

# N'APA 244

January 2020



# The Official Organ

## #244

**Next deadline: March 15, 2020**

The official collator is George Phillies - [phillies@4liberty.net](mailto:phillies@4liberty.net).

The official preparer is Jefferson P. Swycaffer - [abontides@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 preparer 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!

# *Synergy 20*

**January 2020**



**N'APA 244<sup>th</sup> Mailing**

Attributable to John Thiel, 30 N. 19<sup>th</sup> Street,  
Lafayette, Indiana 47904 , [kinethiel@mymetronet.net](mailto:kinethiel@mymetronet.net) .

“This man opens the way to the spacelanes.”—Buster Brown



### **We Have A Long Way To Go Before We Reach Perfection, Missouri**

Looking around at mankind of today from a casual perspective, not getting too involved, as you may understand, but just taking a reading and forming what evaluations may be formed, one is given the impression that, although there is a whole lot of hustle and bustle, nothing seems to be getting anywhere, nothing really solid is being established, no goals are being reached. Technology being in working order, our progress has nevertheless evolved into seeming chaos. It isn't anyone's fault, it's just the result of time and tides. The only thing I can think to compare things of today with are visualizations of the Time of Judgment (no place to hide, no place to run, git along mankind, you've had your fun).

Well, be all that as it may, here we are in N'APA with nobody looking to us for any answers, and we probably would give them a stout hiding if they did come along with talk like that ("Who built the Bomb?" "Where is space?" "What paths have we trod?" "What's become of God?"), but what is there to talk about but current events, and what is there to be said about them? Perhaps we should just settle back and think about good science fiction, or the amusement there is in quaint fantasies. That's my output on it for this month's Napa distribution, anyway, as we commence the second decade of the century 2000. Can't really think of anything I would like to write about, but I want to keep up my editorial attitude and that's by at least trying to write an editorial. Surely the Great Muffin will commend me for doing all that.

I was so impressed with Jose Sanchez' cover on the mailing prior to this one that I asked him to do a cover for Surprising Stories, and one came through and appears on the January issue online. I recall when Sanchez was editing a netzine and I sent him a piece of writing for it which he accepted, but then shortly his zine went out of business, regrettably to both its editor and myself. I didn't hear from him again until he e-mailed me offering some art. I got a cover for the Pdf Dragon, my efanazines zine, but didn't hear much back from him until he burst forth again in the N3F with a lot of art, but seemingly not a membership, making him look like some kind of art contact being generous with the N3F. Anyway, a mailing looks good to go with one of his covers.

Disappointing after the turnout in the mailing just before this to see two members not putting in an appearance in this one. Should we have a roster? It would solve some matters of suspense about whether members are still with us when they do not make the scene.

### **Comments**

Ye Murthered Master Mage. We've got a game going here called The Gates of Eden which involves whether those gates can be crossed. One fellow crossed the gates just recently and is now sitting in Xanadu saying "Eden, Shangri-La, El Dorado, Xanadu, they are all one and the same thing", not without controversy about it.

Reverend Bem is a character in the TV Series ANDROMEDA, or I should say "was", I don't think the series has been on for a number of years now. He wasn't a very good reverend, but there was one double episode in which he repented which improved the series.

I'd hoped the tale of the man fooling around with his gods would entertain some, but I anticipated its ending when his entreating the gods was first mentioned, it being a tradition found in the Arabian Nights, Fairy Tales, and in some comic books. But for people not familiar with that quality being attributed to gods, it's a knockout (one that does the reader no harm).

I hope Will answers your questions—apparently, although he keeps receiving the mailings, his files aren't retaining them, as I understand it, and I'm wondering if he's able to access the N3F annals. Jeffrey Redmond has had trouble getting to Surprising Stories, an unaccountable difficulty since sometimes he *has* gotten there.

Archive Midwinter. I might know of the friend of yours you're speaking of who's writing the Christian-based novel, as George Phillies sent me an interview of a woman who said she was writing just such a book. (The interview will be in the next Ionisphere.)

Nihilism and sophism have this in common, they are both self-centered and both cause a lot of trouble in debate when contending with other viewpoints. Nor, as you say, do they have any end or solution in sight. Sophism discusses having a viewpoint more than anything else, and contends with the other viewpoints *per se*, rather than with what the actual topics are, or at least that's the way I see it.

Redmond's story resembles "deals with the devil" stories as well as taking a light view of gods.

Where I'm seeing it, "Clouds" has the title "Both Sides Now".

It seems like Will mixes himself in with his characters in what he writes.



A Sasha from Proxima Centuri  
Had to leave space-time in a hurry.  
Her innocent ways  
Weren't in vogue these days  
And she left a considerable flurry.  
  
A flame-dweller who lived in the Sun  
Arrived on our Earth on the run.  
He soon found his way  
To a place he could stay  
And curled up in his homestead, a bun.



# Freedom of Speech

by Jeffrey Redmond



**From the ancient Er-Dan manuscripts (Codex 1811), as translated by Ed-Mon**

On the three-mooned planet, as the era of the third inter-continental wars ended, the Central Continent was devastated. The victorious armies of the Eastern and Western continents divided up the Central one, and occupied it for economic exploitation of whatever was left there. The leaders of the Western Continent praised their military as conquering heroes, and in some ways the troopers actually were so. But in other ways the so-called victory had not really been all that much of such a good thing.

So many males had been away from the Western Continent for so long. Many of them had been killed in the military campaigns, and many had remained in the Central Continent as occupiers of the subdued places. Those who returned with the fleet were often wounded or exhausted from their ordeals overseas. There were then way more females than males in the places of the Western Continent, and fewer husbands for marriage opportunities. The birthrate declined sharply, and more of the healthcare and funeral services were done just before. There were way more with wills made out, funerals held, and other things done for the aged. There were far fewer birthings and other things done for the young as in previous times. The societies of the Western Continent were thus changed.

Many of the males in the Western military forces decided to remain in their new areas of the Central one. They married and mated with Centraler females, who were only too eager to take up with these conquering warriors. And especially so because so many Central males did not return home, but instead stayed abroad. And the imbalance in the populations on the Western Continent went from the usual three females for every two suitable males, to three females for just one suitable male. And this disproportion soon began to cause drastic changes there.

