

N'APA 242

September 2019



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The Official Organ

#242

Next deadline: November 15, 2019

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The official preparer is Jefferson P. Swycaffer - abontides@gmail.com

Procedure: Please Read:

George Phillies will collate and mail, but submissions should be sent to the preparer, Jefferson Swycaffer. No harm is done if submissions get sent to George, but the process should be to send them to Jefferson.

N'APA is the Amateur Press Alliance for members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). As it is distributed in PDF format, there are no dues or postage fees. It is open to all members of the N3F. If there are members interested in joining who have no computer access, special arrangements may be possible. People who only want to read are welcome to ask to be added to the email list. Check with the official collator, who is George Phillies, 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester MA 01609; phillies@4liberty.net; 508 754 1859; and on facebook. To join this APA, contact George.

We occasionally send a copy of N'APA to the accessible (email address needed) N3F membership, in the hope that some of you will join N'APA. Please join now!

Currently the frequency is every other month, with the deadline being on the fifteenth day of odd-numbered months. The mailing will normally be collated in due time, as the collator is retired and the prepaper has a full-time job. Publication is always totally regular, though some readers question my interpretations of "is", "always", "totally", and "regular". N'APA has been in existence since 1959, but has transitioned from being a paper APA to an electronic one.

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Super thanks to Jose Sanchez, who sent bunches (!) of works of art for use as covers, some really super spiffing material!

Ye Murthered
Master Mage
for N'APA 242

George Phillies
48 Hancock Hill Drive
Worcester MA 01609
September 4, 2019

Front Cover: Jose, that is a truly fine drawing of the armor.

Synergy: Sympathies on finding fanzines full of editorial complaining. But there are also good fanzines: N3F Fanzines.

The Contents of a Beautiful Life: Truly beautiful images. I had never before heard the lost treasure story. One wonders if it was true. surely as the gold was collected a ledger would have been kept and receipts issued?

The German novels sounds truly strange. Thank you for reading it, so that I do not need to. Asking the Reaper was fine free verse. Is it your writing? Viral dawn is ingenious. You might compare with barbara Hambley's Asher stories, which are also somewhat scientific, except that they are set during World War 1, when the science was a bit weaker.

Your closing image, all filled with shades of rose-orange, was also beautiful.

Achive Midwinter: With respect to fantasy that takes Christian/Jewish/Islamite faiths seriously, I call the attention of readers to Harry Turtledove's Alpha and Omega, a recent novel in which the Lost Ark of the Covenant complete with supernatural power is found in modern Jerusalem, a young man who turns out to be the Jewish Messiah appears, and life becomes more complicated from there.

Ye Murdered Master Mage: Airy Castles All Ablaze is approaching completion. A loyal denizen of Baen's Bar did a line edit. Another denizen is making critical comments. The Artist is hard at work creating a cover. A good model was found for Eclipse. The Andesian aerial warship is being modelled. At a guess, in six weeks it will be out.

Airy Castles All Ablaze

Eclipse
World's most powerful tween superhero.
World's most terrifying tween supervillain.
Opinions differ.

Airy Castles is a novel about superheroes, not a novel about superhero combat, though there is a good piece of the latter. It's a bit different than your typical comic book.

Was anyone bothered that I slipped to first person for Eclipse's big battle with Solara?

Everything went black. For a fraction of an instant, my eyes saw nothing, not even phosphenes. Starfields snapped back into view, still, silent, and beautiful.

Where are you? Comet thought. If sister Aurora wasn't here, she realized, the rest of her party couldn't hear her call.

Right behind you, Aurora answered. Aurora followed with an image, five travellers in a tight bunch, Star carrying his and Aurora's duffel bags.

Comet, I asked, **Please get us out of here before those people get here. Beating them up once was plenty for me.**

Luggage check? Comet asked.

All here, her brother Star answered. **Sis, thanks for grabbing Eclipse's bag. It was way too heavy for me.**

Any time. Comet reached out with her flight field. **OK, I've got all five of us, and equipment. We're out of here.** Her flight field flared a brilliant tangerine. **Homeward bound.**

I shook my head, trying to clear my thoughts.

When I ran in, I could hear you guys having an argument. What's wrong?

Cloud says Morgan Le Fay, Aurora explained.

But he has images in his mind. That's not Morgan Le Fay. It's Professor Lafayette from RTI. So something is way wrong.

Is this a hoax? We can't go back, can we? Star asked. **What do we do?**

Go back? After I just nearly killed myself so we could get this far? I wondered. **Wait. Could I please see this image?** Aurora did as asked. The image Cloud remembered was indeed Professor Lafayette in a white and red body suit, the Orb of Merlin spread across her chest.

Comet? I focused my thoughts, so only Comet heard them. **You know perfectly well what's going on. Morgan and Morgana are the same person. Why didn't you just say so?**

Give away someone's persona identity? Comet shuddered. **Like telling people your private persona, Eclipse, not that I know who it is? I can't do that. It's not gift-true.**

I thought for a few moments. **OK, guys, this is tactical necessity. If Lafayette complains I gave away her persona identity, she complains to me. The rest of you, you tell no one what I'm telling you. Is that clear?** Four heads nodded.

Lafayette and Le Fay. They're the same person. That's why Comet, back at your house, said Lafayette was a country, all by herself. I waited, expecting to hear denials. Comet smiled and nodded. Her fellows stayed quiet. **I just broke one of Morgan's personas. She has every right to get really angry with me, but that's strictly between the two of us.**

Aurora? Comet said. **I don't see them behind us. Can you hear any of their minds?**

No. Mayhaps they gave up. Aurora answered. I hoped that was true.

Why are we bothering to be here? Cloud asked. **You're Eclipse. You have the Namestone. You're infinitely powerful. Whatever needs doing, you can do it with a snap of two fingers.**

She doesn't have the Namestone here, Comet said. **The rest is her story to tell. We all have to do our best, or the world ends.**

If she could have done this herself, the Wizard wouldn't have sent the rest of us, Star observed.

Why's she just lying there? Cloud asked again. **Eclipse doesn't look very powerful to me.**

I was looking over her shoulder, Aurora said, **while she was keeping our pursuers out of the Tunnel. She went one on one with Solara, a dozen other eternals lending Solara their levels, and Corinne herself with the Ambihelicon right behind them. In the end, she got so much power from someplace, she smashed straight through Solara's force fields. Solara would have died, if her friends hadn't rescued her.**

Not quite that bad, I added. **Eternals are cowards. They all hid behind Solara and sent their attacks through her, so they were really weak. It's just that multiple attacks are bad for the target.**

Aurora looked carefully at me. I was soaked in sweat. I hardly needed a mirror to tell: My usually-immaculate curls covered my scalp in mangy clumps.

Who has a blanket? Aurora asked.

Ultra-R, I answered. Now my thoughts blurred so much I was groggy. **Top of my duffel bag. Pull it out. But you shouldn't be cold, Aurora.**

Star, get it out! Now! Aurora looked at me. **I'm not cold, but you're about to be. You way overpowered.**

Everything is so fuzzy, I thought. I'm not thinking clearly. Now I was cold, colder than cold, just like Aurora promised. I have to stay alert, I told myself. I can't let them down. No, I corrected, I was too tired for that.

Bundle her up, Star said. **I'd say use a sleeping bag. But mine is already small on me. She'll never fit inside.**

Use her blanket. It's big. And bundle me inside with her, Aurora announced. **She's freezing.**

I distantly recognized that Star had rolled me in my blanket. The wonderfully warm patch on one side of me was Aurora, not my barn cats. I fell asleep.

What was that about? Cloud asked.

When you overload enough, you get terrible chills,* Comet explained. *Enough to kill you...Morgana warned me. Eclipse went through that, when she saved Aurora and me, two years ago. Aurora and the blanket is first aid.

