

N'APA 241

July 2019



The Official Organ

#241

Next deadline: September 15, 2019

The official collator is George Phillies - phillies@4liberty.net.

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.

In this issue:

Front Cover: Rogue 1 Stormtrooper - Jose Sanchez

The Official Organ #241

Synergy 17, by John Thiel - 7

The Contents of a Good Life 7, by Will Mayo - 7

Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer - 4

Ye Murthered Master Mage, by George Phillies - 5

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

Synergy 17



JULY 2019

NAPA MAILING 240

“We live by Tradition—Tradition, Indiana, pop. 846.”

“Go by the store and get me a chocolate malt, sonny.”

“I’ll have one bheer and that’ll be it.”

Edited by John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904. Email kinethiel@mymetronet.net

Cover by Morris Scott Dollens

If a person looks far enough into his unconscious mind, he can recall his birth if he wants to.—Is the statement true or false? Your thoughts?

EDITORIAL



What's gone out of the modern fanzine?—if, in fact, anything has. I think there are some qualities missing from the fanzines of today that used to make them enjoyable reading. When one reads a fanzine now, one just gets to grouching, because what he's reading is just that; the editor is usually complaining about how hard the times are. Well, why contribute to that by having a zine that's in tune with those hard times? Who would claim that a fanzine had to be in tune with anything? I think that what's missing from fanzines is the editor having a good time producing them—the fun is what's gone out of fanzines. The editors of fanzines I read used to be clearly enjoying themselves with what they were doing. So I have made up my mind to start enjoying myself again, instead of looking upon the production of a fanzine as merely a duty.

Hence the interlineation-like statements on the cover. These break up tedium, in spite of their resemblance to an ass braying. If it were a paper fanzine I'd also have a pop-up inside. Not that those are fun to create. The concept is pleasant, but the doing involves library paste and a pair of scissors, and they must be constructed just so. It's as

if he were attempting to use cut and paste equipment on the net. The reader is apt to ignore the pop-up, with all its humor (Bozo in a space suit, or a kangaroo) and think of the editor slaving to construct this effect, likely getting the paste all over his shirt, and how degraded he must feel. So I'm glad, basically, that I am not working on a paper fanzine here. I have a paper fanzine, but a pop-up would not be appropriate in that. Feasible, but not appropriate.

At any rate, I am thinking in terms of adding amusement to my fanzine, and that is a better mood to be in than kicking about things in general. The spirit of Fandom must rise! Or if it isn't necessary, at least it would be nicer.



“Are you trying to say we aren’t hip?”

Roundy’s Old-Fashioned, that’s what it takes.



Mailing Comments

KEVIN TRAINOR: Your apartment-finding in Las Vegas coincides with John Polselli moving back to Las Vegas and he sent me a similar description of moving back in. The hiatus his moving problems brought about had him out of the N3F but he's getting back in and is still in the fan-pro bureau. As I've said, I've been urging him to get acquainted with Vegas fandom, and as you are a fellow Vegan, that's a good start. His address is 861 Sebastiani Court, Las Vegas 89123. Perhaps you could find time for a meet with him.

JEFFERSON SWYCAFFER: I now have two pairs of pajamas, both given to me as presents on present-giving occasions, and I have a few somewhat ragged ones which can be donned for variety or being more in tune with the weather, so I'm doing okay with pajamas. I also found two pairs of good shoes, for which I paid a total of seventy dollars (each pair being thirty-five dollars), so, put together with my one remaining pair, I'm all set on shoes too.

GEORGE PHILLIES: I remember typewriter keys whose lettering lasted. All too many of today's typewriters have lettering that fades away. A lot of modern produce seems to use cheap materials despite their technological advancement.

I have no internet financial account. Anyway, I finally found shoes of the kind I want.

MAYO: Good, highly readable zine and well decorated with art. I think I'll adopt your style of not naming the zines I'm commenting on. Everyone knows what the zine titles are when the editor of them is named.

THE SERPENT by John Polselli

How silently the stars ignite their blades
That glisten in the boundless blank of space
Where soundlessness conspires and invades
The day's addiction to the commonplace
Where man abides, pressed forward and apace
Amid the masses far beneath the bright
Unblinking eye that gazes above the marketplace
And moves among them like a parasite
Pursuing, at a strange ungodly height.



"Well, Division's found out we do meth."

To Owen K.

There was a young user named Freud
Who got most of the net paranoid
By psyching folks out
But his name incurred doubt
From admins, who were merely annoyed.