Fewer offspring caused a decline in the amount of students going to the lower educational centers. This in turn caused fewer employment positions for instructors at these places. And also fewer educated ones who were younger to replace those who were older. The abundance of females caused social interactions to change. Males who were middle-aged often found more opportunities to divorce their older wives, and replace them with younger ones. In previous times males had valued and courted females with gifts and blooming plants, but then they began more to take the many females around for granted. Many females were ignored, became more insecure, and competitive against each other for the fewer available males. These problems persisted for several generations, and lasted until a great change occurred.

During the time of the partial eclipses of all three of the moons, a most significant event took place. A learned and wise male came down from the furthest and highest educational center, and he made a sudden and profound impact upon the planet. His name was Zar-Thus, and he was usually a soft-spoken and quiet one. But then he began to write and say a long and loud speech. His words were remembered, copied, and repeated to many others throughout the societies of the Westerners. And his ideas spread to all of the various parts of that continent.

His words have been recorded here, and these are copied and translated here literally. Zar-Thus spoke thusly:

"My fellow citizens! Our land and culture has been the victim of yet another terrible war. We have experienced way more than what we should have, and we have survived to carry on with our lives. The deities have willed it that we continue on for the future, and this is what we should all do.

"But how is it that we are to do this? Are we to just be mere observers of life? Or are we to become and remain active participants? I know that we should all participate fully!



"None of us knows what the future will hold, and all of us need to remember the past but not continue to dwell in it. Always remember that:

Yesterday is History

Tomorrow is Mystery

Today is a Gift

That is why we call it The Present.

"Let us always be kind to all others, and to always be tolerant of everyone else. And I wish to especially emphasize that males and females, though different, are nevertheless equal to each other in all things. Males should never be so arrogant or rude to any female, for she may be an essential giver of life and offspring someday. All females need to know of their significance in our time and place. Their talents and abilities must always be emphasized to the fullest extent. For they are all able to be as wise and contributing as males, as well as caring and nurturing for others. So give all females heed!

"Males should never reject or abandon their wives and mothers of their own offspring. But instead they should forever provide and care for them. All females need to be protected and respected at all times. The future is always uncertain, and we all need to plan and prepare for whatever comes to us. So we need to always cooperate and work together as equals in all things now. By building a strong family we build a strong neighborhood, and then a strong settlement, and finally a strong society. And when we each depart from this life for the next, we will do so with the ultimate satisfaction that we each tried and did our best. And that the planet is a little bit better off for our having been here. So give all females praise!

"I call upon all of you, my fellow citizens, to honor and keep my words forever after this. Peace, joy, happiness, and inner contentment will be yours in return. I thank you all for listening and remembering. May the blessings of all of the eternal powers, both male and female, be with all of you, always."

And with that the wise Zar-Thus returned back up to the farthest and highest educational center, and he remained there for the rest of his days. His powerful speech was quickly taken throughout the continent, and indeed, his words were heard and retained by a good many. In time, more and more males began to respect females again as before. And the females began to feel much better appreciated. They became better

educated, employed, and more independent. And they did not regard the males just for their wealth, position, or power as much as before. In time Zar-Thus was considered to be a prophet of wisdom and power, and there were many in the future generations who followed his teachings as such.

For many eras afterwards, the females of the Western Continent were the best-off ones on the entire planet. The females of the other continents envied the better lives of the Western ones. And indeed, often the females of the Westerners were even despised by the other ones as being far too spoiled for their own good. But because of the changes in male attitudes, there were many Westerner females in later times who became successful in many ways. Arts and culture, science and healing, education and the societies in general all benefitted from the lives and talents of many energetic and contributing females there.

It is not known if Zar-Thus himself ever married, or if he ever had any offspring of his own. But perhaps this is not quite so important a matter as the faithful remembering of the reality of his words. It is known that quite often the knowledge of Truth shall make us free of ignorance and limitations. And that it will always be ever so, as here.

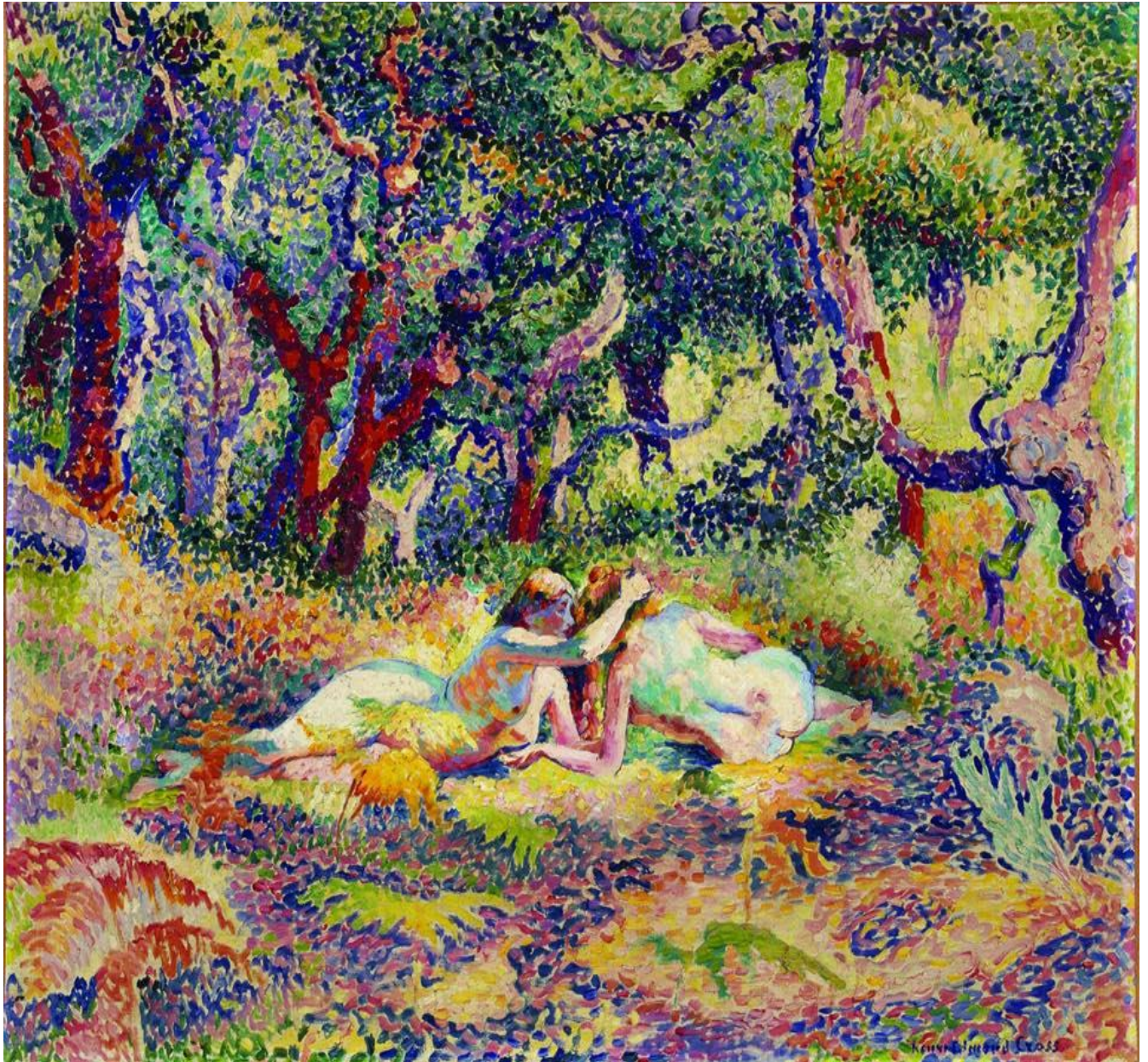
#### **WITH BOTH MY HANDS by John Polselli**

