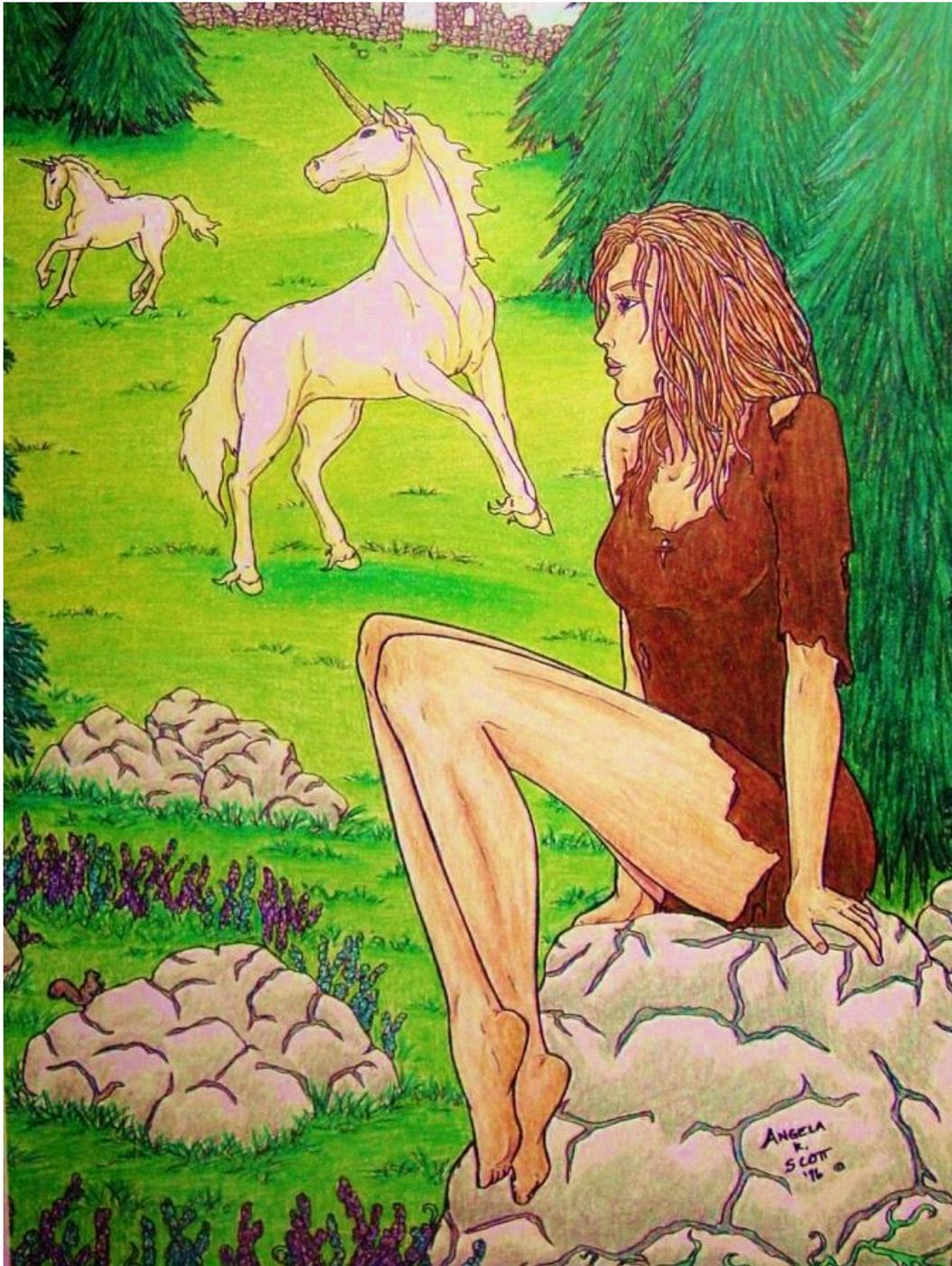


Tightbeam 312

September 2020



Woman of the Wild
by Angela K Scott

Tightbeam 312

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Some contributors have Amazon links for books they review, to be found with the review on the web; use them and they get a reward from Amazon.

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The N3F offers four different memberships. To join as a public (free) member, send phillies@4liberty.net your email address.

To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines. Memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18; memberships with TNFF via email are \$6. Zines other than TNFF are email only. Additional memberships at the address of a current dues-paying member are \$4. **Public memberships are free.** Send payments to N3F, POB 1925, Mountain View CA 94042. Pay online at N3F.org. Our PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org.

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Editorial — PolSciFi

This issue includes an experiment — a review of a political science fiction work, where by political I mean not Honor Harrington but contemporary semi-propaganda, which good or evil being a matter of taste. Reviewer Chris Nuttall writes in his summary “Your attitude to Alternate Truths will probably depend, a great deal, on your attitude to Trump.” For the benefit of the many readers who are thoroughly sick of politics, I have hidden the review **after** Cedar Sanderson’s delectable report on Nathan Lowell’s fish chowder, so that I will not spoil your appetites.

Letters of Comment on this experiment are vigorously invited.

Letter of Comment

Editor:

On the last issue.

A letter by Lloyd Penney. God, he is a prodigious letter writer. What would we fans do without him? About Zoom, my Toastmasters Club meets that way and so does a group called Fed-Ex. Which should be called Ex-Fed. No substitute for an in-person meeting but the best we can do during this Coronavirus time.

Next I will discuss the Fanzine section. I have always wondered what the connection between science fiction and the Christian New Age Quarterly was. The connection is, of course, it analyzes the religion and philosophy in science fiction. I have seen it on many lists of fanzines. Obviously, it is considered a fanzine in good standing.

