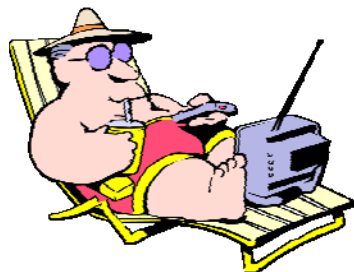




ASFACTS 2022

JULY "HOT & RAIN" SUMMER ISSUE



2022 LOCUS AWARDS WINNERS

The Locus Science Fiction Foundation announced the winners in each category of the 2022 Locus Awards on June 25, during the virtual Locus Awards Weekend. Connie Willis MCed the awards ceremony. Additional weekend events included readings and panels with leading authors.

SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL: *A Desolation Called Peace* by Arkady Martine, FANTASY NOVEL: *Jade Legacy* by Fonda Lee, HORROR NOVEL: *My Heart Is a Chainsaw* by Stephen Graham Jones, YOUNG ADULT NOVEL: *Victories Greater Than Death* by Charlie Jane Anders, FIRST NOVEL: *A Master of Djinn* by P. Djèlí Clark,

NOVELLA: *Fugitive Telemetry* by Martha Wells, NOVELETTE: "That Story Isn't the Story" by John Wiswell, SHORT STORY: "Where Oaken Hearts Do Gather" by Sarah Pinsker, ANTHOLOGY: *We're Here: The Best Queer Speculative Fiction 2020* edited by C.L. Clark & Charles Payseur, COLLECTION: *Even Greater Mistakes* by Charlie Jane Anders,

MAGAZINE: *Tor.com*, PUBLISHER: Tor, EDITOR: Ellen Datlow, ARTIST: Charles Vess, NON-FICTION: *Dangerous Visions and New Worlds: Radical Science Fiction, 1950-1985* edited by Andrew Nette & Iain McIntyre, ILLUSTRATED & ART BOOK: *The Art of Neil Gaiman & Charles Vess's Stardust* by Charles Vess, and SPECIAL AWARD 2022: COMMUNITY BUILDING & CAREER DEVELOPMENT: The Codex Writers' Group.

ROGERS & DENNING HOSTING PRE-CON PARTY

Patricia Rogers & Scott Denning return to upholding a local fannish tradition when they host the Bubonicon 53 Pre-Con Party 7:30-10:30 pm Thursday, August 25, at their home in Bernalillo – located at 909 Highway 313.

The easiest way to get there is north on I-25 to exit 242 east (Rio Rancho's backdoor and the road to Cuba).

At Highway 313 (N. Camino del Pueblo just past Walgreens), turn right to head north. You will pass Bernalillo High School and the closed Country Store on your right. Look for a cow crossing sign and Mile Marker 9. The house - with a mummy on the gate - is on the west side of the road. Please park your car on the shoulder of Highway 313 or in the mowed field to the north.

In addition to socializing, attendees can help assemble the membership packets, & check out the 2022 t-shirt with artwork by Chaz Kemp.

Please bring snacks & drinks to share. And a facial mask to wear inside when crowded! Also welcome: plates, napkins, cups and ice. As with any hosted party, please keep the house clean and in good shape!

FIREPROOF *HANDMAID'S TALE* AUCTIONED

Sotheby's auctioned off a copy of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in early June specially made of fireproof materials, raising \$130,000 for PEN America's efforts to oppose book bans, reported Locusmag.com.

UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS

- **Tonight, July 8:** Summer Movie Time!
- **August 12:** Bubonicon 53 schedule preview and a "Ghost Sex: A Peek Beneath the Sheets" presentation by Benjamin Radford. Oh, yeah...
- **August 19:** Bubonicon 53 Gofer Organizing Meeting in the Adult Education Room.
- **September 16 (One Week Late):** Convention reports in the Adult Education Room.
- **October 14:** Space scientist Larry S. Crumper visits to give a Mars update. Plus Club Officer Elections, and the Halloween issue of *ASFACTS*.
- **November 11:** Unknown! We're working on it.
- **December 9:** Holiday Dessert Cook-Off and Film Shorts. Plus the annual issue of *SithFACTS*.

Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Darth Vader, guest editor each December. Please Send All Correspondence to — 2018 Cardenas Dr NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110. Phone: (505) 266-8905. E-mail: cwrcraig@nmia.com. *ASFACTS* published February, April, July & October for the Albuquerque SF Society. *SITHFACTS* out each December. NEXT DEADLINE: Monday, October 10. **Club Officers:** Craig Chrissinger & Jessica Coyle, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Harriet Engle, Moderator. Mike McCommas, Alternator. Perry Rodent, con mascot. **B'con Con Chair:** Craig Chrissinger (505) 559-0931.