I strive to reach the sky with both my hands  
And raise myself beyond creation's rim.  
To step forth bold upon forsaken lands  
And sail tranquil seas of crystalline.  
When fire burns my unremitting soul  
And wild dances, round vast shafts of light,  
Cast fervent glances steeped in vitriol—  
The dogmen and the demons taking flight—  
Know then I am released from worldly cares,  
And by my grave the dreadful Gorgon stares,  
Turning every emerald leaf to white.



Hate to run into a war like that.

# *The Contents of a Good Life*



**January 2020**



**Will Mayo** Apartment 7B, 750 Carroll

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Some people call me a science fiction writer. Some call me a poet, others call me a bit of a philosopher. Me, it's kind of hard to say just what exactly I am. I just write, that's all. It's whatever pours out of me and I find that some people like it enough to publish it. Gods only know what all. Again, these are words that I put together on paper and out there in cyberspace. You can make of them what you wish.

Like a lot of people, I am a dreamer, and as a dreamer I dream of a world where people would no longer be judged for their bodies or their souls or their lack of clothing, or religious or political or sexual preferences, but only for who and what they really are. Any day now.

### **Such Thought We Find In Our Dreams**

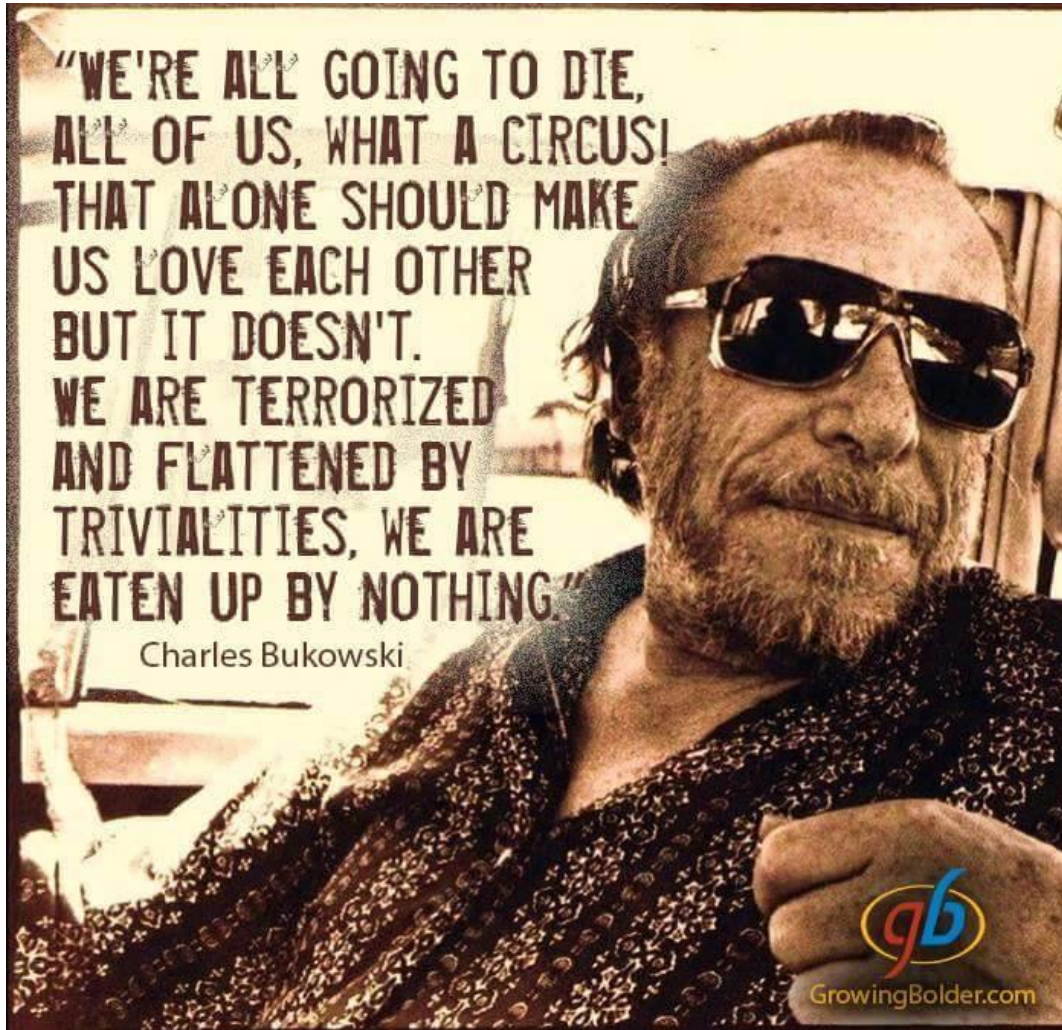
It was a dark December on a long ago night when all the world was held still in the thrall of a madman. I kept to my writing desk as always and my books and cat and my computer with its portal to other worlds. Little did I know what new ideas and people might emerge on that device. Till the dark of night gave way to the burning light of day. Till love conquered all in another and another's arms once again. For the present I kept to my dreams. They kept me busy with the things of solitude and darkness like never before. Till another should come to call. I kept my eyes on the dimly lit screen of my device and pressed button after button while rubbing the fur of my cat. Transfixed, I watched as whole universes and galaxies revolved before me. I blinked my eyes and was as one. And then no more.

