth gets mixed up in all this, sends a telepathic warning back to the Comyn that if one side from space is allowed to use the inactive spaceport, the other (or another – there appear to be more than one faction “out there”) side is likely to level the whole capital city from orbit, fights a duel with the son of one of the most powerful Dry Towns lords, and saves his life using *laran*.

As a result the planet (at least the capital city of the Comyn) is saved and the first ever overture of peace is established between the Comyn and the Dry Towns. But although Gareth has demonstrated levelheadedness and the possibility of having inherited the powerful Hastur *laran* gift, he decides he really doesn’t want to be sucked back into the straitjacket of his former life. He renounces all titles so that, as we find out in a following private moment, he can propose marriage to the trusty female companion of his adventures, whom he has come to love.

Thunderlord is the direct sequel to *Stormqueen!*, and has some of the most nuanced characterization I have seen in a novel. In *Stormqueen!*, a feud between the Scathfell and Aldaran clans or demesnes broke out into open warfare. The Scathfells were shown to be the “villains” in the piece, trying to either conquer or destroy the Aldaran ruling family. Unfortunately for them, a daughter was born to the Aldarans who could direct the weather to brew up a mighty thunder storm and then blast any enemies with a barrage of lightning bolts. *Thunderlord* takes place a generation later, with Gwynn-Alar, the last surviving member of the Scathfell ruling clan or family (probably because he was too young to be on the battlefield at the time), filled with feelings of vengeance and fear (the latter because you never know, the Aldarans might come back at them someday to finish off the job with more lightning).

Even though Gwynn-Alar has built up a small army for dealing a final blow to the Aldarans, he knows

they will be as nothing before a lightning barrage. So he decides he needs an equalizer. The genetic heritage of the “Stormqueen” is carried by the Rockraven clan, a house of lower-level nobles – and in this case, impoverished to the point of barely squeaking by. An offer from the powerful and wealthy Scathfell lord to wed the oldest daughter, with a dowry that would save the family, is welcome to both the Rockravens as well as to Kyria, the oldest daughter. Kyria sets off with the delegation from Scathfell with her beloved younger sister Alayna, who has always been her closest friend and partner in the escapades they have gotten into within the Rockraven household.



On the way to Scathfell they meet a young man named Edric traveling in the same direction, and shortly before their paths were to have separated again, their party is attacked by bandits and Kyria is kidnaped. The Scathfell delegation, with Alayna and several wounded men, decide to push on to Scathfell, from where Gwynn-Alar will be able to bargain a ransom to get Kyria back. Meanwhile, young Edric sets off on his own to see if he might be able to rescue Kyria directly, which he does. However, their escape path from the bandits takes them away from Scathfell and into further adventures. Oh, and by the way, young Edric is the Aldaran heir, heading home after receiving training to control his *laran*, the major facet of which turns out to be the lightning gift.

Now comes the interesting part. Gwynn-Alar’s men can’t find what happened to Kyria. The assumption is that she is dead. Alayna is devastated by this news, but begins to respond to Gwynn-Alar’s kindness. Not that he isn’t a stern ruler – he can be quite harsh when punishing failure, but not particularly cruel. Over time (and here in the highlands, once the winter snows begin to fill in the passes, most people don’t travel), Alayna and Gwynn-Alar find solace and then love. (Right – Alayna is Kyria’s sister, member of the Rockraven clan, so she also carries the Stormqueen’s genes, so one sister is as good as the other for that. But we watch as the relationship grows, and it *is* love, and Kyria had never actually met Gwynn-Alar in person.) So we see a strong man, capable of love and loving concern, but who nevertheless has real paranoia and fear in his heart when it comes to the Aldarans. Spring returns, the various lords and ladies of the highlands travel to Thendara, the capital, in the lowlands for the summer season. Edric and Kyria made it safely to the Aldaran home, so we see Edric making peace overtures to Gwynn-Alar. Kyria visits Alayna in secret to let her know she is alive and pregnant, so things appear to be going for the better.

However, Alayna miscarries twice, and after the second miscarriage a medical examination by *laran* discovers that she has problems with her reproductive tract such she could get pregnant in the future, but she will never be able to carry the baby to term. Meanwhile, Gwynn-Alar’s spy in Aldaran reports that not only is Edric married, but that the wife is Kyria and she has had twin boys! Aldaran has stolen the bride that was to be his, and now there is double the threat from them in the future! Gwynn-Alar goes off the deep end, first with an extended alcoholic binge, and then launching his army for an attack. Alayna rushes off to warn her sister and brother-in-law, who doesn’t have anything like an army to match Scathfell’s. However, as mentioned before, he does have the lightning gift (which Gwynn-Alar didn’t know about). Scathfell’s forces are devastated, although most of them are not killed, Gwynn-Alar

surrenders and is in despair, but finally Kyria offers the solution of giving one of the twins to Scathfell for adoption (she trusts her sister Alayna, even if Gwynn-Alar's actions have not been the wisest). That means that not only will Scathfell's future lords have the lightning gift equally, but as both houses will promote the brotherhood of the two boys, the two houses should grow in friendship as well.