“To raise awareness about the proliferating book banning and educational gag orders in American schools nationwide, and to raise money to support PEN America’s crucial work to counter this national crisis of censorship, Margaret Atwood and Penguin Random House have partnered with the creative agency Rethink to make The Unburnable Book, a fireproof edition of Atwood’s prescient – and often banned – book *The Handmaid’s Tale*, featuring the iconic Handmaid imagery by designer Norma Bar.

“This single-copy special edition of *The Handmaid’s Tale* was produced in Toronto by the graphic arts specialty and bookbinding atelier The Gas Company Inc. The Unburnable Book was manufactured by print-and-bindery master craftsman Jeremy Martin. Fireproof materials and processes were researched and tested by Doug Laxdal.”

ARTIST KEN KELLY DIES

Artist Ken Kelly died June 3 at the age of 76 years old. While best known for his album art (including famous covers for rock band Kiss), Kelly was also a prolific SF/F artist who did work for numerous publishers starting in the ’70s, reports Locusmag.com

Kenneth William Kelly was born May 19, 1946, in New London, CO. He served in the Marines until 1968, and soon after became a professional artist. He got his start doing covers for comics and magazines, notably *Creepy* and *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. In the ’70s he began creating artwork for musical albums and book covers for Ace, DAW, Berkley, and other genre publishers. He also did collectible trading card art and product art for toys.

Some of his work is collected in *The Art of Ken Kelly* (1990), *Ken Kelly Fantasy Art Trading Cards* (1992), *Ken Kelly Fantasy Art Trading Cards Collection 2* (1994), *Ken Kelly Colossal Cards* (1995), and 2004’s *Escape*.

2021 NEBULA AWARDS WINNERS

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) announced winners May 21 of the 2021 Nebula Awards at the 57th Annual Nebula Banquet during the 2022 SFWA Nebula Conference.

NOVEL: *A Master of Djinn* by P. Djèlí Clark, NOVELLA: *And What Can We Offer You Tonight* by Premee Mohamed, NOVELETTE: “O2 Arena” by Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki, SHORT STORY: “Where Oaken Hearts Do Gather” by Sarah Pinsker,

ANDRE NORTON AWARD: *A Snake Falls to Earth* by Darcie Little Badger, RAY BRADBURY AWARD: *Wanda-Vision*, GAME WRITING: *Thirsty Sword Lesbians*,

THE SFWA DAMON KNIGHT MEMORIAL GRAND MASTER AWARD: Mercedes Lackey, THE KATE WIL-

HELM SOLSTICE AWARD: Arley Sorg, Troy L. Wiggins, and Petra Mayer (posthumous), and THE KEVIN J O’DONNELL, JR. SERVICE TO SFWA AWARD: Colin Coyle.

The administrators noted: “Author Martha Wells graciously declined her nomination as a novella finalist this year for *Fugitive Telemetry: Murderbot Diaries, Book 6*, published by Tordotcom. Wells felt that the *Murderbot Diaries* series has already received incredible praise from her industry peers and wanted to open the floor to highlight other works within the community.”

HELP NEEDED AT BUBONICON

It’s true! Volunteers or “gofers” are needed to help out at Bubonicon 53 the weekend of August 26-28 at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown. We’re looking for people who can donate four, seven or even 12 hours of their time during the con to help things run smoothly and give committed workers much needed breaks from time to time.

It should be noted that gofers will not be handling money – that’s for the Bubonicon staff. We especially need people to check badges/wristbands at doors to meeting rooms, the gaming space and the con suite this year.

Volunteer workers will be in drawings for various goodies liked bookstore gift certificates, restaurant gift certificates, Guild Cinema passes, signed books, toys, genre t-shirts, and more!

The Volunteers (Gofers) Organizational Meeting will take place 7:30 pm Friday, August 19, in the Adult Education Room of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, 5301 Ponderosa Ave NE (between San Mateo and San Pedro, south of Montgomery – park on the backside of the building, and follow the sidewalk to the Eastside door). All attending volunteer workers at this meeting will receive some kind of appreciation gift.

If you’re willing to help us out, please email coordinator Suzanne Busch at volunteers@bubonicon.com.

GENRE BOOKS STILL DISCUSSED

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, July 18, at Jason’s Deli (northwest corner of Louisiana & America’s Parkway NE – across the street from Bubonicon’s Marriott Hotel) to discuss *Embassytown* by China Mieville. The group then recommends 2-4 books read in the last year but not discussed in group on August 15.

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested readers on the third Monday of each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on selected novels at Page One



Bookstore in the Mountain Run Shopping Center. For more info, contact Leah at mrsransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 266-8905.

2022 MYTHOPOEIC AWARDS FINALISTS

The Mythopoeic Society announced on May 23 the 2022 Mythopoeic Awards finalists. Winners will be announced during Mythcon 52, to be held July 29-August 1 in Albuquerque.

MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY AWARD FOR ADULT LITERATURE: *The Witness for the Dead* by Katherine Addison, *Light from Uncommon Stars* by Ryka Aoki, *A Master of Djinn* by P. Djèlí Clark, *Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke, *Terciel and Elinor* by Garth Nix, and *Or What You Will* by Jo Walton.

MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY AWARD FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Kiranmala and the Kingdom Beyond* trilogy by Sayantani DasGupta, *The Coming Storm* by Regina M. Hansen, *Pahua and the Soul Stealer* by Lori M. Lee, and *Root Magic* by Eden Royce.

MYTHOPOEIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD IN INKLINGS STUDIES: *Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis: Friends in Co-inherence* by Paul S. Fiddes, *The Worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien: The Places That Inspired Middle-earth* by John Garth, *A Sense of Tales Untold: Exploring the Edges of Tolkien's Literary Canvas* by Peter Grybauskas, and *Tolkien's Modern Reading: Middle-earth Beyond the Middle Ages* by Holly Ordway.

MYTHOPOEIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD IN MYTH AND FANTASY STUDIES: *The Modern Myths: Adventures in the Machinery of the Popular Imagination* by Philip Ball, *Fairy Tales of London: British Urban Fantasy, 1840 to the Present* by Hadas Elber-Aviram, *The Dragon in the West: From Ancient Myth to Modern Legend* by Daniel Ogden, *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to The Hunger Games* by Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, and *George R.R. Martin and the Fantasy Form* by Joseph Rex Young.

Mythcon 52 takes place at the 21st Century Public Academy, 4300 Cutler Ave NE (a local charter school) which is 1/4 mile from the Hampton Inn University/Midtown (convention hotel at 2300 Carlisle Blvd NE). Special Guests are Author Guest of Honor Rivera Sun (Ari Ara series, *The Dandelion Insurrection*), Scholar Guest of Honor David Bratman (Tolkien scholar), and Student Paper winner Alexei Kondratiev. The Theme for 2022 is "The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien (Exploring the Other in fantasy and mythopoeic literature)."

In addition to panel discussions and presentation of papers, programming includes a Dungeons & Dragons game, a screening and discussion of *Encanto*, a costume contest, a Bardic Circle, an Auction, and more.

Non-members of the Mythopoeic Society are \$115.00 for the weekend, students are \$70.00, a 1-day

pass is \$45.00 at the door, or a 2-day pass is \$75.00 at the door. For more information, go to www.mythsoc.org or email chair@mythcon.org.

NM FIRES MOVE TAOS TOOLBOX

Walter Jon Williams, founder of the Taos Toolbox workshop, announced on Facebook in early June that this year's event was relocating from Taos to Albuquerque due to fires in the area:

"So quite a number of plans have gang agley in the last days, so I've been putting out fires – nearly literal fires," he posted. "Taos Toolbox, the master class for writers of science fiction and fantasy, starts this weekend, and has been held at the Angel Fire resort for the last decade or more. It's a deluxe place in a beautiful mountain setting, and unless there's a mountain bike rally or something, it's not too crowded or noisy and we can concentrate on our work.

"Except this year we have the Hermit's Peak Fire, the largest wildfire in New Mexico history, over 300,000 acres and currently only 60% contained," he continued. "It's ten miles from Angel Fire, and when it gets a wind behind it, a fire can race along at 5 miles per day. Angel Fire has been at the 'prepare to evacuate' stage for weeks now. I mean, the pandemic wasn't enough?"

Williams went on to state, "Now the fire is 60% contained, and the odds are Angel Fire would have been fine, but I couldn't guarantee that. I couldn't absolutely promise that Hermit's Peak wouldn't blaze up again, or that we wouldn't have to evacuate 20 people to lodging unknown. So I moved the workshop to the Sonesta ES suite hotel in Albuquerque, which is quite luxe, offers free breakfast, and has a fine view of the semi-trucks running past on the freeway. Angel Fire very kindly returned my deposit, which they didn't have to do, but then we'll be back there next year if the UFOs don't land, so..."

"At least the Sonesta returned my phone calls. One of the things I've discovered running a workshop is the sheer number of people who can't be arsed to take the money I wave in their faces. 'Take this money!' I say. 'All you have to do is your job!' Crickets. Well, we've got a nice place now, and I can guarantee 99.99% that it won't burn down."

This year's workshop took place June 5-18. (And the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire is 93% contained as of July 2.)

STARGIRL EARLY ON CW'S FALL SKED

On July 5, The CW revealed their fall premiere dates and for fans of the network's DC series, that schedule came with good news. DC's *Stargirl* – the only one of the network's DC series airing this fall – is set to return for Season 3 on Wednesday, August 31st. The series returns roughly a month ahead of the rest of The CW's fall pro-

gramming, which kicks off in earnest beginning in October. The show also makes the move from Tuesdays to Wednesdays followed by season 3 of *Kung Fu*.