### **Love and Death And Such Fine Things**

Fires burn out of control in Australia and the Amazon. A madman of a president and the Christian right declare war on the world in the name of their so-called benevolent god. Rich men pilot their way from city to city and from beach to beach and all the homeless left behind sleep in the world's streets. Is this the end of our world? Or just our species? It hardly even matters any more. Men continue to murder in the name of their god's love and the poor, so it is said, "are always with us." The planet continues its orbit about its star. The wars continue to rage. And the universe goes on unknowing.

## THE DYING DAYS OF OUR LIVES

In the long dark December of our lives,  
with one eye on the black cat  
and the other on the beyond,  
we wonder from where we have come  
and where we are going.  
Nowhere! Thinks quick now the mouse.  
How swiftly she runs  
and is gone again.





## Reviews

TALES OF THE SCREAMING AND MAD by Dee Calhoun. Herewith such fine dark tales as ghosts, vampires, and werewolves that are somehow beyond werewolves and at least one tale called "The Net" with a Lovecraftian plot that has none of Lovecraft's cumbersome prose, "Screaming Mad" Dee Calhoun, lead singer of such heavy metal rock and roll bands as Spiral Grove and Iron Man, entertains you and scares you with equal measure. Take these tales in hand and read and you will not be disappointed. Five stars for the lord of darkness.

HOW WE DIE: Reflections On Life's Final Chapter by Sherwin B. Nuland. This fascinating book by a Connecticut surgeon explores, with quotes from physicians, philosophers and poets from decades and millennia past, the modern way of death from heart attacks to suicide and murder to cancer and Alzheimer's with detailed explanations of the anatomy of the human body. Most fascinating, however, are the personal portraits he paints of the dying from his grandmother and Aunt Rosa to the patient who died in his arms while the author interned as a medical student to the brother whose extreme care he advised against his own best judgement. He concludes with a call to a more widespread and available palliative care for the dying and, indeed, a revolution in modern medicine from the technical back to the pastoral. I have to say that I learned a lot from this book and I can only hope that society will heed his final words.

THE NAKED CLOWNS by Dean Beleher. This is a book of a different kind of love poetry, indeed, a book of a different kind of erotic poetry, in which spirits shed bodies, take on others, enter one another and a trip to Seattle becomes a question of universes. Reality is held in the eye of the beholder as well as time and the reader is taken away by one verse after another. Memorable lines include "She was buttered all over my universe" and "I sent you my love at the speed of light/ We received it together." The reader finds delight in the many turns of phrase and closes the book with a heartfelt sigh. Well done, Dean Beleher!

DEATH AND LOVE/ LOVE AND DEATH by James D. Casey IV. This is James D. Casey IV's journey to the dark side of our consciousness what with writings on nuclear warfare, philosophical musings and some damn good necrophilia. Notable offerings include "Everything illuminated" and "Mad Maxian". In point of fact, these are musings on Thanatos's relation to Eros and of Eros's relation to Thanatos. Some pretty dark stuff,

yeah, but then if, as the French say, "Love is the little death", then is death not the greater love? Here. Take a journey with Mr. Casey into darkness and see what you will find.

ABSURD by R. Bremner. This book of poetry reminds me somehow of the Theater of the Absurd of the 1950s which apparently had as its guiding philosophy, "Life doesn't make sense so why should art?" though in a bizarre way the book almost began to make sense to me as I leafed through its pages what with its images of stars, galaxies, universes, magic, voodoo and, not least, David Bowie whose '70s Ziggy Stardust songs the poetry began to remind me about the further I read along the way. It also brought to mind William S. Burroughs' and Samuel L. Delaney's novels formed of cutouts and Allen Ginsberg's LSD mantras and more than once I found myself dreaming of marshmallow skies *a/a* John Lennon's Beatle song, "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" as I got lost in one poem after another.

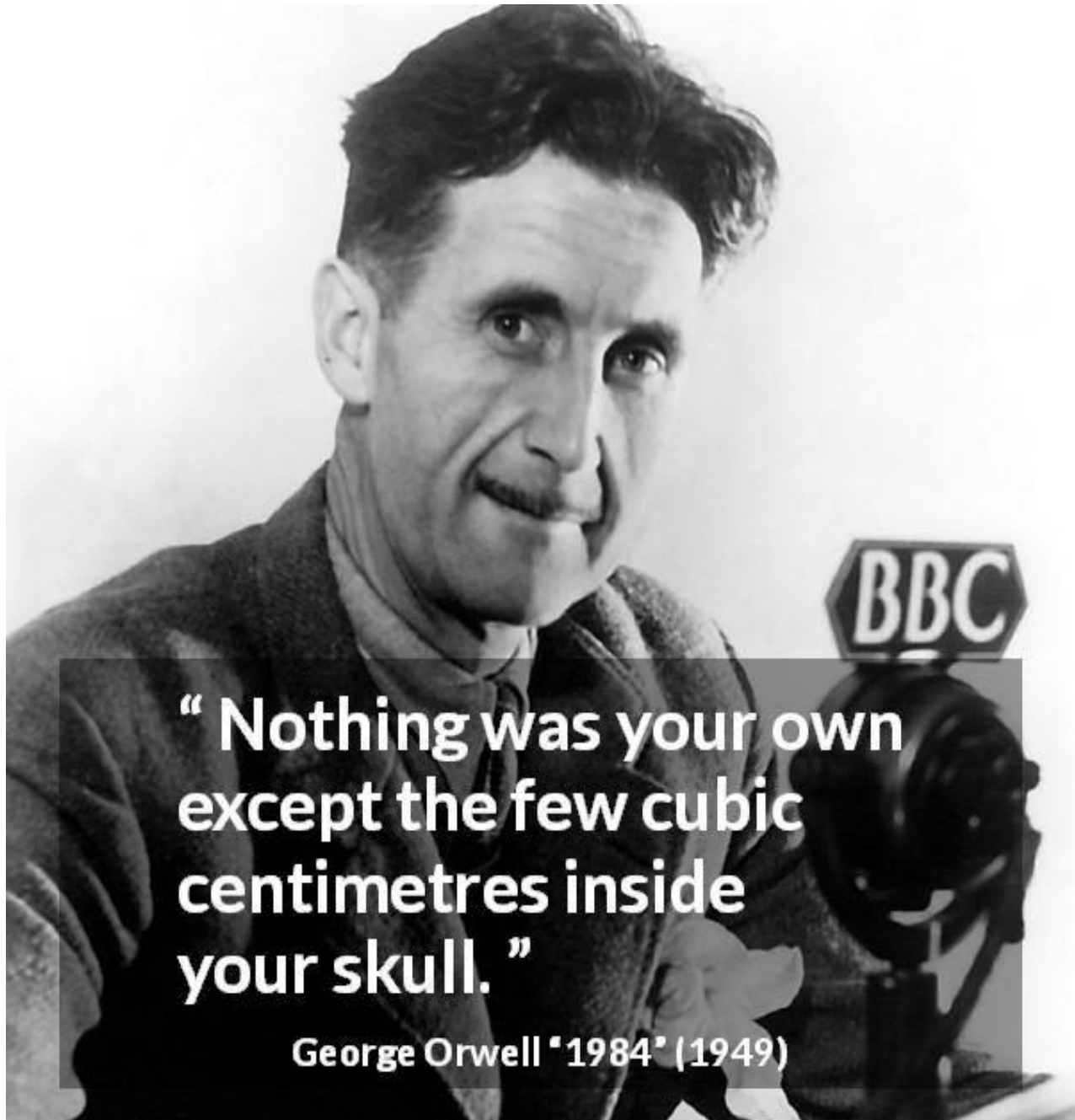
Here's a sampling of what Bremner has to offer here:

