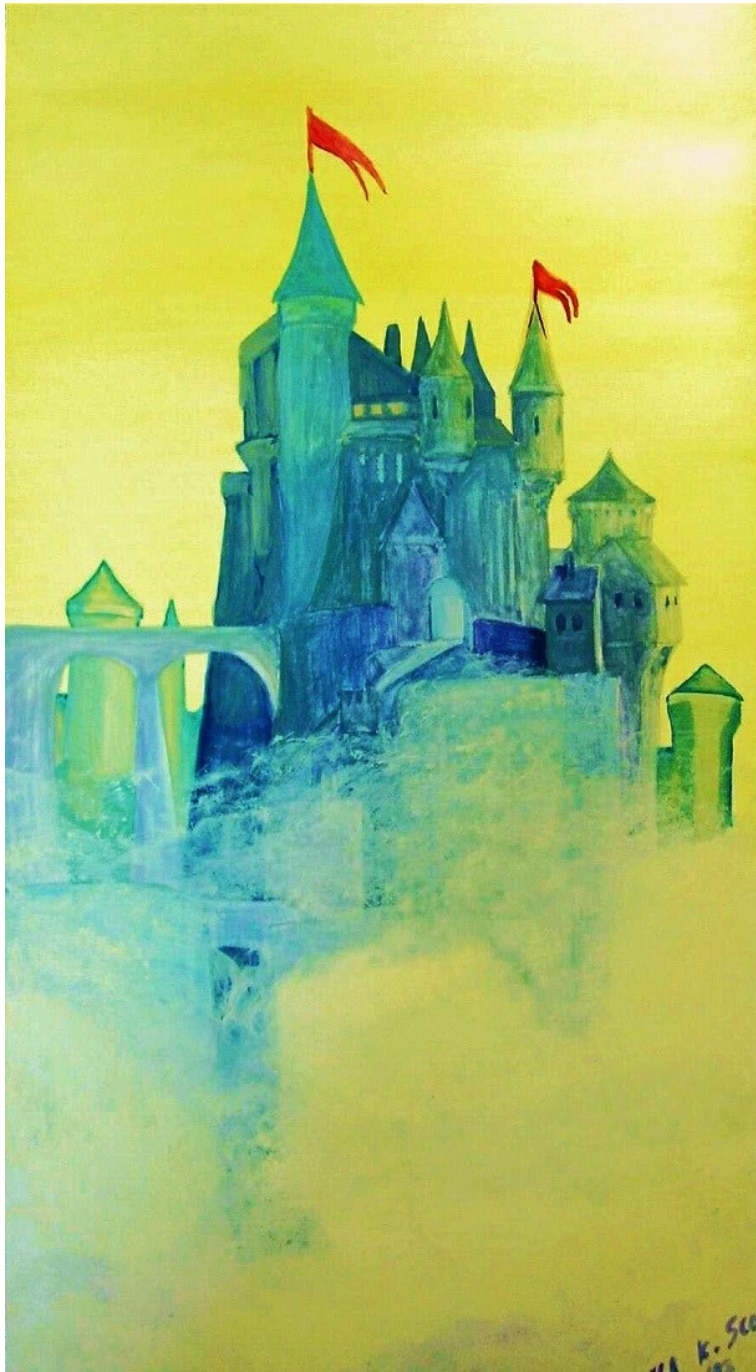


Tightbeam 294

March 2019



Angela K. Scott — Castle in the Sky

Tightbeam 294

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Art Editors are Angela K. Scott and Cedar Sanderson. The front cover this issue and the art on page 4 are from Angela K. Scott.

Anime Reviews are courtesy Jessi Silver and her site www.s1e1.com Ms. Silver writes of her site “S1E1 is primarily an outlet for views and reviews on Japanese animated media, and occasionally video games and other entertainment.”

Fiction reviews are courtesy Pat Patterson and Cedar Sanderson.

Pat Patterson’s reviews appear on his blog <https://habakkuk21.blogspot.com> and also on GoodReads and Amazon.com.

Cedar Sanderson’s reviews and other interesting articles appear on her site www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/ and its culinary extension cedarwrites.com/eat-this-while-you-read-that/

Greg Hullender and Eric Wong publish their reviews at RocketStackRank.com

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Table of Contents

Art

Cover ... Angela K. Scott ... Castle in the Sky

4 .. Angela K. Scott ... Dragon's Flight

Letters

4 ... Lloyd Penney

Anime

5 ... Jessi Silver ... What You Missed, Fall 2017

Novels

9 ... Cedar Sanderson ... An Unproven Concept by James Young

10 ... Cedar Sanderson ... Monster Hunter Nemesis by Larry Correia

11 ... Pat Patterson ... Like a Continental Soldier

Short Fiction

12 ... Pat Patterson ... All Made of Hinges, being an Anthology of Mormon
Steampunk

15 ... Pat Patterson ... Man-Kzin Wars (anthology)

17 ... Greg Hullender and Eric Wong ... Not a Review, But a List

SerCon

17 ... Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. ... Avon's Pulp Magazine — Comic Book Experiment

20 ... Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. ... The Fantastic Writing of John Collier

24 ... Ray Cummings, his actual photograph

Food of Famous Authors

24 ... Cedar Sanderson ... Eat This While You Read That: Mackay Chandler

26 ... Cedar Sanderson ... Eat This While You Read That: Kate Paulk

Letters of Comment

1706-24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke, ON
CANADA M9C 2B2
February 19, 2019

Dear George and Jon:

Thank you both for the newest issue of Tightbeam, no. 293. I might have to make this a fast loc, but make it I will. Let's see what I can say...

First of all, my past letter. More on Miraculous...it is broadcast all over the world, and has been translated into more than 30 languages, but if there is any place where it has the least popularity, it is in North America. Other places...looks like the kids just can't get enough. I guess there's plenty of other programmes to keep the animation fan quite happy. Still waiting for issue 4 of Amazing Stories to come for an edit, and for issue 3 to go to the printers.

As I go through the various reviews of comics and books I haven't read, I suspect I have just read one review that gave the book a lower satisfaction grade for the way the e-book version was formatted for Kindle. Truly, I am living in another era.

Thanks to you, Jon, for I honestly didn't know that Hugo Gernsback launched Superworld Comics in 1940. I'd never heard the title before, either. Only three issues... I get the feeling that while the idea of scientific accuracy is admirable, perhaps people don't mind a little fictional science in their science fiction, or at least they didn't mind back then. As you said, it wasn't profitable, which definitely was a hallmark of many of Gernsback's publications.

It is now less than 100 days until we head back to England for our second (and probably last) trip. In late May, we celebrate our 36th wedding anniversary, and the day after, Yvonne will take me to London (with side trips to Lincoln and Liverpool, to name two) for three weeks. We still have to arrange a couple of those side trips, but once they are done, we're just waiting to go.

Anyway, we are heading out to get a few things done this afternoon, so I will tie this up with a bow, and gift it to you. Thanks for this, and see you both with the next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.



Anime

What You Missed, Fall 2017 Reviews from Jessi Silver



The air is cool, the leaves are changing, and the most wonderful time of the year (apple season) is upon us! And with all that comes a new harvest of anime to look forward to. Every season is a chance to have one's expectations confirmed or subverted – it's something that makes watching anime fun! Below are some of the series that I've been looking forward to (a special thanks to the twenty or thirty people who've asked me what new Autumn shows I'm looking forward to – I've been drawing a blank in person, but now I'll have this handy-dandy list to link to).

Mahoutsukai no Yome/The Ancient Magus' Bride

Synopsis: Chise is a young girl shunned for her ability to perceive the magical world and her lack of family. At her lowest point, she encounters a Magus, a sorcerer with the head of a beast and a wielder of great magical power. He purchases Chise and frees her from the bonds of slavery; in exchange, he asks that she become his apprentice, and his bride.