At the moment, not a lot is known about the third season of *Stargirl*. It was revealed at the end of last season that Season 3 is subtitled "Frenemies." Look for Cindy (Meg DeLacy) to try to join the JSA, the Crocks living next door to Courtney, and according to Brec Bassinger, "Murder mystery!" Bassinger told TVLine, "You know what, I'm just gonna say it... Murder mystery! And how evil and good are going to live in a town together and figure out who the murderer is."

One of the other storylines for season 3 that we know about is Jennie/Green Lantern (Ysa Penarejo) and the search for her brother Todd/Obsidian (Tim Gabriel). The two have been separated since childhood and each has been looking for the other ever since.

In season 2, Jennie learns that Todd may have been at The Helix Institute for Youth Rehabilitation but when she arrives there Todd is nowhere to be found. The creepy institute seems to be run by the mysterious Mister Bones (voiced by Keith David) with daily management on site by an equally mysterious and creepy Nurse Louise Love (Lynne Ashe).

The CW also recently released a teaser trailer for the upcoming season that hints at the more interesting complications that *Stargirl* will face in Season 3 with the return of Sylvester Pemberton/Starman (Joel McHale). It was revealed at the end of last season that he's not dead after all which should make things interesting considering that both *Stargirl* and *Starman* utilize the Cosmic Staff, and there's only one Cosmo.

The series has roots to a pair of 1941 superheroes: the Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy. But this series focuses on the character that started creator Geoff Johns' career as a comic book writer when he created Courtney Whitmore/*Stargirl* in 1999, lovingly inspired by his late sister who was killed in 1996 in the TWA Flight 800 explosion.

KATE BUSH HAS THOUGHTS ABOUT HER *STRANGER THINGS* SUCCESS

by Linda Codega, gizmodo.com 6/22/22

Acclaimed singer-songwriter Kate Bush has rocketed back to the top of the streaming charts according to both Billboard and Spotify after her 1985 hit "Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)" was featured in the hit supernatural series, *Stranger Things*. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, after the show's initial release the song received "an 8,700 percent increase in global streams on Spotify on May 30 compared to its total on May 25, the day prior to the premiere." And Bush has some thoughts about this... well, *strange* phenomenon.

In season four of *Stranger Things*, Max, who saw her

brother get consumed by the Upside Down last season, has been targeted by the antagonist of this season, Vecna. The Hellfire Club has figured out that one of the best ways to resist Vecna's nightmare control is by concentrating on music. Max's favorite song? The Kate Bush anthem about a man and a woman switching places.



In an interview with the BCC Radio podcast *Women's Hour*, Bush said that she has been a fan of *Stranger Things* for a while, and specifically mentioned that the Duffer Brothers have done a great job with the song's inclusion in the narrative. "I think they've put it in a really special place," Bush said in the interview. "I thought what a lovely way for the song to be used in such a positive way... As a kind of talisman, almost, for Max. And yeah, I think it's very touching, actually."

While many have heard about the pittance that artists receive from Spotify, Bush actually owns the rights to this song – it's currently held by her own company, Noble & Bright, which means that she's making roughly \$250,000 a week on streaming success alone. Since Bush's song protects Max, good for her!

The first volume of *Stranger Things'* fourth season was released in two parts. Volume 1 began on May 27, featuring several scenes of Albuquerque standing in for California. The final two episodes, a.k.a. Volume 2, were released July 1.

[From Wikipedia: "Running Up That Hill" reached number one on the UK Singles Chart on June 17 and was Bush's first number one since "Wuthering Heights" in 1978. Upon reaching number one, Bush broke three chart records: the longest wait between number ones in the history of the UK chart, the longest time taken between a song's release and it reaching number one, and the oldest female artist to reach number one. On July 1, the song charted at number one for a third week in Ireland and the United Kingdom. In the United States, "Running Up That Hill" re-entered the Billboard Hot 100 on the chart dated June 11 at number eight, an improvement on the single's initial 1985 peak of number 30 and also becoming Bush's highest charting single on the Hot 100 to date. The song reached number four the following week, becoming Bush's first single to reach the American top five. Bush thanked her fans on her website, noting that "many young people who love the show [were] discovering the song for the first time," and that "the response to 'Running Up That Hill' is something that has had its own energy and volition. A direct relationship between the shows and their audience and one that has stood completely outside of the music business."]

SECRETS OF COVID 'BRAIN FOG' ARE STARTING TO BE LIFTED

by Maggie Chen, wired.com 7-1-22

Allison Guy was having a great start to 2021. Her health was the best it had ever been. She loved her job and the people she worked with as a communications manager for a conservation nonprofit. She could get up early in the mornings to work on creative projects. Things were looking “really, really good,” she says – until she got COVID-19.

While the initial infection was not fun, what followed was worse. Four weeks later, when Guy had recovered enough to go back to work full-time, she woke up one day with an overwhelming fatigue that just never went away. It was accompanied by a loss of mental sharpness, part of a suite of sometimes hard-to-pin-down symptoms that are often referred to as COVID-19 “brain fog,” a general term for sluggish or fuzzy thinking. “I spent most of 2021 making decisions like: Is this the day where I get a shower, or I go up and microwave myself a frozen dinner?” Guy recalls. The high-level writing required for her job was out of the question. Living with those symptoms was, in her words, “hell on earth.”