"Brainen 2—It's spank time under marshmallow skies! I fell into your pieces of 79 and 15, and I don't regret it a bit. Take me where I don't know I am and leave the melody to play on. I will rock you softly."

I suggest you read this book of poems. It will blow your mind and you'll have a good time along the way.

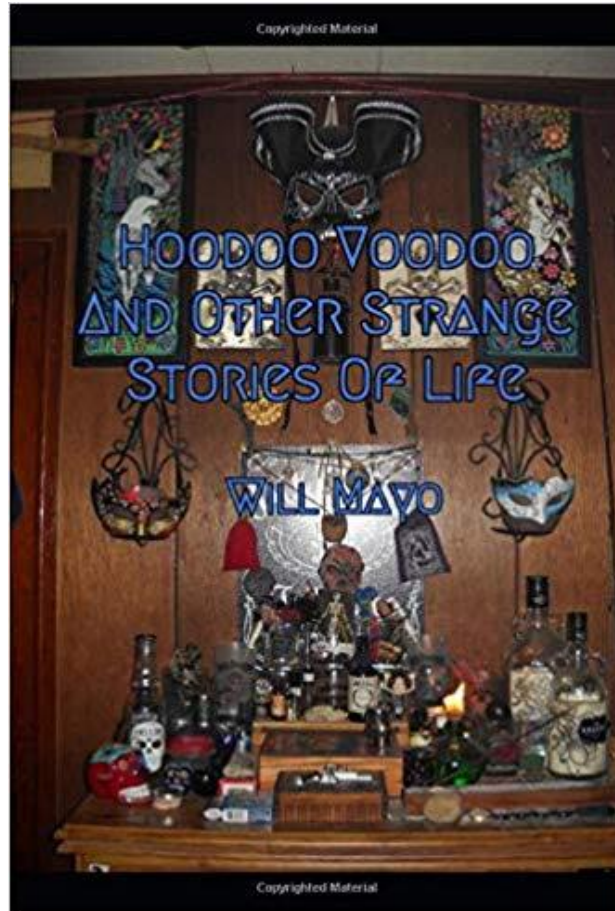
FAMILY BUSINESS: Selected Letters, Allen and Louis Ginsberg. An interesting book here of letters between father and son, both poets by trade, both ever loving, ever growing old with different eyes on the world. There's Louis, of course, traditional and though supposedly socialist still supporting the Cold War in word and deed. And there's Allen, the renegade Beat poet who seeks peace with a harmonica and all manner of things and is against most every manner of war. The two argue about politics and yet Louis is surprisingly understanding, given the times, about his son Allen's drug use. "Perhaps it will inspire some poetry," he says. And it does. Especially after Allen has his great vision in the Peruvian jungle what with seeing the origin of all consciousness, the great beast of being and nonbeing drawing near him and there with the body of a mosquito and an elephant and a human being, indeed of all creation, giving him visions of his ultimate demise. And so after trips across America and abroad Allen and Louis come to grips with their intimations of mortality—no, not "Intimations of Immortality", that would be

Wordsworth, we're talking mortality here—Allen and Louis' book comes to an end. Love and kisses reign all over. A welcome book for whoever cares to read it.



**“ Nothing was your own  
except the few cubic  
centimetres inside  
your skull. ”**

**George Orwell '1984' (1949)**



Here's my newest— Available on Amazon.

Archive Midwinter  
a zine for N'APA 244

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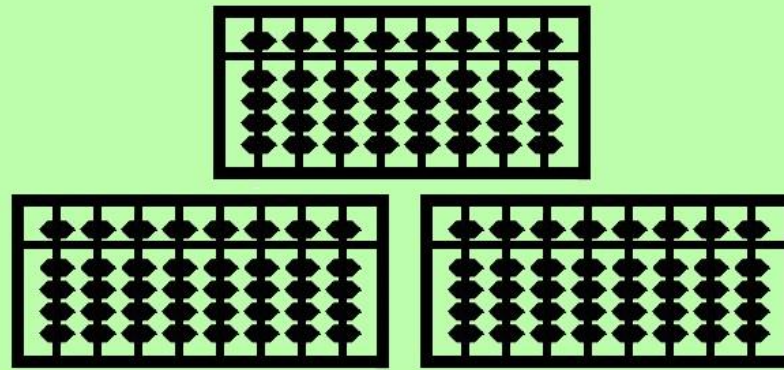
24 November 2019

### Comments:

**Cover: Jose Sanchez:** Nifty, very busy, full of interesting people, objects, and creatures...and I don't know who any of 'em are! Is this something related to Star Wars? It has a SW feel, but I don't recognize any of the references. Artistically, it is lovely, wonderfully detailed, with a nice "soft focus" sense to the coloring.

**George Phillies:** I'll pick up your books from Amazon, and, upon reading 'em, post a review there! This may take a little time, because my reading list is pretty big right now (and the contest is coming due!) but it will happen, or my name's not Lazenby Larrabee McGonigle MacAuliffe! ("We called him 'Steinmetz.'")

re taxes, I used to do my own...but I made some mistakes, and they could have gotten me in trouble (or cost me some money, anyway) but I took my paperwork to a pro and she cleared it all up. I had to pay some back taxes, but it was all covered under "honest mistake" and didn't kick in any penalties. Whew. Like most people, I would favor a much simpler process, but that would take away the preferences, rewards, and incentives so vital to the Powers That Be. Money Talks, alas, often more loudly than anything else.