Another fanzine I will comment on is Fadeaway. In addition to science fiction, Bob Jennings’ zine examines old movies and pulp fiction. It certainly bridges many fandoms, even fandoms that might be considered mundane.

Hugo Nominees. First the Novels. In *The Light Brigade*, someone becomes unstuck in time like in *Vonnegut’s Slaughterhouse 5*. It is not difficult to portray. It is a world where we live in moments that are not in chronological order. As to the scientific or pseudo-scientific rationale for it, who knows?

Novellas. “Anxiety is the Dizziness of Freedom.” This uses a logical approach to time travel, alternate timelines. When someone goes back and changes the past, it produces an alternate present and future. This is more consistent than most time travel tales, which have only one timeline. I know at least one paradox which could come from only one timeline, which is what most people use. When someone goes back and changes the past, he might make it so he was never born. And any changes he made would be undone.

Short stories. About “This is How You Lose The Time War.” Tom Feller says an intelligent vegetable would need high tech to travel through time. Maybe there are plants with intelligence that also travel through time. Maybe us humans travel through time and our consciousness doesn’t tell us so. As they say, there are a lot of things in this universe we have not even dreamt of.

On the other hand, maybe it sounds better if intelligent plants possess high tech.

Novelettes. This concerns the novelette “Omphalos.” The Omphalos it was named after was a polemic by a Philip Gosse. He wrote it in 1857, two years before Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. The skeptic Martin Gardner claimed that, according to it, all the fossils and layers never happened. The Lord God wanted us to believe the Earth has a much greater age than it has. In truth, the Earth was created a mere drop in the bucket ago, as the Bible implies. If Gosse had lived now, he might say that God forged the radioactivity that measures the Earth’s age.

Manga. This comment concerns the manga *Yotsuba&! Volume 1*. One chapter has someone being locked in the bathroom. Being the one locked in, I didn’t find it too hilarious. It was at a Hilton in Raleigh, North Carolina in 2006. I was there for DeepSouthCon. When I first found I was locked in, I wanted to call the front desk on my cell phone. However, the only number the operator could give me was the Not helpful with a cell phone. I tried every way I could to contact the front desk. Finally, I broke down and called 911. Shortly, a janitor came and destroyed the lock. When I told this story, someone suggested this might be added to our long list of DeepSouthCon’s anecdotes ... It hasn’t been – fortunately.

SerCon. The Clifford Simak Bio-Bibliography. Once again I examine the science in science fiction. Perhaps to prove that we shouldn’t worry about it. I gather Clifford wrote stories of animals becoming intelligent like human beings. In the old days, evolution meant progress. All species were progressing toward us and beyond us. A.E. van Vogt wrote about that happening as late as the ‘40s. We don’t believe that very much anymore. I guess the best we could do is more species of homo that .humans will evolve into; and/or a few animals develop their own intelligent species.

Sincerely yours,
Richard Dengrove

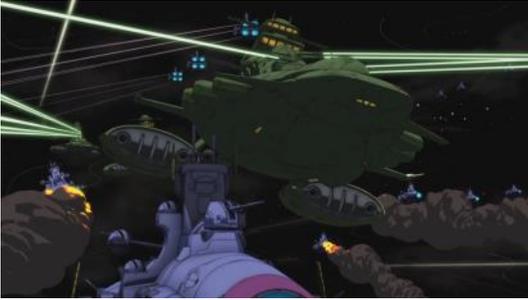
Anime

Giving it Another Try Review by Jessi Silver



Since I’ve been a blogger, my primary focus has been on newer or current anime. Watching newer series has helped me maintain my interest in anime fandom, which is a fandom that often seems to pride itself in bulk consumption – as much as possible and as quickly as one can manage. There are certainly a lot of anime series out there and it can be very easy to get caught up in the destructive mindset of watching as much as humanly possible (I have to say, I do pride myself on the number of anime I’ve completed even though I’m not necessarily proud of having finished everything on that list. I’ll leave that to my readers to guess at which anime fall into what group).

With a near constant onslaught of new anime, it becomes much more difficult to look backwards to the classics. I’ve admitted in the past that I have some large blind spots when it comes to certain famous franchises. I’ve watched very little *Dragon Ball* (or its offshoots). I don’t have a special connection with older sports anime like *Slam Dunk*. And, in probably one of the more surprising twists of my life, I’ve never really gotten into the *Gundam* franchise.



The Gundam series isn't just large-scale battles in space... but those are pretty cool, too!

The latter hasn't been from lack of trying, however. Though I'm pretty much the exact right age for it to have consumed me along with many of my female fandom peers, the entire Gundam Wing fan frenzy somehow passed me by. I've seen a couple of the shorter series in anime club over the years – Gundam 0080 and O8th MS Team – and many people claim them to be very watchable for those who don't know much about the franchise, but despite acknowledging that they were both pretty good, I've never felt strongly about either of them.

As Covid-19 has continued to disrupt many aspects of my life (including causing me to completely biff any sort of new anime previews or reviews last season out of depression – thumbs down for mental illness), our anime club's move to online meetings has opened up some new opportunities for ad-hoc showings aimed at smaller groups. A friend offered to stream the three-part compilation film series that covers the events of the original Mobile Suit Gundam TV anime, and it was at that point that the story finally captured my interest. Who could have guessed that watching from the original starting point of an incredibly epic story would serve as the most logical and user-friendly point-of-entry? That's a rhetorical question that no one should feel obligated to answer. I feel like enough of a doofus already.