Many of these hard-to-define COVID-19 symptoms can persist over time – weeks or years. Now, new research in the journal *Cell* is shedding some light on the biological mechanisms of how COVID-19 affects the brain. Led by researchers Michelle Monje and Akiko Iwasaki, of Stanford and Yale Universities respectively, scientists determined that in mice with mild COVID-19 infections, the virus disrupted the normal activity of several brain cell populations and left behind signs of inflammation. These findings may help explain some of the cognitive disruption experienced by COVID-19 survivors and provide potential pathways for therapies.

For the past 20 years, Monje, a neuro-oncologist, had been trying to understand the neurobiology behind chemotherapy-induced cognitive symptoms – similarly known as “chemo fog.” When COVID-19 emerged as a major immune-activating virus, she worried about the potential for similar disruption. “Very quickly, as reports of cognitive impairment started to come out, it was clear that it was a very similar syndrome,” she says.

In September 2020, Monje reached out to Iwasaki, an immunologist. Her group had already established a mouse model of COVID-19, thanks to their Biosafety Level 3 clearance to work with the virus. A mouse model is engineered as a close stand-in for a human, and this experiment was meant to mimic the experience of a person with a mild COVID-19 infection. Using a viral vector, Iwasaki’s group introduced the human ACE2 receptor into cells in the trachea and lungs of the mice. Then they shot a bit of virus up the mice’s noses to cause infection, controlling the amount and delivery so that the

virus was limited to the respiratory system. For the mice, this infection cleared up within one week.

Once the mice had been infected with the virus, the scientists assessed the levels of cytokines in their blood and cerebrospinal fluid (the liquid surrounding the brain) at seven days and seven weeks after infection. Cytokines are markers secreted by the immune system, and they are critical in regulating inflammation. Not only were certain cytokines elevated in the cerebrospinal fluid at both time periods, but the scientists saw an increase of microglia reactivity in the subcortical white matter of the brain – the squishy white tissue rife with nerve fibers. That was another sign of potential trouble.

Microglia are sort of like the central nervous system’s hungry scavengers. They are immune cells that clean up the brain by chomping on dead and unwanted neural debris, among other important functions.

In response to inflammatory stimuli, microglia can become perpetually reactive. One consequence is that they can begin eating away at needed neurons or other brain cells, which further disrupts the brain’s homeostasis. In the case of COVID-19, the scientists found that this reactivity persisted even seven weeks after infection.

To figure out what exactly caused the microglia to become reactive, the researchers looked for the cytokines that had reached elevated levels. Specifically, Anthony Fernandez Castaneda, a postdoctoral researcher in Monje’s laboratory and a study coauthor, found CCL11 – a factor that can decrease the generation of new neurons and impair learning or memory. “The elevated CCL11 result was very interesting, because it could potentially explain why some COVID survivors experience cognitive symptoms,” he says.

In a second phase of the experiment, the researchers gave shots of CCL11 to a separate group of mice. Then they examined tissue from their brains to discover where the microglia had been reactive, and where fewer new neurons had grown. That turned out to be in the hippocampus – indicating that CCL11 acted on very specific cell populations in a memory-related area of the brain.

Geraghty recalls staying in the lab late at night during the Christmas holiday to finish the analysis of how COVID-19 affected myelinating oligodendrocytes – brain cells that generate the myelin “padding” around neurons to provide insulation. The result: The infected mice had lost approximately one-third of their mature oligodendrocytes, and had a statistically significant drop in myelination compared to mice in a control group.

Joanna Hellmuth, a cognitive neurologist at UC San Francisco who was unaffiliated with the study, notes that the “mouse data is very compelling,” and more studies are needed to see how these results translate into treatments for human patients – like Guy or others struggling with long COVID and cognitive symptoms.

Wes Ely, a pulmonary and critical care specialist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, believes that such

studies can lead to future therapeutic development. “This work paves the path towards both pharmacological, neuropsychological, and cognitive rehabilitative mechanisms to rebuild brain power,” he says.

For example, Monje thinks, some drug candidates that already worked in “chemo fog” animal models might be useful for treating COVID-related cognitive symptoms.

The team would also like to investigate other questions, like whether these neurological effects are different after even longer periods of time, or if they are different following a breakthrough infection after vaccination.

While Monje and Iwasaki’s work has given researchers a better idea of how COVID might affect the brain, it may take years before there is a working treatment for patients. For Guy, the time cannot come soon enough. In 2022, she got COVID again. “I’m just praying for medicine, praying for treatment,” she says.



