

# EDITORIAL

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## LOOKING BACKWARD

Occasionally I post an essay at [www.asimovs.com](http://www.asimovs.com) that reflects on the past year's stories. I've done this in conjunction with our Readers' Award ballot. The essays have mentioned every story published in *Asimov's* over a given year and they are far too long to be published in the magazine as an editorial. This year, I've decided to run an adapted excerpt from my most recent essay in conjunction with our Index and ballot. Readers can check out a longer version of 2021 in review on our website under the News section of our "More Stuff" tab. I hope the expanded editorial will be a useful reference when considering stories to vote for in the Readers' Awards poll. Feel free to consult it if you nominate stories for the Nebulas, Hugos, or any other annual genre awards as well.

We published seventy stories in our six double issues last year—nine novellas, twenty-five novelettes, and thirty-six short stories. The short story is often where we find new authors and that was true in 2021. Eleven of twelve tales by authors making their first appearances in the magazine were short stories. The twelfth was a novelette. Among these tales was a story translated from Russian by Alex Shvartsman and a Canadian author who writes fluently in French and English. Some of our newcomer stories were first or early sales. We were delighted to welcome all of these original voices into the magazine. We were saddened, though, to say goodbye to one of our long-time authors. Although James Gunn died eleven days after submitting his last short story, we were fortunate to have the chance to publish it as well as his last novelette and a nonfiction Thought Experiment on "Religion and Science Fiction." Jim never received my acceptance letter for his short story, but I think he knew I'd enjoy the tale. I've always considered Jim a mentor, and working with him has been one of the purest joys of my career.

As the novella is our shortest category, I thought I'd look back on them here. Our January/February 2021 issue kicked the year off with two novellas. Ray Nayler gave us an alternate history noir SF cover story set in 1950's Istanbul with alien technology and "A Rocket for Dimitrios." Donato Giancola painted the original art for this tale. Erudite readers noted that it was also a homage to Graham Greene's "A Coffin for Dimitrios." Robert Reed gifted us with a Great Ship novella set in "The Realms of Water." This clever tale was partially inspired by Hannibal and his war elephants crossing the Alps.

March/April also brought us two novellas. Alex Irvine's "Glitch" was an extremely tense and exciting tale about body swapping and terrorists. Greg Egan's "Light Up the Clouds" was an inspired tale about humans who have adapted to life in the floating forests of a gas giant and how they cope when their way of life is suddenly disrupted. The cover art for this issue was a conceptual painting that I found on NASA's website that perfectly captured the story's setting.

There were no novellas in the May/June issue, but in July/August we published Jay O'Connell's "Out of the Box." I always love a title that takes on multiple levels of meaning, and the title of this tale filled with danger, intrigue, and replicators didn't disappoint. The story was a great anchor for the issue.

Somehow, we managed to cram three novellas into our annual slightly spooky September/October issue! Greg Egan contributed an eerie story about a civilization with a very different concept of death. "Sleep and the Soul" was both alternate history and

alternate physiology. "A Blessing of Unicorns" by Elizabeth Bear was set in the same milieu as her earlier "In the House of Aryaman, a Lonely Signal Burns" (January 2012). Police Sub-Inspector Ferron and her partner Senior Constable Indrapramit were drawn into a tense missing person mystery in real space and in virtual reality. September/October also featured an alternate history baseball story about "Billie the Kid," Hedy Lamarr, Moe Berg, and Captain Nobukiyo Nambu. This was another one of Rick Wilber's thrilling World War II tales. (As a side note, Hedy was also a character in Ray Nayler's novella! This brilliant woman is finally getting due recognition for her inventions.)

November/December wrapped up 2021 with John Richard Trtek's far future story about "La Terrienne." I encountered the author's poetry before I discovered his fiction, and his evocative language skills are evident in both bodies of work. I was completely captivated by Monsieur Picot and his exploits among the diverse cultures that make up the population of Unemone and elsewhere. I hope I have more opportunities to lose myself in this author's future history.

Speaking of poetry, *Asimov's* published at least twenty-nine poems by twenty-three poets last year. I won't have room to mention each poem here or online, but readers should definitely take a few moments to review the 2021 poetry before casting your ballots. As one of last year's voters mentioned, our nonfiction does not qualify for any of the awards. As usual, however, we published charming columns by Robert Silverberg and James Patrick Kelly, while Erwin S. Strauss kept us up to date on virtual and in-person conventions. We also published astute book reviews by Peter Heck, Norman Spinrad, and special guest reviewer Sheree Renée Thomas, and we featured a deeply moving memorial to James Gunn by Kij Johnson.

2021 was a stellar year for fiction, art, poetry, and nonfiction. Now I'm thrilled to be looking forward to the works of 2022!