Readability: one of the fun things about the chronologically "early" Darkover novels by Marion Zimmer Bradley is the eldritch, eerie air she was able to create even though these were essentially science fiction novels. Part of that came from the public view of the majority (who didn't have *laran*, or enough of it to do anything with it) that *laran* was witchcraft, with all the medieval-style views that go along with that pejorative term. Ross is not able to capture or recreate that eeriness in her novels. The read is much more straightforward adventure novel in style. Having said that, the stories move their plots right along, and if you have the uninterrupted time, these books are definitely page-turners. As I got going in each one, I found myself staying up through the night to read them. (Being retired, I can afford to do that.)

Bradley was, in her day, something of a feminist (how fervid I don't really know, but she did like her female characters) and Ross also writes strong female characters for Darkover. Gareth was the central figure in *The Children of Kings*, but with strong female characters playing important supporting roles, including saving the planet following Gareth's warning about the warring off-world factions. In *Thunderlord*, although the story is driven by Gwynn-Alar's unfortunate fixations, the action first follows Kyria's adventures until she and Edric are safe, and then the story switches to Alayna and the growth of her relationship with Gwynn-Alar, including her growth and finding of herself as lady of the castle. I found nothing particularly preachy in these books; the characterization of the strong female characters was simply a natural part of the stories.

If you like adventure stories with well-rounded characters, including realistic, strong motivations for those in the roles of the villains of the pieces that show them as real people too, then you should enjoy these additions to the Darkover oeuvre.

Should Small Press Award Finalists Be Limited to Six Stories?

The 7/21/17 July First Friday meeting began with President Bob saying, "Alright folks, let's get things moving. Sam L summarized minutes. This led to a discussion of rain at Fourth of July picnic. Sam L has new journal. Bob said the next meeting is here. August meetings are switched as the Scheiners are in Helsinki for Worldcon. First Friday at Candy's and Third at Sam's. Cathy asked the Secretary to put reminder on email lists.

Cathy spoke for Capclave present as Elizabeth was not here. Cathy is taking the lead on Capclave temporarily while Elizabeth is dealing with work and health stuff. Capclave needs people to help with book launch czar, green room, fan table, and workshops. Cathy doing programming coordinating and invites. Please take rack cards and bookmarks. Cap Future: Cathy is looking at hotels and comparing charts. Capclave Future: Sam P said Robert L. Sawyer is GoH for Capclave 2019. Cap 2020 had nothing new.

World Fantasy Convention: Bill said memberships trickled in. 950 cap. We have announced all of our guests, but if right person comes in can change it. Mike Walsh, Tom Kidd, Aliette de Bodard, Scott Edelman, Linda D. Addison, and Kaaron Warren from Australia. Early yet. We'll have a membership bump at this year's WFC in Texas. By end of the year, we hope we will be getting close to the cap. There

was talk about a committee meeting, but it is pushed back to later in year as nothing is pressing. Need to decide when to start getting dealers.

Committee to discuss SF gave the magazine schedule. Swapping meetings so discussing Clarkesworld next. Small Press Award said the deadline is Aug 6th.

Trustees: Not involved in the matter of the Press Secretary.

Entertivities: Kim read Analog mention of SPA in bio of Martin L. Shoemaker.

Small Press. Cathy said if 70% vote, will do fudge. 80% cheesecake. 90% both, 100% individual packets of fudge. Can't speak for Madeleine. If you don't know your small press award password, email Paul. Same password as last time.

Old business: Lawhorn had proposed to limit the total number of stories on the small press finalist list to a maximum of six. Cathy said, as someone on and off the committee, given that the committee sifts through a lot of stories... averaged 7 only in last couple of years up to nine. This is not something that needs to be changed. If you don't want to read all the stories, you don't have to.



Bill said if you want to be fair in judging you need to at least start all the stories. The Hugos are only six. Rodger said that the Worldcon members are from all over the world, to think a committee from the few WSFAns can do the same is not realistic.

