

The WSFA Journal July/Aug 2020

Edited by Sam Lubell

Darkwing Dodo by Alana Tedmon



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Drive-By Fudging

The July First Friday (7/3) began with Prez Bob MacIntosh saying “It is the first Friday in July.” Sam L. read the minutes. Sam S. gave the Treasurer’s report. Current: \$\$, Year-over-year: \$\$\$\$. Those are virtually unchanged from last month.

Bill for Capclave had nothing to report. Might be something next meeting. He will be travelling. Wants to talk to vice-chair George Shaner. George for Capclave Future had nothing to report at this moment. Rodger for Far Future said in order to let Collette go forward on hotels he has confirmed dates of Jewish holidays are for second week of October asked her to go for Sept 30-Oct 2nd weekend. The same as 2001. He is potentially moving forward with asking guests but is waiting to get the date set first rather than play is this weekend good for you. Cathy agreed saying it is better if get the date first.



Cathy for the Small Press committee said the 8 stories are up. We have blind judging and people appreciate it, so don’t look up stories’ authors. People appreciate the blind judging. We will have a press release after we let the finalists know. Don’t be a dick. The usual bribes of baking and making fudge. 70% fudge, 80% chocolate cheesecake. 90% both. 100% I do individual portions of fudge. So goals. I hope everyone votes. Committee went through XX stories to get it down to 8 for you. All but one of the eight finalists are short stories. The Hugo deadline was extended to July 22nd, but we are still well past that. Even if putting it off to read the Hugo books, still have two and a half weeks to read 8 stories. Not that hard. This year, we may need to modify letter we send to people if convention is online. Will coordinate with Bill and others to see how to handle it

Gayle said still selling books off website and off Amazon site. It would be nice to remind people that WSFA press books make good gifts and people may buy more. I’d like to get them out of my basement. Paul said paid-up members should get notification of the Small Press Award site and their password via email. Contact him if you did not get it. For all the years Cathy offered to bake, only one year have we met even the minimum. I’d like this year to be different. Let the woman bake this year. Courtni said she missed that year. Make fudge great again. Elizabeth asked about having a drive-by fudging in a socially responsive manner. Cathy offered to sling bags of fudge into people’s cars. Paul said I look forward to having to solve this problem.

The Committee to Talk SF discussed the schedule. Will discuss all the novels on the Hugo list – novel, series, YA. Then third Friday we will discuss the small press award story. In August return to normal schedule and discuss Asimov’s. For Entertivities Michael I said the San Diego Comicon will be this month online on July 22-26th. A mini-online version of Comicon. Also the local Artomatic local art show is online July 20th. (He said the Wardman Park may be closing. Sam L. said that’s not very entertaining so it doesn’t count.) Sam L said bookstores are reopening. Please support. Alex said Sea Lion Press, who specializes in alternate history, did a call for alternate history stories on revolutions.

Courtni for trustees said to vote for the small press award. Elizabeth said her committee on a harassment policy is waiting to learn if Capclave will be online only.



Only old business is the fifth Friday at the end of the month. No new business. Second meeting for Elizabeth Flack who found out about us through BSFS and Balticon. Socialize with people of like minds. Elizabeth Twitchell said Elizabeths should stick together and take over the world. Top 10 name for 100

years. Sam S. said as the usual host of first Friday he is waiting to host in person until safe to gather without social distancing. He predicted January at the earliest. Paul said this was wise and that the electronic meeting is working. It is not as good as in person but acceptable. Bob said we don't have much choice in the matter.

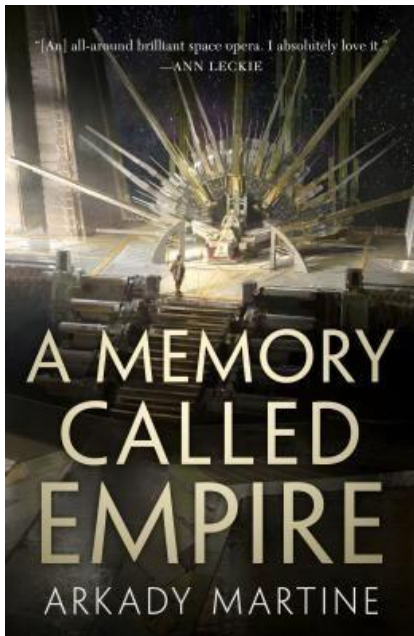
Elizabeth proposed an outside picnic if we can, in the Fall if best practices allow so we can see each other in person. You're just my imaginary Internet friends. Rodger said he liked the idea in theory but asked about paperwork and permission. Elizabeth said we can address this in late October if we can go outside. Paul said his and Gayle's place has 5 acres, if people bring their own chairs we could meet there. Can meet the chickens. Depends on how turns out. Cathy said it can be the sort of picnic when people bring their own food and stay six feet apart. Elizabeth said Chicken Alcatraz is huge. Paul said we could bring this up later as things evolve. Cathy said her nephew was accepted to an arts school in San Francisco. He plays a bass that is bigger than I am. Meeting adjourned 9:45 at what passes for unanimous.



Attendance: Aaron and Angela Pound, Alex Wallace, Baltar, Bill Aquier, Bill Lawhorn, Bob Macintosh, Carolyn Frank, Courtni Burleson, Elizabeth Flack, Elizabeth Twitchell, Fabrice Guerrier, Frances Holland, Gayle Surette, George Shaner, Greg Key, Jim Thomas, Judy and Sam Scheiner, Judy Newton, Ken McAuliffe, Kim Hargan, Madeleine Yeh, Mark Roth, Michael Ikeda, Mike Taylor, Paul Haggerty, Rodger Burns, Sam Lubell, and Sarah Mitchell.