Impressions: Having already seen the OVA episodes that preceded it, I can safely say that this is my most anticipated anime of the season. Aside from the fact that the show looks to be visually stunning as compared to many TV anime, it also combines some of my favorite things together in one package – dark magic, Eastern/Western fantasy, and complicated character relationships. It bugs me that labeling anime as “shoujo” conjures an image of something frothy and immature in many viewers' minds – glob only knows that trying to get the anime I attend to vote to watch anything with that label is a challenge, especially as of late. This looks to be an example of something that successfully bucks the expectations of its demographic label, and I hope that many people will give it a look.



Kekkaishi & Beyond Blood Blockade Battlefront and Beyond

Synopsis: One day, New York City was consumed by a mysterious fog, and a break between dimensions occurred. Now the city maintains a tenuous balance between our world and the netherworld, its combined existence now known as “Hellsalem's Lot.” A group of superhuman protectors known as “Libra” helps maintain the balance between worlds, and the hapless Leo is recruited into their organization by chance.

Impressions: I watched the first four episodes of the original season back when it was broadcasting and had a serious case of the “I-don’t-get-it-itis” for some reason. I felt as though I was consistently missing something that would serve to pull the plot together. Luckily I got a second chance when our local anime club chose to watch the series – I had purchased the discs to support the show, since it was directed by a woman, but my second impression was also much more positive than my first and I was glad to have watched it. So it stands to reason that I’d be excited about the sequel. I’m slightly apprehensive because season 2 has a different director, and has been advertising itself as being “closer to the manga.” My hope is that director Matsumoto didn’t somehow get blacklisted for following an anime-original plotline, and that the second season won’t be too slavishly-devoted to adapting its source material that it loses all of the charm the first season had. I’m hopeful but wary.

Inuyashiki

Synopsis: Ichiro Inuyashiki is a man who looks old beyond his years. He’s a kind soul with an ungrateful family who steps all over him. One day as he’s standing in a park, a meteor crashes down from the sky and obliterates him. Or, at least that’s what it seems like until Inuyashiki awakens and finds that his body has gained several new abilities. He looks at this development as his life’s new purpose, and puts his powers to good use helping others. But there was another man in the park with him that night, and he has more sinister ideas about how best to utilize his violent new abilities.

Impressions: I read a good chunk of the Inuyashiki manga about a year-and-a-half ago, and despite it being a bit out of my comfort zone in terms of violence and the cynical motivations of its antagonist, I was impressed by the use of a non-standard (meaning, not a teenage boy) main character and the fact that it ultimately seemed to speak against cynicism and lack of hope. I’m hoping that the anime interpretation will carry that through and not focus too much on brutality and violence. noitaminA has been really hit-or-miss for a while, but I think the source material has enough potential to bring this adaptation to an interesting place.



Kino no Tabi

Kino’s Journey: The Beautiful World

Synopsis: Kino is a traveler who crosses the world astride her talking motorcycle, Hermes. She spends no more than three days in each of the countries she visits; any longer, and she may feel compelled to settle down in one place. Throughout these travels, Kino encounters the best and worst that humanity has to offer and learns that the world is beautiful due to its imperfections.



Impressions: I’m a fan of the original Kino’s Journey anime series and its related OVA episodes, but I was caught completely by surprise when I first heard the announcement that a new anime adaptation was being created for the story. I’m not entirely certain whether this adaptation contains entirely new material or is re-adapting some of the older stories, but I suspect it may be a mixture of the two. Either way, I love how the setting, despite being kind of reductive in some situations, still does a lot to show how and why humans behave how they do. The story vignettes are always very fascinating, and Kino is a truly unique protagonist. I

would not have expected this to get another adaptation, but I'm certainly not going to argue!

3-Gatsu no Lion 2nd/ March Comes in Like a Lion 2nd Season

Synopsis: Rei is a teenage shogi prodigy, rising in the ranks as he wins out over players more than twice his age. But Rei also struggles with depression and a complicated family life, and spends much of his time alone. His one solace is the time he spends with the Kawamoto family, three sisters who provide Rei with a glimpse of the loving family life he never had. As Rei tries to make an attempt at finishing high school, eventually he has to learn to reach out and seek help from others in his life.

Impressions: While the first season of the show ended on a note that wasn't necessarily final, but presented a feeling of optimism, and I wouldn't have been disappointed in a lack of continuation, I'm definitely happy that we'll get another 22 episodes to see Rei progress in his professional and family life. While there were some complaints that the first season got a little overly-involved in the shogi plotline and strayed from the more emotional elements of the story, I found the overall balance to be pretty good. My one hope is maybe that the second season will look slightly more Shaft-y than the first, but season 1 played the visuals pretty straight, so that might be too high an expectation.



Shoujo Shuumatsu Ryokou Girls' Last Tour



Synopsis: Chito and Yuri are two girls left living in a world that is nearly dead. Rather than despair, the two load up their motorbike and set off across the desolate world, devoid of civilization, and spend their days enjoying life to its fullest for as long as it's possible.

Impressions: I've mentioned previously that I really enjoy post-apocalypse stories, especially those that aren't necessarily focused on how the disaster happened, but which are more about living on in a changed world. Summer's Made in Abyss did a great job of presenting a world that was clearly an after-image of something, but focused more around the humanity of the people desiring exploration of the mysterious world at their fingertips. Whenever some new information appears to fill in the gap, it's like a treasure, but the real joy is just the journey and experience. I'm hoping that this series revels in the experi-

ence of living, rather than trying to outright answer too many questions. The first volume of the manga is currently available, so I might check that out, too.

Just Because!

Synopsis: As a group of students approach their high school graduation, a mutual friend of theirs, who left in middle school, transfers back into town. This group of friends is suddenly revitalized; while they were all just standing around, waiting to graduate, now their relationships seem to have a renewed sense of vigor.

Impressions: This show is definitely an unknown quantity for me; as an anime-



original series with its claim to fame being that it's written by the creator of *The Pet Girl of Sakurasou* (a show that people continue to tell me is good but which had a first episode that squicked me the hell out), all I really have to go on is a short synopsis and a trailer. Something about it, though, reminds me of *Orange*, a series that I enjoyed in both manga and anime form. Perhaps it's the focus on character relationships, and the fact that people are crying a lot. In any case, I'm definitely curious about it. As someone who doesn't believe that emotional melodrama is necessarily a bad thing, it might be worth a look.

Two Car

Synopsis: Yuri and Megumi are high school students who enter into the world of competitive motorcycle sidecar racing. Though they have opposing personalities, they learn to work together as a team. And they're not alone; it seems as though most of the teams they race are similarly complimentary.

Impressions: This is a case of "this is dumb enough that it might be totally awesome." I actually have fairly low expectations for a show about something as specific as motorcycle sidecar racing, but as a fan of anime based around obscure themes and activities, I had to give a shout-out to this one. My fear is one of forced comedy and the potential for fan service, considering the gender makeup of the cast and what appears to be a propensity for silly character designs (judging by the trailer), but I'm game to give it a try. It wouldn't be the first time I'd watched a show about girls doing goofy crap.



Kujira no Kora wa Sajou ni Utau Children of the Whales

Synopsis: Chakuro is the 14-year-old archivist of the Mud Whale, a ship/floating island that sails across the sand dunes. He and his companions have never seen anyone from the outside world, but they yearn to someday explore it. One day they find a ruined ship, and the girl they recover from the wreck will change their lives forever.

Impressions: Ignoring the fact that the plot hinges on a "mysterious girl" arrives to "change the life" of the male protagonist (I'm cynical, please forgive me, I have low expectations), there's something kind of haunting and fascinating about the setting of this series. Again, I think it kind of falls into that "mysterious post-apocalypse" sort of situation; it's the bleakness of the world and the mystery of the characters' isolation that becomes so fascinating as the basis for an interesting story. The first PV is also really beautiful – while I have suspicions that some of the visuals were animated specifically for the PV and probably won't appear in the same form in the show, it definitely made an impression on me.



So that's a pretty good run-down of what's got me interested this season. As usual, some of these will ultimately pan-out while others will falter, and I'm positive that there'll be some interesting surprises buried in there too. What's got you fired up this season?