**She saved your life?* Cloud asked.*

**Several times. Aurora, Star, could you tell the stories? I'm busy flying. Oh, Aurora, I'm speeding up time for you two, so Eclipse gets more zees before we get back to Earth. Shout if anything starts going wrong.* Comet's mind dropped out of the conversation.*

~~~~~

Half-way through her headlong flight, Comet yawned and enjoyed the sight around her.

Light. Silver-blue light. Light from a hundred years' full moons, beams scattered by rolling wave and foaming surf, flooded vision in every direction, so all was transmuted to shimmering curtains of coldest brightness. Through the glow passed the tangerine ball of her flight field, its steady brilliance in stark contrast to its flickering surroundings.

*\*Shall I take over flying for a bit?\** I was now sort of awake from deep sleep.

*\*Eclipse? No need. You did plenty. Catch your breath.\* Comet wished Eclipse would go back to sleep.*

*\*I ought to do my share, oughtn't I?\** I said, not quite insistently *\*The others have different gifts. But I could cover for you, so I should.\**

*\*Really! There's absolutely positively conceivably no reason at all for you not to join the three sleepyheads,\* Comet answered.*

*\*There is too a reason! I could be using my gifts.\** I responded, trying to stifle another yawn.

*\*Oh, really! And what would I do? Please, let me? You do so many things, and all I do is fly fast. Join Star asleep!\** I yielded to slumber.

*\*I'm not sleepy, sis. Only resting the eyes.\** came a third voice. Star really had been awake, Comet told herself, reading to her from a girl's adventure novel.

*\*Well, don't let me stop you,\* Comet answered.*

*\*Aren't we there yet?\** Star queried.

*\*It's a long way. Why don't you rest your eyes again?\** Comet said, slightly tense at another repetition of the same question.

*\*Sorry. I won't ask again,\* Star said. \*But I will stay awake to keep you company.\**

*\*\*She says she's okay now.\*\** Only Comet could hear Aurora's thoughts, referring to the somnolent Eclipse. *\*\*She's not. She was hurt back there. Enough to kill you or me. Don't let her do anything.\*\**

*\*\*More than overdid things?\** Comet asked.

*\*\*You see she's so quiet?\** Aurora pointed out.

*\*\*She never said a word! She just insists it doesn't matter she got shook up a bit. But it's not much farther and we'll be home. Why don't you doze off, too, sister?\** Comet said.

Cloaked again in silence, a solitary pastel-orange gleam raced across the shining sea.

## Chapter 4 Reached Earth

*\*Guys,\** an exhausted Comet said, *\*we've reached the Solar System. Time for everyone to wake up. Yes, Star, I know you've been awake all this time, pulling your first all-nighter ever, to help me stay awake. That was so good of you. And I know it'll be rough on Eclipse but, Aurora, you'd better see if you can wake her up.\**

*\*You're my sister,\** Star said. *\*For you I'd do anything. Ummh, can I fall asleep now?\**

*\*Star?\** Aurora asked quietly, *\*weren't you supposed to wake me up so we took turns with Comet?\**



*\*You were sleeping so peacefully,\** Star answered.

*\*Besides, you shielded us in the Tunnels.\**

*\*I'm here,\** Eclipse finally answered. She called her Medico rules engine. The dead black glyphs had turned to blue tinged with violet. *\*I seem to have missed dying. Barely.\**

*\*Where's the Star Compass pointing?\** Star asked.

*\*Is it pointing home?\**

*\*It shouldn't be,\** Aurora answered. *\*We haven't done anything yet. But where'd those people go? We got out of the Tunnels a different way, but they didn't ambush us on the way back.\**

*\*Merlin be thanked for small favors,\** Eclipse said.

*\*Fighting those idiots once was enough.\**

*\*You really wrecked them up,\** Star said. *\*You were incredible. Mayhaps they think fighting you once was enough.\**

*\*For sure, I won't complain if you're right,\** a tired Eclipse answered.

*\*I'm getting a sharp direction from the StarCompass,\** Comet said. *\*Does anyone see a reason not to follow it? What did you say, once upon a time, Eclipse? Recon first or regret later?\**

*\*That was one of my mom's lines.\** Eclipse then wished she'd kept her mouth shut. *\*It's about bargain basement shopping.\**

Soon they were a few thousand miles above the earth's surface.. *\*OK,\** Comet said. *\*It's after dark across America, Hawaii approaching nightfall. The StarCompass is real sure it wants us on the Pacific Coast, roughly straight down.\**

*\*Comet,\** Cloud said, *\*Could we possibly land now? Please? I'd like ground under me. I don't care that I fly, I just want to be standing on something solid. No, you've been fine, but flitting between galaxies is just weird.\**

*\*Can you do invisible on us?\** Star asked. *\*Enough we don't set off the air defenses? I'd rather not be shot at.\**

*\*Will do,\** Comet responded.

*\*Mayhaps I handle everyone's weight, Comet, that's one less thing for you.\** Cloud tried to sound apologetic about asking more of Comet.

*\*Sure,\** she said. *\*OK, let's try the switchover.\**

There was a momentary feeling of weightlessness.

*\*Thanks, Cloud, that helps me a lot. I see where the StarCompass is taking me. That must be state forest or something. I see a nice clearing where we can set foot.\**

Comet brought the five in for a gentle landing. The night sky was clear, every constellation sharply visible. Dense woods on all sides shielded them from the wind.

"Where are we?" Aurora asked.

"Oregon, near the coast. I think," Comet said.

"There was a river. It had to be the Columbia. But there should be a huge city just north of it, right on the ocean. Cosmopolis, Pearl of the Pacific. Dad took me there, once upon a time. That city, it wasn't there."

Wherever we are, Eclipse thought, it's cold enough that I see my breath. Comet, Star, and Cloud are drawing on their gifts to stay warm. I can tell. You can see the air flicker. Aurora is drawing, too, I think, but she never gives anything away. Me? I have my Ultra-R blanket, so I can lie back on this nice stone slab. Star pulled out my under tarp for me. The rock is a little hard for sleeping. It's good enough, though, me being this tired.

"Eclipse, may I please share your blanket again?" Aurora asked. "Like we're seventh grade friends at a slumber party?"

"Sure," Eclipse answered. It's a big blanket, she thought, enough for her and me, her being barely twelve and shorter than me. Besides, I never had a slumber party, never had friends my own age who'd do that, and two of us under the blanket warms me up lots faster. My gifts should be taking care of all that, but I really toasted myself when I fried Solara. Sometimes my gifts work, and sometimes they're a bit iffy. Aurora took off her boots, slipped back between the blanket halves, and leaned up against Eclipse. She's smart enough, Eclipse realized, to realize she should be absolutely terrified, so I get to

play big sister protecting her. She's even careful to lean her head back on my good shoulder, not the one where the ribs and stuff got broken in the Maze.

"I could tell," Aurora whispered to Eclipse, "your gifts weren't keeping you warm. Besides, this way we can pretend to be asleep, so we don't have to get involved in the stupid argument."

"I could try to draw on my gifts." Eclipse whispered. "But you're right. I wasn't toasty-warm. I've taken photos on Pluto and Mercury, never felt the least bit hot or cold. That's gifts. I can take getting cold. I froze in Antarctica, first time I did something actually dangerous. I was nine. I teleported to Antarctica, the Deep Waste. That had to be me by myself, and Mom knew she couldn't know where I was. Anyone else close, I couldn't've listened hard enough, even gifts damped. Hid out of the wind, dropped all my gifts to zero, and listened. Listened with my mind, listening for the Currents of the Earth. After a half-hour, I was chilled to the bone. Then I heard them, singing ever so softly in scales and rhythms not our own, songs of Rome and Atlanticea and Marik and the Goetic Knights. Singing of memories never fading. I 'ported home. A pint of Mom's hot cocoa later, I was warm. And a bit dizzy, Mom having spiked the cocoa with a shot of chocolate brandy. But I'll always hear the songs. Sorry, I'm wandering a bit." And distracting her, Eclipse thought to herself. She stopped in wonderment. "Wrong! Can you get senile at twelve? I'm not hearing them, not at all. I should. And I didn't notice, not until I thought about them."