The opening of Eclipse is, as always, wonderfully disparate in power levels. You go from washing the dishes directly to time travel and massive continuity disruption (let alone a convenient teleportation.) It is this massive dissonance in power levels that makes your superhero stories so striking. I only know of one other author who works at these levels, and that's Fred Perry in his Gold Digger comic book. He juggles galaxies.

The opening of Volume 4 is also fun; Eclipse's awakening and the beginnings of her recovery are told in painful detail, and the note she finds is gracefully written indeed. I like the hint of time travel in the note being written partly in a language that didn't exist yet.

**John Thiel:** Impressive cover art, sort of Peter Max mod/glo in style, colorful and zen! The human silhouette personalizes it, so it isn't just an abstract. This makes the abstract elements more interesting (because we humans really do like looking at ourselves in mirrors!)

Which observation leads elegantly to your essay on what Mankind Can Accomplish, an engaging effort to obtain perspective on a very large-scale theme. (My own view is that every change we make, as societies and civilizations, solves ten old problems, but

causes nine new ones. On balance, we come out ahead, but, oh, the complexity of the process!)

You conclude, "We should give more independent consideration to ourselves." Is this possible? It's a little like asking us to be objective: can we? How can we give an independent assessment to something that we are so personally involved with? I think the best we can really do is make judgements on the basis of whatever moral system we have chosen to adopt (and is it even a "choice?") At very least, some moral systems, such as Christianity, or Communism, or Utilitarianism, offer us a "calculus" by which we can make measurements of "good and evil" and try to guide our steps by these calculations. The results are inevitably skewed, but they have an element of objectivity, in that any two persons, using the same calculus, will (probably?) arrive at the same conclusion.

(Maybe not: there may be some inescapable level of uncertainty and/or postmodernism entropy that forces solipsism upon us in the long run.)

re Asimov, I have a friend who adores the original Foundation series, and thinks it was the biggest mistake Asimov ever made to "fold" the Robot novels into that same universe. He hates the "fusion" of the two major fictional worlds. This makes me a little sad, because I think it's brilliant, one of the best things Asimov ever did!

Gerald F Heyder's little story about the cartoon characters airing their grievances was fun, although I thought it lacked balance. The same characters have a lot going for them. I don't buy the bit where Mickey wants a divorce from Minnie: the two are very happily in love, and that love is clearly the best thing in their lives. Popeye, too, has a sweetie, and that makes up for a lot of his other angst.

Jeffrey Redmond's story was fun, a life history of a good man, a nice moral lesson and an example to all. We try to do the

right thing, and, sometimes, if we are very lucky, we succeed. Sometimes, it's even recognized and rewarded. Oscar Wilde said, "The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means." The joy of humanity is that it isn't always fictional!

**Will Mayo:** Your frontispiece is another example of delicious day-glo pop art, vibrant and surreal and beautiful, with a human figure to give a kind of relevance. I zoomed in, trying to read the words in the banner, but all I could make out was "Eat a Peach." This is a moral dictum I can agree with wholeheartedly!

"I just pet my cat and pen another word. Hoping for the best." This is a perfectly good moral code -- it reminds me a little of "We must tend our own garden" from Candide. It also makes me think of the political slogan, "Think globally, act locally."

I agree with your celebration of lonely, isolated creativity, the stories that millions (yes, it could be a billion!) of us write, the drawings we sketch, the operas we score, all for ourselves, if for no one else at all. Creativity is a major human need. For every "sung" genius like J.R.R. Tolkien, there are surely dozens (hundreds? thousands?) whose visions are as rich, if perhaps rougher in expression, who are equally laudable and wholly unsung.

Quantum computing is marvellous! A recent proof-of-concept machine succeeded in solving a particular mathematical problem thousands of times faster than a conventional supercomputer could have. We don't know what the ultimate ratio will be, but it certainly is starting to look as if QC is a major mathematical game-changer. For a brief time, the code-breakers will break into the ascendancy, until entanglement wins the game for the code-makers, once and for all. (But, then, the same is true for single-use code books. And nobody ever broke the "code" of the Navajo speakers in WWII!)

I'd never heard of Oscar Wilde's Pen, Pencil, and Poison. It isn't on Project Gutenberg, alas!

I definitely agree with you on the importance -- the vital key to life! -- of just writing for writing's sake, to focus on the here and now, and not to get "caught up in the arts scene." I know my stuff is read by a few close friends -- that can be enough!



Ye Murthered Master Mage 244  
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Lastish Comments:

As always we had an excellent cover, this time from Jose Sanchez, whose work is most appreciated.

Archive Midwinter: Glad you liked the bits of my novel. Your comment on the Temptation on the Tower was very thoughtful. If Jesus could not have succumbed to temptation, if he had script immunity, then the event was a fake, not a temptation at all.

Interesting review of an unsuccessful book. Writing things in the recent past is challenging. I am reminded of an alternative-history volume of the end of World War 2, which might be described as Patton uber alles. Everything falls his way, including the author's belief that the Third Ukrainian Front (A Soviet Army Group) was filled with soldiers from the Ukraine, an advance from western Germany to Kuibyshev in a single year with no logistics, the author failing to note that the allies are now half-way to the Soviet War industry in the Urals,...very sad.

Contents of a Good Life: You find the most remarkable books and tales to review. Paintings tinged with the color green? That's arsenic salts. What poison did he use?

N3F Member Chris Nuttall and Jagi Lamplighter of the Rachel novels are organizing a collection of short stories on fantastic schools and where to find them. I sent them an entry, of which you will see part:

Adara's Tale  
Because Academic Warfare is Deadlier Than the Real Thing.

My first view of Dorrance Academy was in the early morning. The rising sun was still low above the horizon. Dawn's rays painted the grass and trees in gorgeous shades of green-gold. The Academy's buildings were tinged with burnished bronze and faded copper. It must

have rained last night; you could see sparkling raindrops hanging from spring flowers. The air was spring-chill, but the sun was warm against my cloak.

I'd waited a decade and a half for this day, a decade and a half in which I knew this was what I wanted to do. There had been the day, a decade ago, in which I first came into my magic, meaning I could don the agelessness spell that held me unaging as a young adult. Of course, someday I would finish here, put aside that spell, and age into a grownup, but that was an unclear time in the future, after I'd established myself as a scholar.