In retrospect, it seems obvious; the charm of most long-running series tends to grow organically from slowly learning about their worlds and characters. One has to walk before one can run; one has to learn who Captain James T. Kirk is before reading some obscure tie-in novel for the original Star Trek series. And really, one has to see Amuro Ray and Char Aznable in action, get a whiff of Sayla Mass's tragic past, and witness Ramba Ral's sacrifices, to get a sense of what makes the Gundam series more than just a show about cool robot armor and grandiose outer-space battles.

We followed up the original series with the much more recent adaptation of the Mobile Suit Gundam: The Origin manga. As one might expect, this is a prequel that follows most of the major characters' stories to the point at which they enter the story as depicted in the original. One part fan-service (which I mean in the traditional way – character cameos and references to things that we know are going to happen later on) and two parts character development, with a heavy sprinkling of action and melodrama that hits just right, I can say that Origin was what really solidified my interest in watching more UC Gundam (although my friends who are experts also tell me that they think I'd like Turn A Gundam. I suppose we might see!).



Sayla's story is an interesting high point of the Origin series.

As a long-time anime fan, I know how easy it can be to avoid a series you haven't yet developed a relationship with, and to discount that lack of connection by assuming that the issue is with the media itself. That could very well be the case, but I challenge those of you out there who find yourselves with some free time

on your hands to think about some anime you've overlooked in the past. Maybe you'll never find the entry point or angle you need in order to really enjoy watching it, and that's fine of course.

But there's always the possibility that great anime – anime that might become your new favor-

ites! – are sitting out there in the void just waiting for you to sort yourself out and appreciate them. And, honestly, isn't having more anime under your belt a good thing?

FanAc

Announcing a New Fan Experience The Geek Galaxy by Cedar Sanderson

We all need a place where we can go to let our hair down and talk to people who get the joke. A place where everyone gets the joke and you can talk to someone who doesn't think you're a freak just because you used a word like "Ferengi" or "Droids." You know what I mean. A place where people not only grok you and what you're all about, they don't give a frak that someone else wouldn't and they can communicate on your gorram level.

Or maybe it's more about a person that will understand your fascination with that fair elf maiden and the sword at the end of the quest. Maybe it's not knowing if the light at the end of the tunnel is the sun, a djinn powered locomotive, or the anti-magic ray of a Beholder. Or is it the magical sword of your missing companion?

Whether you prefer your fandom in the form of the written word, the big screen or the small screen, on a computer or a tabletop (or if you're into polygeekery the way I am) I'd like to extend an invitation to you.

The Geek Galaxy (<http://thegeekgalaxy.freeforums.net>) is the place for all things geekish. It's a place to meet and gather with people who share your passion and have a discussion that includes more words than you can fit into a tweet or a Facebook post.

Our mission at The Geek Galaxy is to promote works of Science Fiction and Fantasy (as well as Horror, which Stephen King once said was part of Science Fiction. I'll take his word for it.) that have entertaining characters, strong plots and plenty of action. In other words, we're out to promote works that bring escape and enjoyment. We're here to once again bring the fun into Science Fiction and Fantasy.

Part of what we plan to do is to offer one book monthly for reading and discussing. Some of you may be familiar with the concept, because I stole the idea from someone here. Voting for the first



Little Fairy by Angela K Scott

month's subgenre is already live, and your chance to show some love for your favorite subgenre is slowly slipping away. (Uhh... Sarah Hoyt's Goodreads group does this exact same thing? Uhh... Oops? Would you believe me if I said I didn't kn...*COUGH* Never mind.)

I want you to register. I want to know what you're thinking. I want to find out what's out there that I don't know about. I can't do this without you. Yes, I'm talking to you, personally, and to every other human being that would enjoy something like The Geek Galaxy. It's time to make your thoughts known. So run on over to <http://thegeekgalaxy.freeforums.com/register/7165925>

and get started. You'll be happy that you did. It's like the con that never ends, except with no con-suite (*SIGH* I know, but no system is perfect, ok?) and you don't have to buy a ticket or pay for an overpriced hotel room. And, if you're Con Funk Guy no one is going to pester you about it because they won't be able to smell it anyway. Put another way, this also means that you won't have to smell Con Funk Guy. So what's holding you back?

I'll give you an enjoyable experience if you'll let me. Just swing by and tell me what you're thinking. Oh, but be warned: I was serious when I said I've got dibs on starting the thread re: The Godfather. I'll be doing that soon. Other than that, it's all wide open and your time is now. Get to it!

(Jim McCoy is the proprietor of The Geek Galaxy and Jimbo's Awesome Science Fiction and Fantasy reviews at <http://jimbossffreviews.blogspot.com>)

FANAC Fan History Project UPDATE 13

Good wishes to all for a safe and almost normal Summer. We were on the Moon 51 years ago plus 3 days!

Now, we are still pretty much in isolation. However, that isolation has allowed us to document a lot of fan history with help from many of you. You have our thanks and requests for even more material.

We have received new material from Leybl Botwinik, John Bray, Elinor Busby, Eli Cohen, Rich Dana, Morgan Dawn, Linda Deneroff, Leigh Edmonds, Kim Gibbs, Rob Hansen, Irwin Hirsh, Kim Huett, Steve Johnson, Jerry Kaufman, Evelyn & Mark Leeper, Guy Lillian III, Rich Lynch, John Owen, Joe Patrizio, George Phillies, David Ritter, Kevin R. Smith, Leah Zeldes Smith, Dale Speirs, Erwin Strauss, Jo Van Ekeren, Tom Whitmore, and input from Justin Ackroyd, Sandra Bond, Bill Cornette, Zoe Deterding, Paul Fraser, Thomas Hartl, John Hertz, Chip Hitchcock, Robin Johnson, Dave Langford, Bruce Mai, Thomas Recktenwald, Mark Richards, Alex Steinberg, and Martin Moore Wooster. If you belong on this list, and I've left you off, then my apologies.