"Eclipse," Aurora said, "Not senile. Distracted. Tired. Lots of ways, you're the smartest person here. OK, Comet might be smarter. But she's my sister."

"She's smarter," Eclipse said. "And you focus way sharper than I can."

Star leaned back on the ground next to them. "Aurora, mindlink us three, please?" he whispered.

*\*Done.\** Aurora answered. To Star's inner eye, Aurora's mind always focused sword-sharp. He could tell that Eclipse was there, listening distantly, except behind her conscious thoughts she felt as

though she had the worst case of the flu imaginable, with aches and pains in every bit of her body.

*\*I'd like to be doing something,\** Star said, *\*except I don't know what, and I think we have to wait for those two to stop arguing.\** He pointed across the clearing at Cloud and Comet.

*\*I wasn't paying attention,\** Aurora confessed. *\*Right after they got started, I found this really neat Territories strategy, and was trying to see why it doesn't work.\**

*\*I keep falling asleep,\** Eclipse added.

*\*What are they arguing about?\** Aurora asked.

*\*Who runs our team,\** Star answered. *\*Cloud said it should be him, because he's a boy and only boys can see the big picture. Comet said it should be her, because she's a girl, and only girls can get every detail right. They think it's them leading, because they're both most of a year older than me. Then Comet tried doing something with her lessoncomp, and it didn't work.\**

*\*Merlin preserve us, they're doing the stupid boy-girl thing,\** Eclipse commented. *\*They're like two cats snarling and hissing but never striking. I guess this teamwork Comet keeps talking about means they don't try to kill each other. But Cloud couldn't just stop with saying 'I think that command is only for ClassLink.' He had to say 'only girls are so dumb they think that command is for SPS.' They both learned the boy-girl thing from their older friends: Only boys/girls choose one have brains, common sense, or experience. That's wrong, you two. You both have brains and common sense. Goddess be thanked, I wasn't brought up that way.\**

*\*So they're standing there slamming each others' lessoncomps as second-rate cheapo models,\** Star added. *\*I happen to know: They have the exact same model comp.\**

*\*After a while,\** Aurora grumbled, *\*they'll get tired of it, and start whining the 'when I grow up' thing, on account they think when they grow up they'll do whatever they want, or other reasons, all equally dumb.\**

*\*Don't we all want to grow up?\* Star asked. \*They want to change, because they know change is better.\**

*\*Do I?\* Eclipse asked. \*Me? No. I don't want to grow up. I know who I am. I'm comfortable being me. OK, I'll be more a lot comfortable being me when I recover. Getting older is changing. I don't want to change.\** And if I'm very careful, she thought, I can hold my age almost constant.

“Guys?” Aurora shouted across the grass. “Comet? Cloud? I get to decide who tells me what to do. You don't. Please argue about something intelligent. How to win with the Horns of Hattin opening comes to mind.”



# **SYNERGY 18**



**September 2019**  
**Napa Mailing 242**

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## EDITORIAL



### NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT

There's a complaint originating, I think, in Shiloh, that a lot of things you take on, you have nothing to show for it, is the way it winds up. Well, Walt Whitman says "The pay is certain, one way or another". But he might be wrong. However, that does show that there is a contrasting attitude, which is not always the case when a negative principle is proposed. Those tend to be ignored because there is thought to be nothing in them. It might be well to ask those whose reasoning is in the negative what they have in mind, because (possibly in spite of all the attempts of those with a negative attitude) there are some matters being contended with for some reason where negation is involved. The ultimate reasoning of nihilism is that nihilism itself has no value to the individual, and nihilism has already found that to be true of everything else; at last it reaches dead zero. But does it? Or is this just a mood—existential as it undoubtedly is. A lie usually proposes some unavailable alternative, and receives little further study when it is discovered. Crime consists of practicing a system not conjoining well with the regular and approved systems. Are criminals left-behinds system-wise? So some liberals suggest. I think a nihilist will come out of the ultimate extinction he finds things leading to, and will want to redefine some of his thoughts and express some of what he has been thinking.

What is wanted when a person does something, particularly what is wanted in poetry, prose and art? When you create art, what do you have to show for it? Artists typically don't scrounge together very much, unless somebody connected with Spiderman manages to sell an early issue for the rumored two million. But I think that what one has to show for creation is success at creating what one has wanted to bring forth into being. It's something that might make others jealous. They have what money won't buy.



“It might be a bit dangerous down that way, Laddie.”

Reverend Bem from the ANDROMEDA series

## MAILING COMMENTS

**The Contents of a Good Life.** Your town has an interesting history. That incident reads somewhat like a fairy tale, or the song "One Tin Soldier" is recollectable. I'm recalling some of the other things you've had to say about Frederick.

**Archive Midwinter.** I guess Sanchez is a recipient of NAPA when it has his art in it, but I don't expect him to answer you here. Maybe someone could get him to do a zine and join us, after he joins the N3F.

Kevin lives near John Polselli; I keep trying to get them to get in contact, but I haven't heard anything back about it.

A pity world evils are moving in so heavily. My understanding of the predicted Apocalypse is that good is going to come to do battle with those who are moving in with evil. But predictions aren't always on the mark.

On the street level, there is a lot of discussion of these world matters that perhaps haven't been seen before. They are feeling the effects of these mighty calamities—as Tom Lehrer puts it, "No need for you to miss a minute of the agonizing holocaust." It isn't just at the top where issues are being fought. I look to philosophy more than government in the following of these issues.

Re your remarks to Phillis, I have noticed the strongest opposition to fantasy and science fiction is in the church.

**Ye Murthered Master Mage.** Mayo gets all over the net. Some places he's more active than others.

I hope we'll recover the two presently missing members.



**It's been a rough run, all right—but I'll make it with two boxes of Cheer in my hand. And I've got some blanqueador to go with it.**

When a man's got moxie you don't argue with him.

*It seems to me that an apa fanzine should be more than a perzine, more like a regular fanzine.  
With that in mind, here's a story.*



## CHEAT THE DEITIES by Jeffrey Redmond

**From the ancient Er-Dan manuscripts (Codex 3144), as translated by Jeph the Scribe:**

An old miser named Kronhet was very wealthy, but very ill. He had no family or friends, and was getting worse every day. He was carried to the Temple where he began to pray, and he promised the deities: "I will sacrifice all of my best livestock to thee. I will also give all of my best possessions to the temple. In return, I beseech thee to restore my youth, health, and save me from Death."