Bill suggested that each person on the committee gives their top story and that still gives one more for everyone to agree on. The thing is, you get to pick at least one of the finalists. Carolyn pointed out that Bill hasn't been on the committee. Cathy said people do a top 10 or top 12 votes. Any story picked by at least three ends up on the list and then if there's room we add people's first pick. Bill said, in practice, the committee makes the final decision so can insist that each person's top story goes in. Even if everyone else thinks it stinks.

People on committee disagreed. Rodger said that the committee values consensus. Almost certainly go for stories picked by most. Sam said, people only rank their top five, so having more gives them more choice. Carolyn said she hasn't ranked stories, but reason why she wanted option of 5 -10 when set up, was because people on committee were doing some horse trading and wanted to have some room for consensus. It's worked pretty well and don't understand need to change.

Bill said that as an economist who does a lot of surveys, the more you expect a respondent to do, the fewer people will do it. The extra stories may be too much and fewer people will do it. Give me the best six stories. It's a strong feeling on my part. In last few years, I have the impression that the quality has suffered and the stories are getting longer. Bob, pointed out that actually this year there was only one long story. Carolyn said that the average is 6-7000. Very few of the long stories get in because committee realizes few want to read long ones. Tend to be short. Committee picks at least one really short.



Bill concluded by saying, I'm going to withdraw the motion, but if next year there's nine to ten stories, I'm going to move to kill the award.

New business: Next meeting is here, third meeting is in Virginia.

Bill moved that we add "No Award" as one of the options in the small press award for finalists. Rodger asked, if we allow no award as an option, how would this be publicized? In the past we only announce the winner and not where the others are ranked. So unless No Award wins, who would know? Cathy said, if no award wins, we'll have to be careful about how we announce it, just say we decided not to award the award.

Bill said I find it very unlikely No Award would win, but feed that voters should be able to say no stories worked for them. There is a point where three stories down, you'd want an option that would prevent the other stories from winning. Cathy said, No Award works for Hugos, so don't think it is unreasonable for people to say they didn't like any of the options or only a few of them. So not unreasonable to have as an option.

Bill said there might be a voter who would want no award and that would count toward Cathy's goals. We use the same voting system as Hugos.

There was a vote. Bob said eight to three with two abstentions. So it passes and changes the standing rules.

No more new business.

Andrew is here for second meetings.

Announcements: Bill said BWAWA is bidding to host 2021 Worldcon in DC. Things are progressing. See him to presupport. If we win, we'll need help of everyone.

Jordin Kire passed away from heart complications. Engineer and filker, see File 770.

Carolyn has happy announcement. She is retiring at the end of the month.

Motion to adjourn passed unanimously at 9:58.

Elizabeth Jones paid membership

Attendance: Rodger Burns, Carolyn Frank, Cathy Green, Frances Holland, Michael Ikeda, Beth Jones, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Sarah Mitchell, Sam Pierce, Steve Smith, Mike Taylor, Deidre Tracy, Ivy Yap, and Andrew Johnson,

**Review of <http://images.amazon.com/images/P/B06XWRST2B.01.LZZZZZZZ.jpg> *Bring the Jubilee* by Ward Moore
Reviewed by Sam Lubell**

HBO is taking some criticism on social media for a proposed new alternate history show in which the South won the Civil War. Perhaps they should take some cues from the very first alternate history (well mostly) novel to use this idea – Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee* first published in 1955.

Hodgins Backmaker, the first person narrator of the story lives in a version of the United States still stuck in a depression in the 1930s from having lost the War of Southron Independence in 1864. Apparently influenced by post-WWI Germany, Moore paints a picture of a backward North perpetually impoverished from being forced to pay indemnities to the South. While the U.S. does not have slaves, non-whites are routinely lynched, denied equal rights, and blamed