ON THE CONVENTION FRONT: **BUBONICON 53 JUST SEVEN WEEKS AWAY**

by Craig Chrissinger, con chair

Bubonicon, New Mexico’s annual science fiction convention, returns to being in-person to celebrate its 53rd edition August 26-28 at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown, 2101 Louisiana Blvd NE (at I-40). More than 40 authors, artists, scientists & fans will be participating in programming.

This year’s convention features special guest talent from the East Coast, Ohio, Texas and New Mexico. Guests of Honor for Bubonicon 53 are Ohio novelist Rae Carson and New York writer Keith R.A. DeCandido; Guest Artist is Chaz Kemp of Denver; and Toastmaster is A. Lee Martinez of Texas. We also are happy to have with us (among others) Peri Charlifu, Stephen R. Donaldson, Sheila Finch, C.C. Finlay, Gordon Garb, Reese Hogan, Darynda Jones, Jeffe Kennedy, Elizabeth Leggett, Jane Lindskold, Emily Mah, Chris Marsh, George RR Martin (tentative), Susan R. Matthews, Melinda Snodgrass, Jeanne C. Stein, S.M. Stirling, Lauren C. Teffeau, Ian Tregillis, Robert Vardeman, Carrie Vaughn, Walter Jon Williams, and Connie & Courtney Willis.

Proceeds from the Friday charity auction and a portion of any Bubonicon 53 profits will benefit the Williamson Library Collection at Eastern NM University, the local Roadrunner Food Bank, and World Food Kitchen.

Bubonicon 53 opens with Pre-Registered check-in 1:00-2:30 pm Friday the 26th, with regular registration open at 3:00 pm; and goes almost nonstop through 5 pm

that Sunday. The first programming is at 4 pm, the same time the Art Show opens. The Con Suite and Gaming open at 5 pm.

The theme for the weekend is “After the Plagues Years (Plagues & Pandemics in SF/F).” The five tracks of programming at the Marriott are fairly full, so don’t be surprised if you’re torn between attending two or three panels/readings at a time! And by the way, we are using Carlsbad for the CON OFFICE, so smaller program will be in Salon G (across from Cimarron/Las Cruces).

Two Programming Notes – A. Lee Martinez will be Master of Ceremonies for the *COSTUME CONTEST AT 7:00 PM* Saturday; with Jessica Coyle’s Green Slime Awards remaining at halftime. Yes, that’s ONE FULL HOUR earlier than in the past. Geneva Schult is organizing the costuming event, and already has judges lined up. And the Charity Auction on Friday evening also will be earlier, starting at 9:10 pm.

Don’t forget about the hospitality suite– located on the 16th floor in a Suite with two adjoining sleeping rooms. The Con Suite will be serving individually wrapped snack items and canned drinks, and patrons will place orders at a counter. Sadly, due to COVID concerns, there will be *no* Sunday Afternoon Tea this year (but the Con Suite will stay open until 12 Noon that day).

Speaking of COVID-19, we plan to announce BUBONICON 53’S OFFICIAL POLICY on July 20. Based on cases and hospitalizations going up in New Mexico, there is a *really good chance* we will have a masking and/or vaccination mandate in place. Stay tuned and stay safe!

Gaming takes place in two rooms by the Art Show and also on the 2nd Floor. The Dealers Room, which is full for 2022, is in the usual space.

Art Show rules/forms are now online as PDF files on the Bubonicon website. One major change for the Art Show this year – There will not be any Silent Auction. The price you see on a piece is the price you will pay to own it (just like in a gallery show). Plan ahead as you may pay a realistic price instead of a minimum bid.

There will be a Dead Dog (post-con gathering) 7:30-11:00 pm in the hospitality suite, hosted by Eric Klammer, Mark Gillespie, Geneva Schult and Michelle Melendez. Again, single-serve snack items will be on hand.

We need volunteer workers (gofers in con speak) to help us throughout the weekend (see separate blurb earlier in this newsletter). If you can help, please email Suzanne Busch at volunteers@bubonicon.com, or come to the meeting Friday, August 19, at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church on Ponderosa NE (home of ASFS).

Passes for the whole weekend are \$42 if purchased by August 12. After that, you’ll have to wait to pay \$48 at the door. Daily memberships are \$17 Friday, \$25 Saturday and \$15 Sunday. Youths 14-17 years old are \$25 for the whole weekend. Children under 14 years are free when accompanied by an adult.

There are two ways to pay now! You can send pay-

ments with the registration form to arrive by August 12 to Bubonicon Inc at 933 San Mateo Blvd NE, Suite 500-208, Albuquerque, NM 87108; or you can use your PayPal account/Credit Card on our website (make sure to include the names for all passes purchased).

The Bubonicon 53 special \$105 room rate (single-quad occupancy) is only guaranteed through Monday, August 15, so get your reservation now at 800-228-9290.

Info is available from our Google voicemail at (505) 559-0931, Craig at (505) 266-8905, by email at bubonicon@gmail.com, or through the website at www.bubonicon.com.