Review of *A Memory Called Empire* by Arkady Martine

Reviewed by Sam Lubell



A Memory Called Empire by Arkady Martine is won both the 2020 Hugo Award for best novel and the Baltimore Science Fiction Society's Compton Crook award for best first novel. This means fans considered this book by a brand new author to be better than novels by much more experienced writers.

Although some label the book as space opera it lacks space battles or space exploration. Instead, it can be argued this is an example of space diplomacy (along with the Keith Laumer's Retief series and Ursula Le Guin's *Left Hand of Darkness*.) The main character Mahit Dmare is sent from Lsel Station, a mining station, to the capital of the interstellar Teixcalaanli Empire, an elegant civilization whose leaders compete in spontaneous poetry contests, when the previous ambassador died under mysterious circumstances. Her leaders choose her in part because she is already in love with Teixcalaanli's culture, which the book shows in opulent detail, but when she arrives, she realizes she can never be a part of it in the same way as those born to it.

Mahit was implanted with an imago, a secret device that carries the memories of her predecessor, which is supposed to advise her. Unfortunately, these memories are 15 years out of date and something goes wrong with the integration of memories when the imago-Yskandr sees the dead body of the real Yskandr, leaving Mahit by herself in an alien world. Her mission is to ensure the Empire stays away from Lsel. But she finds herself caught in the Empire's politics, both in

regard to the emperor's heir and an attempted takeover, as the dying emperor sees the imago device as a way to continue ruling after his own death.

Mahit is aided by Three Seagrass, a cultural liaison and a necessity when Mahit does not have the access rights to open doors or read her own mail. Naturally, part of her job is to spy on Mahit for the empire. But the two gradually become very close. Also drawn in is Three Seagrass' friend Twelve Azalea, who has connections with the rebel underground that Three Seagrass is careful not to notice.



My one quibble is at one point Mahit goes to a black market doctor, to perform complex brain surgery that not only has the doctor never performed before but had not even heard of before. Somehow, this surgery goes perfectly and Mahit is able to run for her life after just a short nap. Even for a far future adventure, this seems a little much. Still this is a small flaw in an excellent book. I recommend *A Memory Called Empire* to anyone who is more interested in the clash of cultures and characters than space shootouts.

“We Pulled the Plug”

7/17/20 WSFA Meeting - “It’s about that time,” said WSFA President Bob MacIntosh. “It is 9:15 on the Third Friday in July. Put this on record.” Sam L read the minutes. Sam S said no fiscal activity so the same as last time.



Bill for Capclave Present said Collette spoke to the hotel as part of process of talking about future years. As of Monday we will exercise the clause to exit an in-person convention this year. Will be virtual. Oct 16 and 17th, Sat/Sun only. XXX. Other parts of the country are not well so getting guests back would be a problem. All guests of honor and returning guests have been emailed that we are going virtual and the dates. Not all bad news. Because we will be virtual we reached out to international people. Aliette De Bodard will participate. That is some of the positive news. We will do an email to everyone who is a member. Want larger distribution. Plan is for all current Capclave members or who signs up at the current price to have a virtual membership this year and full attending membership next year. People can request a full refund. Online only memberships are \$10. Current Capclave fee is \$55 that will not change through Sunday of the convention. After Sunday the rate drops \$45. No one can say paying more money than someone else. In decent shape. I talked to George and we will extend an offer to his guests to do online presence this year. Once everything is out in the world. We will do outreach to past guests of honor to see if they can spare even an hour to do an activity. Still have to call Howard. Sam L. reminded him to contact Alastair Reynolds since we don't have to worry about flying him over. Will have a survey about what times people are available. Dealers' payments will roll forward to next year. Won't try a virtual sales area. Don't think it was successful at Balticon. A lot of time and effort we can spend elsewhere. Sarah suggested doing links to dealer's web sites. Sam L. asked about penalty clause. Bill discussed this xxx. The rest of the deposit will roll over for next year. This is still better than having the con when no one wants to show as we bumped up the hotel block. A lot of people even staff would not have been able to attend. Carolyn asked, “What about tech?” Bill said that Kathi Overton will be in charge of tech. She has ideas. We will be running panels via Zoom. And the con suite as well with breakout rooms. Cathy asked, “Will we set up a Discord?” Bill said yes, if we have someone who can run it. It would be strictly an announcement and text-based chats/message board rather than a social platform. I am not opposed to having a secondary channel. George said, “Discord is really meant for online gamers. It works well for

that, but let's not add another platform, to the mix." Carolyn suggested talking to the BSFS people. Bill said Mike Rafferty and Matt Shogun are talking with us. We can check if they are willing but we have to figure out the cost structure. Carolyn said BSFS might be willing to share. Bill said might talk to Fred Bauer who has some experience. Cathy said, "My experience with Discord is that more people are using it now than previously. In terms of bandwidth, video chat is a disaster. Text is okay. It is easy to join but requires two factor authentication and you had to download an app that grabs access to everything on the phone. If people already running as moderators that might work but I could not moderate the Discon3 part since I couldn't do the two factor authentication." Bill said we will need moderators and he will talk to Kathi Overton who is here, head of tech. We will have to have a discussion. Paul asked about the June-July Capclave price is \$60. Elizabeth said not to worry Bill said to drop it down to \$55. Sam S. said xxx people paid the \$60. Bill said to pay the \$5 refund to the xxx people who paid \$60. Keep \$55 the max through the convention. Depending on how many channels we can run, no workshops, just panels, presentation, smaller discussions, readings, and kaffeeklatches.