In addition to adding lots of new material, both photos, fanzines and audio/video, our big news is that Mark Olson has been working on a new way to show convention publications. Details below. Also new: We want the Fan History Project to be as useful as possible and entertaining (don't forget the entertaining part). To that end, we would like you to answer a few questions about how you use the site. In the next few days, you'll receive a survey on how you use FANAC.org, Fancyclopedia.org and the FanHistory YouTube Channel. Please respond so we can plan our improvements more intelligently. Now, on to the highlights.

CoNZeland Retro Hugo Awards: We hope you voted on the Retro Hugos for 1944 as part of CoNZeland's Hugo Awards program. Deadline is/was July 23 in New Zealand July 22 in much of the rest of the world. As we've reported before, we have the fannish material which was nominated in the categories of Best Related Work, Best Fanzine and Best Fan Writer. You can find it at http://fanac.org/fanzines/Retro_Hugos.html. We've also put together some material for CoNZeland, the Virtual Worldcon. Look for us there in Exhibits.

FANAC by the Numbers. Numbers can be misleading, but they do give us some idea of the progress we are making in documenting our fan history. As of today, we have 11,526 fanzine issues consisting of more than 179,423 pages. This is up from the 10,000 fanzine issues and 150,000 pages

reported in our April update. Our YouTube channel is now at 621 subscribers, and 90,356 views, up from last time's 500 and 75,000. Fancyclopedia 3 has exceeded 32,000 items.

Recent Highlights: We are trying to highlight the material of a few good fen on our home page each month. The first, in June, celebrated Bob Madle's 100th birthday and featured links to his material on The Fan History Project. This month, we feature Sam Moskowitz' fannish heritage, with links to his writing and bio for his 100th anniversary. In August, we're planning on Jack Speer. If you like this idea, let us know and suggest some more fen to spotlight.

Filk: Some people love it. Some don't. We're in the former group. If you are interested in filk, we have started expanding our material in that area from Filthy Pierre's Micro Filk to Stu Shiffman's Fokal Point (more folk than filk) to Bruce Pelz's early Filksong Manuals. Many more items will be coming. They will all be available at: <http://fanac.org/fanzines/Filk/>

It's always a balancing act to juggle adding new titles with completing the runs of fanzine titles already being scanned. You can see the complete runs yourself by going to the "all fanzines" page at http://www.fanac.org/fanzines/Classic_Fanzines.html, then clicking on the column titled FLAG. There are 158 titles marked as complete - from Don Wollheim's Adulux Beskan to Lisa Conesa's Zimri.

The recently completed runs include: Dave Ish's Sol, Lee Hoffman's Quandry, Ken Cheslin's The Adventures of Hemlock Soames, Richard Geis' Psychotic, Science Fiction Review, Richard E. Geis, and The Alien Critic, Joseph Gilbert's Sound Off, John Berry and Ken Cheslin's Fables of Irish Fandom, Roger Sims's Fantasy-Scope, John Owen's Crystal Ship, Shipyard Blues & Rastus (all scanned and supplied to us by John), H.T.McAdams' Fantopologist, Lisa Conesa's Zimri, Rich Lynch's My Back Pages (also supplied to us by Rich), John Foyster's Emanation (only ish), Earl Kemp's Safari Annuals ("Who Killed Science Fiction?" and "Why is a Fan?"), Ted White's Ego-scan, Harlan Ellison and Jim Schreiber's Vector (only ish), Rob Hansen and Ted White's Crank, plus various one issue trip reports, anthologies, fannish plays, collections, bibliographies and other things.

One unusual item you might want to peruse is a Dianetics fanzine from the 50s, Aberree, from Alpha Hart. We have 7 issues - <http://www.fanac.org/fanzines/Aberree/>.

We didn't do this alone, but with the help of many others. If we're close to a complete run of an important fanzine, we will importune you all for scans or copies to scan so we can fill in the gaps. Fanzine runs for which we lack only a couple of issues are on our begging page.

http://fanac.org/fanzines/desired_fanzine_list_to_scan.html Please check the date on the page, and drop us a line before you scan to make sure we still need the issue.

Of course, we've also started adding some new titles. You might be interested in BSFA's Matrix, Roy Tackett's Dynatron, Dean Grennell's Grue, Ken Slater's Operation Fantast, Joe Hensley's Apollo, James Blish's Tumbrils, Dale Tarr's Science Fiction World, and the aforementioned complete sets of Lynch's and Owen's fanzines. We filled-in hundreds of issues for other titles as well.

Other Organizations: Our work with other organizations has resulted in a lot of good reading for you. In cooperation with BSFA, we have 276 issues of Vector online and now we have uploaded our first 34 issues of BSFA Newsletter/Matrix; with N3F, we have over 200 publications; 448 newsletters from BSFG; over 140 zines from LASFS, 222 from WSFA, and 40 or more each from FACT, SFSFS and NESFA. We just completed an agreement with First Fandom and will be hosting many of their publications soon.

Under Construction: Mark Olson has been working on new software for FANAC.org's collection of convention publications. It's under construction still, but very far along. Only the Worldcon section has some material so far. The plan is to use this approach to add not only convention publications, but reports, bidding materials, committee materials and ephemera. We'd like to get your feedback – it's a bit of a departure from our normal look and feel. Please click through and check it out at <http://fanac.org/conpubs/Worldcon/index.html>. You can send your feedback to fanac@fanac.org. Thanks in advance!

FANAC Fan History YouTube Channel: <https://youtube.com/c/FANACFanHistory>

We've added five recordings since the last update making three complete new pieces. When the panels and interviews are more than an hour, we break them up for easier viewing. Links are at the bottom.