I'd arrived on a rise, several hundred feet above the sloping plain on which the Academy waited. The ground where I stood was entirely flat, paved with a single slab of flawless white marble. I did remember to check the seal. Carved into the stone and filled with gold, it read "53" in numbers two feet across. Yes, I'd come to my assigned arrival point. My two trunks hovered behind me.

Relative to my luggage, the arrival point was enormous. Was it used for something else? I summoned from memory a campus map. No, the freight arrival points were sensibly down on the plain. Arriving up here is what you did as a student, preferably about this time of day. Some students just had a lot of luggage.

I heard a high-pitched whistle to my left. At the rear of the next entry point, someone was opening a deep gate. A deep gate was surely an effective way to get here in a whole hurry from far away, as opposed to what I did, taking a long series of shorter walks across the Purple Sea. The deep gate's surface was black, shot through with fluorescent clouds and bursts of particolored lightning. Through it walked someone close to my own age, well, physical age. He came through first, so he had to have opened the gate himself. Yes, I do know how to open a deep gate. That's one of the things you learn to do to support really high-power spells. However, I am definitely not stupid enough to walk through one. Deep gates take you into the Void, which at my age is definitely a bad place

to be. OK, some boys think they are invincible and indestructible.

I watched as he pulled more and more of his trunks through the gate. He wasn't keeping that good control of his gate, enough so that the wards around my arrival point, the wards around my trunks, and finally my personal wards began to flicker into activity. I've opened larger deep gates, with people standing there to intervene if needed (it wasn't), but my deep gates were rock solid and completely under my control. His gate was unstable. Before the matter got too serious, he pulled the last of his trunks through the deep gate and closed it.

I turned away to look at the Academy. The view was beautiful, the Academy plain stepping slowly down toward the Pelnir Sea. The beaches were golden yellow. Several large-scale enchantments meant that the water for a fair distance out from shore was pleasantly warm and absolutely clean. Across the harbor, I could make out through the morning haze the New School, its single vast building capped with domes and towers.

Academy buildings were an eclectic range of every known style. That's every style known to us, the Timeless Ones, the Hidden Masters of such part of creation as we choose to rule. The One Library was a vast slab of golden granite and glass brick. Even from here, well up on a rise and a mile away, I could see the shimmer of its wards, spellwork that protected it from fire, flood, and every other imaginable disaster. The School of Theology building was architecturally unique. It started with limestone columns and slabs, fused at one end to brickwork of rococo ornateness, merged into a mass of silver and glass, finally reaching an open court surrounded by topless columns and four quartz towers, those being the personal and staff offices of the Four Patriarchs when they were in residence.

Entering student interviews were in Ellwood Hall, just this side of the Campus Martius. Campus Martius? We are, divine beings help us, expected to study the combat arts. As an heir of House Triskittenion, I'd been expected to master combat sorcery. Already. I'd tried. My

occasional tutor grumbled that I relied too much on speed and brute force rather than subtlety. He warned me that would often work poorly, given that I'm a young adult, not a grown-up. Grandfather Worrow was more tolerant, not to mention more demanding. For my first single-person hunt, I brought back the heads of three night terrors. Back at home, their skulls decorate the wall of my bedroom. After my first hunt, my tutor grumbled less.

Over my back, under my cape and cloak, I wore a *gnothdiar*, a spellcaster sword, one of whose other purposes was to be extremely sharp. It was the same weapon that I'd used to kill the night terrors. I suppose I could have locked it in one of my trunks, but its enchantments were sufficiently heavy that it was safer worn close to my body.

The fellow to my left was doing something that rearranged his trunks into a line suitable for towing. He could wait. I tapped my lead trunk once to get the attention of its spellwork. It dutifully followed me, puppy-like, as I started down the hill. School housing, unless I wanted a proper house, was off to the left, so I would need to walk the trunks there, sign for keys, lock up my trunks, and then walk all the way across campus to be interviewed. It was good exercise.

"Look out where you're going, you idiot!" That shout was the boy on the next entrance point. He'd started after I had, was moving faster than I'd say was sensible for someone with that long a train of trunks behind him, and obviously thought that I was in his way. "I'm a man of House Fourbridge, soon to be a great combat sorcerer, so you get to wait while I pass." He made a crude hand gesture, a gesture a bit too close to a mantric form for my comfort.

He appeared to be something of an idiot. Supposedly students did get into fights – a massively stupid behavior, in my opinion – but if he wanted to start one I would do my best to finish it. I pushed my hood back from over my head and reached behind me, my left hand tapping my trunks to stop them. Pushing back my hood meant I had my right hand almost at the hilt of my *gnothdiar*, while my left hand was

out of his sight where I used it to cast a shielding ward. "Nice to meet you," I answered cheerily.

"I am Harold Fourbridge. You may walk behind me, like all my other girlfriends." He marched on by.

I decline to believe that a Dorrance student, a young adult, is old enough to have real girlfriends. However, he was well taller than I am. He might be one of those boys who was so full of themselves that he had tampered with his agelessness spells. He appeared to be growing toward adult height and build well before he should. I muttered several impolite words under my breath. Given his control, or rather lack thereof, of his trunks, I was entirely happy to have him downhill of me.

SNIP

[She has a test: How good is her knowledge of combat magic?]

A few days later I received a directive, when and where to report on the Campus Martius. I went over the day before to survey. My assigned location was a good mile out from the places where other students were being tested. Each student was put up against a simulacrum, a creature of straw and twine, something barely able to walk. A good number of them did not take the exercise seriously. They got pummeled by a bag of straw and the feeble spells backing it. Others seemed to have an unclear idea of what they were supposed to be doing. Many had clearly only been in mock duels in which you were expected to pull your blows. If I'd quoted the family doctrine on kicking a man in the head, 'best done while he's flat on the ground; he can't dodge as fast', they'd have been distressed.

The rules were simple. Each location had two warding circles. You stepped into the outer circle, raised the circle, prepared your weapons and spells, and stepped into the inner circle. The docent grading your skills raised the inner circle. At some point, probably not instantly afterward, you were attacked by a simulacrum. You were expected to defend yourself.