Mark said about Discon we can ask Morgan for videos of Discord training. If we have more than 10 people on Zoom it eats my system. People were typing on Discord. Bill said, "Text based activity only just because of resources." Mark said, "I had been meaning to ask Councilmember about whether they are keeping the large meetings mandate." Discussion of other cons.



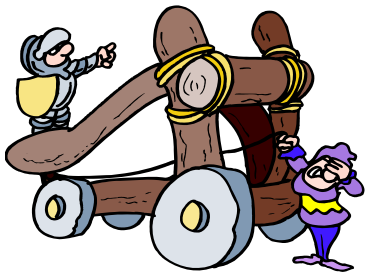
Bill said, "We've been talking to the hotel for a month of it. Don't show your hand until you get an answer. We got a price we can afford so we pulled the plug for in person this year. Contracts are being worked on for 2021 and 2022." Sam L asked about keeping this quiet and off social media. Bill said yes. We will hopefully have something going out tomorrow. Elizabeth said that the mailing is going out tomorrow or Sunday so keep it quiet until Sunday or you get the email. There was a discussion about doing the email. Sam S. said what we tell people should be different if they have already bought a membership. Elizabeth said we should run it through mail blast so it is trackable and we know who opens it. So send me the list. Bill said only five people have signed up since you last got a list from them. Elizabeth said that the good news is that half of the people who need to be informed are on this Zoom call. Sam S. said, "No, we're up to 140 members total so not half in this room." Bob asked when dealers should be notified. Bill said "When you are ready, let them know. I've already sent out to the GoH and returning guests. So you can reach out and let them know. If they have a website, we can link to it and sent out to social media." Cathy said to tell dealers not to put it on social media until the official announcement. Bob said he would wait until the official announcement so he won't have that problem. Elizabeth said she is just the mail chimp who pushes the buttons. It is Bill's message.

George said he needs stack rats. George for Capclave Future said his guests of honor are Eric Flint and Peter Beagle and Troy Wiggins. If the hotel accepts our rollover, that will expedite having a contract. I will reach out to Eric via his liaison and give him the date. And considering the people who will join us virtually I will send an email to XXX XXXX to see if she's like to participate virtually depending on her schedule. Yes, that's where we stand. We have some clarity and hopefully can have a real convention next year. Sarah Katz asked about whether the hotel will continue to exist and function. George said, "Yes, we can be pretty sure, at least as much as this society will. I am a professional historian. We specialize in staring into the abyss, and then I have a drink."

Rodger for Capclave Far Future said he is giving serious thought to a GoH with a date in mind. That will happen offline. Otherwise nothing to report.

Trustees had nothing. Webmaster Paul said all's well. Sam L. for the Committee to Discuss SF said they will meet to discuss the small press award stories which hopefully all of you read <lots of laughter> and are ready to discuss and vote <more laughter>. He gave the schedule.

Cathy for the Small Press Award said the final stories are up. Seven out of the eight are short stories and the page count is not super long. The more people who vote the better. Since we are a small club even a single person can make a large difference. Cathy promised if 70% vote she will make fudge, 80% she will bake a chocolate cheesecake, 90% both, and if 100% vote she will make the cheesecake whenever we meet again and individual packets of fudge. "I will fling bags of fudge into people's cars. Go ahead and



make me bake." She asked that people not go to look out the authors until the vote is done and the press release is out. Authors and editors like that this is blind judging. Don't be a dick. Sam S. said we currently have 48 members. Cathy said, "Still time to PayPal your membership in and vote." Paul said, "If you believe you are a paid up member and didn't get an email with password email me <the webmaster>". Zenlizard asked Cathy if she would like to borrow his desktop trebuchet. Cathy said, "That would be interesting, should we get 100% then yes. I would love to trebuchet the stuff into people's cars." Bob asked if DC would consider that an armed weapon. Elizabeth said "No trebuchet without arranging video coverage first. If those

pies go flying, it needs to go on You-Tube." Kathi said we can arrange that.

Entertivities, Sam S. watched the *The Old Guard* on Netflix and recommended it as quite good. Kim said Pluto TV (free streaming app) has a *Star Trek* channel running *Star Trek* 24/7, new this week and also an *Andromeda* channel. SciFi is showing *Earth: Final Conflict* so there are three Gene Roddenberry shows at once. Also has classic Dr. Who.

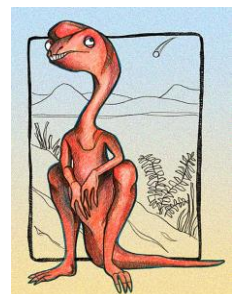
Bob asked about our Code of Conduct for a virtual convention. Elizabeth said she sent trustees a copy of a code of conduct she found that we will steal almost everything on it. Will get everything up and talked through before Capclave with lots of time.

Old business: Bob said Fifth Friday, Eva has volunteered to host it. Eva asked if people would feel comfortable coming out. She has a 600 square foot apartment. I don't want to make this decision on my own. Bill asked if this would be during ConZealand? Yes. Sam S. said it is not safe to do a gathering. We should not do a fifth Friday except virtual. Cathy said we would have to limit how many people to be legal. Eva said Prince Georges County recommends 1 person for every 200 feet, so with 600 feet I can have one slant shack over or three people.