I think we live under the burden of world affairs. It used to be said, "It's always nice to know what's going on in the world," but it's not nice now; I haven't heard of anything going on in the world that I would regard as nice to know about for some time now. If you read a newspaper you might be thought to be in possession of classified secrets. Television news reports disasters but seemingly omits disasters going on in television programming. I've been watching quiz shows that seem to take place in public fallout shelters. The people scream and jump up and down when they get one of the incomprehensible questions they are asked correct. A lot of the channels just seem to be showing what's going on at the studios or whatever they are in or are broadcasting from. You might say this all sounds gloomy and pessimistic, but my only answer to that is that it is just that, gloomy and pessimistic, but it isn't what I'm saying that's that way, it's the news. That's what I mean when I say living under the burden. We get constant problems from the news to go along with the problems we have ourselves.

What I think should be done about all this has the answer, I don't know. I've no idea at all what should be done about the problems I face or am aware of. When I come to think of it, my science fiction and fantasy reading material has not been very optimistic about this from the start of my reading. Unless this is a form of optimism:

"Ring up the demons from the lower pit
Since evil conquers goodness in the end;
break down the doors and let the fires be lit
and greet each slaving monster as a friend
....then....we'll pen the perfect rime.

Get along with dark forces, if you can't beat them join them, is what this verse maintains. You hear it on the radio... "Don't say no, it's the end of the world..." "world's in an uproar, the danger zone is everywhere", "step out of line the man come and take you away..." and with sf, "So shall ye reap!" "Boot coming down on the human face forever." "I am a jealous people..." If modern man is experiencing *angst*, one can easily understand it.



finis



View of Frederick, Maryland

NADA MAILING 241
July 2019

**WILL S. MAYO, 750 CARROLL PARKWAY,
FREDERICK, MARYLAND 21701. WSMAYO@YAHOO.COM**



Asking the Reaper

Death, you silent sentinel of darkness,
that strikes us all,
when shall you come for us next?
In an alley with a knife?
In a plane with a missile?
Or even here alone in the night
with the tenderest of bellies?
I wonder at you still.

The Lost Treasure of a Town I Hold Dear

Between battles of the Civil War, when my town's churches and homes turned into hospitals for the war's wounded and dying, there rode into town a whole troop of Confederate soldiers with torches at the ready, saying "Give us our money or your town shall surely burn!"

It took time and effort but Frederick's citizens drew ready the chest of gold coins fresh from the city's banks, for the bandits. Then the gray coated soldiers rode away for another battle with the Yanks. The men in gray made their way to the battle and points beyond but the treasure did not. It is lost among the marches and ledgers of another time. Some to this distant day say that it remains buried in the distant mountainside community of Yellow Springs, right outside of town where ghosts from another time guard it still. Others say it lies elsewhere. No one really can say. Countless attempts by representatives and senators from my town to get the United States government to reimburse the city for its valiant efforts have gone down in vain...as have treasure hunters here, armed with modern technology, who have looked and found nothing for all they sought in the hills and valleys surrounding my town.

Still, the legend lives on of how my city stood steadfast when torn between North and South, and of the treasure that was lost along the way. Old ghosts whisper in the steeples among the hills and no one is the wiser.

REVIEWS

Viral Dawn: Extended Edition by Skyler Rankin

A remarkable thriller, perhaps most memorable for the amount of time it spends on character development (as much character development as the early novels of Stephen King) and for its scientific explanations for the essentially supernatural phenomenon of the undead—including coining the term “necro-regenerative cycle”, a nice touch—with its suitable villains being my country’s armaments industry and the evil scientists that run it. I enjoyed this book, it kept me going through a hectic time in my life in which I found myself blowing up at people who were in my life personally and professionally and kept my mind off my troubles. More importantly, it was a good ride. And that’s all anybody could ask out of anything in this life, a good ride. The ride is everything.

Perhaps most notable was this paragraph from chapter five: “The rattle of...dying lungs could be heard carrying on in the wind. It was the sound of possibly a hundred walking corpses breathing death into the night. Every fiber in my body, every nerve, every cell screamed in terror, and I fought against the urge to turn and run and leave the man where he stood.”

Although this was not my favorite of zombie novels (for that, my single most favorite zombie novel will always be Richard Matheson’s *I AM LEGEND* from about sixty years ago), it will always hold a special place in memory because of the author’s innovations and her remarkable craftsmanship. I look forward to seeing more work by her in the future.