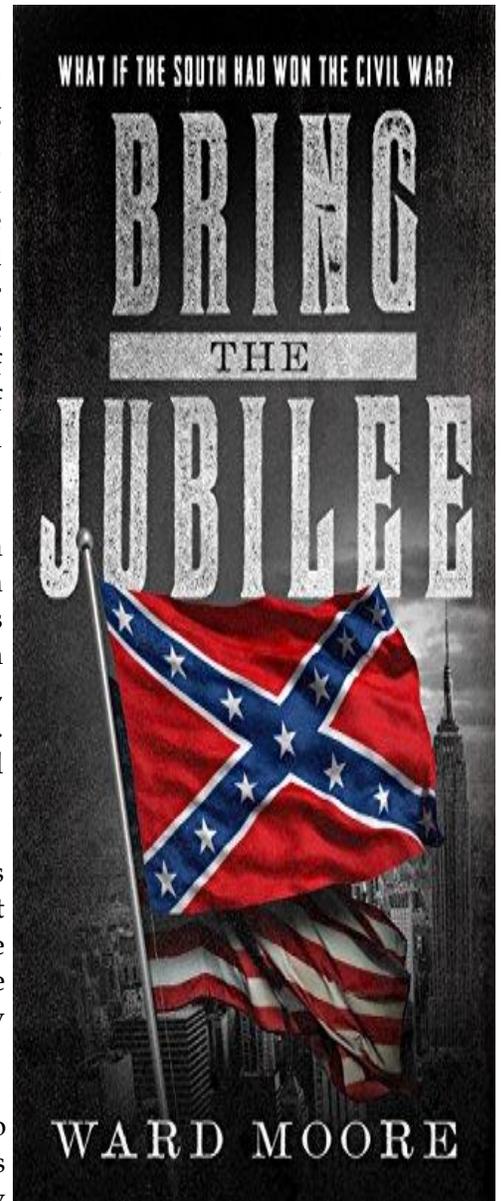
for the war. Whites do not live much better as most people have to sell themselves as indentured servants to a company, emigrate to a more successful country, or join the Confederate Legion and fight for the South. The United States is technologically backward as well, with few minibiles (their version of the automobile) and no transcontinental railroad line (the Confederate States have seven).

Hodgins grows up a dreamer with little manual dexterity. He prefers to read and think. Lacking money for college, he decides to relieve his parents of the burden of supporting him by setting out for New York. After being robbed of all his possessions, Hodgins is aided by a drunk who helps him find a position at a bookstore. There he educates himself with the aid of the bookstore owner who is always willing to discuss history and philosophy. Gradually he realizes that the bookstore is a front for the Grand Army, a terrorist group that is trying to restore the country to greatness, but who believe "The darkies are better off among their own". Ultimately, he finds his way to a group of independent scholars, not affiliated with any university, and becomes a historian who writes about the Civil War.

It is worth noting that considering the book was published in 1955, it avoids much of the prejudice of the day. In part, this is a result of being set in the North, rather than in the victorious Confederacy where he would encounter slaves. But it is also a deliberate choice by the author--Hodgins' best friend is a Negro, Monsieur Rene Enfandin, the Consul for the Republic of Haiti. And while there are only a handful of women in the book, all flawed in different ways, one is a genius inventor.

Since the very first sentence says the narrator is writing his account in 1877, despite being born in 1921, the reader should not be shocked to learn that time travel is involved. And while the surprise twist may seem old hat today, used on more than one episode of *Quantum Leap* among others, it was fresh and new when Moore invented it in 1955.

While the modern reader does need some historical perspective to enjoy the book, this is largely because the book is a victim of its own success. Many of the ideas here have been subsequently borrowed and developed by other authors. But there is still some value in reading the original "South wins the Civil War" novel. Readers who like alternate history need to read this classic of the subgenre.



“Allergic to Everything on the Planet”

WSFA 8-4-17 George Shaner presiding.

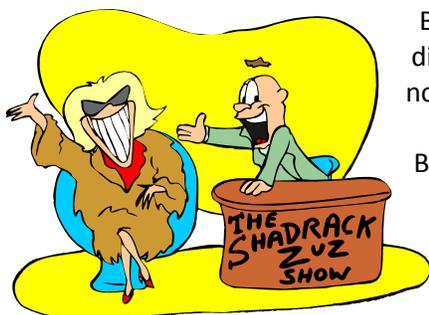
The 8/4/17 First Friday in August began with the veep in charge. “Already folks, let’s get the show on the road. It’s 9:12, the first Friday in August held in scenic Maryland. I’m your VP George Shaner.”

Sam L. gave minutes. George Shaner said he has the treasurer’s report \$xxx. Year to Year is down –xxx.

Capclave Present, Elizabeth said she is not dead, but has too much work at work. She is allergic to everything on the planet. Please sign up for Capclave. Will send pleading emails. Come help out. Take rack cards and bookmarks. Tons of rack cards. Capclave Future is in Iceland.

Capclave 2020 and WFC. Bill said that Sam S. is trying to get me to back off on 2020 since there are too many other events I’m doing, but I want to honor our guests. Things will be hectic as we go through 2018 WF and Worldcon vote in 2019 and if we get it the convention. If we delegate we can do it all. Bring in people with experience. We should try to get back even half of our past guests, with Worldcon being out of the US, we should be able to get people. Make better use of returning guests and scale back some of our local people that year.

Elizabeth said the 2021 Capclave can be billed as all local since many of us will be doing Worldcon. Mark said make 2021 a relaxacon. Bill said up to chair to decide. Sam L. said, “Mark, if you want to run...” Mark said he’d do a fast walk out the door.