Elizabeth asked if we could set up a fifth Friday Zoom? Alex said, "That would be the most sensible thing to do." Bob said that would be the way to go. Paul said, "In person is not a good idea. Travel is a problem anyway. If virtual I would be 1000 times more likely to attend." Eva said she did a Zoom family reunion this cannot be much worse. Sarah said, "Challenge accepted." Elizabeth said she gets to theme it. Eva said the theme is Happy Birthday J.K. Rowling. Judy said Eva should send out an email with an invite. Mark said something very distorted. Eva said it will be virtual except for Mark who I am making come over in person. <laughter> Discussion of Madeleine knowing poll-arms. Madeleine said her ceiling isn't tall enough.

New Business. Rodger said that since we have been doing virtual meetings in Zoom since June and will for the foreseeable future, he has been serving as the default host



but does not want to be the only default host. Involvement by other officers or senior members who can get basic instruction in Zoom and be the host is appreciated. Bill is exempt because he did it too much already. Sam S said he basically lives on Zoom at work and would be happy to do it for first Fridays. Rodger said he doesn't want to be the only host because might get hit by a truck even though he doesn't leave his apartment much.

New people. Alan Carswell is here for his first meeting. We have been on his radar. He just retired and is putting together his life. Found out about our online meetings. Kate Secor is here for first meeting. She is the program chair for Capclave. She said she lives too far away for in-person meetings. "I'm here because Bill dragged me."

Announcements. Zenlizard said Chessiecon will go virtual. They are working out the details. The hotel is automatically rolled over to next year. Kathi said Fast Forward is on Youtube. Meeting unanimously adjourned at 10:08.

Attendance: Aaron and Angela Pound, Alan Carswell, Alex Wallace, Baltar, Bill A, Bill Lawhorn. , bob MacIntosh, Carolyn Frank, Cathy Green, Courtni Burleson, Elizabeth Twitchell, Fabrice Guerrier, Frances Holland, Gayle Surrette, Ginny Schneider, Greg Key, Jim Thomas, Judy Newton, Kate Secor, Kim Hargan, Madeleine Yeh, Michael Ikeda, Mike Taylor, Remy the Cat, Rodger Burns, Sally, Sam Lubell, Sarah Katz, Sarah Katz, Sarah Mitchell, and Zen Lizard.

Working as a Tech at Virtual Balticon 54

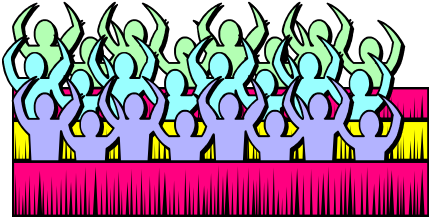
By Carolyn Frank

Although I normally spend Memorial Day weekend enjoying the sun, this year I spent it volunteering as a tech for Virtual Balticon. With my trip to Myrtle Beach canceled, I answered Roger's call for volunteers in mid-April. After numerous emails, the Balticon tech folks managed to get me access to their Google Drive (Google does not play nice with my AOL email address).

From there I was able to gain access to their Discord server (used for text chat and most logistics planning) and to the Zoom host training sessions. Although never having met Discord (we used Slack at work, so it was eerily familiar), I managed to figure it out enough to use it when needed. Zoom was another question. I had joined Zoom meetings, but now I needed to learn how to be a host and learn how Balticon wanted to use it in less than two weeks.

In order to train both us tech hosts and the panelists in less than two weeks, Balticon folks arranged for 3 practice sessions a day each day. Based on availability, I was assigned to 5 practice sessions scattered over the time period, and we practiced. Happily, Kathi Overton also volunteered to be a Zoom tech host, and Kim Hargan had volunteered to be a practice panelist and panel moderator, so I had two known friendly WSFA faces at many of the practice sessions. Of course, as we practiced, both Zoom had system updates and the Balticon processes changed. So literally, every practice session was somewhat different in terms of either what we could or needed to do.

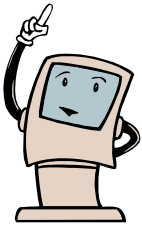




On the Sunday before Balticon, I completed a Google form asking for my availability during the con, and on Thursday I learned which panels I was slated to host on Friday and Saturday (on Friday I learned which panels I was slated to host on Sunday and Monday). As the folks in charge were making this up as they went and we volunteers were flexible, it all worked out.

So here I was at 4:30 PM on Friday, readying to host a Zoom panel scheduled for the 5 PM official start of the con. Luckily, I had Kathi as my co-host, and a group of veteran con panelists who had all been to several practice panels. The topic was “Adding Love Stories to Genre Fiction” and the panelists included Wen Spencer, the Guest of Honor (who I had never heard of or read anything by).

With Kathi’s invaluable assistance, we managed to get the panel in Zoom’s gallery view, broadcast live, record on, and off they went. Attendees texted on the chat and mostly asked questions on the Q&A panel, and everyone appeared to enjoy the session. I managed the backstage as needed and nothing went overtly haywire. I even got to hear the entire discussion, although admittedly the discussion content was the least of my focus.



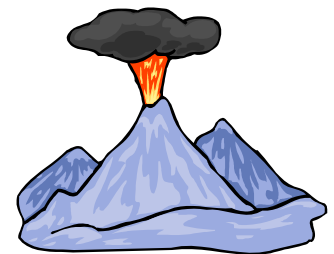
I recovered from that session, spent an hour as an attendee at another session, “I Read for the World Building”, and then got ready for my next hosting gig. This 9 PM panel was “So You Want to Build a Galactic Empire” and included Arkady Martine, the author of this year’s Nebula and Hugo nominated *A Memory Called Empire* (which I have actually read and enjoyed). This was another set of veteran con panelists who had attended the practice sessions, and it all went well. With a bit more confidence from the success of the first panel, I was able to listen and enjoy most of the discussion.