Perfume: The Story of a Murderer, by Patrick Suskind

I read this amazing novel devoted to the scent of desire in fits and starts, taking time out for one book here, another book there, but always returning to it. It concerns a poor man born in the slums of Paris, France in the Eighteenth Century during a time of the utmost decadence (keep in mind that this was the age of the Marquis de Sade) and without any smell of his own (or, for that matter, any morals), yet possessing the ability to sense smells of others near and far. His ability to smell things and people takes on an almost supernatural significance, such as when he can smell a safe full of money hidden behind a wall or smell a man miles away, and quickly assumes cosmic if not heavenly proportions. That he would become a victim to his own desires, both with his murders of a large number of virgin girls to attain their scent and in the aftermath of his crimes, goes without saying. It is as if true evil had assumed the clothing of all the virtues and then walked among us.

Hats off to John E. Woods, who translated this novel from the German. If it’s this enticing in its English version, I can only imagine what it must be in its original German. Unfortunately, I know no Germans, so I’ll have to let that pass. But what the author, Patrick Suskind, has achieved here is nothing short of extraordinary. I would recommend this novel to anyone who enjoys a good ride to the edges of the imagination. It is truly extraordinary.



The
Tombstone
Tourist

Mailing Comments

Thanks, Jefferson, but, again, my book “The Great Red Horse Robbery and Other Tales of the Imagination” is out of print now. You may be interested in my current volume “Dreams of Mongolia and Other Stories and Poems From One Man’s Mind”. It’s available on Amazon.

Thanks to George Phillies as well. I have mixed feelings about the future as well, but somehow I think that if we can muddle through the next few years new doors will open for us. I feel absolutely sure of it.

John—Oh, but come to think about it, that’s an interesting point you made in Synergy about the difficulty in buying pajamas. Does anyone wear pajamas in bed any more? Hell, does anyone wear anything? If so, why? Especially in this heat?

Well, anyway, we’ll work through all these technical difficulties.

More stories and poems to follow.

Multitude

I am multitude.
A legion, a forest,
a host of those
who have come before
and will come afterward.
A little boy lost,
an old man quivering,
a young woman
who is mother to nations.
I am all of these things,
an army of the Forgotten,
a voice whose answer is lost in the wind.

One Minute

But in between the miseries and the storms and the rains of life there is sunshine and there is moonshine and there is sitting naked with your beloved. In between all the troubles there is one solid minute of happiness. And when I tell you that many a man has died simply to find that one minute of happiness you needn’t laugh, you needn’t fret. No, you must call that very minute your friend. Like an old blanket, like a tireless friend, like a cloud on a hot day. I tell you that one minute is everything in the world to us all.

Today Like Any Other Now

Some have their sights on eternity
Some on nirvana.
I take no bets,
Simply go one day forward.
Closer to the grave.
Closer to living again
as well as I can now.
“Easy goes it,” I’m told.
It’s just another day.

One Man Drowning In Awe

And life was the bride
as Death was the groom.
I swore an oath
of solemn amazement
as the tides took me away.

Just a Dream But It’s Worth It

It’s just a dream called paradise.
No reason to lose.
Every reason to use.
Go ahead and live while you have it.

Alive, I Tell You

Glitterings like dead stars
flaming with desire
fill the conscious
of my mind.
And you too are there
...old ghosts...

Quick, Now! Live

How quickly the body passes!
Passing, passing like the dark.
As our fumbling fingers untie the night.



Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 241

by Jefferson P. Swycaffer
P.O. Box 15373
San Diego CA 92175

(619) 303-1855
abontides@gmail.com
jpswycaffer.com

25 May 2019

Comments:

Jose Sanchez: Cover: I 'fess to my ignorance of who this character is, but he has a nobility of feature, a philosophical pensiveness, which elevates him above the usual stolid and stoic warrior we've come to associate with heavy forehead-ridges and body-armor. Maybe he's balancing wrong against right, as any warrior must do. (Maybe he's wondering how he's gonna pay this month's rent.)

Will S. Mayo: Lovely cover pic, girl with butterflies and irises. Very "Victorian" and quite engaging. (Recently, I got to stand in the middle of an aerial river of migrating butterflies. Absolutely fascinating: tens of thousands of them, drifting along at a man's jogging speed, effortlessly lifting over and around obstacles. These were the ones that look lik Monarch butterflies, but aren't, and I don't remember their actual name.)

re The Faith Lovers, I half agree and half disagree. (Or maybe 75/25?) I have no love for organized religion, but I do have some respect for what I call "Naive Deism," the idea, based on "feelings" rather than "faith" per se, that "There must be someone out there," and that "If we just live and die, then there isn't any meaning, and life has to have



meaning." This aspect of faith, in my opinion, is nothing more than wishing...but, well, what's wrong with wishing? There are an awful lot of things I wish for; don't you?

re "Dreams Take You Back," I've had very, very similar dreams. Bittersweet and haunting. The Greeks showed wisdom when they named Nostalgia, for it is painful as well as rewarding.

re "My World," I largely agree. I've travelled very little, and, while I did enjoy it, it wasn't "necessary" in any way. Yes, photographs aren't quite the same -- but they're mighty close. And a well-written travel story can convey much of the personal individual sense of "having been there." In the end, all we have are memories, and they're pretty vague, really.