The deities finally agreed, and granted Kronhet his wishes. He was restored to youth and health very quickly. Soon he was up and out of bed. But now that he had his youth and health, he did not want to really give up any of his wealth.

So he instead sacrificed the oldest and most feeble of his livestock, and gave the Temple only a small portion of his least valuable possessions. The deities were much angered at being so betrayed, and wanted to trick him in return. So they sent a messenger to him in a dream. The messenger told him:

"If you will go to the seashore, it will result in your being worth a true fortune of a thousand large coins."

Being so greedy, Kronhet was unable to contain his joy. He ran to the beach, where there was a ship just offshore. He came upon some pirates who immediately seized him. They took him away to the Distant Islands, where they sold him into slavery. As he was young, healthy, and strong, they did indeed obtain a thousand large coins for him.

## ON THE EDGE OF DREAM by Will Mayo

My dream time is much easier than my awake time. I'm once more at peace with the dead and they are with me. All is well with the world. I realize that these dead are, in fact, dead and no longer walk among us and I wake to the darkness of my room. Alone once more.





**"These leaps ain't brought nothing my way yet." (Quantum Leap series)**



**"Now for six thousand dollars, tell me where we're at." (Rommy, Andromeda series)**



**"Worst convention we've been to yet."**



**"Face it, we did make a pretty bad job of it."**





**Synergy on a Hillside**

# **The Contents of a Good Life 8**



**N'APA MAILING 242, September 2019**

Edited by Will Mayo, Apartment 9B, 750 Carroll  
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*Cover shows an abandoned castle.*

About the N3F: I'm grateful to be in the surroundings of such talented fantasy readers and writers. And, in finding such a place, I come full circle to the hopes and dreams of my younger years. That's life, isn't it? Kind of like the old Blood, Sweat and Tears blues song "Spinning Wheel Turning Round". We are constantly turning round the places we have and have not been before.



**Carroll Creek, Frederick, Maryland**

# **ALIVE AT LAST**

## **Time Out of Hand**

Down a landscape of desire, through a forgotten corridor. Into a wood where all trees talk to us. Alive once more.

### **The Wiz**

In between my college years and during my wandering about the state, I once made the acquaintance of a man we all just called The Wiz. He was a Wiz all right, with an old-fashioned video machine, and could do marvels to mix up anybody's mind from taking old reels of Superman to throwing in a few deals from Skull Island—all done to the Rolling Stones' "Symphony For the Devil" and Walt Disney's Fantasia. He was a hell of a creative genius back when these were hard to come by. No telling of what became of old Wiz but I imagine drugs got him in the end and thought he just basically disappeared off the face of the Earth. Still, some nights when my mind gets to wandering the Internet I get to thinking of the Wiz. What would he make of it all now? I guess he'd just give a shrug of his shoulders and turn the dial to another tomorrow.

That's it, you see. There's always tomorrow.

### **The Wisdom of Ancient Times**

Archaeologists have relentlessly discovered that there were vast trading routes extending from long ago England all the way to Eastern Europe and back, dealing in all manner of tools and colored stones from tens of thousands of years ago. From DNA analysis of the remains scientists have determined that these were blue-eyed black people, the original inhabitants of the land. Race was apparently not important to them. They did, however, know the lore of the land from the views and glaciers that cut through it to the forests and plains in which all manner of creatures roamed. These were shamans, calling up spirits to attend them in their all too brief lives. They were wise beyond their years. And you know what? They were better than you and me.

### **The Opening of the Silence**

I am as of now 58 years old, older than some, but not as old as all. I've seen many suns rise and many suns fall. I've seen lives come into being—I've seen lives pass away.



I've met men and women of many faiths but not all. I don't know what the answer is to this life. I've surely done more harm than good in it and my mind is tarnished from the ordeal. I only know that I must go forward into another dying day. What waits is unknown but the sound of one door closing and another door opening. Beyond, there are yet more questions without answers. But behold the silence. It is everlasting.

### **Here Always**

Where will you find me? Always here, alone, among the lonely, the outcasts, the forgotten. Here writing one more word.

### **Putting Words in Front of Armstrong**

I was eight years old and as a special treat my parents let me stay up late to watch the moon landing with them on the one black and white television set we possessed in our home in Alabama. Heck, it would have been fine, it would have been wonderful except I talked all the way through it. I talked through the spacecraft landing on the Lunar surface. I talked through the astronaut(Neil Armstrong by name, as I was later to discover)'s walk on that moon. I even talked my way right through Armstrong's talk right there on the moon up there in the sky. Thereby making unknown to me the first words spoken by man on another heavenly body.

"What did he say? What did he say?" I asked my parents.

"One small step for a man, one great leap for mankind," my father then correctly said. Proving even more right than the newscasters who would leave out the "a" part of Armstrong's speech.

Having got that right at last, I jibber jabbered my way to bed. Then, as now, I never could keep my mouth shut.

### **The Stars In the Night**

"Mother," I said on the long ago evening, "What's the difference between a star and a planet?"

"A star twinkles," she said. "If it doesn't twinkle, then it's not a star."

"Oh," I said. And then, "What does 'twinkle' mean?"

"How a star shines, my son," she said.

"I see," I said. I really didn't.

We continued to look out at the night until the years overcame us. She was sure to tuck me in tight.

### **All Through the World**

"Aren't we just a little bit haunted?" she asked.

"I suppose we all are," he said.

Then they wandered through a field and a maze and a wilderness and back to what is real. Lost all over again.

### **A Man Between It All**

On a trail of idols. In a valley full of temples. In a mountain high. In an old woman's cry. You can find a man sometimes there wandering between it all. Neither lost nor found. Simply there.

### **All of Us Must Learn**

I must learn to forget myself. Too much of my mind is on what I have said and done while all around me people go their own way. I must learn to forget myself. As the sun and moon go around our yesterdays and all of us must sooner or later be forgotten. I must learn to forget my self.

### **Games for the Living and the Dead**

The living and the dead play cards and make friends with the damned and the saved. It's just another day in Paradise but pass me the whisky if you please. Soon, Mother Mary will make merry with God the Father again as Krishna comes to know Shiva awfully well. Take it or leave it. There is life. There is a living, there is a dying away. And another heart is torn out of the womb all over again.

### **All Is One**

I am one of many. One of millions of writers in the English language world. One of perhaps a billion writers here on Earth. One of the seven billion human beings here on Earth. One of the many life forms in this universe. And as this universe is to many others and as the molecules swirl in my body to make a figure of consciousness, so do I too sit here in my eddy of desire. One among many. And among the many we are all one. And so we begin.

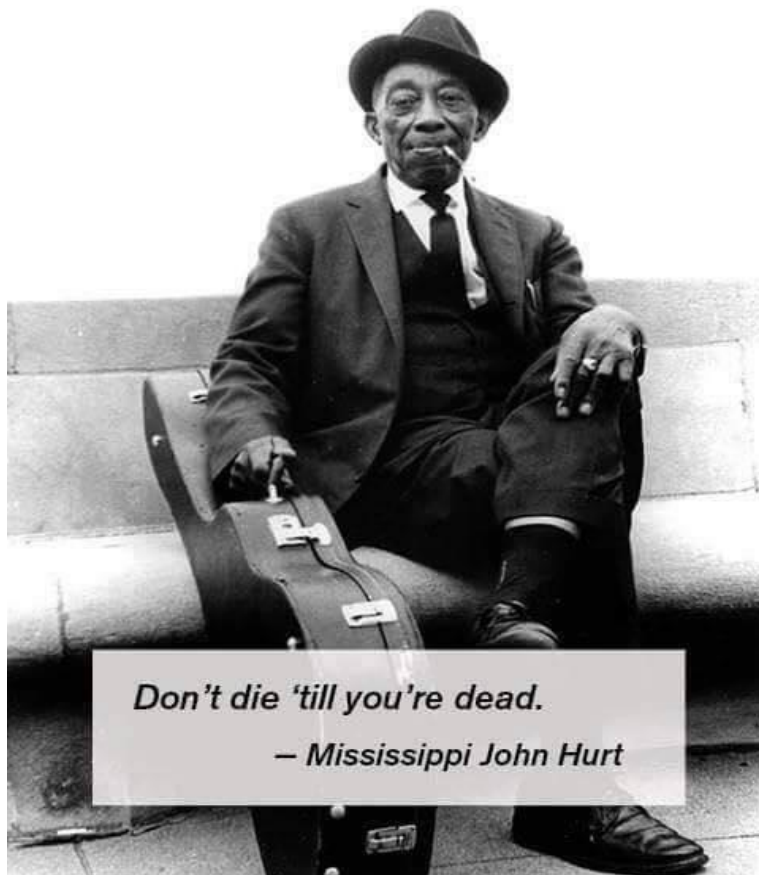