BOOK REVIEW ROUND-UP

***A Mirror Mended: Fractured Fables Book 2* by Alix E. Harrow, 2022 Tordotcom, hc \$18.99, 144 pages.**

Review by Jessica Coyle

Alix E. Harrow's *A Mirror Mended* is a continuation of *A Spindle Splintered*, her 2021 novella that is currently a Hugo nominee. The story follows Zinnia Gray, a professional fairytale fixer with a degree in folklore, who is able to travel into different worlds of the story Sleeping Beauty because of her status as the Sleeping Beauty of our world. Zinnia is feeling burnt out from saving princesses, and is trying to decide whether to return to her own messy life in her world when she glances into a mirror and sees an entirely different world with an evil villain looking back at her. Zinnia finds herself pulled out of the Sleeping Beauty story and into the world of Snow White by the story's villain, the Evil Queen.

The Evil Queen has heard about Zinnia's ability to save Sleeping Beauties from their narrative, and she wants Zinnia to save her from her own horrible fate. Zinnia reluctantly agrees to help the Queen, and their journey soon leads her to question the true nature of evil and her own life choices.

Harrow, who has been receiving a lot of attention in recent years for her short fiction and novels *The Ten Thousand Doors of January* and *The Once and Future Witches*, delivers another great story here. Zinnia is an interesting character whose worldview is significantly shaped by having a disease which meant she knew she was going to die at a young age. Having her earn a reprieve through her experiences traveling the fairytale multiverse, and the fallout that she experiences in her life as a result, is a novel concept. If you enjoy fairytale retellings, this one is a well-written novella that takes a very different bent from the usual entries into the genre. That said, I highly recommend you start with *A Spindle Splintered* to fully understand the story.

***Drunk on All Your Strange New Words* by Eddie Robson, 2022 Tordotcom, hc \$26.99, 288 pages.**

Review by Roberta Johnson

Drunk on All Your Strange New Words is a combination of post-first contact science fiction and locked-door

murder mystery.

Lydia's world is near-future Earth, sometime after its first contact with the alien Logi, who are unable to communicate with humans since they are telepathic rather than verbal. While technology has advanced, there is no mechanical Universal Translator. The Logi have all the money Earth needs, but they need human translators. Fitz' job is to learn human culture, and Lydia's job is to translate while he mingles with the upper-crust. She's good at translating, not so good at mingling with the rich and famous.

We open with Lydia drunkenly falling off a New York City opera balcony while on the job, something that would get me first killed, then fired. Except that drunkenness is a physical consequence of her translation duties, so her employer saves her, and he is not only understanding, he's abashed at having kept her working too long and thereby endangered her. He's really a good employer and Lydia's lucky to have the job. Jobs are hard to come by, and if she loses it she'll land back with the hardscrabble family she came from.

When the unthinkable happens and Lydia's in danger of being arrested for murder, she's desperate to find the killer. Except that no one thinks she's capable of it; the police want to arrest her, and of course there are the obligatory threats on her job and her life. This is, however, not your typical mystery, and Lydia's not your typical heroine. She has unexpected allies, and the action and the clues keep coming. Only this mystery is steeped in conspiracies within conspiracies, and she can't trust anyone, including herself. Just when she thinks she's found the killer, she'll find instead that the crime was worse than anyone could have imagined, and she must get justice for a good friend.

Drunk is a good, fast read, well-written and with characters who are both relatable and intelligent, and a setting that springs naturally from events going on today. As an avid reader of both mysteries and science fiction, I found it well worth my time.

***The Past is Red* by Catherynne M. Valente, 2021 Tordotcom, hc \$20.99, 146 pages.** **Review by Jessica Coyle**

Catherynne M. Valente's *The Past is Red* is a novella that expands on the world Valente created in her short story *The Future is Blue* from the 2015 anthology *Drowned Worlds*. Valente, who has earned herself a reputation as one of the best short fiction authors working today, knocks it out of the park in this novella, which is nominated for both the 2022 Hugo and Locus Awards. The story explores a distant future where all livable land has been destroyed, and the few remaining humans live on communities made of floating garbage. The story follows the character of Tetley Abednego, who is "the most beloved girl in Garbagetown, but she is the only one who knows it." Tetley has been both shunned and abused by other residents for some unnamed crime that is slowly revealed as the story unfolds. Even though Tetley has

every reason to hate Garbagetown and the people who live there, she truly believes that it is the most wonderful and hope-filled place in the entire world. Tetley's optimism is contagious, even as it is revealed just how unreliable of a narrator she truly is.

The Past is Red is truly a revelation and deserving of all of the praise being heaped upon it. You can't help but fall in love with Tetley; her brightness and positivity shine through even as everyone in her entire life abuses and takes advantage of her. Even when her one chance at love falls apart in the most tragic way, you hope that she will survive and thrive. This is definitely one I recommend for fans of Valente's work and the climate change dystopia genre.