"All We Have," beginning, "Don't try to change me. I can't possibly change you," made me think of my favorite sura from the Koran, which is short enough, I shall quote it in its entirety:

"Say: O disbelievers!
I worship not that which ye worship;
Nor worship ye that which I worship.
And I shall not worship that which ye worship.
Nor will ye worship that which I worship.
Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion."

Nice book cover for Dreams of Mongolia! And very nice picture of the graveyard angel poka-dotted with little spots of light. Elegant and sweet.

Kevin Trainor, Jr.: Yikes! You're riding the yo-yo roller-coaster of fate, up one day, down the next! But I'm glad you're settled in to new digs in Las Vegas, and I hope that things return to a healthy and happy routine, no longer quite so punctuated with dramatic swerves! "Life is what happens to you while you're making other plans."

Very happy to hear you liked Alita: Battle Angel, and fascinated that you consider it better than the original anime. I have the American translated versions of the manga, but have never seen the anime, nor, yet, the movie, but it's at the top of my current "wanna see" list, so I'm encouraged by your approval. (The manga started out quite well, but, in my opinion, lost its traction when it started focusing on the skate-racing combat/sport.)

John Thiel: Nice spacesuit photo. We're still exploring The Final Frontier, little by little!

Interesting essay on the future, the present, and the past. I definitely agree with the moral, "Take advantage of the future, but remain grounded in the past." And, yeah, the apocalypse -- or some variations of it -- is closer today than it was in A.D. 2000. We're going through a world-wide reversion to tyrannical thought, with fascist political parties making gains in a great many nations, and with China and Russia spearheading the formal organized opposition

to "democracy" as we know it. (I happen to believe that representative democracy is the single finest thing the human species has ever devised. Chocolate is probably the second.)

I once again apologize for the disruption following my accession to the position of collator/assembler/dogsbody. I'm not the most organized soul...

rect me, yes, I do draw a lot of my insights from the thesis/antithesis/ synthesis approach. One of my consensus-building techniques is to try to get groups to agree that they reject extreme viewpoints. e.g., even the most flaming liberal doesn't want a 100% tax rate, and only the most impractical anarchist argues for no taxes at all. The vast majority of us believe in the necessity for some collective funding of major projects, such as national defense, sewage and sanitation systems, roads and highways, and some effort at mitigating the worse sufferings of the poor and ill. So we can "walk back" from the extremes of madness, to try to approach -- by a drunkard's walk, perhaps -- a golden mean of moderation.

My story, "The Dimension Weasel," was in the Winter 1988/89 issue of *Weird Tales*, the special Avram Davidson issue. I had some lovely illustrations by the late Hank Jankus.

Striking closing pic of a really big demon reaching out through the fog. Yikes!

George Phillis: A lot of projects! The most I can encompass is one novel-in-progress and maybe a story or two at the same time. A novel takes me about a year to write (although my most recent took me a year and ten months. I'm not as young as I used to be...)

I do like the idea of copying a book as a way of comprehending it. Highly labor-intensive, and perhaps more "clinical" -- like a medical dissection! -- than is the less-involved, less-dedicated manner of conventional reading. When I was

younger, I studied the writing of my favorite authors, as opposed simply to reading what they'd written. Such intensive study is, I believe, educational and conducive to the forming of good writing skills. (Stopping, of course, far short of actual plagiarism!)

rect me, aye, my writing group members are all fans of science fiction and fantasy, fantasy most especially. All of us are writing fantasy stories and novels. One member is writing a "Christian Fantasy," a fantasy story that is also Christian in apologetics and proselytizing. She rather despairs of ever publishing it, for Christians tend to hold fantasy novels in suspicion, and fantasy fans tend to be put off by Christian evangelizing in a story. It's a vague and batable ground, a "no man's land," lying between the conventional trenches of established genres.

rect me, agreed, if an ebook sells for more than five dollars, I'll skip it, and wait to see if the price comes down eventually. (Same for when I'm buying movies on disk. I've got time. I can wait.)