First, we have a 1975 panel discussion from Aussiecon (1975 Worldcon) featuring Guests of Honor Ursula K. Le Guin and Susan Wood in a discussion of Ursula's writing for young adults. Other panelists are Stella Lees, Peter Nicholls, Annis Shepherd, and Anne Sydenham. Thanks to the folks that wrote in to correct our (previously) bad spelling of the panelist names. Still very interesting and pertinent.

Second, we added an audio panel (now with pictures!) from Iguanacon (1978 Worldcon), where Harlan Ellison was Guest of Honor. SF Fans into Pros is on YouTube in 2 parts (dictated by length, honest). Panelists are Harlan, Bob Silverberg, Ted White, Dick Lupoff and Terry Carr. The first part is often hilarious, but still informative. The second part has less humor, but lots of interesting conversation.

Lastly, we uploaded an interview with Bob Tucker from 2000. This is also a two-parter and is chock full of Tucker stories about the 1940 Chicon 1, Claude Degler, the Tucker Hotel and generally 60 years of active fandom, with humor, conducted by Dick Smith.

I hope you enjoy them all. We're getting a good set of interviews with BNFs, so we've started a playlist just for Interviews. You can amble between the likes of Walt Willis, Dave Kyle, Bob Madle, Bob Tucker, Art Widner and others. Of these, only Bob Madle is still with us, and for me it's a real treat to watch these interviews now.

We're looking for people who like to digitize: We have more than 300 old recordings that we are trying to preserve, and we are getting more. We are currently inventorying them by program item, event and participants. There are 336 items in our database at this time, with several boxes to go. We are only listing them by their labels which are sometimes incomplete or indecipherable. The recordings are in many formats, from reel-to-reel audio, to various types of audio and video cassettes and digital media. We are looking for help to digitize some of these old recordings. If you have some knowledge and equipment for this, please volunteer.

Fancylopedia.org: To continue the focus on conventions, please take a look at our Tropiccon page on Fancylopedia - <http://fancylopedia.org/Tropiccon>. There's a lot of data there, because Tropiccon was our Florida local convention. Edie and I worked on Tropiccon for 20 years, and we made sure that the Fancylopedia article was flush with information.

You too can have your local convention well represented in Fancylopedia. Check out the article on your local, and if you have info that should be there, either become a contributor yourself, or send the content to Fancylopedia@fanac.org. I know we keep asking for information, but how else

do you think we can document what happened in 1974 at PgHLANGE_VI? [Yes, that article needs some loving attention - bring it.]

Coming Attractions: Looking ahead, we'll have more recordings on our YouTube channel with Harlan Ellison, Masquerades, Samuel R. Delany and others. We'll have more classic fanzines from the 1930s and 40s as well as more of Mimosa, Trap Door and zines from Australia and the United Kingdom.

Please pass this update on to any fan or list where you think it might be of interest. Those interested in subscribing can sign up on the FANAC.org home page.

We usually close with a funny line about Fan History. This time, we're still hunkered down and all of us are getting worn. So, we just want to leave you with this – stay safe and we'll see you next time.

Fanhistorically yours...Joe Siclari

Selected links:

FANAC.org: <http://www.fanac.org>

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/fanacproject/>

Fancyclopedia 3: <http://fancyclopedia.org>

Chronological Convention list: http://fancyclopedia.org/Convention_timeline

Convention Publications (Worldcons under construction): <http://fanac.org/conpubs/Worldcon/index.html>

Fanzines: http://fanac.org/fanzines/Classic_Fanzines.html (FIND ALL FANZINES HERE)

Core List: to Scan: http://fanac.org/fanzines/desired_fanzine_list_to_scan.html

Chronological Listing: http://fanac.org/fanzines/chronological_listing_of_fanzines.html

Newszine Project: <http://fanac.org/fanzines/newszines.html>

FANAC Fanhistory YouTube channel: <https://youtube.com/c/FANACFanHistory>

Interview with Tucker (pt1): <https://youtu.be/f271Wc3YW6s>

Iguanacon Panel (1978 Worldcon), Fan into Pro (pt1) - <https://youtu.be/WhyqRXuCWHE>

Aussiecon panel with Ursula LeGuin and Susan Wood (1975): <https://youtu.be/NyP2PQpOc30>

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Fanzines

Fanfaronade: Celebrating Current Fanzines Justin E.A. Busch

Having gotten the backlog out of the way, and with only two new fanzines on hand, I thought I'd take some space to explain my intentions as a reviewer.

The term is key; I consider myself to be, in these columns, a reviewer rather than a critic. As Lester del Ray commented (in his final column for *If*, in December, 1974), "A critic basically examines a work to find new insight for those who have already read that work. He sees beyond the



Mask and Rose by Angela K. Scott

first impression, he relates the work to other works, and to the whole body of mankind's development within the field and those related to it." This is one reason why critical writings tend to be lengthy and, to many readers, wordy.

A reviewer, on the other hand, seeks "to give as accurate a reading as possible, and then to pass on his impressions to those who have *not* read the work." Reviews tend to be shorter and to cover more individual items; in effect, the reviewer is attempting, within the available space, to give a sense of the tone and content of what they are reviewing in such a way as to allow each reader to decide that this item is, or is not, something they would be interested in seeing more of.

I don't mean that all fanzines are created equal, or that I treat them as being so. What it does mean is that in my reviews I will generally concentrate on the strengths of the issue at hand rather than its weaknesses, noting weaknesses mainly when they seem to undercut the zine's own purpose. Snarky comments would serve only to reveal the current state of my digestion; they are neither useful criticism nor helpful to potential readers.