## **The Song and the Dream**

I had a visitor here recently who stopped by to sing me a song. She sang of a land where the berries were sweet, the women free and bold, where the day was long and where nature was always green with sap running in the vine. Then she left me and I returned once more to the books. Wondering how the song could be so true for a fool such as me. And then I drifted off into dream and the song came back to me then. True as ever.

## **What She Said**

Some people ask how I came to these rooms where I read and write my days and nights away. Well, it seems that in the course of my wanderings about the state I came to a strange woman with no name and where she came from I do not know but this she said to me—"You shall be mad. Mad for life. Mad for the world. Mad for all manner of words and dreams. And no normal everyday man or woman shall ever take notice of you again." And so I was born into this. And began to write....



# REVIEWS

## **Among All the Strange Reads.**

I walked into the bookstore one day and the proprietor said to me, "What'll it be?"

"Oh, strange books, sir, if you please," I said.

"We have lots of strange books here," the man said to me. "We have Asimov. We have Lovecraft. We have Poe." He paused then. "Where would you like to begin?"

"At the beginning, of course," I said.

"As you wish," he said.

That was many years ago. I'm still in that bookstore. The proprietor has long since died of old age and I'm here now reading my way through all his strange books. Hurry, now. Won't you join me? I've just found my way to Heinlein's STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, and it is a most remarkable read. We've just found our way back to Earth in the volume as the Martian makes his way through the Earthlings. Here. Have a seat. Let us begin...

**James D. Casey's TINFOIL HATS & HADACOL COINS.** The Bible, pagan religions, good and bad whisky, the loss and gain of friends, and personal trips around an old mad star as galaxies turn around—all this and more form the background of a book of poetry, definitely the most fun one I've read in a while. Follow Mr. Casey as he takes us to parallel dimensions, exorcisms, werewolves and strange journeys of the soul. You won't be disappointed.

Below is a stanza from his poem "Unbridled Birds" by way of example:

I remember  
A cosmic tribe  
Ancient feathers  
From galactic owls  
Braided into their hair  
Dancing for rain  
On a distant planet

Diamonds fell from the heavens  
Like water there.

Right now, while you are staring and clicking into your own personal computing devices, don't forget to find your way to Amazon and buy this book. It really is a gem.

**Piers Anthony's ON A PALE HORSE.** Well, I guess I can best sum up my review of this book about the adventures of Death with the following poem:

The Man Dressed In Black  
Strolling among all the town,  
the man dressed in black knocks on the doors.  
First, a poor widow.  
bedridden and despondent over her husband's death,  
then a lonely man riddled with the plague of fools.  
Afterwards, countless others upon the night.  
To each he gives a kiss of air  
and sends them far away on his white horse,  
compassion his only tools;  
he has the face of demons  
and the heart of a lover now lost.  
Always he waits  
till another will come for him, in turn.

**George MacDonald's LILITH.** I have to say that this book came as a surprise to me. Not a disappointment, no, but definitely a surprise. I expected a tale of Lilith, mother of matriarchies, from whose dominant sexuality and power over the elements mankind would only turn away in peril. That was my desire. Instead, I get a frank study in Christian literalism, with Lilith a figure of sin, being made to suffer and repent for her supposed wickedness while Adam, the dominant male whose unseemly wisdom makes the reader gag at every turn, together with Eve, meek mother of nations and servant to a jealous god, lead the narrator through constant struggling including the supposed death in life and a life in death, to the dreamed of St. Augustine's shining city on a hill. All this is very well and good for the reader of quaint religion who dreads this life and welcomes the grave, but what I had really hoped to read was a novel about a vibrant

and alive Lilith whose sexuality is beyond that of Eve's, who could only teach man untold wonders. This evidently is not that tale.

**C.S. Lewis's THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE.** I'm not sure exactly when I read this remarkable volume of fantasy, but I do know it was long after my childhood years when I was in my 20s. In between visits to the local tavern and the madhouse, I would lay out in the yard in front of the town library here in Maryland and rest my head against a tree as I read one chapter after another. Afterwards, I would head back to my rooms down the road and dream in my weary state there upon the streets. And there, upon waking, I asked myself, "What is it that lies beyond that wardrobe drawer? And do I really hear a lion roar?" I was taken away then to the end of the novel and back to my dreams again. And you know what? I think you will be too. You need only turn the page...

**Bryn Fortey's COMPROMISING THE TRUTH.** What a wonderful collection of strange tales this is! From the tribute story "The Place of Small Misdemeanors" to the Jekyll and Hyde story "Oink" to the molester's tale of possession "Locust Day" to the Hannibal sendup "Diagnosis". While the Elvis tribute tale "The King is Dead" is a host as is the alien visits a cathouse story "El Homestead Notorious". Most moving, however, is the blues homage poem "The Death of Blind Lemon Jefferson", for, like me, the gentleman from Wales has a love for a blues song whenever he can get it. I suggest that you run, not walk, to your nearest merchandiser and buy this book in order to set all your minds on fire. For if anybody will do that, surely Bryn Fortey will.

**John Jacob Astor's A JOURNEY TO OTHER WORLDS: A ROMANCE OF THE FUTURE.**

Tired of the dystopias of today, I took comfort in reading this utopia of a nineteenth century science fiction novel set in what the author theorized to be a twentieth century Earth, complete with a straightened axis that guaranteed an eternal spring and worldwide communication by means of the telegraph, and life on Jupiter and Saturn and the stars and planets beyond, including mastodons on Jupiter and spirits of the far off stars. It's true, his predators, for the most part, have proved erroneous, but I am left with that incredible feeling of awe just the same. And that feeling of awe, yes, is largely what every science fiction and fantasy writer longs to instill in the reader, that more than forecasting some strange regions of the future of life on Earth and elsewhere, the awe remains. And in this, Mr. Astor has largely succeeded. Thanks to his memory for an enjoyable read.

## **Bruce Confort's UP JUMPED THE DEVIL: THE REAL LIFE OF ROBERT JOHNSON.**

This book is a nice study of the interplay between life and art, how life affects art, how art affects life, and how the two together go to forward the creation of a legend. Robert Johnson, bluesman, often called the King of the Delta Blues, was a well-practiced musician who hopped freight trains and traveled along roads both in the country and in the city to play his guitar as well as other men have played the piano, capturing that old drawn-out sound he would often play with his friend and mentor, Ike Zimmerman, among the graves, and yet the legend persists of a largely untutored man who sold his soul for the secret to the blues.

How did such a legend come about? Well, for that, we have no more than to look to musicians of our own recent years such as Alice Cooper and Ozzy Osborne, who have been known to play up the notion, prevalent when I was coming up as a young man in the 70s and 80s, of that being the devil's music by poking fun at it all and singing Satanic lyrics to laugh at the ridiculous notion. So, too, when Robert Johnson was starting out as a musician in the 1930s, was blues music derided as the devil's music and so, too, did he and other wandering bards poke fun at the idea by including voodoo and other local practices in the lyrics they sang (to the point that another blues singer advertised himself as "the Devil's righthand man").