...Jessi Silver

Novels

An Unproven Concept

By James Young

(and some preliminary comments)

...Review by Cedar Sanderson

I'm struggling a little with continuing to do reviews. A while back – and I delayed this discussion to give some space, but those who read regularly will know which one – I did a less-than-glowing review on a book. Look, it's a bad book. There are a lot of flaws with it, enough that I finally decided not to waste any more of my life on it, and I set it down. But I did a review anyway, pointing out that the hang-ups I had with it were in large part me... things I know that the general public doesn't know or care about. I did like the first few books in the series.

I was attacked, personally, privately, and through multiple others, who told me quietly that they had received private messages asking them to squash me, or join in the attack. I was disappointed by this behaviour by an author, but not terribly surprised, I have caught flack for my reviews in the past. But I'll make this clear. You can buy a 'professional review' if you want rave reviews about your book. You can't buy or bully me.

Here's the thing, though. I must be honest in my reviews. Just because I am also an author (and sure, I hate negative reviews of my work, but constructive criticism doesn't bother me at all) does not mean I am going to 'go easy' on other authors for no better reason than tit for tat. I have an obligation to my readers, yes, you whose eyes are on these words. I'm going to tell it straight. Now, you might disagree with me. The book I couldn't finish, you might feel it's the greatest thing since sliced bread. And I urge you to publish that review, because you'll make the other author feel great! but don't lash out at me just because you don't like what I wrote about your book. Hiding that attack behind fans is even more unbecoming.

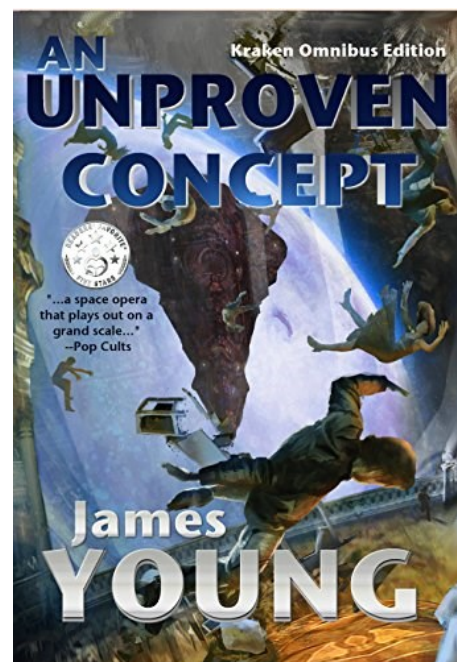
WHEW! Now that is off my chest, I can go on to the real meat of the matter today.

James, my friend, you already know this, but for my readers, I must say the truth and nothing but the truth. Readers, beloved readers, bear with me...

Your original cover sucked, man. This isn't true any longer, although I'm not going to talk about what a great cover it is now, since I had a hand in laying that out on the great art James came up with.

BUT the story inside the cover is terrific!

Ok, enough teasing the author. James L. Young came to my attention relatively recently, and I had picked up his short story *The Ride of the Late Rain*, hadn't started it, when he released his novel *An Unproven Concept*.



Space Opera fans, my Harrington series peeps (heh), this is another one you'll love. Those of you who glaze over at overly detailed space battles? Bear with the first chapter, then, and dig into the dovetailed plot and interesting characters he gives you from there on out.

The two plots intertwine, one the tale of the Space Fleet and the men and women who struggle to keep humanity from imploding into an interstellar war that threatens between the core worlds and the Spartans. The other is the story of the fatally-named Titanic, a gargantuan space liner for the rich and powerful to soar through the spectacle of the stars, dancing in micro-gravity. The collision of these two story arcs is unexpected, and yet well-foreshadowed. I really enjoyed the gritty realism that Young, himself a veteran, put into the battles and something I rarely see detailed; the aftermath of battles.

He made me cry. I almost never cry at science fiction anymore, and I won't spoil it, but the character who... well, there's a holographic farewell delivered that made me laugh while crying. It was masterfully done.

And the ending, well, he keeps delivering right through the end, continuing after the climax to give the reader enough to satisfy them about the emotional growth of the major characters. It's good. Really. It just needs a new cover to properly cue the awesomeness within. On the other hand, my blog readers can now be ahead of the curve, and sneak in before it takes off like Andy Weir's *Martian* (which initially had a crappy cover, and I was surprised at the quality of the writing inside) and gets all popular.

Follow-through. Yeah, that's what James Young has...

Monster Hunter Nemesis

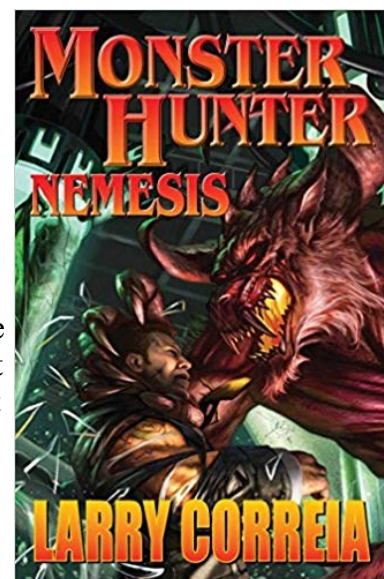
By Larry Correia

Review by Cedar Sanderson

So I give you Larry Correia's *Monster Hunter Nemesis*.

Yes, this book is one of a series, and while I have read all of them (and enjoyed immensely, and I highly recommend them to anyone) I think this one can stand alone. While there are references to what came before, the story that unfolds is constructed well enough to keep an observant reader up to speed. It is the story of Franks, the government agent extraordinaire, who is not human. I don't think it's a major spoiler to reveal that Franks is in reality Frankenstein's Monster; I had deduced this almost from his first appearance. Who Franks really is, however, is not so simple.

The unfolding of the layers of Franks, exactly like an onion, with the accompanying pungency you would expect, is masterfully done by Correia. I believe that of the authors I enjoy who are writing currently, his work will stand the test of time and be seen as classics in a generation. Especially the Grimnoir series, but this book is on a level with that when it comes to exploring the existentiality of a monster. Where Correia takes the backstory of Franks is not something I anticipated in an Urban Fantasy, and when it dawned on me what he was doing, I think I may have crowed a little gleeful laugh.



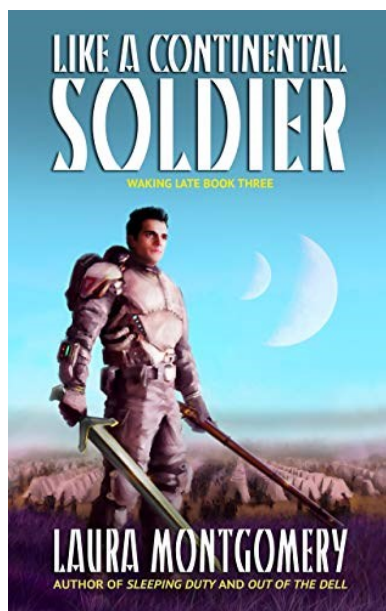
You know I hate to spoiler, or do plot summaries. I'm not going to do it to this book, either. Read it. It's fun, it's a darkly humorous romp that may make you tear up a bit, but it will certainly have you laughing out loud at least once. And the reveal at the end of the book? Yeah, that will get you...

You want to know what a Correia Monster Hunter book is like? Well, if you have read and enjoyed Jim Butcher, you will enjoy this. If you have read my Noir books, but not Correia, then you will definitely enjoy this. I don't think there is anyone else who does what he does.

Like a Continental Soldier

by Laura Montgomery

Review by Pat Patterson



A variation on 'In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king,' is that brand of lovely escapist literature (and movies) about being in possession of advanced technology among primitives. There are LOTS of ways to make this happen, from time warps via messing around with superstrings, as in the 1632 universe, or Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, to landing on a primitive planet, as in a million movies and Twilight Zone episodes, to all of the post-apocalyptic stories, regardless of the nature of the apocalypse.