Bill said he has a guest in mind, but don’t have a hotel yet. This led to discussion with the people the club voted in. Some of the top people are not doing as many conventions so he may need to call in some favors.

Bill continued for WFC 2018, we have our GoH. Michael Walsh, club member, the only person to be to all WFCs; artist guest Tom Kidd; special guest, Aliette de Bodard; another local Scott Edelman; Kaaron Warren from Australia; and poet Linda D Addison as toastmaster. These are people known for mentoring. Number wise, memberships are trickling up. WFC will take place Nov 1-4, 2018 at the Renaissance Inner Harbor. www.wfc2018.org can sign up there. Register before price goes up.

Small press award said people have through the weekend to vote.

Intertivities: American Art Museum arcade weekend. Gamer symphony is having a concert in Germantown. The Renaissance Festival starts before Labor Day. The Library of Congress is having its Book Festival the Saturday of Labor Day. SFWA will be at Baltimore book festival.

Elizabeth said Meetup and Tweets are happening. March-April WSFA Journal is up.

No old business.

New business. Fifth Friday in September. Yom Kippur and a week before Capclave. Bill moves that Fifth Friday be moved to Capclave. Mark suggested making it the Saturday of his song circle. George tabled it for the next meeting.

Here for first meeting: Amanda Elkhateeb, visitor here, lives in Colorado, came with Deidre. Goes to conventions. Katie Pinto, here through September, friend of Deidre.

Elizabeth said Star Trek Discovery will launch Sept 24th First episode on CBS regular TV then goes to All Access.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:44.

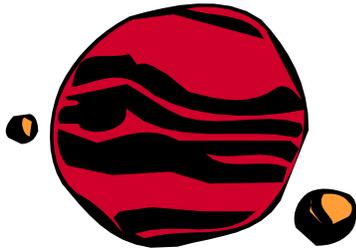
Attendance: Courtni Y Burtleson, Erica Ginter, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, Michael Ikeda, Beth Jones, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Candy Madigan, Sarah Mitchell, Mark Roth, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Deidre Tracy, Elizabeth Tracy, Ivy Yap, Katie Pinto, and Amanda Elkhateeb

O, Those Martians

By Barry Carver

The lecturer, shapely even in her Curie-suit and respirator, swiveled her perfect dimensions back to the diminutive crowd.

She'd been examining what could have been an amazing discovery: Two of her charges had called her to something they'd found just off the usual path claiming they'd found a "dinosaur bone". The structure would remind the untrained eye of, perhaps, a hip-ball and femur fragment of some giant sea-serpent but, at the slightest touch, it fell to powder.



Many such hoaxes had been created in odd places by the first miners and settlers. Whether wishful thinking or a calculated ruse was anyone's guess. Not wanting to get into this particular controversy (and impossibility), she dusted her gloves and wiped the moment from her mind. *Let's stick to reality, shall we?* – she wanted to say, but she brushed her own comment aside too.

“Over there, if you look carefully, you can make out the arc of Orion's Belt as it emerges from the sparkling cloud that was once Earth.”

“Where did Earth come from, Proctor?” asked young Edisoni, ever one to spark the class on to the next lesson.

“Much as our home did, Earth was made of material left over when Sol coalesced. It was destroyed 89 years ago, and while the cause isn't yet known, it was most likely an accident. Can anyone tell me what 89 years would be in ‘Earth Years?’”

“One hundred and sixty-seven and one-third Earth years” was the nearly instant answer, but it came so fast she couldn't tell which of the Guttenburgol twins said it first.

“You've been a good class today, so I'll give you ten minutes to enjoy gazing at the sky. Then you can go in and prepare to go home.” Ms. Voss then headed back into the building, doffed her exo-suit and made her secret way down to the thermal baths.

The kids hadn't been particularly good or bad; she was just still aching from her workout this morning and wanted to soak her tight, sore butt in as much hot, mineral water as she could. Afterhours, beneath the elementary school, was the one place she could relax without being in a crowd.

She slipped off the rest of her clothes and wondered how the red dust got into the little places that had been so thoroughly covered. She straddled the sanitizer, which was the last hurdle before she could melt into that life-rejuvenating pool. As she came out the far door of the old shower room and the airlock whispered shut behind her, she was finally alone.

It took a minute to get used to the smell of sulfur and copper that came up from the natural bath, as if anything here could be considered natural. This had been a sort of daily spa for the Japanese and Malaysian workers in the original camps. She'd read how, on Earth, every town and, in some cases, better homes, had small pools of hot water in which to soak.