The next day my time in the ring came. I'd mentioned to the General Magic table where and when I had my test. Unlike the other first-year students at the table, I did not have an audience. Grandfather Worrow had drilled into me: There are no mock combats, except between fools. Mock combats teach you bad habits. I am not a fool. I was about to face a straw scarecrow, but I would face it with the readiness I would have had if I faced a barbarian horde. I stepped inside the outer circle and felt its shields rising behind me. I checked my wards, summoned my left- and right-hand spells, opened the void node on each wrist, and stepped across the inner circle, grumbling under my breath that I was not allowed to reach for my *gnothdiar* before combat started. OK, it's a realistic test on being ambushed.

At first nothing happened. There was supposed to be a target dummy. It was missing in action. I cast a weak sight spell, enough to spot something invisible. Nothing.

The attack came from directly behind me, strong enough to drive me down onto one knee. My *gnothdiar* was only useful if I drew it, difficult when my right hand hit the ground almost hard enough to break my wrist. Reflexively, I released a half-dozen spell-breaker and warding spells, followed by area fire and lightning spells, all directed straight behind me.

The scarecrow, whatever it was, caught two of the spell-breaker spells and sent them back in my direction. My own wards swallowed them and powered up. Someone was fond of pyrotechnics. Lightning spells left behind the smell of sweet metal. Blinding lights and screeching noises tried to tear at my senses. Sorry, the last time that trick worked on me I was four years old, when I could barely cast any spells at all. That time I countered the trick by kicking big brother Heath in the stomach. Hard. I pushed up with my right leg, struggling to stand, casting Dance of the Air to help me get off the ground. Standing, I fell back into pure defensive combat, each finger on my left hand releasing a separate ward. Now I was on my feet. With my right arm, I managed to touch

my *gnothdiar* hilt. The sword leaped into my hand. I pivoted and took two steps back. Every combat master teaches you to charge at the enemy, the better to create threats. I stepped back to create surprise.

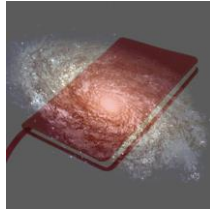
I faced a vaguely manlike creature of shiny metal and glittering lights, surrounded by a haze of warding spells. A straw-filled scarecrow it was not. I could see its attacks, lightning and fire, striking the ground where I had stood. They were powerful and very tightly focused. I sprang to the side well before the creature realized I had moved.

Sharp, I thought, Sharp. I called the most powerful destructive spell I knew, backing it with both hands and *gnothdiar*, directing it straight against the creature's core. The air between us trembled and bent. Its wards would not go down. I drew on my void nodes, sending all the power I could reach against the creature. My wrists burned where the nodes touched my skin. Its wards would not go down. I interleaved a dozen attack spells with ward breakers. Its wards remained intact. All this time, it was directing spells at me, spells as sophisticated as mine, backed by more power than I could call without careful preparation. My wards did not go down, either.

The creature turned and charged. I jumped to the side. Our wards collided, sending me tumbling across the circle. The creature outweighed me by a lot. It wasn't weak, either. I rolled, landed on my feet, and hit the creature with a half-dozen ward-eating spells.

TO BE NOT CONTINUED

## NOTES FROM A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY #20



January 2020

For N'APA 244

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**Natter**

I completely forgot about this in November, despite the reminder email. I got the email - oh! That's nice! - and immediately forgot about it. I've got this this month. Barely - it's 7 pm on January 15th.

### **The Mandalorian**

I got the Disney+ streaming app for a free trial and was immediately hooked. Sadly, there are only 8 episodes and now I have to wait until I don't know when for more.

I like it mostly for for "Baby Yoda." The creator has told us that "the child" is not *really* baby Yoda. We all know that he's not baby Yoda. But...there is speculation that he's the illicit love child of Yoda - or maybe Yoda broke the Jedi code and outright got married. At any rate, the child is clearly of the same species as Yoda.

At any rate, Baby Yoda (for lack of a better name - you would think that after 8 episodes The Mandalorian should have given the baby Yoda a name. Even if that name is "Chucky." Come to think of it, even the Mandalorian doesn't have a name, he's just referred to as "Mando," which could be used to refer to all the Mandalorians. Maybe because he has no name, it hasn't occurred to him to name the child.

There's also speculation about why the Mandalorian can't take off his helmet - ever (well, except when no one else is around - and I assume he eats and bathes) - but other bounty hunters in the Star Wars universe episodes can. It is explained away, at least by fans, as the Mandalorians being of a specific sect of bounty hunters. It kind of makes sense - it's a big universe, so there should be room for more than one group of bounty hunters.



I crocheted my very own Baby Yoda.

### **The Rise of Skywalker**

I also saw *The Rise of Skywalker*. The whole Star Wars saga is over. For now, at least. But the franchise will still go on. You just know that Disney won't let it go easily. Plus, there are all the movies that can be made to fill in the gaps. And there are lots of gaps that need to be filled.

Other than that, I'm not going to say much about the movie. I don't want to spoil it for those who want to see it. I know that many people have long since dropped out of the Star Wars universe, though. I'm sure it's far from George Lucas's vision of the series.

### **COMMENTS ON N'APA #242**

RAEBNC

## COMMENTS ON N'APA #243

George Phillies: Re: your comment to me: Yes, the sculptures are outdoor and permanent. They are on Route 5 in Lyndonville, VT, and if you happen to be up that way, they are worth taking a look (but I wouldn't take a special trip). Usually, I will see them as I pass through town, but one day, I decided to stop and take photos.

Jefferson Swycaffer: Re: your comment to John: I like Christian fiction (sometimes), but I don't like being hit over the head with the Christianity. A little goes a long way. There's an author who writes Christian thrillers, and as thrillers, I find them pretty good. The Christian element tends to be a preachy moment between two characters about ⅓ of the way through the book. The sermon is otherwise out of place and can be easily skipped over without losing any of the rest of the story. I've long since moved on from her books, though. I assume she is still writing them.

John Thiel: I had to look up Medievalist Society. It doesn't appear to be particularly active these days. I have not been a member, not even ever having heard of it before now. I was interested in the Society for Creative Anachronism about 25 years ago, but never found out much about how to join. This was before the internet as it is now, so info wasn't a few keyboard clicks away.

Will Mayo: Even today, certain days hold special meaning for me. Oddly, I still look forward to my birthday. Not the getting older part, but it's nice to have a special day that is all mine. But since I often have to work on actual holidays, I also like to celebrate holidays at my - and my family's - convenience. Thanksgiving on a Monday? Works for us. And yes, why not celebrate now? Every day is a holiday. Every day is special.