Now, while I PERSONALLY would favor being provided with lots of weapons, ammo, and magic healing devices if I were to be dumped in a pre-industrial society, what I prefer in reading is how advanced technology is re-introduced, and it seems a lot of people agree with me. I take the 1632 for evidence of that; not only do we have the BODACIOUSLY large number of novels and nonfiction books published in that universe, there is also the Grantville Gazette, which is, I believe, up to Issue #80. They never thought it would go that high, and I support THAT statement by pointing out that they started by numbering the Gazette with Roman numerals.

And thus, the series that Laura Montgomery has brought us, "Waking Late," is something I enjoy tremendously. She manages to insert time travelers into the story without having to have time travel, which I really appreciate, since I think time travel stories are too full of malarkey to be much fun. Her time travelers are colonists and soldiers who went into long-term suspended animation in order to make a lengthy space passage to a new planet. Unfortunately (details are in the first book), they didn't make it.

At the time of the three books, the descendants of the first people awake have devolved into a ferociously tyrannical monarchy, and most of those who are not rulers are serfs or slaves; they may not be called that, but that is their existence. Labor saving technology has not been introduced, and thus muscle power, either human or human directed, is what brings in the crops.

I speak now as one who was seduced at age 18 by the myth that 'living off the land' was a good thing; it's not. The best thing that science and engineering ever did for us was to free us from back-breaking, continuous labor needed to feed ourselves. While it required legislation to legally free the slaves in this country and others, it is technology that made that a viable alternative.

The society of First Landing, with the brutal monarchy in charge, **REQUIRES** slave labor to exist. Their ability to control the population is dependent on the absence of the slaves to fight back, and that's what the protagonist Gilead brings. There is minimal use of spaceman technology; only a few communicators exist. So, how is the conflict created and resolved?

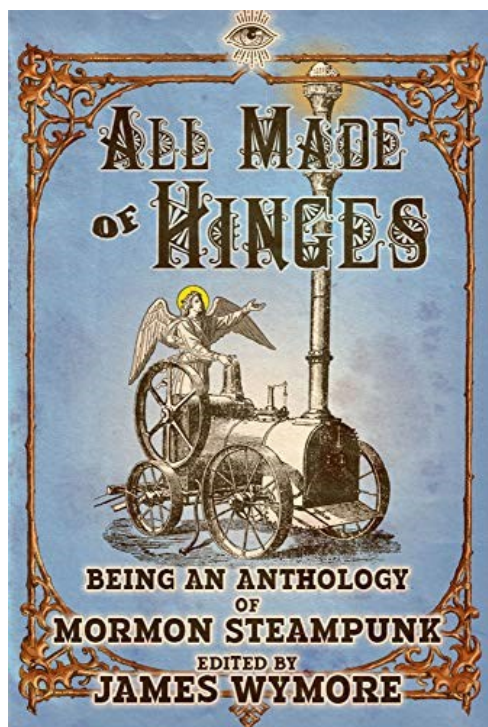
This is where we **MUST** give proper homage to the author, and to her diligence in doing her research. I was fortunate to visit with a gunsmith who specializes in working on antique fire-arms. He walked me through the evolution, handing me examples of each, from matchlock, to flintlock, to percussion cap rifles. It's the **NEXT** step that makes the difference, and Montgomery was faithful in her reproduction of the Spencer rifle, introduced in our timeline just before the start of the Civil War. Her account of some of the battles in the book mirror some of the conflicts in that war, when the rebel forces were limited to muskets loaded with ramrods, and the northern troops armed with fast-firing Spencers. The fact that she is a **SPACE LAWYER** (although not a lawyer in **SP-A-A-CE!**), and not any kind of fire-arm expert, makes the reading all the more delicious.

I reviewed this on Amazon as well. The link will be posted down in the comments; 'helpful' votes are appreciated.

Peace be on your household
Pat Patterson

Short Fiction

All Made of Hinges,
Being an anthology of Mormon Steampunk
Review by Pat Patterson



Two questions I must address first:

1. Why **MORMON** Steampunk?
2. Why am I, a non-Mormon, and a member of a high commitment, non-traditional Christian church, reviewing this work?

My response to the two questions.

1. Why **MORMON** Steampunk?

I have only quotes by the editor, but whether those answer the question, I am not sure. James Wymore, in his introduction, offers these as something that may constitute an answer to 'Why is there an anthology of Mormon steampunk?':

- A. Steampunk has always been good to him
- B. He is a faithful Mormon
- C. He was asked to do it.

Those work as answers to me, but if you have more questions, direct them elsewhere. I only review, I do not justify.

A very cursory run through my memory reveals no corresponding

volume which is a precise match. Certainly, there are other forms of literature linked with a particular belief system: pure expositions of theology; collections of hymns; children's instructional literature. There may even be such a thing as a particular Baptist expression of art, or a Methodist-inspired school of photography, although I am familiar with neither. Precedent exists at those times when EVERYTHING artistic had to be sponsored by The Church, because no one else had enough money to divert from survival needs. I suppose that Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia" and the Space Trilogy, besides being explicitly Christian works, may also be Protestant Christianity, and thus have some degree of specificity about them, but I wouldn't put them in the same category as "Here I Stand: A Biography of Martin Luther."

So, while it may not be a customary thing for a work of non-religious literature to be linked to a particular belief system, it is not without precedent.

2. Why am I, a non-Mormon, and a member of a high-commitment non-traditional Christian church, reviewing this work?

I was asked to.

The Reviews

Mere Pulp, by D. J. Butler. It's my understanding from reading the intro that D. J. Butler is the other primary mover of this anthology, for which we accord him due accord. He has written some EXCELLENT alternative history, published by Baen, in the "Witchy Eye" series, the last of which, Witchy Winter, was a finalist for the Dragon Award. The quality of writing extends here, in a plot/subplot/counterplot steampunk detective story, concerning a plot to reanimate the body of Brigham Young and purify/save the Church, and the non-believers can go jump in the lake.

Marching On to Glory, by John M. Olsen. This one is exciting! It also manages to bring in the truth that military leaders frequently do not take into consideration the strengths and limitations of their troops when they make their plans for conquest. It's also a good example of that genre of literature which demonstrates that a prophecy may be fulfilled in more ways than one. Join the troops of the gigantic airship, as they make their way to battle the mechanized monsters of the South, and on the way get a glimpse of what the Eternal City must be like. This one, as others, makes lovely reference to the genius works of John Moses Browning, one of which is strapped to my right hip at the moment.

A Strike To The Heart of the Cannon Lord, by Stephen L. Peck. It doesn't matter whether we are discussing steampunk, magic, Iron Age implements, or antimatter devices, SOME Bozo is going to find a way to make people miserable with it. And some force, even it dwindles down to a Remnant, will defy the Bozo. And someone is bound to fall in love, even in the middle of a war. In this case, the Bozo is the Cannon Lord, and his superior use of steampunk tech have prevailed, up until now. A pitiful handful makes the final assault.

Avenger's Angel, by Elizabeth Mueller. She's just a poor orphan girl, down to one faithful retainer and the last bit of technology left to her by her father. Alas, whatever shall she do? Well, she can become a bounty hunter, using her feminine wiles to win the confidence of wicked evil-doers, and then clap the bracelets on them, and turn them in for the reward. Lately, though, a tall, dark, and handsome stranger, mysteriously costumed while remaining devastatingly gorgeous, is getting the drop on her, and shooting the bad guys before she can turn them in. Alas,

whatever shall she do? (Hint: she isn't gonna quit.)

Ganesh, by Scott E. Tarbet. It is ingrained into the nature of men under arms, or engaged in some other death-defying career, that when the moment for rest comes about, they talk about what brought them to the place where they are. This is one of those conversations, more engaging than many. That it takes place between a sentient airship and a mecha-man is irrelevant; the best parts are still about fidelity and love. I couldn't say whether this story is most similar to Kipling, Jack London, or O. Henry, but it has that pleasing comfort those stories can bring.