It was all, of course, intended as some kind of bizarre joke. But what with Johnson's death at the hands of a cuckolded husband (poison, no less), and Son House and Howling Wolf's uproarious talk, well out of such things were legends born, and decades later people began to take all of that talk a lot more seriously. That and, of course, having the scion of the Vanderbilt fortune championing Johnson's music helped too, of course.

Still, now, nearly a century later, the myth endures, every bit as strong as the man's music. I, for one, am thrilled to have read this book and would strongly recommend it to many others.

### **A Fool's Paradise, by Will Mayo**

Flowers of forgotten spirits stretch away toward the sea of heaven.

Sailors ply their ships on these crystal waters making way for the lesser ones. While on the distant shore, the Prince dances with his mother, the Queen, as archangels bold sound their trumpets. The skies above are rimmed with clouds on their horizons while a silver sun shines on the zenith. On this day, the saints are quiet as they sit on glimmering halos. Fools are allowed to speak. No More. When the moon comes up to cast its eye on the sun all are bathed in a golden light. Waiting for a voice that may not come.



A fountain near to here.



Archive Midwinter  
a zine for N'APA 242

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21 July 2019

#### Comments:

**Jose Sanchez:** Cover: Beautiful and elegant. The Imperial Stormtrooper is probably the most iconic emblem of the Star Wars universe, and you capture him in all his glory, even to the highlights indicating the high polish on the armor's surface. Superb!

**John Thiel:** Lovely piece of space art, with the sister planet looming large in the daytime sky. Very nice!

re the question for thought, my belief is, no, people cannot recall their own birth. The brain simply isn't well-enough developed at that point for permanent memories, even unconscious ones, to be created and kept. Human conscious "awakening" comes a bit later in life, although I do not know when. There have been some lovely experiments showing that "abstract thought" arises at about the age of two and a half.

imho, the modern fanzine is better -- certainly better-produced -- than efforts in the past. All hail to the corflu era, and the astonishing amount of work and creativity of the time, but in this fan's opinion, these are slightly better times. We've become more media-savvy,



more connected, and have a better grasp on the use of memes. Also, we have an entire internet full of clip art, something our forefathers would have been overjoyed with.

rect me, no need for jammies; I sleep raw. Shoes, ah shoes! I just got a new pair, and the dang things hurt! The back rides up high and grinds away at my Achilles Tendon. Not fun! But I paid good money for 'em, so, darn it, I'll wear 'em till they fall apart!

re your closing mini-essay, kinda yeah, but also kinda no. We do live in depressing times, and that's on a global scale. Democracy, per se, is under attack from the powerful oligarchs in Russia and China, and also by mini-oligarchs in Europe and South America. Many nations in Africa have elections that are little better than pre-arranged shams, with hundreds of thousands of votes "lost" or simply not counted. Here in the U.S. we have Gerrymandering and Voter Suppression, not enough to cripple our democracy, but enough to put scars on the finish. I've said it before, and, by golly, I'll say it again; Representative Democracy is the best thing the

human species has ever come up with. It saddens me when very bad people set out to undermine it.

**Will S. Mayo:** Lovely photo of Fredericksburg! Very pretty church over the water.

Nice (?) picture of the Grim Reaper. I had a Grim Reaper dream a couple nights ago: the guy popped up, confronted me, and lifted back his hood, showing that, beneath, was....nothing. Only the blackest absolute void. Scarier than a grinning skull!

Cool "Lost Treasure" story! I hope it is found some day, not only for the monetary boon, but to solve an historical mystery!

Another very pretty graveyard angel sculpture!

Interesting poetry... I agree that "one minute" can be a miracle, in its way, and a life might well be lived in pursuit of that one all-defining minute. Some find it in combat, some in creativity. One particularly powerful minute in my life was when I found a recording of a particular Oboe Concerto by Georg Philip Telemann, a piece I had been searching for for over ten years. I wept with joy.

Another lovely photo of the waters and spires of your home!

**George Phillis:** "If we all dreamed the same thing, there would be much less progress." I wonder! There might be more, as we all worked together to make our unanimous dream come true. For a brief time, we all "dreamed the same thing," and that's what took us to the moon!

Creepy about the guy brazen enough to put a ladder up to second story windows in order to burglarize houses. Here in southern California, the police have been catching "front porch robbers" by shipping packages via Amazon...with GPS location-finders inside, so when crumbs come along and snatch 'em, they can

be traced and followed. (The boxes also have \$1,000 of actual merchandise inside, so the robbery qualifies as "Grand Theft.")

I'll try 409 on my keyboard. Ick!

Fun superhero material! I'm happy to see superhero prose fiction; it's a field I feel has been under-represented in publishing. The "Wild Cards" books were nice, although a little rough-edged, because of the multiplicity of authors. I felt the series needed a little more editing. Your story certainly continues to be on the high end of the power spectrum -- as you say, you haven't quite created new universes out of the energy density, but you aren't far short of that!

### **Asimov's Foundation Trilogy**

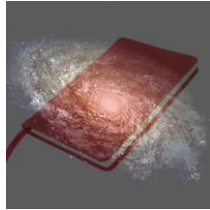
I just indulged in a bit of nostalgia and re-read Asimov's classic, the Foundation trilogy. I was struck by a few things, most notably how the books are very heavy on dialogue, and very sparse on narrative description. I'd estimate the books are around 95% talk. This isn't too much of a problem, as the talk is mostly interesting, but it is a style that isn't in vogue today.

The third novel spends a lot of time on the Maguffin, "Where is the Second Foundation?" To me, this was a non-issue. It doesn't matter where they are! They're wherever they happen to be operating at the moment. Sort of like the Federal Reserve Board holding a meeting in Philadelphia. It signifies nothing; they might meet in Denver next year. They don't have a "place." There is sufficient mobility in Asimov's Galactic civilization that an organization can "be" anywhere it wants -- including lots of different places at the same time.

The books are also fairly short. Geore R.R. Martin would have written ten of them, each twice as long as Asimov's individual novels. Asimov's work stands up only modestly well to the test of time, and is painfully inadequate in a lot of ways. In later editions,

he changed "atomic" to "nuclear," but that isn't an issue, and doesn't help any. He might have been better to make up a word like "nucleonic."

## NOTES FROM A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY #19



September 2019

For N'APA 242

Lorien Rivendell

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### Natter