On Saturday I felt like a veteran and so relaxed and took advantage of being at the con. I spent my time watching Discord channels, hosting Zoom panels, attending other Zoom panels, enjoying filking concerts by Metricula and Kim the Comic Book Goddess, and watching the Masquerade being shown on their Twitch channel. I even took time to eat and then later, to get outside to pull the invasive plant garlic mustard for an hour.

Sunday was more of the same. The difference was that this time my Zoom hosting was for a set of author readings and for a presentation. The author readings were by the most recent Compton Crook award winners: R.F. Kuang for 2019 and Arkady Martine for 2020. They each read part of their forthcoming books and then held a lively Q&A session to fill out the time.

The presentation was a bit dicey as we took most of the half-hour setup time trying to get her PowerPoint presentation to present nicely. We finally ended up with me showing the slides off the Balticon server and her saying “next slide”. But the talk, “A Bird in the Hand: 100 Years of Bird Banding and Citizen Science in North America” by Pam Garrettson was fascinating and the attendees appeared to enjoy it as much as I did.

I spent the evening watching Wen Spencer’s Guest of Honor talk “I Survived a Volcano”, which was quite entertaining. She moved to Hilo, Hawaii in 2010, apparently with little research as to potential impacts of moving to an island with known active volcanos. And then in May 2018, Kilauea erupted. Living 30 miles away, she only had to deal with the 5.4 and then the 6.9 earthquakes. And even more luckily the prevailing trade winds blew the gasses and ash eastward away from her home. This certainly was an effectively scary tale. Afterwards I watched the short film festival being broadcast on Twitch and attended a Zoom party for techs.





Monday I hosted my final presentation, Tom Holtz presenting “Clocks in the Rocks: Determining the Ages of Fossils and Rocks”. Having already done two other presentations at the con, he had it under control. I was able to relax and enjoy learning how much had changed since my Geology 101 class at the University of Pennsylvania in 1970, 50 years ago.

I attended a few other panels and then the Dirty Dog tech party held on Zoom. I finally got to meet the Con Chair and explained how weird it was, working the entire convention not having any real idea as to who was running it. Whenever I needed to learn something, I would just post it in the zoom host discussion channel in Discord and someone would say, just ask so-and-so. So, I would ask so-and-so, get my answer, and move on, without having a clue where so-and-so fit in the organization. My guess is that all the BSFS folks have done so many Balticons that they could do this one in their sleep – and by Monday afternoon, many of them appeared to be sleepwalking.

I enjoyed the con but given the choice of beach or con next Memorial Day weekend, if I can get to the beach, I think that is where I’ll go.

Trebuchet vs Catapult

8/7/20 “Alright folks,” said Bob. “Meeting Time. Welcome to First Friday in the merry month of

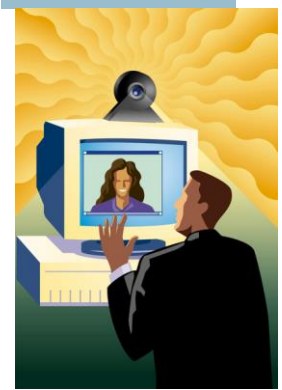


August.” Sam L. summarized the minutes. Sam S said, “Bob, you owe me a W-9 form.” As of Aug 1: \$\$\$; Year-over-year: \$\$\$\$. Sarah Katz asked, “Does that include the credit on account with the hotel for the downpayment for next year?” Sam S replied, “There is no credit that I know of.” Sarah said, “Half of the downpayment is going to be applied to next year.” Sam S. said, “It is in the contract and I’ve asked. Where is that payment? I have no record that we have actually paid a downpayment.” Bill said “Colette told me she paid it and the hotel hasn’t come back to us. There is a chance the credit rolled over from two years ago.” Bill said, “Since he cannot track it, it must not be included.”

Sam S. said, “I have no idea where that payment is unless you or Colette haven’t turned in a receipt.” Bill said, “I got the advance but then I paid it back since Colette said she took care of it.” Sam S. said “I have to talk to Colette. I can try to trace it from 2 years ago, but hotel bills are hard to figure out.” Sarah said, “You’re your friendly neighborhood tax lawyer saying this would not be a bad thing to figure out. As a tax exempt organization you should have some idea of where the money goes.” Sam S. said he tried to go through the bills from last year and cannot figure it out. Nate the Fixer asked about ads in the program guide. Is there going to be a refund. Bill said we only took in one ad at this point. We will do an electronic version of the program guide. I might talk to Sahid to see if he can do a printed one in 2021. That’s still in the works. It will be more accurate when we get around to printing it. Nate asked if we can make the ad in color if this is virtual. Bill said will have a list of sponsors on the website. So have a place to list friends and put it in the program book.