The Pipes of Columbia, by Jay Barnson. Premise: the steel of Deseret has properties not found in other metals. In this case, it is the acoustical properties that are of particular value to a miscreant. A lovely lady in distress reaches out for help to a man crushed beyond endurance. And then, we have a very fine detective story.

Napoleon's Tallest Teamster, by Joe Monson. Dippel's Oil, in this universe, is more than an obsolete animal and insect repellent. It actually acts as a restorative agent, which permits the construction of reanimated men with mechanical enhancements. However, although the substance may generate activity, it is the actions and ethics of the Teamster that drives the story. The loyalty and determination that drives him is thus entirely his own creation, and may thus commend to his Ultimate Maker, those his earthly maker find him repellent. Nicely based on real events taking place in those years when France was having more difficulty than usual.

Reversals of Fortune, by Amanda Hamblin. It is in this story that I found my ignorance of Mormon history to strike the hardest. From the descriptions, I get the feeling that these characters represent actual persons; if not, then they are singularly well-drawn. A dark-skinned Methodist girl, on her way to Italy, to work with their advances in steam technology, intercepts a young white girl whom she believes is intent on some sort of sabotage. Two Mormon evangelists look on, and render what assistance they can.

The Machinations of Angels, by Christopher McAfee. This is a ghost story. There are a moderate number of Mormon references and steampunk devices, but the essential nature is that of BOO! What would YOU do if an angel appeared, offering technology thought to be lost forever? We may not be able to count the number of angels who can dance on the head of a pin; in fact, COUNTING appears to be one of the last things you will want to do with angels. (Spine-tingle!)

The Best Among Us, by Jace Killian. The details of the story include steampunk elements, such as airships, steam-powered guns, and mechanical legs. However, it's the message of alienation, repentance, and restoration which set this apart.

Strange Pilgrims, by John D. Payne. A house elf and a robot walk into a bar... Well, it's not a bar, it's a cargo hold. However, they DO strike up a conversation, just as strangers will sometimes do in a bar. What is the nature of man? It almost always comes down to that, doesn't it?

Tracting Out Cthulhu, by Lee Allred. (Did you ever want to write Cat Hewell Hugh, and then get into an argument about the correct spelling? Never mind.) This installment has the best bad guys, and what might be the best good guys, and the goofiest pun. You'll know the pun when you get to it; it's the name of a robot. The heroes include Japanese schoolgirls, and genius John

Moses Browning is respected for his works, one of which I have strapped to my right hip at the moment. The sufficiently advanced steampunk technology is indistinguishable from magic, and a wicked-efficient airship captain spits tobacco. Nasty human bad guys are attempting to restore Cthulhu to power, and their location is hidden, and must be determined by sending Mormon missionaries door-to-door. Help! Help! The world is under attack!

I just went back over the list to see if I could find a favorite, and found it impossible. I MIGHT be able to pick a top five. I even might be able to separate the stories into two groups: stories I will read again, and those I won't. Even that would be twitchy: the story I am MOST likely not to read again is so well crafted, I think it belongs in a 'Best Of' collection. I just don't LIKE stories in that genre.

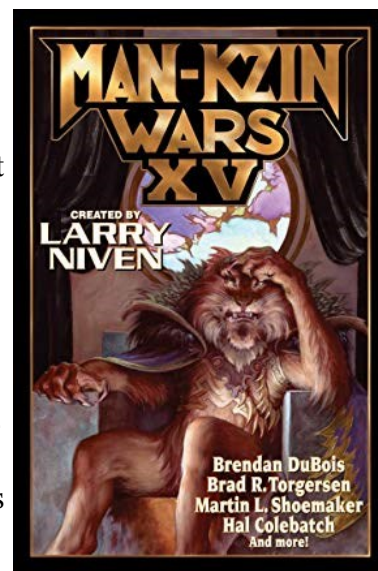
Peace be on your household
Pat Patterson

Man-Kzin Wars XV

Review by Pat Patterson

Seems like decades, but it's only been six years since the last Man-Kzin Wars collection was released. SIX LONG, MISERABLE, STARVING YEARS!!!! Maybe that's a good thing; they say "Absence makes the heart grow fonder", but that's only the pathetic solace sought by one who has been denied access to the object of affections.

And there is SO much that we can be affectionate about when it comes to the war cats. To the best of my knowledge, the Long Peace, those 300 years in which humanity was lobotomized out of studying war, produced exactly ONE story: "Safe At Any Speed." Those who are SMOFs will correct me on this matter (or rather, they would if they read my blog) in the event that I'm wrong; I'm just basing that statement by Larry Niven that it's the only story from that time that he wrote, because: it's so BORING.



I wish to make this point perfectly clear: I would VASTLY prefer living during the Long Peace. I rather doubt that I would ever vote in a government that promised to socially engineer us to that point, especially since there are several billion people who don't share citizenship with me, and thus would not be subjects of that engineering, but still: if I were PERFECTLY assured (and there's the problem) of living in peace with all, I would be willing to forfeit some irascibility. I've got grandchildren, you see, and I'd like for them to be able to live as the first generation of my family who didn't HAVE to go to war. I am proud of the four generations of veterans! But war is not what I would choose for my life.

It IS what I choose for my escapist reading, however. I do not wish to read stories of interesting conversations all the time, as amusing as I find "The Importance of Being Earnest." It's a pleasant diversion, but I rather need the smell of horse sweat, the clack of the Winchester as I jack another round in the chamber, the "vroom-vroom" of the light saber.

So, HOORAY for Man-Kzin XV! These are the droids stories we were looking for! Even if we

DID have to wait six years!

And now, to the stories:

"Sales Pitch," by Hal Colebatch, one of the strong veterans of the series. I suspect he knows more about this aspect of Known Space than anyone else. Whether everything he knows is TRUE remains to be seen, but he tells an excellent story. In this one, he provides deep, deep, deep background to the conflict between Man and Kzin, giving us another reason to despise those who pull the strings.

"Singer of Truth," by Martin L. Shoemaker, another long-time writer. This tale is set relatively early in the Wars, before much of the self-centered nastiness of the human race has been stripped away by the desperate need to unite for survival. A human psycho-therapist risks his life and well-being in order to make contact with the Kzinti, especially those who don't wish to make contact with him. His biggest struggles come from his own people, who fight over their own privileges as if that were the biggest deal in the world.

"The Third Kzin," by Jason Fregeau. WHO IN THE HECK IS JASON FREGEAU??? When I first heard about this volume, I went looking, and I could find NOTHING he had written. And yet, he does one of the most elaborate combinations of classic films and Man-Kzin conflicts I have read. I love this particular method, although I am partial to the Humphrey Bogart movies. This one, though, is just wonderfully satisfying, combining the best elements of the movie (including the zither) with the story of Wunderland after the war. I found "The Third Man" on a streaming service, and watched it in parallel with reading the story. I think that served to enhance my experience; YMMV. But, don't miss this one, and I hope we get more Jason Fregeau in ANY lit form.

"Excitement," by Hal Colebatch and Jessica Q. Fox." Both authors are veterans of this world, and it shows. I love the way in which they take pre-existing characters, ask 'What WOULD happen?' and then proceed to answer the question. In this case, it's the WunderKzin Vaermar-Ritt, who may yet solve the problem of a universe with both war cats and monkeys.

"Justice," by Jessica Q. Fox. As mentioned above, Fox is a MK veteran, and in this particular selection, she appears to show some significant history with another thread that I don't recognize. Her characters seem to me to be too well developed to be created just for this story. The Kzin morality is their primary influence on the plot, which involves probably the nastiest villain I have seen in Known Space.

"Saga," by Brendan duBois. I'm having difficulties remembering if I have duBois' name associated with the MK universe, and the fact that I have to pick up my daughter for a cheerleader function in 29 minutes prevents me from taking advantage of my usual google-fu. Regardless, the snapshot of a particular point in Kzin development rings just as true as anything could. There have been numerous stories about the change from sentient to non-sentient females, but this strikes EXACTLY at the cusp. Even better than that, it inserts Kzin into one of the oldest myths humans have.