Fun sequence in your story. In my opinion, the "Oh yeah?" "Yeah!" exchange goes on a little too long. Superheroes love to boast and trash-talk, but, by and large, your characters tend to be a little more pragmatic and less in love with the sound of their own voices. I also wonder at the description of Comet as "panic-stricken." Seemed like she had herself pretty well together. Worried, sure, but not panicky. I'm looking forward to the exercise of all those super-powers, as the proof of the pudding is in the pounding to smithereens!

Adrift on a Foreign Sea

I finished my most recent novel, an urban fantasy offering, set in the same universe as all my other fantasy books, the "Demon Constellations" background. The conceit here (that wasn't a typo) is that the constellations are demons and the night sky is hell. Think of

Cassiopeia in chains. Now think of the demons, cast out, imprisoned in that way.

Some spoilers... It's hard to write an action/adventure plot where one of the major characters is a mind-reader. It's tougher'n the dickens! How do you maintain suspense, when the character knows what everyone else is thinking. The bad guy can't have a deep secret plot: the mind-reader knows it. All sorts of surprises are impossible: the character knows it all already!

It's hard to write a story where the villain has knowledge of the future. How do you set a trap for him when he already knows how it's going to turn out? How do you plan and plot a story, when the villain knows the ending? It's bitter, bitter tough to do!

So for me to have incorporated both of these elements in the same book -- yikes! And it took me longer to write this one than any of my previous books. I had to fight against it every step of the way. Too many ideas just didn't work, given the superpowers of the hero (actually the hero's sweetums) and the villain. That it works at all is, in part, due to the classic dodge of many, many superhero stories: I sometimes kinda hid from the full implications of the characters' knowledge. I won't say I ignored the consequences, but I downplayed them now and then. I can't really say I'm happy with the final result, but, hey, it's done.

Psychology of the Past

I'm a fantasy fan, and I like neo-feminist fantasy -- one prime example of which is the Red Sonja comic book character. I'm fond of the "swordswoman" motif in fantasy. It's a portrayal of feminist empowerment in pretty much the most blatant form. "Respect me, or I'll kill you." If it's okay for men, it's okay for women.

Realistic? Hell no. Absurd. It's a grotesque cartoon, grafted onto pure wish-fulfillment. Why do you think we call it "Fantasy?"

It's a fantasy I enjoy, and it has resulted in fiction that I admire and respect, but it's hideously unrealistic. The sociology is about as believable as the magic.

The same is true, then, and sadly so, in a series of Westerns I am in the middle of reading. These are "The Law Wranglers" series by Ron Schwab. These are fun page-turners, rollicking giddyap-and-whoa western fantasies, engaging and gripping.

And they're about as realistic as Red Sonja. They are, sociologically speaking, a load of hooley. The characters are 1980's characters, who simply happen to inhabit the Old West. The women are all empowered, including being sexually active, and the men are all tolerant of the women and their rights. (Everyone is also tolerant of blacks, and even of Indians.) It isn't exactly "My Little Pony" in the New Mexico Territory, but you might say it's a 1980's TV drama in that setting. The contemporary viewpoints and outlooks dominate, and completely obliterate any historical accuracy.

In contrast, let me applaud Mark C. Jackson, a local (San Diego) writer who writes Westerns that are historically realistic. His greatest accomplishment in his books -- start with Eye for an Eye, book one in the Tales of Zebadiah Creed -- is the portrayal of a way of thinking that doesn't exist in the U.S.A. today. He gets into his characters' heads and depicts their reasoning and their emotions -- and they aren't like people today. There is an ingrained and unconscious sexism and racism that were simply the way things were in that era. There is also a much reduced sense of the value of human life, which stemmed from the simple ugly fact that life was a hell of a lot deadlier then.

Jackson's books are a little ugly, because he's giving us the story without a coating of fantasy. He's done his basic research, and then he's gone farther and done in-depth, scholarly research. But most of all, he's understood how people of that era thought, and he's given us an honest presentation of it.

I've met Jackson, and have heard him read his work aloud. I've told him what I think, congratulating him on the overall psychological and sociological tone of his books.

The same sociological disconnect is also found in many other historical fantasies. The various Arthurian novels and series are utterly rife with it. I've read a number of books set in Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece which also suffer from the same problem: modern attitudes, set in non-modern times.

There's room for fantasy. I like fantasy! But I believe that such fantastic portrayals of modern sensibilities should be quarantined into wholly fantastic lands, such as the Hyborian Age, Barsoom, or Melniboné.



Ye Murthered
Master Mage
for N'APA 241

George Phillies
48 Hancock Hill Drive
Worcester MA 01609
July 6, 2019

Comments

Will Mayo: You find remarkable art. Those are bearded iris in the front cover image, a variety I don't recognize. They are tall, but generally not that tall; at a guess the young lady is standing behind a raised bed of them.