That said--

Pablo Lennis #393, August, 2020. Editor, John Thiel, 30 N. 19th St., Lafayette, Indiana, 47904. Available for 2.00/copy or "having writing or art in it, or a letter of comment, or as an exchange for your fanzine."

Fanzines are often deeply personal, even when the content is mostly not by the editor. John Thiel has been publishing *Pablo Lennis* for about a third of a century, and the zine has a well-honed profile, one emphasizing variety. Short fiction takes center stage here: of the various stories or serial chapters, only two are over two pages long; several of the others are under twelve lines in length. Incident and mood painting accordingly take precedence over character development and complex plotlines. The effect is reinforced by the numerous poems, all short, scattered amongst the stories. This has a certain advantage — if a reader isn't entertained by one story or poem, they may well find the next, half a page on, much more to their taste — but it does lessen the impact of some of the serials, particularly Joanne Tolson's "Society of Disinformation," which, developing cumulatively but presented in small chunks over many monthly issues, does make it more difficult for the reader to recall earlier elements.

Non-fiction comes in the form of Thiel's idiosyncratically wide-ranging editorial and short fanzine reviews, a lengthy article (almost a quarter of the zine) by Jeffrey Redmond on artificial intelligence, and a lettercol, also wide-ranging. As is the case with most contemporary fanzines, there is a dearth of original art; images drawn from the internet leaven the blocks of print more or less relevantly.

Thiel does not so much edit as conduct the proceedings. The result is that each contributor's voice comes through clearly, yet the collective result very much reflects the overall purpose stemming from the editorial point-of-view.

Purrsonal Mewsings #74, August, 2020. Editor, R. Laurraine Tutihasi, PO Box 5323, Oracle, Arizona, 85623-5323. Available "for the usual (a response of any kind, including letters, e-mail,

and phone calls [!] of comment; trade; contributions of illos, fiction, or articles; or even money: \$5.00 per issue)."

A delightful Al Sirois cover promises variety to come, a promise amply redeemed, even though, as with many perzines, Covid-19 has restricted external activities on which to report. An editorial leads into photographs of Tutihasi's cat Cato (in response to a complaint that the last issue didn't have enough cats), followed by Mike Weasner's galaxy photographs, which, even in small size, are impressive. Reviews come next-- of a short story, two books, and a fire. As Tutihasi writes, "'It's a bit unusual to have a review of a fire, but it was an unusual (fortunately) experience for us." The Bighorn Fire came within three miles of her home, which made for some dramatic pictures, several included here.

The rest of the zine is given over to other writers. The zine's main distribution is through StippleAPA, so each issue includes comments from the APA's members; some of these will perform be slightly obscure to non-APA readers. The APA section is followed by about eight pages of letters (including one from recent Neffy laureate Lloyd Penney), covering topics both fannish and personal. The tone is friendly throughout.

According to Jack Speer (in *Fancylopedia*), a personal zine has a central advantage: "it is virtually conversation — comparison and modification of ideas, and that reminds me, and what did you think of my last issue — without that one-dimensional limitation of verbal conversation, that people are always interrupting, and only one subject can be discussed at a time." *Purrsonal Mewsings* is a fine illustration of this. It's serene and thoughtful, with a clear character all its own.

If you publish a fanzine and would like it reviewed here, please send a copy to Justin E.A. Busch, 308 Prince St., #422, St. Paul, Minn, 55101.

Games

Harry Potter: Hogwarts Mystery Review by Jim McCoy

"So Jimbo, you've reviewed books, movies, and comics. You've covered things like G.I. Joe which are totally not considered by most people to BE Science fiction."

"Yeah, and?"

"You've never reviewed a game. Everyone thinks games are SF/F. DragonCon even has a few Dragon Awards for games."

"Uhh.. Yeah. Your fault. I mean, it's actually my fault but I'm channeling my ex-wife here."

"So what's up, bro? You gonna do this or what?"

"Fine, I'll do it. Now take your ass to the kitchen and make me some pie."

(Bonus points if you're not screaming sexism when I never gendered the speaker. Also, bonus points for everyone who remembered the old school Cartman quote.)

So, while cruising somewhere someday, I came across an ad for a cell phone app called Harry Potter: Hogwarts Mystery, and I was kind of hesitant. I had taken a look at another game called Harry Potter: Wizards Unite and it was basically the Harry Potter equivalent of Pokemon Go! and well, three hundred seventy pound dude and all, so...

Yeah, no.

Hogwarts Mystery, however, does not force me to drag my overly large posterior all around town, presenting a huge target for any passing cars as I unwittingly wander out into traffic. I shouldn't diss Wizards Unites as I've never played it, but it just didn't sound like my kind of thing. Hogwarts Mystery, however, is.

I'll let you all know about the biggest complaint others have about the game right now: The player has a limited energy meter and has to wait awhile for it to recharge after it's been used up. I'm okay with that. I actually like that aspect of it, because I don't have all day to play apps on my cell phone and if I'm waiting for two and a half hours waiting on energy, I don't have to continuously be staring at my phone trying to get ahead. This is not the kind of game you have to spend eighteen hours a day playing to succeed. Obviously, if you don't play as much, it takes longer to advance, but that's life.

The story of Hogwarts Mystery is excellent. The players finds themselves wandering around mostly familiar parts of Hogwarts (I don't remember seeing some of the Common Rooms in either the books or the movies) and solving a series of mysteries, which are actually all part of the big mystery. What happened to your brother Jacob? Is he alive? Is he dead? If he's still alive, is he hiding out or being held hostage? No one has seen him in literally years. (And, yes, I mean literally literally. I'm a fifth year and I still haven't found him, and he was missing for a few years before that as well.) Things build very well upon each other and it's obvious that the storyline was written by someone who knew what they were doing and honestly, if every year ends on a cliff hanger, at least you can start the following year immediately after, at least up to sixth year. As of now, I can see a list of achievements for years one through six. Not being a spoiler type guy, I'm not sure if there is no seventh year, if there will be and it hasn't been released yet, or if it's being hidden to prevent spoilers. If any of you have this information and can share it in a non-spoilery way, please let me know below. I'm afraid to look.