"Scritch," by Brad R. Torgersen. This is my personal favorite in the book, for at least three reasons. In the first place, Torgerson, a fellow POG, has written magnificently of the way in which a POG (Person Other than Grunt) can be the source of the human race being saved from a novel

type BEM. Secondly, I loved Ringworld, as well as the other novels in the series, and this goes very far in answering some of the itch from "but what about" questions that linger after Niven closed the last book. Finally, it does a Wonderful job of covering new territory, while reading EXACTLY like Niven. It is UTTERLY faithful to the entire series. If you read Jurassic Park II, the you know that one of the serious questions was "How did they get this dino-clone thing right straight off the bat?" Well, same question goes for the RingWorld.

As mentioned above, I have to be elsewhere (now in only 19 minutes) so I will not take the time to proof this, nor will I attempt a brilliantly succinct summary paragraph. Get the book!

Peace be on your household!

Pat Patterson

Not a review, but a list:

<http://www.rocketstackrank.com/2019/01/sff-ballots-for-stories-from-2018.html>

Rocket Stack Rank has aggregated descriptions of various award ballots for 2018 science fiction and fantasy., including awards on which anyone may vote, awards on which members may vote, and juried awards. Hullender and Wong, the authors of RocketStackRank, as usual do a superb job of aggregating vast amounts of sf/fnal

SerCon

Avon's Pulp Magazine--Comic Book Experiment

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph. D.

N3F Historian

Early in 1950 -- at the suggestion of his printer -- Joseph Meyers, the publisher of Avon Periodicals, asked an editor to put together a new science fiction pulp magazine to be titled *Out Of This World Adventures* (OOTWA). What made this venture new, and the proposed magazine different from the other pulps of that time, was the "plus" that was later advertised on the magazine's cover: "32 Pages of Fantasy Stories Illustrated in Full Color." The original plan called for this 132-page (counting covers) SF magazine to be published on a bi-monthly schedule, although only two issues, dated July and December 1950, ever saw print. Science fiction pioneer Donald A. Wollheim was the editor chosen to carry out this publishing experiment. Wollheim wrote in his first editorial for this new magazine that it "will carry its readers 'out of this world' both in story and picture."

Moreover, apparently this SF magazine with comics in the middle was only part of a larger plan that called for three new Avon pulps with comic book inserts. In addition to *OOTWA*, *Pioneer Western*, and *Sparkling Love/Sparkling Love Stories* were published. I have not seen copies of these latter two titles, but reference sources report that only one issue of *Pioneer Western* (dated December



Issue 2. Cover Artist:
James Bama

1950); and two issues of the last title: *Sparkling Love* (dated June 1950), and a slightly retitled *Sparkling Love Stories* (dated July 1950) were published. One Internet source has reported that *Sparkling Love* [reprinted in 1953 by Realistic] had a photo cover. It's obvious from these statistics that Avon's innovation of including comic inserts in pulp magazines was not a huge success.

On the other hand, I still remember the thrill I experienced when I picked up the first issue of *OOTWA* at the newsstand where I worked on Saturdays. I was 15 at the time, and had given up reading/collecting SF comic books for the SF magazines. At the time *Galaxy*, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Other Worlds*, and other new titles were appearing; and *Astounding* and *Amazing* were still going strong. I had been reading and collecting *Astounding* for a couple of years, and loved the writing of its regular contributors: Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Lewis Padgett (Henry Kuttner & C. L. Moore), L. Sprague de Camp, Hal Clement, Poul Anderson, Theodore Sturgeon, Will Stewart (Jack Williamson), and A. E. van Vogt. Van Vogt was a particular favorite of mine, and of most of my SF-reading friends. Still, I recall vacillating for some time over whether or not to buy this first issue of *OOTWA*, despite the fact that it included a story by van Vogt. In the early 1950s my funds were limited, and I was buying several other SF titles on a regular basis. Others I was reading on a semi-regular basis at the newsstand.

July 1950 Issue

The first issue had an imposing lineup of authors. In addition to van Vogt, stories by A. Bertram Chandler, Lester Del Rey, Ray Cummings, William Tenn, Lloyd Williams, Mack Reynolds, and Kris Neville were included. Cummings' story, "The Planet Smashers," the longest story in the issue, was featured on the cover; but van Vogt (as "A. E. Vogt"), Del Rey, Chandler also were named. I recognized several of these authors from my reading of *Astounding* and other SF magazines. While *OOTWA* #1 probably did not contain some of the best work of these authors, their stories nonetheless made for entertaining reading.

The "special story section, illustrated in full color," had stories by John Michel, Edward Bellin, W. Malcolm White (2-page text story), and Gardner Fox. The illustrators of these stories were Joe Kubert and John Giunta. Bellin was one of Michel's many pseudonyms. At the time Michel was a close friend of Wollheim's.

The unsigned cover art showed a monstrous Martian from Ray Cummings' story, "The Planet Smashers." This particular gray-skinned creature was depicted wearing a gray helmet and with a young blonde woman in a low-cut red dress in its clutches.

Notable stories from the first issue included "The Planet Smashers" and van Vogt's "Letter from the Stars". In the first, a novelette, Cummings wrote of a war between pleasure-loving Venusians and warlike Martians who attempt to blow up Venus. In the second, a short story, van Vogt told of correspondence between an Earthman and an alien who planned to conquer Earth.

December 1950 Issue

The second issue carried over only one author from the first, A. Bertram Chandler. His story, "Raiders of the Solar Frontier," the longest in the issue, was featured on the cover. Other sto-

ries included were by Bryce Walton, Walt Sheldon, Basil Wells, J. Harvey Haggard, Len J. Moffatt, and John & Dorothy de Courcy. Walton, Sheldon, and Wells were named on the cover. At the time I had read only Chandler (from my regular reading of *Astounding*), but I had heard of some of the others.

The section of comics again offered stories by John Michel, under his own name and his Bellin pseudonym (this issue as E. J. Bellin). The other authors were again W. Malcolm White (2-page text story) and Gardner Fox. Three separate Internet sources I consulted stated that W. Malcolm White was in fact Wollheim, but this particular name does not appear in any “official” list of Wollheim pseudonyms. The illustrators again included Joe Kubert and John Giunta; a third art contributor was A. H. Johnston.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this issue was the “Mail from Planet Terra” department with letters from readers who commented on the first issue. While one teenage reader from Minnesota liked the comics (“I just love your illustrated section”), the consensus seemed to be that such comics were not necessary to a SF magazine. One letter writer summarized this point of view with the following: “A reputation for good stories will sell far more copies than ‘Hey, Kids! They got funnies in the middle’.” This reaction is a bit strange when one realizes the importance comics played in the careers of many SF writers. Moreover, only a few years later the comics’ fandom explosion occurred; and the leaders involved were adults, not children. I myself was a charter member of the executive board of the Academy of Comic-Book Fans and Collectors, and I was in my twenties and a graduate student at the time.

The driving force behind comics fandom was Dr. Jerry Bails, a university professor; and other responsible adults were active participants who went on to careers in comics, SF, and related areas. Early members of comics fandom with SF ties included Buck & Juanita Coulson, Ron Goulart, Don Glut, Jim Harmon, Gordon Love, Richard Lupoff, Chris Steinbrunner, Roy Thomas, Don & Maggie Thompson, and Ted White.

The unsigned cover of the second issue showed a woman who has been stabbed lying on the ground. She was dressed in a brightly colored blue bikini and bra, and next to her was a many-legged creature of some kind. Another woman, similarly dressed (but in a red bra and bikini), was standing over her. A man, naked to the waist except for a sash with a lightning bolt on it, was kneeling by the stabbed woman. Incongruously, the man was wearing a space helmet, while neither of the women was so equipped.

Notable stories from the second issue were Chandler’s “Raiders of the Solar Frontier” and Moffatt’s “Alpha Centauri Curtain Call.” In the first, described as a “complete novel,” a battle between spider-like alien invaders disguised as humans and the inhabitants of a prison planet was described. In the second, a clever satire, a vaudeville performer told of performing before hostile aliens and literally “knocking them dead.”