Sam S. said presumably you all got the email saying that we are going virtual and that you can rollover your membership to next year and get a free membership for this year. Asked that people tell us. Almost no one said rollover. Elizabeth said that the email said if don’t respond we’ll automatically roll you over. There was a

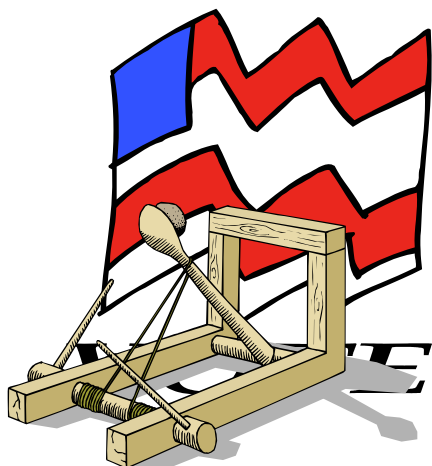


discussion about what the email said was the default Rodger said please don't pause the recording. Nate said his email said to let us know what you want for your choice. Bill said we need ribbons saying "Please unmute yourself" and Elizabeth said they should read, "Can you hear me." Elizabeth said the default is welcome to Capclave 2021. Mark said just registered for Capclave and assumed the membership was for this year. Sam S said that his membership is good for both years. Sarah Katz said only contact Capclave if you want a refund.

Bill for Capclave said program meeting tomorrow. We need someone to setup and help run a Discord channel. We will need that for communications backchannel. Met with Kathi Overton. Plans to change programming operations to make cost manageable, create opportunities for people to attend more. And some breaks. Kate Secor had to step back; she can help but cannot do the front facing person. If someone wants to work with participants please let me know. We have a team and can assign things to people. We have competition for that weekend from FIYAHcon same weekend, also online. We could lose a few people but virtual nature means people can do both activities. Rebecca Kuang is scheduled for FIYAHcon but is seeing if her schedule will let her still do some stuff with us. Cost is not an issue so might invite poet Linda Addison who could contact people from the poetry world for us to up our variety. Staying away from workshops until we know what the slots look like. Zoom panels might be exhausting for some people so may limit the number of panels people are on. Two days. Similar level of activities. Maybe 4 simultaneous activities and breakout rooms for the con suites which might include kaffeeklatches. Haven't determined yet how to do signings. Normally a lot of conversation there. Maybe have breakout rooms run later after the award ceremony along with late night panels as we will have people from other places in the country. Registration is at 167. And that is before we have the \$10 memberships up. I will get a hold with Paul about setting up the \$10 online only memberships. We will figure out the interface so people can log in and get to panels. Sam said had someone from Australia excited about being able to attend Capclave since it is virtual. Bill added that Capclave is popular with Australian authors. Had conversations at Worldcon and they knew about Capclave. Likely will start programming at 9 or 10 in the morning. Worldwide participation. In the case of the Chinese SF panel Regina will set up from Sweden so 9-10am is the best time for all participants.

George Shaner for Capclave Future said, not much to report. Emailed Bjorn, Eric Flint's liaison. October 1st weekend for Capclave, not set until recently. Invited Eric to do electronic participation this year. Pitched XX XXX who is busy and can't do it.

Rodger for Far Future said committed to talking to potential guests and tell them our prospective dates.



Bill said had a text from Colette. She has the 2021 contract and will review it tomorrow. Breaking news. Bob asked if George will do the happy dance. He said he would get another glass of wine.

Courtnei for Trustees said the last chance to vote for small press award is Sunday the 9th. Bob asked how many people have voted? Cathy from the Small Press Award said, I haven't asked Paul that. Is he attending? I hope you're voting. Sunday 11:59PM is the deadline. If 70% vote she will make fudge, it may be a while before people get it. 80% chocolate cheesecake, 90% combination, 100% individual packet of fudge in addition to the chocolate cheesecake. At the last meeting Zenlizard said he had a trebuchet so it is possible that everyone can drive to her place and she will fling fudge through the car window via trebuchet. Don't you want to see that? Madeleine said I would prefer to watch you fling fudge at someone else's car. There was a discussion of trebuchet versus catapult being different things. Elizabeth protested, "They both fling things at walls." But others gave more specific definitions. Question of how

doing ceremony. Needs to know to do the letter and press release. The letter will be nonstandard so need to know exactly how we will do it. Bill said maybe give nominees their own breakout rooms for them and their editors. Maybe as clumps. We can make space for finalists in programming.

Sam L. gave the schedule for the committee to discussion SF. For Entertivities, Sam L recommended the second season of the Umbrella Academy on Netflix. Kathi said NESFA is doing mini-convention, Reconvene, on the 15th that will be a one-day test for Boskone for \$10. Carolyn watched the first episode Star Trek: Lower Decks and said it was fun but light. Lightly amusing.

No old business. For new business Sam L asked about upping our Zoom account for Capclave. Bill said he is discussing with Kathi what our actual needs are. What we need to purchase and what we can borrow. Need to see what limitations there are on borrowing. Rodger said we should be able to borrow Zoom resources from friends rather than pay for Zoom resources we will use only one weekend. Bill said may want one to use for practice. He is not ready yet to request expansion.

Ken McAuliffe was here for his first meeting. He said you have been on my meetup list for a while so thought I'd sit in on a meeting. Lori Hendricks here for her first meeting. She is a fantasy author and someone told her about Capclave. And in trying to figure out what Capclave was I found this group. Sam S. said, "When you figure out what Capclave is, could you please tell us?"