Hogwarts Mystery has a cast of characters that is just awesome. Not only are we treated to some of the awesome characters we're all familiar with, but there are some really cool new ones as well. Rowan Khanna is your best friend. You meet him on the Hogwarts Express on the way to start your first year. My understanding is that he's in the same house as you are regardless of which house that is and yes, you do get to pick. Merula Snyde is an awesome enemy. I hate the chick's guts. I'm totally shipping my character and Penny Haywood, potions nerd extraordinaire. Seriously, where were all the chemistry geek blondes when I was fifteen?

Oy.

Also though, we get to see some old friends. Hagrid, Dumbledore, Snape, McGonnagal and others are all here. Tonks is here and that's awesome because I have a thing for older Tonks as played by Natalia Tena. I mean seriously. Hogwarts Mystery also features some of the lesser known characters from the series, like Bill and Charlie Weasley. It's a lot of fun working with those guys solving mysteries and creating mayhem, especially the mayhem part.

Stop looking like that. I played the trombone all through high school and everyone knows that

trombone players are basically just Weasley Twins: The Muggle Version.

Anyway...

If I had chugged along merrily doing the main storyline quests and ignoring everything else I'd probably have been done with this game a long time ago (seriously, I've been playing since like January.) but that's just not me. Hogwarts Mystery features a ton of sidequests along the way and they're a blast. I don't want to go into too much detail because spoilers, but they add a whole freaking lot to the story and you get some cool prizes. Side quests come with a lot of outfits (and dressing your character and/or getting new gear for the stat bonuses is almost as big a part of Hogwarts Mystery as gathering xmog stuff in WoW was) and other prizes. Some is stuff to decorate your dorm room with. I love it all. You have to pay attention though, because some of the sidequests come with real world time limits. If you don't complete the quest in time you don't get the prize(s) you haven't earned yet. That's life and they are clearly marked, but you have to keep that in mind.

Oh, and not to be too spoilery but if you get a really cool outfit from one of the timed sidequests and it comes with a headpiece that's kind of annoying with any other outfit, you can change it in the hairstyle settings. I just figured that one out today.

Quidditch is fun, too. I'm given to understand that it was added to Hogwarts Mystery by popular demand after the game had been out for awhile. I can't comment on that except to say that it was available when I started playing. It's not quite the way I had pictured it. It's a really simplified game but it looks cool and IT'S QUIDDITCH. 'Nuff said.

Dueling is fun mostly and sometimes frustrating. It sucks to lose and I got stuck trying to advance the storyline because I couldn't win a duel and I ran out of galleons (which you have to pay to duel) to get past that spot in the story. It took me forever and I wanted to pound the snail snot out of myself when I figured out what I'd been doing wrong, but I got past it. There are duels throughout the game though, and it's a useful skill to have. Not to mention that there are sidequests that really only depend on winning a set number of duels and the prizes for completing them are really cool.

Care of Magical Creatures is a hoot and I'm not just talking about the class. There is actually a setting where you can adopt various and sundry creatures and teach them to like you. There is a series of sidequests with Hagrid. I've read that they'll be adding more. I don't want to ruin too much, but if you're doing these, I do recommend looking up some information on what order the animals go in. It'll make life simpler later and it won't detract from the fun if you don't read through the actual walkthrough. I do recommend only trying to max one critter out at a time, but honestly if you're not spending real world money that's all you'll probably be able to get at once anyway.

There are also multiday events that aren't really part of any storyline but give rewards. One of the most common rewards is the notebooks you need to buy the Magical Creatures, so if you're planning to do that, get used to playing these. I enjoy them. There is a dueling event that not only gives prizes for total victories, it also pays one hundred galleons a win. There is a Quidditch event. I like that one but I can't manage to get too many wins in a row. I'm getting better gradually though. There is an event where you gather crests by taking classes. There's an event based only on gaining experience (experience levels are part of the game but don't add much that I can see) so all you have to do is anything. That's a long one. It usually lasts close to a month and I usually beat it in about a week or a week and a half. The latest one required less exp and I beat it in a few days, but that's because I got big experience bonuses for finishing a chapter (all school years are divided into chapters) and for finishing two sidequests. The bonuses accounted for over half of what I needed all by themselves.

The biggest event is the one I call the “bingo event” and the game calls something totally different that I can't remember at the moment. My feelings on this event are mixed. The other events are pretty self explanatory as far as what you need to do. Do classes, get quests, win prizes. Win duels, get prizes, etc. With bingo you have a four by four bingo card. Each square has a different goal: Get so many stars for Flying Class. Win so many mini games in Charms. Buy some clothing (in-game money and/or notebooks and/or gems can be used with no real world money needed) from the in-game store. Fight and/or win so many duels. Play/win so many Quidditch matches, etc. So now you can't concentrate on one thing, you're scatter-shotting your efforts all over the place.

The thing is though, you're earning points the whole time and you've got competition, made up of bots with the name/appearance of other players avatars. It's hard to outscore them sometimes, especially when you can clear one card and don't know what's coming on your next one. Now, you can spend gems to reset hard goals (and I frequently do) but the number of gems you can earn in game is limited. You can also use gems to produce a multiplier for your points, but again that's a lot of gems if you're getting them the hard way. Otherwise, you have to pay real world money to get more gems. And I guess that's what irks me, because it's the only part of the game that I consider to be pay to win. Bingo is also the one event that will eat through your Galleons so fast that it'll make you wonder if you ever had any. You have to save up for this one.