Another Internet source reported that the comics section in *OOTWA* #1 was the Avon comic book *Out of This World* #1 (June 1950), while the section in #2 was the same as the comic book *Strange Worlds* #1 (November 1952). Tuck, in his *Encyclopedia of SF and Fantasy*, reported that the Canadian issues of *OOTWA* were published in November 1950 and April 1951, and that the comic section in #2 was different from the one included in the United States version of the magazine.

In conclusion, while not a financial success at the time it was published, *Out Of This World Adventures* has nevertheless become a collectible and copies of the two issues published now demand high prices. The magazine originally sold for 25¢, but in recent years copies in good condition have been priced as high as \$170.00 each. The comic books that provided the comic sections sell for even higher prices. In addition, posters of the covers of the two magazines are now being sold on eBay.

The Fantastic Writing of John Collier

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph. D.

N3F Historian

Born in London, John Henry Noyes Collier (1901-1980) was privately educated by his uncle, Vincent Collier, a novelist. When, at the age of 18, Collier was asked by his father what he had chosen as a vocation, his reply was "I want to be a poet." His father indulged him, and over the course of the next ten years Collier lived on an allowance of two pounds a week -- plus whatever he could pick up by writing book reviews. During this time, being not overly burdened by any financial responsibilities, he developed a penchant for games of chance, conversation in cafés, and visits to picture galleries. He never attended a university, and was later married to silent film actress Shirley Palmer.

In his poetry, Collier said he tried unsuccessfully "to reconcile in that medium the intensely visual experience opened to him by the Sitwells and the modern painters, with the austerer preoccupations of those classical authors who were fashionable in the nineteen-twenties." He also said that his poetry was influenced by the writing of James Joyce, whom he unsuccessfully tried to emulate. I'm not at all certain what he meant by these statements, but I'm glad Collier went on to write prose.

Novels

His Monkey Wife: or Married to a Chimp (1930) [a man is tricked into marrying an intelligent chimpanzee]. As a private joke, Collier wrote a review of this book, concluding: "From the classical standpoint his consciousness is too crammed for harmony, too neurasthenic for proportion, and his humor is too hysterical, too greedy, and too crude."]

No Traveler Returns (1931) [a short, non-fantasy novel]

Tom's a-Cold (1933) [a gloomy fantasy -- set in the 1990s -- of a future England wrecked by war, its people turned into savages/published in the United States as *Full Circle*]

Defy the Foul Fiend: or The Misadventures of a Heart (1934) [a sardonic, humorous, non-fantasy novel about mis-matched lovers]

Short Story Collections

Green Thoughts (1932)

The Devil and All (1934)

Variations on a Theme (1934)
Presenting Moonshine (1941)
The Touch of Nutmeg (1943)
Fancies and Goodnights (1951)
Pictures in the Fire (1958)
The John Collier Reader (1972)
The Best of John Collier (1975)

Other Works

Gemini (1931) [poetry collection]

Paradise Lost: Screenplay for Cinema of the Mind (1973) [adaptation from Milton that was never produced as a film/Collier later revised it to make it more readable in book form]

Sleeping Beauty [short story used as the basis for James B. Harris' 1973 fantasy film "Some Call It Loving" (aka "Dream Castle"), screenplay by Zalman King]

Screenplays

Having moved to Hollywood in 1935, Collier wrote prolifically for film and television. He worked on the screenplays of "The Elephant Boy," "The War Lord," "I Am a Camera," "Sylvia Scarlett," "Deception," "Roseanna McCoy," and "The African Queen" – although he was not always credited on the screen for his contributions. His short story, "Evening Primrose," was the subject of a 1966 television musical by Stephen Sondheim; it was also adapted for radio for the series "Escape" (starring Elliott Lewis) and later by BBC Radio. In addition, several of Collier's stories were adapted for the "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" television series.

Selected Short Stories

I can honestly say that I have enjoyed reading (and re-reading) all of Collier's short stories. Still, some of them stand out from the others. A few of my favorites are listed and briefly described below.

"Ah, the University!" -- A father sees to his son's education. Required reading for every poker player, especially ones currently attending college.

"Back for Christmas" -- A doctor murders his wife and leaves England for America. Before she was killed, his wife had told their friends that her husband would be back home for Christmas – and she was always right.

"Bottle Party" -- A genie tricks a man into taking his place in the bottle.

"The Chaser" -- A young man buying a genuine love potion cannot understand why the seller sells love potions for only a dollar but offers a colorless, tasteless, undetectable poison at a much, much higher price. The final sentence tells it all.

"Evening Primrose" -- People live in a department store, hiding during the day and coming out at night/probably Collier's most famous story.

“Green Thoughts” -- A man succumbs to a strange hothouse orchid he is growing.

“Interpretation of a Dream” -- A man experiences disturbing and serial dreams of falling from the thirty-ninth story of the skyscraper in which he works, passing one story every night. In his dreams he looks through the windows and makes observations of the real-life inhabitants as he passes.

“The Lady on the Gray” -- A philandering male of Saxon descent meets a bewitching Celtic female. My wife's favorite Collier story.

“Over Insurance” -- A loving couple puts nine-tenths of their money into life insurance and becomes so impoverished that each decides to poison the other, unaware that the other has made the same decision.

“The Steel Cat” -- An inventor uses his pet mouse to demonstrate his better mousetrap to an insensitive prospect who insists on seeing the mouse actually die.

“Three Bears Cottage” -- A man tries unsuccessfully to poison his wife as retaliation for serving him a smaller egg than the one she served herself.

“Thus I Refute Beelzy” -- A rational father is confounded by his imaginative son.

“The Touch of Nutmeg Makes It” -- A man tried for murder and acquitted for lack of motive tells his story to two sympathetic friends.

“Youth from Vienna” -- A couple, whose careers depend on youth, are forced to deal with a gift of a single dose of rejuvenating medicine that cannot be divided or shared.

Stories Reprinted in Genre Magazines

Avon Fantasy Reader #3

“Evening Primrose” (1947)

Famous Fantastic Mysteries

“Thus I Refute Beelzy” (October, 1952 issue)

Fantastic:

“The Devil, George, and Rosie” (March-April, 1953 issue)

The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction:

“After the Ball” (November, 1959 issue)

“Man Overboard” (March, 1960)

“Meeting of Relations” (January, 1959)

“The Tender Age” (May, 1960)

“A Word to the Wise” (September, 1958)

Shock:

“The Frog Prince” July, 1960 issue)

“Green Thoughts” (May, 1960)

Conclusions

Collier was very popular in the United States, where his most memorable literary pieces were collected in *The John Collier Reader* (1972). Like many writers of fantastic fiction, Collier was largely ignored by scholars, but received high praise from the public. Critic Marjorie Farber noted in a review of *A Touch of Nutmeg* that “Collier handles clichés with the deft conviction of a poet.”

Commenting on Collier, fellow author and critic Anthony Burgess compared him to Saki and Mervyn Peake, but admitted that he did not belong to any known literary tradition. Burgess concluded: “Though not a writer of the very first rank, he possessed considerable literary skill and a rare capacity to entertain. He needs to be rediscovered.” Clifton Fadiman wrote that Collier’s humor “has nothing to do with phrases or even situations; it proceeds from a peculiar flip-ness of tone all his own, acetic, casual, always surprising” and his stories have “the infernal, neat touch of horror.”

A. L. Furman said that there had been no writer like Collier since Saki. Anthony Boucher (writing as H. H. Holmes) also compared him to Saki. Fred Hoyle compared him to both Saki and Poe. Genre writer and critic Judith Merrill compared his work to that of Al Capp, calling them both geniuses.

Commenting on his own work, Collier once wrote: “I sometimes marvel that a third-rate writer like me has been able to palm himself off as a second-rate writer.” Collier was my kind of writer, amusing even when criticizing himself!