What a joy that must have been here! To come home from a hard day in one of those antique "space-suits", covered in clinging dust and relax in fluids just below body temperature. It was really the high point of any day when she could sneak into this oddly never catalogued retreat.



Today all she'd done was talk to four-year-olds and stand outside in the "rain" for a while. Strange, she thought, that the rain should be so oppressive and the bath so liberating. Rain was a part of daily life here. That rain must've soaked down and replenished this place after countless ages of lying dry and empty, waiting for water to return – which without humanity's interference – would never have happened.

The atmospheric generators create a condition that means rain every day, all day, for a hundred kilometer circle. She'd seen a simulation that it'd been different on Earth. Rain fell from the convergence of competing pressure variations, actually out of clouds. Here, fine droplets condensed in the thin atmosphere and fell straight down out of a normally tan sky. In recent months that sky was starting to take on a blue tint, which administrators assured the populace, was the designed color.

Down in the echoing cavern of a forgotten workmen's treat, the very desirable Ms. Voss could bask in solitude and consider all that had been lost, and gained, by moving one planet further from the sun.

Smoothing her hands over her skin, she watched the loosened bubbles parade to the surface, daring not to linger on the more luscious, intricate, or responsive parts. Pausing too long would make this a more energetic endeavor than she'd come here to enjoy. Even a quick brush against her eagerly excitable regions brought a quick physical response and, along with it, deeper ideas that were more soul-nurturing than sensually satisfying.

A thought crossed her mind as her hands returned to the surface: Would it be possible, some day, that the oils from her skin and the natural fluids, like the light perspiration that trickled over her lips, might combine with the exotic mixture in which she floated and generate some truly Martian life? Her face broadened into a light smile as she told herself, a fair hand at scientific theory, how silly the idea was. Not even bacteria had ever been found on the surface of this rock. The only lifeforms here came from a planet that would never send anything again – and that was that. She returned to her buoyant daydreaming.

Some of the ideas of the "old world" seemed so crude and obsolete now, at the only surviving outpost of her species, but at the same time a bit romantic. Imagine a culture so primitive that the quality of your medical care was doled out in proportion to the amount your employer was willing to pay you! You'd live, suffer or die based chiefly on your ability to pay for medicines or procedures. It's barbaric! Not to mention housing, clothing and food were all similarly tied. On the other side, you were mated, often for life, with but a single other person. Your children may have suffered from your lack of income but, at least, they were *your* children.

That last thought reminded her that she'd soon need to report to the medic for another harvesting. As she hovered there, soaring in the pale water that continued to slightly arouse her skin, she reassured herself that humankind was better off than they'd ever been before. Technology and evolution make this situation the best one it has ever had – and yet there was still some wish that the Earth was out there – as a frame of reference or as a possible alternate choice.

Someday, she lazily dreamt, humans will again walk on green lawns and pick fruit from trees. In the meantime, for the million here on Mars, it is still a satisfying life. And with that thought she began to doze.

A bubbling hiss interrupted her reverie, *Was that the door?* She wondered.

No, no one there. Must've been a gas bubble.

Funny how a little thing like a compressor's whoosh or a tiny splash can snap one back to reality. Now, with all her speculations burst like the tiny bubbles slipping up from under her small but perfect breasts, the structure around her became the crystal clear focus of her thoughts.

The egg-shaped cavern was quite a piece of natural art, beautifully arched and interrupted only by a manufactured ledge three-fourths of the way around, with an airlock door in the middle. The airlock led, through the showers, to an elevator and up into the building where an unmarked door kept this secret.

The underside of this egg, somewhere far below, touched some small bit of the planetary core – most likely a tiny dot of still molten iron. It was a brush with the ancient and elemental planes of Mars himself. Although it made the place smell, it's what made the hot, limitless water of this place so enticing.

Why it had been abandoned she couldn't guess. She was just happy to have it all to herself. Maybe that was the reason those who knew about it never told anyone, to keep it all to themself—

I'm afraid, dear reader, the narrative stops there. I could go on with just descriptions, but they get quite graphic, and I'd rather spare you that. Suffice it to say the young teacher found out, ironically right at that moment, why the place had been abandoned.

Those who enjoyed it before hadn't kept it secret. They were not consumed with greed... they were simply consumed. You see, water tends to revive things in deserted places; some of those things you'd never guess were there until, well, until too late.

People are like that too. Give them enough room, love and encouragement and they'll grow into something you could have never predicted. You give your kindest intentions and a good example and trust that all will work out for the best.

However, you may want to consider not making yourself too appealing... Just in case.