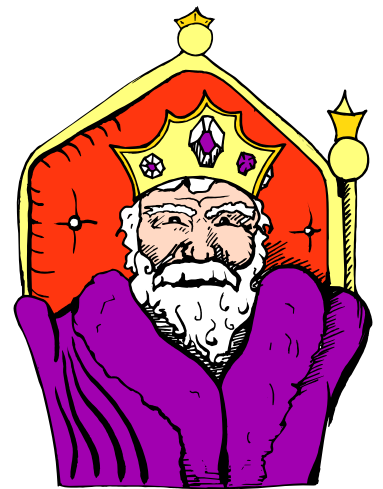
Announcements: Bill has Capclave virtual backgrounds for Zoom from Allana. He said Jennifer O'Callahan is now in Texas and said to say hello. Courtni will update meetings on Meetup to be virtual for the rest of the year and will update Capclave to be virtual. Sam L. said has a new Journal up. George Shaner will show up physically to work next week. It is a very analog organization. Mark has Zoom working. Carthy's eyedocor said her eyes have gotten better for the first time in 46 years. She talked about the problems of having an eye exam while wearing a mask. She now has contacts. Jim offered to do sf trivia. Elizabeth has a quiz league invite.

Aaron Pound, Alex Wallace, Angela Pound, baltar, Bill A, Bill Lawhorn, Carolyn Frank, Cathy Green, Courtni Burleson, Elizabeth Twitchell., Frances Holland, George Shaner, Jim Thomas, Judy Scheiner, Kathi Overton, Ken McAuliffe, Kim Hargan, Lori Hendricks, Madeleine Yeh, Mark Roth, Michael Ikeda, Mob MacIntosh, Nate, Paul Key, Rodger Burns, Sam Lubell, Sam Scheiner, and Sarah Mitchell.

The Lack of Democracy in Fantasy

By Sam Lubell

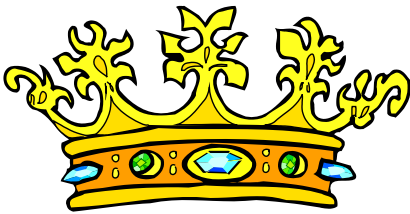
I've often wondered why American fantasy novels are so obsessed with royalty. After all, Americans are supposed to be about democracy and letting people vote for their rulers. Yes, we treat the British royal family as celebrities in magazines, websites, movies like "The Queen," and miniseries like "The Crown." But that's safe because the British monarchy no longer have any real political power. But in fantasy novels, kings and queens run their countries, yet a very high percentage of fantasy novels (other than urban fantasy) deal with royalty, especially princesses. This is not only true of books based on fairy tales, but also totally original fantasies. There seem to be endless variations on the rightful king overthrows illegitimate ruler and feisty princess heir takes command of kingdom despite the machinations of the grand vizier. Considering that Americans led a revolution to overthrow the king's rule, why do nearly all fantasies support the divine right of kings?



For instance, I recently read a fantasy novel which I am not going to name since I am about to reveal a major twist. In this book a member of the novel's equivalent of the untouchable caste, the lowest of the low, becomes queen, much to the horror of the nobility. You would think this is a nice subversion of expectations. However, two-thirds of the way into the book the author reveals that this queen is actually the secret daughter of the previous king and not really a member of the low caste at all. This plotline goes all the way back to whatever unknown storyteller decided it was not enough for King Arthur to become king by pulling the sword from the stone but that he had to be the son of King Uther, raised in secret by Merlin.

In fantasy novels, the revolutionaries trying to overthrow are misguided at best or outright villains standing in the way of the rightful king (or queen). They are not George Washington or even Robin Hood, but people standing in the way of the Rightful Heir.

Purists would also say that most fantasies are based on medieval Europe which had kings. But today's fantasy already takes enormous liberties with conditions in the middle ages, especially in regard to women's roles, not to mention that the existence of magic requires major changes. And many fantasies have guns and other non-medieval weapons.



One reason for this emphasis on royalty in fantasy is that it allows for an easy shortcut for Young Adult authors. It is a lot easier for a YA author to make a young character a Prince or Princess in a hereditary monarchy than to develop an alternative reason for why such a young person would be ruler or even next in line to become a ruler. It also allows for different personality types, especially the reluctant ruler, to come to power, instead of just the strong, confident personality needed to seize control of a country by military force or a political campaign. It also makes it easier to tell the good guys from the bad guys rather than have to explain different political philosophies (it helps that fantasy royalty is a lot more interested in the well-being of their people than the "let them eat cake" royals in our reality).

Still, reliance on royalty is a crutch that fantasy writers would do well to eliminate. It would make the books more modern and better reflect modern American values. It would also open up new plot opportunities.



It is one thing for the English conservative J.R.R. Tolkien to pen *The Return of the King* as the ultimate triumph of good over evil. But why must American writers do this? In recent years fantasy writers finally broke free from slavishly copying all aspects of *Lord of the Rings*. It is long past time to drop this emphasis on royalty as well.

Review of *Alita: Battle Angel*

Reviewed by Rodger Burns

Alita: Battle Angel is a 2019 live-action film adaptation of the Japanese manga series *Gunnm*, produced by James Cameron (*Terminator*, *Avatar*) and directed by Robert Rodriguez (*Sin City*, *From Dusk Till Dawn*). It tells the story of a teenage cyborg girl, initially dropped from the bowels of a futuristic city into the dystopian junkyard-world beneath it, and her efforts to rebuild her body, regain her lost memories and identity and find a purpose.

Alita is certainly visually spectacular. Its use of CGI and related special effects is omnipresent and deft, shaping not just action sequences but

also building background, environment and smaller character details. Of the latter, the most distinctive is the reshaping of the protagonist's facial features, giving her oversized anime-styled eyes that strike a delicate but solid balance between appealingly attractive and differently alien, and never seeming discordant or too obviously artificial. *Alita's* cinematography is also excellent, building a strong sense of setting and framing well the (often all too brief) flurries of action. The performances delivered by both the lead actress, Rosa Salazar, along with several of the supporting cast are likewise solid, genuine and earnest; making the best of the script they've been given.