ASFS MEETING REPORTS — MAY 2022: JONES & MCCORMICK VISIT

ABQ author Brian Jay Jones and local puppeteer Michael McCormick spokes to 34 people about Jim Henson, George Lucas, *The Dark Crystal*, *Labyrinth* and *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*. Jones has written biographies on Henson and Lucas, while McCormick worked on all three films.

Jones gave an overview of Henson and Lucas, noting that it was possible that the two may have met in 1976 as both were working in London (Henson on *The Muppet Show* and Lucas on the first *Star Wars*). *The Dark Crystal* and *The Empire Strikes Back* were being developed at roughly the same time. Thus Lucas got Yoda while Henson got the technology he needed to make the advanced puppets work. When *Labyrinth* started development in 1984, Henson decided people didn't connect with *The Dark Crystal* because there were no people in it. Thus *Labyrinth* has humans. Henson had wanted Sting to play the Goblin King, but one of his sons insisted, "Bowie is forever!"

McCormick started as a Punch and Judy performer and was spotted by singer-songwriter Roger Miller, a Henson associate, in Santa Fe. Miller introduced McCormick to Henson with a phone call, and soon McCormick was off to England. "I had no idea what I was getting into, or what *The Dark Crystal* was. I flew to London with a steamer trunk full of puppets. I stood through one of the last *Muppet Show* productions before I finally met Jim Henson in person.

"It was a crazy situation, and was the whole time," McCormick continued. "Brian Henson told me recently that he hired me to help make things look old. I was on the Skeksis team. Nobody knew what they were doing. It was all invented on the spot, but it had its own world already. We worked so hard that we felt like we were falling apart, but we still would come in the next day."

With footage from *The Dark Crystal* running behind him, McCormick talked about the sculptures Wendy Froud did for the characters, the fabrication and design of creatures, and the process to make one Skeksis fall apart at death. "Puppetry is doing what's necessary to make it work," he noted.

McCormick also showed off one of the crystal shards that was seen in Aughra's observatory before the giant crab-like Garthim arrive to capture Jen. "It's been measured, and it is not the shard from the Crystal of Truth," he said. "But it is one of the shards that Aughra has."

McCormick got to know David Bowie while working on *Labyrinth* as the musician/actor had filmed *The Man Who Fell To Earth* in New Mexico. "He was a sweetheart, and we talked about red enchiladas," he said.

McCormick spoke briefly about his work on *Return of the Jedi* as a puppeteer and sculptor of Salacious Crumb (Jabba The Hutt's jester), Sy Snootles and Ephant Mon.

Wrapping the presentation up, Jones noted that George Lucas actually helped on *Labyrinth*'s script, drawing concentric circles within circles for the producers.

EDITOR NOTES THAT FIT THIS SPACE

- **WELL, HALF OF 2022** IS over and done. It's definitely gone by a lot quicker than the last two years, but there have been long moments. COVID-19 still lingers, and probably will never totally go away (plan on those annual vaccinations along with the flu shot). The January 6 Committee reveals more of just how close a political coup came to succeeding, and the political atmosphere certainly is...interesting. We're watching rules and bans come out with little thought for reality, and stubborn resistance to any gun control despite many recent mass shootings. And then it's New Mexico's turn to be on fire. The largest wildfire in the state's history is finally close to 100% containment after burning for three months. And there are other fires still burning - even with Monsoon rains now here. Just how long do humans have left? Seems like the Earth and our psyche are trying to tell us something. It's kind of depressing, so time for comics, old '50s sci-fi movies, and *Star Trek*. And I seem to be reading a lot of magazine articles lately instead of the many books in our house.

- **AT THE END OF MAY**, Jessica and I had to put our cat, Malcolm, to sleep. He had some kind of seizure or stroke late at night, and he wasn't doing well that Saturday morning. So, we made the difficult decision to let him go. For whatever reason, this particular pet loss has been especially difficult. Maybe because he was our only fur baby right now, maybe because of how social he was. He loved to visit with people, to cuddle, and to sit on laps. We very much miss him.

Also depressing is wind damage to our roof (especially May 21), so the whole thing is getting replaced (luckily covered by insurance), and our sewer line is collapsing and needs to be replaced soon. Big problem is the Orangeburg material used from WWII to the late 1960s. At least it lasted 70+ years.

- **HARD TO BELIEVE BUBONICON 53** will be here in seven weeks. Yikes! Still so much to do - now and at the con. We definitely need as much help as possible this year...

- **ALMOST OUT OF ROOM**, but I want to mention that we have enjoyed *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, *Minions: The Rise of Gru*, *Let the Wrong One In*, *New York Ninja*, *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*, *Turning Red*, *Ms. Marvel*, *Stranger Things 4*, *The Umbrella Academy*'s 3rd season, and season 2 of both *Girls5Eva* and *Hacks*.

Many thanks to Roberta J, Jessica C, and Melody R for their contributions. Next *ASFACTS* will be out in October - Submissions are needed! Stay well, keep safe. - Craig C