© N. Barry Carver 2017

“It’s Cathy’s Con”

8/18/17 Third Friday meeting. Prez Bob banged the gavel at 9:15 to declare it “Meeting Time.” Sam L. read minutes from the previous meeting. The treasurer said whatever was said for first Friday. Sam S. said there’s a bunch of WSFA press money that he doesn’t have.



Capclave present: Elizabeth said due to work and medical, she has resigned as Capclave chair. Cathy Green, as vice-chair, will now take over. “I won’t die or anything but it’s Cathy’s con.” Cathy said that we had a big Capclave meeting.

We need people to volunteer. If more people are working, it becomes great.

We need volunteers to wave signs. Capclave@gmail.com. Assimilate, assimilate. Bob and I will do the hotel walk through. After the meeting, Elizabeth will have rack cards for distribution. Talk up the convention to people. For Capclave Future, Cathy said she is working on getting hotel before can get guests. Capclave Far Future was not here.

WFC – Bill said he has nothing to report. Will have a meeting in Sept, dates to be determined.

Small Press Award – Cathy said notifications have gone out to publishers and individuals where we have contact information. Includes come to Capclave messages, be on programming for author and publisher, and designate someone if they can’t be there. Cathy read the nominees list, revealing the authors for the first time. Press release will drop on Monday. No fudge from the turnout.

The finalists are:

- “Foxfire, Foxfire” by Yoon Ha Lee, published in *Beneath Ceaseless Skies* (March 2016) and edited by Scott H. Andrews;
- “Jupiter or Bust” by Brad R. Torgersen, published in *Orson Scott Card’s Intergalactic Medicine Show* (March/ April 2016), edited by Edmund Schubert;
- “The Mytilenian Delay” by Neil James Hudson in **Hyperpowers** (May 2016), edited by Bascomb James, published by Third Flatiron Publishing;
- “Only Their Shining Beauty Was Left” by Fran Wilde, published in *Shimmer Magazine* (September 2016), edited by E. Catherine Tobler;
- “Radio Silence” by Walter H. Hunt in **Alien Artifacts** (2016), edited by Joshua Palmatier and Patricia Bray, published by *Zombies Need Brains*;
- “A Salvaging of Ghosts” by Aliette de Bodard, published in *Beneath Ceaseless Skies* (March 2016), edited by Scott H. Andrews;
 - “The Tomato Thief” by Ursula Vernon, published in *Apex Magazine* (January 2016) edited by Jason Sizemore;
 - “Vengeance Sewn With A Fey Cord” by Christine Lucas, published in *The Future Fire* (April 2016), edited by Djibril al-Ayad; and
 - “The Witch’s Knives” by Margaret Ronald, published in *Strange Horizons* (October 2016), edited by Niall Harrison, Jane Crowley, Kate Dollarhyde, Lila Garrott, Catherine Krahe, An Owomoyela, and Vajra Chandrasekera.



Paul said “The winner is... one of nominees. This year it was very close, up to the last round. One vote could have changed the results. I will order the award when Cathy sends the details. It takes three weeks,

so should get there in plenty of time.” Bill said, in future for the award, we should tell the nominees to include their social media presence.

Sam S. asked who here has not registered for Capclave? If you haven't I'll take your money here.

WSFA Press/website. WSFA Press, there will be a book said Paul, probably. We're dealing with publication schedule. Don't want a repeat of driving down to Pennsylvania the Friday of a convention in the rainstorm. Cathy asked about pre-registering for the book. Paul said it's the same price at con, so see me at Capclave.

Website. Paul said, Sam L. does let us know about Calendar stuff. Everyone else should send them information to be included. Social media. Nothing. Cathy said Madam Defarge. (because was knitting) Oh, said Sarah. Sent out a few things. Elizabeth said Meetup did switch. Rodger thanked social media for doing the Hugos.

Entertivities: There will be an eclipse on Monday. Be careful where you look. Discussion. We'll get 80% coverage. The Museum of Science fiction's Escape Velocity will be held Labor Day weekend.

Talk SF gave schedule. Constitution – check with Steve for next week.

Old Business – Fifth Friday in September. Options, Capclave, Mark's, not holding. Not holding won. Cathy called it an overwhelming vote for apathy.

New business – None.

New person. Barry Carver. He is a former actor. He found WSFA while searching for ways to learn more about writing. He has done stories now doing a novel. Found out about web. Also here was Baby Sophia Rey Tiberius Pound. Technically she has been to a few meetings before.

Paul said – but under cover.

Judy said need people to take stuff from their house to Capclave.

Bill made a motion to adjourn. It passed at 9:48 unanimously.