I shall join you in being happy that you are not dead. It beats the alternative. You have dreams that don't resemble mine. Just as well. If we all dreamt the same thing, there would be far less progress.

Kevin Trainor: Sympathies on ill health. Happy to hear that there is progress on recovering. Every year taxes become a bit more complicated. I shall not ask you about my taxes, unless I pay you of course, but I am idly curious. It appeared to me as life became very complicated that there had been changes in the minimum standard deduction such that folks down at the bottom paying taxes previously would now be spared from paying taxes, at least some of them. Or was that an earlier version of the income tax modifications?

I certainly appreciate your reviews of Cherryh, Correia, and Cole. I enjoy reading Correia's books up to a point, but I am not that fond of continuous action. On the other hand, there are people who read my books and complain there isn't enough megaviolence. Please consider nominating Alita: Battle Angel for a Neffy next year; this year there were complaints about the number of nominees for motion pictures, coming from folks who hadn't nominated any themselves. Life is cruel.

Jefferson Swycaffer: indeed, there is a video of two Space-X rockets landing as God intended, on their tails, right next to each other, at the same time. That was really impressive. With respect to The Great Red Horse Robbery, you might see if it goes back far enough that Project Gutenberg has picked it up.

A local cat burglar has found an ingenious solution to 2nd floor break-ins. He had a white panel truck with some writing on its sides, a ladder conveniently hooked on the top, and in early afternoon pulled up in front of the victim's house, put out a traffic cone on each side of the truck, took the ladder off the truck, and went around to the rear of the house so no one saw him breaking in. We know he was doing this because, or so I am advised, one fine day he started to come through a window that just had a window screen on it, and the retired veteran who was lying in bed recovering from flu pulled a gun on him. Gun safes or can be a bit slow, but putting a ladder in place and getting up the ladder to come through the window takes a bit. The gentleman on the ladder realized that death was imminent, slid down the ladder, ran for it, got into his truck, and drove away leaving behind the traffic cones and ladder. The erstwhile victim managed to get to the front of the house in time to see him drive off. By 19th century standards, this would be science fiction.

With respect to keyboard cleanliness, I call your attention to 409. You don't want to spray it directly on the keyboard. You spray it on a piece of kitchen paper towel, and use that to clean the keys. If you are reasonably patient, everything comes off. I suppose you could use Q-tips instead of paper towels.

Thank you for your comments on my work for the Federation. I do what I can, given that I have other hobbies and interests. I am grateful to people like you who contribute the time they are able to contribute to get us a better club. Of course we also have a few people who give us sensible critiques of what we are doing and make suggestions for what we might be doing instead.

I have reached the age where I have a house, which requires a significant time investment to keep clean and in good order. About every other year, I go through the whole house, take everything out of drawers, clean things is appropriate, polish the woodwork — I do that considerably more often than every other year — and have a clean house for a while.

Indeed, my characters are fairly high-powered, though I am toning down the power a bit. We have not quite reached the point in the tale where Eclipse

blows a hole in the universe, thus creating a new universe at the moment of the Big Bang.

As the next novel is closer to finished than not, I am about to negotiate with my wonderful artist about what I want on the next cover. Someone was kind enough to explain to me that there were more effective ways of communicating than the ones I had used, so that less back-and-forth would be needed. The secret was to find images on the Internet which can be used to explain what I am trying to say. For example, there is the image I lifted from a book cover, to explain “This is not Eclipse.” The young lady on the cover was not flat-chested; Eclipse is quite entirely flat-chested and will be for a couple of years yet. The young lady on the cover also had feminine waist and hips and thighs, while Eclipse has no curves at all. She has a couple of years to go before she gets them, assuming she lives that long, which is somewhat dubious.

You make a point to Lorien about speech-to-text. These comments are being done with DragonDictate. It occasionally has difficulties, though it has gotten vastly better since the first version I used 20 years ago.

Thank you also for the obituary note on Ryan.

Thiel: Surely we are a considerable number of furlongs ahead. Your back cover art was really good.

You mentioned the apocalypse. I note that Harry Turtledove has a new novel Alpha and Omega in which the protagonist in our real world connives to find the Lost Ark Of The Covenant just as someone finds a red cow. To the his great dismay, he being a modern liberal professor, he manages to stage the actual Apocalypse. I am omitting many details.

As I recall Childhood’s End, it was less coming to adulthood and more staging a huge-scale genocide. The resistance to the event seems to have been somewhat limited.

When you refer to Boskone I suspect you mean Boston, though it is always possible that the American Revolution was due to a Eddorian interference in our politics.