It would appear that I'm being lazy this spring and summer. I haven't had a zine in 3 publications of N'APA. Yes, the old time slipping away from me thing. But really, it's as much a time management thing as anything. I've been enjoying the warmer days out hiking and geocaching. Geocaching motivates me to get out and hike, so it's a great hobby to have. Come winter, I won't want to be outside so much, so I'll be able to catch up on reading (I hope) and writing (I wish). I think I'm much more fit than pretty much ever. And getting outside and exercising has some nice mental health benefits as well. When I'm out in the woods, I'm not working. There's still plenty of work, and I could probably work every day of the week, if they'd let me. I'd like to enjoy life while I still can.

### Some awesome sculptures in Lyndonville, VT



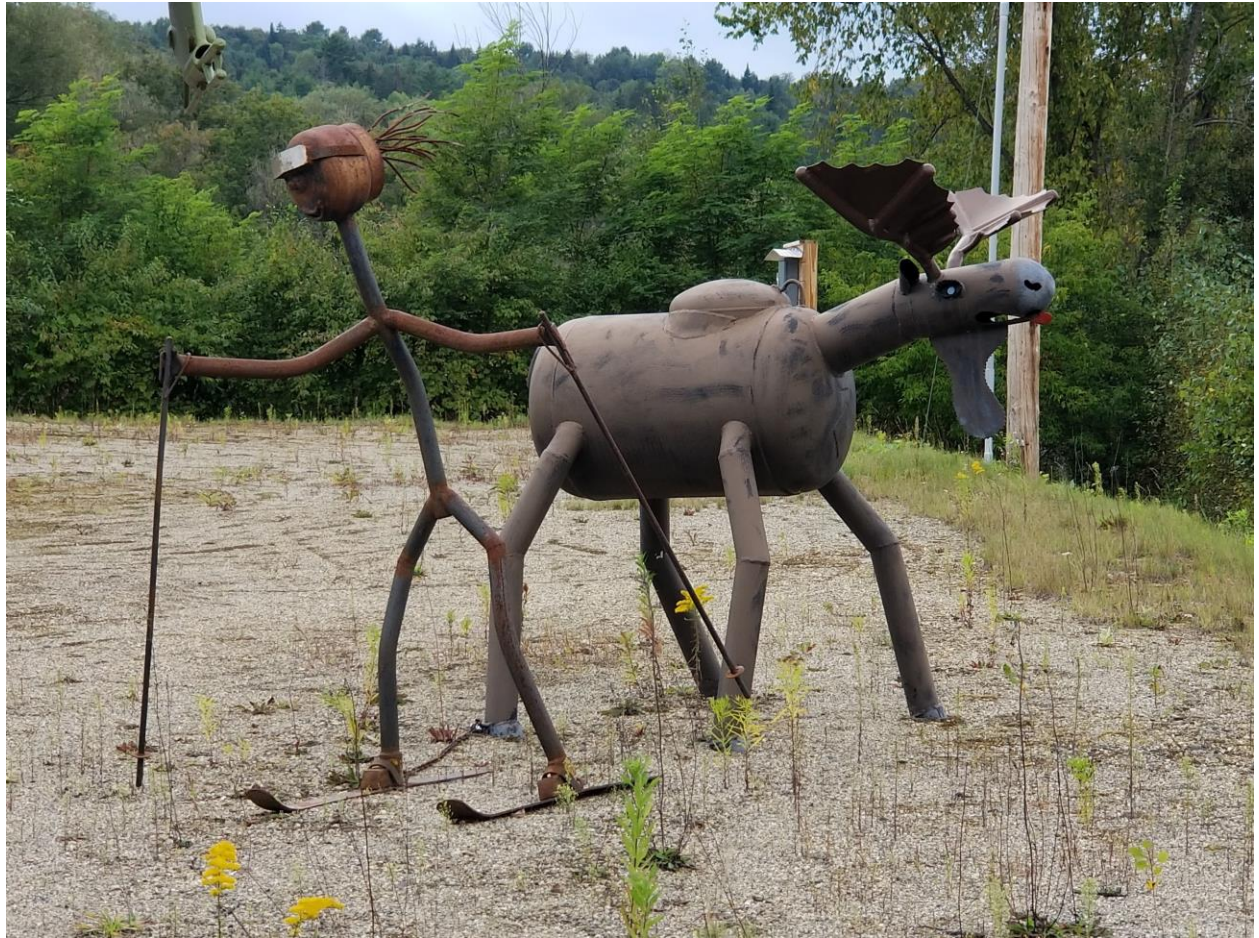
















## REVIEWS AND RANTS

### TV/streaming

Hulu keeps movies on your watch list even after they have expired off Hulu. I think that's to taunt you for being too lazy to watch them while they were available. Some just migrate to Netflix. Some I'll need to wait until they come back. Everything seems to come back eventually.

"12 Monkeys" (1995) (Hulu): This is one of those weird go back into the past to save the world movies. This one has Bruce Willis as a prisoner (if they said what crime he committed, I missed that) sent back to the past to find out the source of a virus that wiped out most of the world's population back in the 1990s. Let's see...if Bruce's character was about 10 in 1995, he must be around 50 in 2035. Living underground and in prison must agree with him, because he looks just fine for somewhere around 50 and who has been bounced around in time a few times (Bruce was 40 when the movie was released).

"Invasion of the Body Snatchers" (1956) (Amazon Prime): I saw the 1978 version way back when it was in theaters; I think it might even have been in a drive-in. I hadn't seen that or any other version since. This version, while old, is pretty good.

"Little Shop of Horrors" (1960) (Amazon Prime): This version was so bad it was funny. The only other version I have seen was a musical production done by a local community theater group. I expected this to be a musical, as well. Apparently, it was set to music for the 1982 theatrical production.

"Carrie" (1976) (Amazon Prime): If this movie isn't a classic, it should be. I've seen it several times in recent years. I hadn't seen it until a few years ago, and now I watch it now and then, when it's available on one of the platforms I subscribe to - it comes and goes, and I really should buy it so I can watch it any time I want. The movie doesn't closely follow the book, but it retains the horror of a bullied teen destroying a town. The revenge exacted by Carrie in the movie seems accidental - teens bully her, then teens - and a teacher - try to be nice to her - and then some teens exact the ultimate bullying and everyone pays in the end. The bullying seems pointless, as most bullying is. Carrie is just a weird kid with a weirder mother, and for that, she must pay the price every day of her life.

### Books

*Carrie* (1974) - This is the novel that started it all for Stephen King. I read this several times back in the 1980s, and then hadn't touched it until recently. I had forgotten a lot of what was in the novel, as my mind was more recently influenced by the movie. There's a lot more about Carrie's motivation behind seeking revenge on her classmates in the novel. Carrie is bullied, probably since first grade. Her mother is a religious fanatic in both the novel and movie. In fact, her mother comes across as crazy in both, and perhaps crazier in the novel, because there is more time to delve into her past. It's clear it's not Carrie's fault she's the way she is, but the other kids don't consider this when they bully her relentlessly. I don't think it's a spoiler to say that Carrie is telekinetic - I assume everyone who has not yet read the book or seen one of the movies at least knows this. In the 1976 movie, she researches telekinesis; in the book, she practices at home. It seems she used it much more deliberately in the book, but then, the book can describe her process much more thoroughly. In the movie, we see her look at the water main valve and it turns; in the book, she can visualize it, even without actually seeing it. In the book, it takes her a while to develop her full power; in the movie, it just shows up, almost full force.

### **COMMENTS ON N'APA #239** **Or what I have so far**

Will Mayo, Contents of a Good Life 5 - Traveling around the world in some sort of giant, interconnected subway system sounds fascinating. We've already got railway lines and roads. We've got high speed trains in some areas. Why not get them enclosed and use high-tech, rapid transport pods to get around? This sounds much safer, to me, than zipping around in air cars. I can see no way to effectively regulate once everyone is in the air, and the only way to go once one is up is down. Pods enclosed in tunnels would not be able to slide off the rails. In theory, they would be safer than what we have now. // It is interesting to imagine what humans thousands of years in the future will think of our ruins, when all that remains are stone and brick.

John Thiel, Synergy 15 - I'm rather the opposite. I'd rather have people see my email address and not my physical address. I think having my physical address out there invites stalkers and other not-so-desirables to show up at my front door. In N3F-dom, it's probably not so big a problem, because everyone lives Far Away (except maybe George Phillies, and in an N3F perspective, he's practically next door).



The Silver State Age #14  
for N'APA #242

September 15, 2019

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### **Obligatory Natter**

Well, after half a year of being in this apartment a couple blocks off Mesquite & Maryland Parkway, all the appliances are finally working, I have a fair chunk of my books unpacked and on bookshelves, a large pile of empty boxes in what would normally be the dining room waiting to be hauled out, and barely-organized chaos in the second bedroom, where more books, clothes, games, and other miscellany await unpacking and/or storing on other shelving which I haven't gotten around to buying yet. Quite a bit of it is going to get yeeted into the nearby dumpsters, I suspect, or donated to local thrift stores, because my initial reaction on looking at it is "What on earth did I save this for?" There are also quite a few things belonging to my daughter, some of which I have been lugging back and forth across the continent for a little over a decade now. I am at the point of telling her that the next time she comes to Nevada for Burning Man, she can either pop down to Vegas and deal with it, or it too will get chucked in the dumpster - or sold, depending on how exasperated I am when I get around to dealing with those particular boxes.

My health is better than one would think, considering I continue to fail at keeping sugars and starches out of my gob. The ulcer on my left leg is almost completely healed up and not oozing any lymph fluid, while the one on my right leg is very close to being healed - there is still some oozing, but much less than there used to be, and most of the wound has been replaced by scar tissue or healthy skin. This I attribute to the CircAids the VA issued me, which are bulky and require some effort to strap on and take off thanks to the eight strong Velcro straps that hold them on and apply the necessary compression. They are much more effective than the custom compression stockings I was using before, which were good, but they wore out after about six months and it was like pulling teeth to get new ones through the VA.

Not going to bore people with my problems regarding Social Security, because the situation is annoying, depressing, and there is nothing y'all can do about it anyway. Suffice it to say they have not completed the "expedited claim review" they started last December, but they have cut off the interim payments after six months; it has so far taken them four times as long to do the review as it did for them to consider and approve the initial claim.