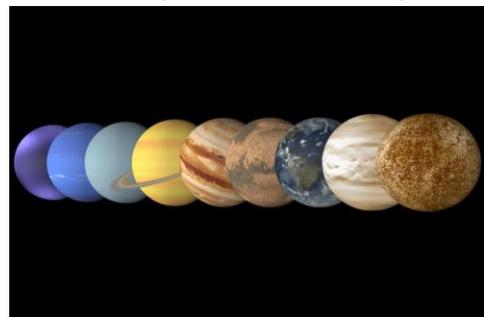
Attendance: Courtni Y. Burlson, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Kimberly Hargan, Sam Hogan, Frances Holland, David Keener, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell

Bob Macintosh, Sarah Mitchell, Aaron & Angela Pound, Ann Marie Rudolph, Judy & Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Elizabeth Twitchell, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, Rey Tiberius, Sophie Pound <first appearance of a future Capclave chair>, and Barry Carver.

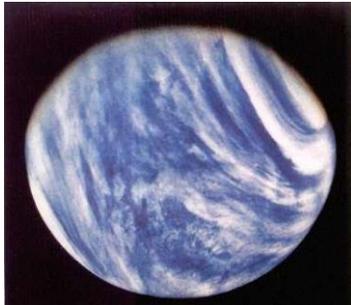
A Rant about "The Planets" TV Program By Kim Hargan

As a bright little kid, I was a science geek. While looking for books on astronomy in the school library while in the third grade, I came across a card for a book by Andre Norton in the card catalogue. That was my first science fiction book, and I have been hooked on science fiction ever since.

However, that entry into science fiction fandom did nothing to suppress my interest in science. Indeed, both interests fed each other. I continued to watch TV programs on science topics and, as a subscriber to *National Geographic*, I read all of its articles with interest, especially news of the latest discoveries in space.



As you can imagine, when The Science Channel announced a TV series titled “The Planets”, I awaited its broadcast with considerable interest. And of the four programs that have aired so far, that interest has been rewarded – by three of them. As a follower of planetary research, I actually already knew most of what was shown in programs 1, 2, and 4 (Jupiter, Mars and Saturn), but there were still things presented that I hadn’t known before about surface features and system dynamics (particularly with Jupiter’s and Saturn’s moons). But program number 3, on Venus, was a real disappointment. I tune in to these programs to learn about the other planets, but well over half the program on Venus was spent on describing how one day the hellish atmospheric conditions of heat and pressure there will one day prevail on Earth, and how that will happen (expansion of the sun and the consequent increased heating of the Earth). I’m sorry, but I didn’t tune into the program to have them continually harping on how Venus *now* will be Earth *then*.



I will admit that I did learn some things.

- 1) Venus’s retrograde rotation, in which one Venusian day lasts longer than one Venusian year (which I already knew about), was probably caused by a collision during planet formation on something of the same scale as the collision that resulted in the formation of the Earth’s moon.
- 2) Venus’s extremely slow rotation prevented it from generating magnetic fields like Earth has. That lack of magnetic field protection allowed the solar wind (and its closer orbit to the sun) to heat up Venus’s water into water vapor and then strip it out of the atmosphere.
- 3) Before that process got under way, Venus and Earth probably looked like twins, with comparable amounts of surface water.
- 4) The surface temperature of Venus is above the *boiling* point of lead and bismuth, so that “metallic snow” consisting of lead sulfide and bismuth sulfide falls on Venus’s mountains.

And that was it. I know that at least one of the Soviet Venera probes lasted a whole ninety minutes on the surface before being crushed by the pressure and heat, but there have been a number of missions since then, focusing on radar mapping of the surface – but none of that was presented. The ads for the series talk about a “ride on a lava slide in Venus’s five mile high volcano,” but it was never actually mentioned during the course of the hour.

There was no discussion of Venusian landforms. The metallic snow segment mentioned mountains, but there was no discussion of how many mountains there, whether they existed in chains, or how they were created. Were (Are) they mostly volcanic, or was there (is there) plate tectonics on Venus? There was no mention of the two “continents” and the apparently volcanic lowlands making up 80% of the planet’s surface. There was no discussion of the apparent lack of lava flows around any of the radar-resolvable volcanic calderas. And there is a whole slew of apparently volcanic features unique to Venus called “farra,” “novae,” “arachnoids” and “coronae”, none of which were even mentioned, let alone discussed. I would have loved to have seen a discussion of the surface of Venus now and of hypotheses as to why the surface features are the way they are. But there was no room for that in the hour because of the continual harping on Earth’s future. Come on, folks, if you are going to do a program showing our most recent understanding of the features of the other planets; please *actually* show us the features of the other planets.