Phillies: There has been progress on the projects. I now have an alarmingly large stack of technical papers to include in the review article. Some of them are more interesting than others. I am impressed by the number of people who can do computer simulations, find results that contradict at every point the received standard model of polymer dynamics, and advance to say that they have confirmed the model. Confirmation bias is an extremely strong force.

I did manage to finish redoing the Eclipse novel, by integrating into it the material from the old This Shining Sea, and now need a major editing pass. I am considering the possibility of turning the current novel into something appreciably shorter by inserting a cut and moving a decent amount of material from where it is now located to book 3 of the series. After all, the novel is currently at 180,000 words, which is reasonable, but a bit long.

Chapter Eclipse vs Solara

Insert bit above, Eclipse thinking to herself that there were a whole pile of Lords on hand, but they were all working through Solara – because they are all cowards – meaning this was only modestly more dangerous than taking on Solara by herself. Well, being optimistic.

I command the stellar fire! Solara screamed.
You cannot stand!

You only command the stellar fire? I giggled.
Is that all? Solara sounded really upset. She’s a bit sensitive about the Silver General lifting her boyfriends. There’s a line here from one of mom’s really old story books. *Wimp! I command the secret fire, the fire that underlies all the world, before which your stellar fire is a cool summer breeze.* Solara, I thought, was starting to sound like Valkyria. If you get under someone’s skin, so they get angry, they become several bales short of a full load. Angry opponents make stupid opponents, and, the stars know, I need every advantage I can find.

*I see several of your fellows aren’t here,” I continued. *Plasmatrix? Starsmasher? You know, folks with brains as well as flabby muscle? What’s wrong? Did they figure out how totally stupid you

are, going one-to-one toe-to-toe against me, the invincible Eclipse, Bearer of the Holy Namestone?*

I reached farther into my levels. Here was that impossible geometric object, the Straight Circle. The Solid Rainbow came almost unbidden, its surface comfortingly warm against my skin. There was the Well of Infinity, a cerulean blue pool that went down forever. I figuratively stepped forward, dropping straight down into the well, down to the place where ideas are solid and material objects are the palest of palimpsests. Once again I saw the Nipponese gentleman, sword drawn and held high, seemingly bowing in my direction. In the distance, the girl from atop the burial mound nodded at me. I scrabbled for the full width of every level I could reach, shoving all that power into charging my force wall.

We share our powers, Solara announced. *You face the combined powers of a dozen Lords of Eternity, and the limitless power of the Ambihelicon.* Supposedly that 'limitless' adjective is a gross exaggeration. I was about to find out. Solara struck at my force wall.

For a moment, the impact took my breath away. Solara's attack was brighter than a lithium bomb, more penetrating than the radiation at the starcore. Can I do this? I wondered. She's tearing away at my force wall. I have to reinforce it, faster than she's destroying it. I yawned affectedly.

Solara launched a half-dozen attacks, each as powerful as the first, each different from all the rest. Gamma ray pulse laser burst. Plasma torch. Neutron beams. That's all her friends, I thought, each with his own attack, all passing through Solara, so I can only target her. All at once is a multiple attack, way more effective than them just lending Solara their levels. All the time we'd been talking, I'd been charging up the wall. I had to see if I could hold.

I felt Aurora's null links trigger. Now what? She should have been at the core of the Tunnels, someplace safe and quiet. The null link said Aurora was pushing some of her gifts as hard as she could.

Help! Her agonized cry for aid rang in my ears
*She's crushing my mind screens. It's a mind

control attack. They want to make Comet give up and turn around.*

Mind control? From outside the tunnels? Someone had an absurd amount of power behind that attack. I was putting every bit of power I had into holding my force wall, and somehow I had to find even more to help Aurora. We'd never practiced sharing levels, she and I. Now I had to lend her the power she needed to keep her screens up. My fists clenched so tightly my fingernails bit into my palms. Medico's glyphs flashed in my head, burning from green, to blue, to the violet that warned I was doing lethal damage to myself.

What could I do? I stood squarely at the bottom of the Well of Infinity. I could feel myself decomposing into ideons made real: Will. Determination. Duty. Down here, they were the material objects, and my physical body was a ghost made of words. I had reached the limit of my gifts, and that limit was not enough.

Bottom? What if there were another level, further down? I imagined the abstraction I stood upon cracking, like the ice on a frozen pond when you whack it hard with a sledgehammer. That was a figurative image, but down here figurative images are physical reality.