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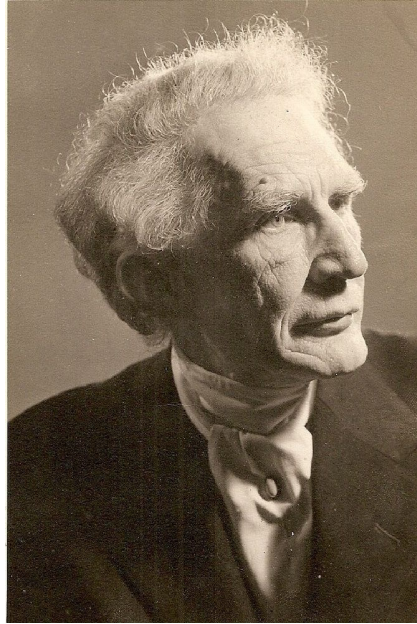
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Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were also consulted.

Ray Cummings

I am advised that our allegedly reliable computer search seems to have found an image of the wrong Ray Cummings in later life. The image below is believed to be accurate:.



Raymond King Cummings

Food of Famous Writers

Eat This While you Read That: Mackey Chandler
...Cedar Sanderson

I've had the pleasure over the last couple of years of reading Mac Chandler's two series, and watching him grow by leaps and bounds as an author. While April, his debut novel, was a very strong story with a terrific female lead who... well, I suggest you read it. It was rough but has been polished into the gem it should be, revealing the beauty I saw in it on first reading. Now that I've said that, and you can tell I'm a fan, I'm going to say that his second series, which begins with Family Law, is even better. It's a superb tale of science fiction, but mostly it's about people, and what makes family, family. Love, not DNA relationship, is the tie that binds.

When I asked Mac for a recipe or dish for this series, he suggested that there was a meal in April which would work for it. I know that food comes up a lot in that series – it has to, when you are dealing with teenagers who have been genetically altered to be stronger and faster. But Mac doesn't just make his food fuel, he writes an appreciation of meals and cooking into his work. So I was tickled to be able to create this for April, and her author.



Fettucine Alfredo with Pinenuts

I prepared this meal two ways – with and without pasta, as I am currently avoiding carbs. Served over a bed of sauteed kale with bacon, it was delicious and I didn't miss the pasta. The First Reader's comment was that it was very good, and I can make it again any time I feel like it.

I prepared our meal with chicken breasts, although you could go meatless if you want this as a side dish.



Alfredo with pinenuts

Alfredo, pinenuts, and more parmesan cheese because cheese!

2 boneless skinless chicken breasts
2 tbsp coconut oil
3-4 crushed garlic cloves
1/2 c white wine
sprigs of thyme (optional)

Toast the pinenuts first and set them aside. They do not need oil in the pan.

In a heavy cast-iron skillet, heat the coconut oil over med-high heat and sear the chicken breasts. Set the oven to 350 deg F. Once the breasts are seared, tuck the garlic and thyme around them and pour the wine over them. Put the skillet in the oven. They will take 20-25 minutes to finish cooking through, depending on the size of your breasts. When you check with the meat thermometer, spoon the liquids over the breasts. When they are done, remove from oven and set aside. Slice into medallions just before serving. Chicken should be cooked to an internal temp of 160-165 deg F



1 small packet (mine was 2.5 oz) pinenuts
2 c heavy cream
1 c shredded parmesan cheese
1 stick (4 oz) butter
cloves of garlic (I used 4-5)
grated nutmeg

Before putting the oil in the skillet earlier, I had toasted the pinenuts. They are delicate and will burn so keep an eye on them and keep them moving.
alfredo sauce recipe

Making the sauce: cheese and cream and butter, oh my!

Once toasted, remove to another dish and start the oil for the chicken. In a saucepan, heat the cream to a boil with the garlic cloves over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Add the butter. When it is melted, whisk in the cheese. Continue to cook until the sauce thickens. If you want, you can remove the garlic cloves – I left them in.

Cook the fettucine to al dente. The sauce and breasts will make enough to serve 4, so a 1 lb package of pasta is about right for a meal portion.

shredded or chopped kale leaves
three slices of bacon, snipped with kitchen shears into 1/4" wide strips (across the short way!)
balsamic or rice wine vinegar

A lot of kale. This was enough for two of us, I would have used the big stock pot for a family meal.

In a heavy-bottomed stock pot or large saucepan, fry the bacon until crisp. Dump the kale in, swishing it around and turning it until it is coated in the bacon grease. Cover the pan. In a few minutes, repeat this process. Sprinkle with vinegar to taste (I usually use 1-2 tbsp). Cover again, and keep doing this until kale is bright green and melted (looks almost transparent) which will take about 15 minutes. This is the kale at doneness. Bright green and wilted.

On the plate, arrange the kale, then the pasta if desired, and 1/2 a chicken breast, sliced. Pour the sauce over, grate a little nutmeg on, then sprinkle the toasted pinenuts over. You can toss the whole thing together in the pot and serve family style if you aren't in the mood to be fancy! The acidity of the kale offsets the rich alfredo sauce very nicely, and the pinenuts offer a little crunch and a sweet, nutty flavor.

This meal works beautifully as a low-carb with no pasta entree.



Eat This While You Read That: Kate Paulk ...Cedar Sanderson

If there's one thing I am sure Kate Paulk is tired of hearing, it is: 'When is the next Con book coming out?' So I won't say it. I'll just look hard in her direction and think it. For this series where I recommend a book to read with a meal, I've had a lot of fun and different foods, and books. This one, I'm warning you now, should not be read while indulging in a beverage. I'm not responsible for damage done to screens. Sharp wit, fine humor, and a snarky exposé of the underbelly of the publishing industry, you don't have to be either a congoer or a writer (or even, shudder, an editor) to enjoy the con series. So go ahead and pick up ConVent before we fire up the grill.

Yes, I am going with an Australian cliché, and cooking this meal on the ‘barbie.’ When Kate and I talked about something Australian to make, because although she lives here in the US now, that is her background and very much a part of her, we decided it had to be lamb. Australian lamb, she told me. What is that? I asked. Just put lots of garlic on, she responded. For a woman who wrote Impaler, and Jim the vampire in the Con books, she sure likes garlic... I wonder...

Australian Grilled Lamb

Ingredients

- 4-6 lamb chops
- 6-7 cloves of garlic, chopped finely
- 1/2 c red wine (I used a merlot)
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

Put the lamb, garlic, and wine into a ziploc to marinade at least 30 minutes before cooking. Push all the air out of the ziploc and seal.

Start the fire in the chimney for the grill with 15-20 charcoal briquets. When briquets are fully engaged, pour them into the grill tray.

Place the lamb chops on the grill and cook with lid closed, 2-3 minutes on a side, until medium rare. Use a meat thermometer to be sure of doneness.

Allow lamb to rest, covered, for 3 minutes before serving. Salt and pepper to taste.

I served the lamb with medjara rice and caramelized onions, with a bit of chiffonaded herbs on top.

Medjara Rice

- 2 c basmati rice (or Jasmine)
- 3 c water
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tbsp coriander seed, grind if you don't like the whole seed in your food (it's edible, but can be crunchy)
- 1 tsp turmeric or 2 tbsp saffron flowers (note: not saffron. They are a kind of marigold)
- 1 tbsp whole allspice, grind before putting in rice.
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 tbsp oil

Optional: a handful of raisins or chopped dates

Place all ingredients in rice cooker, stir, and set to cook as ‘white rice,’ you can start this when you put the lamb to marinade, it will keep warm until needed. You may want to check and stir again during and after cooking.

Fresh ground spices

I ground the spices in a coffee mill.
Spiced rice

Various spices on the basmati rice, cooking them with the rice gives it so much flavor.



The rice when cooked is just perfumed with spice and tastes wonderful

The finished meal, packed with flavor and deliciousness.



We finished off the meal with the cherry mead our friends had brought to share. Sweet, but not overly so, it was a perfect finish to this spicy wonderful meal.

Mead from New Day meadery in Indianapolis.

Cheers!