Unfortunately, that script and its underlying plot are fairly dire. *Alita's* storyline and scenes draw from no less than four different volumes of the original *Gunnm* manga, and the result is a hurried and overcrowded mess that touches briefly on many potential stories without daring to explore any of them in-depth. The pacing becomes especially problematic in the trailing third of the film, which is basically just a montage of confrontations and catastrophes, all without either introductions to establish the emotional stakes or denouements that can offer closure and catharsis. *Alita* closes on an obvious bid for a sequel, and James Cameron's statements and ambitions definitely promise one; but unless and until a proper conclusion exists *Alita* can only be judged as badly incomplete at best.

Alita: Battle Angel will certainly be of interest to dedicated fans of anime and manga looking to see how their genre can be adapted to the extravaganza of big-budget live-action cinema. It may also pass muster with casual viewers willing to dispense with the limitations of the plot and enjoy a loosely-chained spectacle of action sequences. Most prospective watchers, though, will find more fulfilling stories elsewhere.

Editor's note: I rather liked the first half of the movie but agree that it did more to set up plotlines than resolve anything.

No Fudge for WSFA

8/21/21 - "Is everybody ready?" asked Prez Bob MacIntosh. "It is Third Friday in August at 9:15." Sam L. read the minutes. Sam S. said he only updates the budget numbers once a month so no change. A little over \$\$\$\$\$. He got the insurance information Sam L. sent. We haven't been invoiced for it yet. It was the pre-invoice

Capclave present. Bill said to say Capclave reported. That's all I want. Xxx George for Capclave Future said Colette sent email about how she is in striking distance of having a contract. He contacted Eric's liaison to let Eric know about our date and to inquiry if he wants to participate virtually this year. Sam L. said Eric was at virtual NASFIC. Mark said George may need to keep bugging Eric who has a lot on his plate. Capclave Far Future, Rodger said invites to potential guests have been sent out. He will announce the GOH in public after Capclave 2020.

Trustees. Courtnei said nothing on my end.

Small Press Award. Cathy said we did not hit the fudge level. Only xx out of xx members voted. Sam L. showed off his math skills by saying, "That's not even xx." Cathy said this was not the worse turnout. Sam S., said we have 49 members.

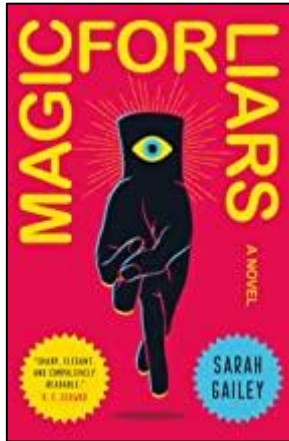
Sam L. gave the schedule for the Committee to Talk SF for Entertivities Sam S. said virtual NASFIC. Science and Engineering Festival (virtual) is next month. Third Bill & Ted meeting can be watched from your living room. Galaxycon.

No old business. No new business. No new people. Meeting adjourned 9:42.

Aaron Pound, Alex Wallace, Angela Pound, Bill A, Bill Lawhorn, Bob MacIntosh, Carolyn Frank., Cathy Green, Courtni Burlison, Elizabeth Twitchell, Fabrice Guerrier, Frances Holland, George Shaner, Greg Key, Jim Thomas, Judy Newton, Kim Hargan, Madeline Yeh, Mark Roth, Michel Ikea, Nate, Rodger Burns, Sam L, Sam S, Sarah Katz, and Sarah Mitchell

Review of *Magic for Liars* by Sarah Gailey

Reviewed by Sam Lubell



At first glance *Magic for Liars* may seem like a Harry Potter-inspired magic school book except with a murder mystery. In reality it is a character study of Ivy Gable, Private Investigator. Ivy's sister has magic and teaches in the school so when the school's headmaster wanted an outsider to investigate the mysterious death of a teacher, after the magic cops called it an accidental death due to magical experimentation, she turns to Ivy as an investigator who already knows about magic. But Ivy barely graduated high school and mostly investigates cheating spouses. She lives up to the worst stereotypes of hard-boiled, hard drinking P.I.s (think Jessica Jones without the superpowers.) And she has not seen her sister in years

But in the process of investigating this case, she winds up living at the school (in the dead teacher's apartment) and pretending to be part of the magic world, even dating another teacher, while getting to know her sister. She deals with the anger and jealousy she still feels towards her sister and gets a taste of what her life could have been if she had had magic like her sister does.

Of course, this is also a high school story and the author has the headmaster makes the point that even though this is a school of magic "at the end of the day, we're just a high school." of Gailey creates believable pictures of the students and the teachers. One boy is convinced that family prophecy makes him the Chosen One who will save the world of magic. A girl uses her powers to influence teachers and create a clique of 'friends' who obey her out of fear of the rumors she can start. And there's the 'cool' teacher and the teacher who is full of himself.

At the same time, this is a murder mystery and Ivy does investigate by talking to students and faculty. Gradually, Ivy learns that her sister had been in a relationship with the dead teacher and may have lied about her whereabouts at the time of the death.

Both mystery fans and readers of magic school books will enjoy *Magic for Liars* as long as they recognize that this is a character-driven novel rather than a novel of plot.