Suddenly I was through. The new power level made no sense. It was a circle that was a square. Someday I might understand what I was seeing, but not now. That didn't matter. The level supplied me with astronomical amounts of power. Medico glyphs flashed deep violet. I was killing myself. If I'd spent weeks easing into the new level, I would have learned how to handle the power it was giving me. I didn't have those weeks. I was taking the power all at once.

The draw from Aurora changed. She was drawing vastly more power from me, much more smoothly than a few moments earlier, yet so smoothly that I hardly felt the extra load.

A medico glyph flashed flat black. That was the death glyph, my final warning. I was sliding from mortally injured into death. I couldn't control the power I was drawing. The Lords of Eternity were still leaking damage through my shields. I needed a better answer than holding my force wall. Aurora's

words rose to the surface of my memories. If the situation is hopeless, try desperation attacks.

Solara was in front of me. Her friends were way back. I had no way to target them. I couldn't tell where most of them were. OK, Solara, you are the target. Mum had taught me a cute trick against an attacker drawing on friends' levels. I had to get the timing right, way harder when I didn't have Mum's picosecond timing control and precision targeting.

I dropped my wall. Most of their attack now passed through empty space. I'd have to hope my personal force field stayed up. I fed a huge pulse of power into Solara's gifts. That pulse needed instants to pass through her. Before I fed her the pulse, I'd already maxed out my plasma torch, which needed instants of its own to travel from me to her. Medico? Glyph after glyph flickered between violet and black. I hadn't died yet, but I would, soon enough, if I kept drawing so much power.

Things happened so rapidly I really didn't see what happened. My personal force field flared red-green-blue into the far ultraviolet in next to no time. Some of that was Solara's attacks. Much of that was me boosting Solara's attacks, incidentally frying her ability to control her gifts. Tiny stars, red and green and blue, crawled across my field of vision. My plasma torch smashed straight through Solara's force fields. She would have died on the spot, except one of her friends teleported her out before she was actually dead. I didn't have another target for the torch, so I eased off on it, smoothly trimming how hard I was drawing on my power levels. Now I was standing above the Well of Infinity, but I could remember, all too clearly, how to reach the Square Circle if I needed it.

It would have been frigid, I thought, to have had a teleport block in place, so Solara died instead of disappearing, but I was already using more power than I could control. My medico glyphs had been flaring between blue and violet. I wasn't really scared until I saw one after another flip to black. That's the death color. Solara and friends were killing me through my own screens, driven absolutely as hard as I could.

Eclipse! Time! Aurora's mentalic message was a shout. I turned and ran. Not being able to fly or teleport inside the Tunnels was a nuisance. I had a

solid mile to take at a sprint, or as close as I could manage. The tunnels were symbolic, but they provided a very real one gee of gravity. Pressure on my shields had stopped, but surely that wouldn't continue. Gasping for breath, my heart pounding, I reached my friends. The Guardian of the Tunnels was nowhere to be seen.

*Guys!" I shouted. *No time! They'll be on us in an instant. Comet, where's the exit? Get us out of here!*

On it! Stand close together! Comet answered.
All five of us!

Aurora staggered. I caught her by one shoulder. Star moved to take the rest of her weight.

Aurora? What's wrong? I asked.

Don't know, The younger girl answered. *They kept trying mind control on us. I stopped them, but it was so hard. Then it got easy, and I got dizzy. And I feel strange.*

Please don't block me, I asked. I touched Aurora with my healing gifts. Every glyph came up gold—good health. *You're fine,* I announced. *Except you powered your mentalic shields way up.* Way more, I thought, than I would have guessed you could. I could feel the personality behind the attacks she'd blocked. *If it makes you feel better, that was Corinne and the Ambihelicon trying to break through your mentalic defenses. She failed.* Blocking the Ambihelicon qualifies as totally amazing. How did Aurora do it?

*That was Corinne herself? * Aurora shook her head *Now I feel all right,* she announced. *I was just dizzy for a moment.*

The present was not, I decided, the moment to solve this little mystery. Aurora was not a casualty, which was just fine with me. She also wasn't a whiner, so I'd take her at her word on being all right.

All luggage off the floor, Comet said. *Orders from the Starcompass.* I looked for my bag, saw Comet had its straps, and the straps for her own bag, over her shoulders.

Three off, Star announced, pointing where he had his bag and was helping Aurora with hers.

Comet straightened her legs, hoisting both bags clear. Goddess, I thought, those two bags weigh well more than she does. But she's doing it.

Comet rotated two of the StarCompass's disks.

Exit is inside the Starcompass. The StarCompass's golden plates spread like a peacock's feathers until they were enormous pale images, yards and yards across, into which I found myself falling. My sense of balance is fine, I decided. The room really is spinning wildly around us.