### **Balticon**

I went out a couple of days early so I could hang out with friends and consume mass quantities of the best chicken wings I've ever had (Buffalo Wing Factory in Chantilly, VA, if you're ever in that neighborhood) before going up to the convention. Because I was there mainly to see friends, I managed to miss most of the programming, but I did make it to opening ceremonies for once, and I was glad I did. It was blessedly simple: they introduced the guests of honor, and this year's Compton Crook Award winner, Rebecca Kuang, who impressed me sufficiently that afterward I went directly to the dealer's room and bought her novel The Poppy War, which I described elsewhere as "Hermione Granger At The Marco Polo Bridge". Despite that description, it is not a book for children, unless your children cut their teeth on The GULAG Archipelago or The Theory And Practice Of Hell.

The plot is essentially a coming of age story set in a fantasy version of the Second Sino-Japanese War (the prelude to World War II), and the protagonist Rin is a hard-working, determined war orphan who passes the very difficult exams to get into Sinograd, the elite military academy where her empire's aristocratic families send their children to prepare for a military career.

Unfortunately for Rin, she discovers that she has a talent for magic, may be a vessel for the goddess of her ancestors, and that neither of these are a good thing, even with the empire about to be plunged into war.

Kuang pulls no punches when it comes to the brutality of war between the Empire and the Mugen Federation; there is an expy of the Rape of Nanking that was sufficiently graphic to make me put the book down for a few hours, and I am no stranger to carnage and violence in literature. Kuang clearly did her grisly homework (she cites Iris Chang's book on the Nanking atrocity in the afterword), but this is not merely a recasting of the historical war as a fantasy. Rin is a solid character that one comes to care for quite a bit, and her compatriots are all very real characters as well. I am looking forward to the sequel, The Dragon Republic, with no little trepidation, as I hope Rin will have a happy ending, while fearing she will not.

On a happier note, I am finally getting around to reading Tolstoy's War and Peace, which unlike many of the "classic" novels I've read is actually interesting and full of wonderful descriptive passages. Probably not going to be done with it before the August 1 due date, because I am taking it a couple of chapters at a time and there's so much of it.

Michael Williamson has an anthology, Forged in Blood, which is almost more of a biographical novel about a sword than the collection of short stories that it is. Many contemporary combat SF writers are among the contributors, and I found it uniformly good, with some excellent stories sticking out - Larry Correia and Mike Massa's tales set in the Shogunate period and the Russo-Japanese War respectively are particularly fine.

Speaking of things I am finally getting around to reading, S.M. Stirling's Emberverse spun off an anthology, The Change, which to me is interesting because a lot of the characters in the stories show up in the last three novels of the Emberverse series that deal with Princess Orlaith and her adventures in the land that used to be California. It's more uneven than Williamson's anthology, but then it doesn't have a unifying theme aside from different people in different places dealing with the post-Change world.

### **Comments, Leftover & Otherwise**

Official Organ: (240) I note that N'APA is my age, possibly a few months older, maybe a few weeks younger.

Will Mayo: RAEBNC

John Thiel: (RYCTo me) I'll try to drop Mr. Polselli a line, which should be easier now that I've found my stash of envelopes and stamps. 🍷🍷 I am not sure what the proper cognomen for a Las Vegas resident is, but given the amount of steak and prime rib consumed around here, I'm pretty sure "Vegan" is NOT it.

(RYCTo George) A friend of mine out east is disposing of an IBM Selectric II typewriter. Those were the typewriters I learned to hunt and hit on (never learned to type "properly") and I do miss them. If there was someone out there doing for Selectrics what Qwerkywriter is doing for aold manual typewriters, I'd be pretty excited and probably start throwing more change in the change mug.

(natter) I try to pay as little attention as possible to what is going on outside my state, though this is difficult since I spend entirely too much time on social media. I just can't get too excited over things I don't have much impact on, which describes pretty much everything in national politics, and at this point in my life I am actively disinterested in most of what passes for "entertainment". There's enough in science fiction, historical fiction, and military history to keep me entertained, to say nothing of video games. Speaking of which, if you'll excuse me, I need to oil my shipgirls (not a euphemism).

Jefferson Swycaffer:

(RYCTo me) Unfortunately this has been a very difficult summer, but after liquidating some stock I'd forgotten that I had, getting help from a comrade in arms, and having one of my Congresswoman's local staff boot the local Social Security office in the head (please don't ask for details, my blood pressure is bad enough as it is) I think the worst of it is over and things will settle down. Thank you for your kind wishes. 🍀🍀 I can't fathom Yukito Kishiro's fascination with motorball. Even with cyborgs involved, the game is basically the same as Rollerball, except less of a team sport, and there's only so much you can do with that story. Personally, I would rather watch the young ladies of the Sin City Rollergirls do the roller derby thing.

(RYCTo George) Your friend writing the Christian fantasy should find some solace in the fact that several indy-published authors are all fired up about Christian pulp SF, or "Star Wars meets Deus Vult", of which Jon Del Arroz' Justified is no doubt the first of many. It occurs to me that there are also a number of Catholic & Christian writers doing fantasy which is unapologetic about religion: Larry Correia, John C. Wright, and IIRC John's wife L. Jagi Lamplighter Wright. I hope we see more of this, frankly; far too many of First Fandom and many of the Golden Age writers seemed to think that religion was inherently anti-science, and this has affected the genre in ways that aren't good.

George Phillies

(RYCTo me) Well, as far as your taxes go, we do free reviews of tax returns to see if you (or your preparer) missed anything, and I would be happy to do that for you. We can discuss it offline. As to the change in the standard deduction, you are correct, it did wind up excluding some folks on the lower end of the tax tables from having to pay anything, even with the abolition of the personal exemption. 🍀🍀 I will try to remember to nominate more stuff for the Neffies next year. As to the level of violence in one's works, well, you can't please everyone. I suspect that as I finish The Misfit this month so I can pub it next month, there will be people ticked that a short space opera only has one battle scene in it.

## **Closing Natter**

Well, this has been a rough summer, no doubt about it. I have been fortunate to have made good friends over the years, and a number of them came through for me so that I could stay in this apartment, keep the internet on, and keep my car from being repossessed by the credit union. As I said to Jefferson *supra*, the inertness of the local Social Security office has been remedied with a Congressional boot to the head, and that situation should be sorted by the end of the month, with positive implications for my cash flow. But I'm still reasonably healthy ("There's nothing wrong with you except your blood sugar," my doctor said) and somewhat productive.

Some of that productivity went into getting The Anti-Dog Tank & Other Stories published this month on Amazon. It's five short stories, some of them very short, but people seem to like them. It's on Kindle Unlimited and the Kindle Users' Lending Library, so feel free to browse it there if you like.