Seriously, you can play Hogwarts Mystery from beginning until end without spending a dime if you don't mind missing out on the last couple of prizes in the Quidditch and bingo events. Anything else is easily completable using just your time. I'm pretty bad at the Quidditch one and there are times when the CPU just puts the bingo event out of reach. At least with Quidditch there's a good chance that I'll be able to complete the event if I just keep practicing.

Don't let that discourage you though, because this really is a great game. I find myself playing the game and trying to guess what will happen next. I laugh. I rage. I don't cry because that's not me, but some of you will. Oh, and it's challenging and fun too. You should try it. You'll enjoy it.

Bottom Line

4.5 out of 5 Black Feathers

Hugo Awards

The Hugos, continued Tom Feller

White as a Raven's Wing by Seanan McGuire—

This is one of the stories in the author's InCryptid series. Ista is a female waheela, a carnivorous shape-changer from North American Arctic regions, and Ryan is half-Tanuki, a Japanese shape-changer. They are lovers and working in a bar in Manhattan at the beginning of the story. He is a bartender, and she is a bouncer. When they decide to get married, she decides to take him home to meet her family, which involves killing her father. Both incest and cannibalism are routine for waheelas, and her father would object to their marriage on the grounds that he expects to mate with her himself. Ista also wants Ryan to know exactly what he is marrying into, giving him the option of backing out. However, Ryan insists on accompanying her to northern Canada, and they go off. This is the first story I've read in this series, so I was at somewhat of a disadvantage, but I found it

quite engrossing, as I usually do with McGuire's work, and would like to read more. Since this was the only finalist in the Best Series category that I had actually read, I ranked it #1. Now I have seen episodes of The Expanse TV series, and on that basis, I ranked the book series #2. The Expanse was the winner, and InCryptid finished number two.

Catfishing on Catnet by Naomi Kritzer—

I was rather amused that most of this young adult novel, nominated for the Andre Norton Award (technically not a Nebula) and recipient of the Edgar Award for Best Young Adult novel, is set in Wisconsin, where I grew up. While New Coburg, the main setting, is a fictional small town, there is a scene set in nearby Marshfield, where one of my aunts lived for many years before her death. This novel, set in a near future that has robots, drones, and self-driving cars, is a sequel to Kritzer's 2015 Hugo and Locus winning story "Cat Pictures Please". The narrator of the original story was a sentient artificial intelligence (AI) that lurks on the Internet and loves pictures and videos of cats. The AI returns in the new story, but the author adds another point-of-view character, a 16 year old eleventh-grader named Steph. Since Steph was seven years old, she and her mother have been on the run from Michael Quinn, their abusive father/husband. They frequently move around the country, staying in one place only a few months at a time.

Besides her mother, who makes her living as a computer programmer, the only constant in Steph's life is Catnet, a social media site secretly run by the AI, who posts under the name Cheshire Cat. Steph, who posts under the screen name "Little Brown Bat", belongs to a chat group that consists of other teenagers. Steph and her mother move to New Coburg at the beginning of the novel. Unfortunately, Steph commits an indiscretion that alerts her father as to their location.

This coming-of-age novel is both funny, especially the robot that teaches sex education, and thrilling, especially when Quinn finds them. It is a fast read, and I found it hard to put down during the last 50 pages. The only defect is that Quinn is completely unoriginal and a character that we have seen a thousand times in movies and television shows. This was the only finalist in that category that I read so I ranked it #1. I guess I chose the right one to read, because the other voters agreed with me, and made it winner of the Lodestar Award (technically not a Hugo).

Becoming Superman by J. Michael Straczynski—

When I was on the committee for the 1997 Worldcon in San Antonio, we had a meeting in which we discussed what to do if J. Michael "Joe" Straczynski showed up. At the time, Babylon 5, the show he created, produced, and mostly wrote (92 out of 110 episodes and five TV movies!), was at the height of its popularity with science fiction fans, winning two Hugo Awards. He had given a talk at the previous Worldcon in Los Angeles (actually Anaheim), and the room assigned to him was too small. There was standing room only, so they had him give a second talk and even then some people were excluded. The head of the events division the next year offered the programming division use of the auditorium otherwise reserved for the Hugos and the costume contest. Straczynski did indeed show up and gave his talk in an auditorium big enough so that everyone who wanted to hear him got in. All was well, except with the person in charge of the costume contest because it took away some of her preparation time.

Straczynski begins his autobiography with his father's family. His paternal grandparents came over from Russia about the time of the Russian Revolution and, according to his description, were about as loathsome a group of people as you would NOT want to meet. His family's history consisted of poverty, incest, and abuse, including physical, sexual, and psychological, but their darkest secret is not revealed until close to the end of the book as in a murder mystery. His mother Evelyn was a prostitute when she met his violent, alcoholic father Charles, at the time a military policeman

with the Air Force. Charles habitually beat his children and his wife, who was frequently institutionalized. The elder Straczynski also killed stray cats young Joe adopted, collected Nazi memorabilia, and refused to pay for eyeglasses for his son. They moved 21 times in 19 years to avoid creditors, but young Straczynski found refuge in comic books, which his father would destroy when he was angry, television, especially the George Reeves Superman, who became his role model, and later science fiction. Straczynski broke off contact with his family when he was thirty and only re-connected with his siblings after his parents died. He made one attempt at marriage, but feels it failed because of his emotional detachment stemming from his abusive upbringing. It also didn't help that he is a workaholic.

Straczynski started writing as a form of therapy and became a professional writer while attending San Diego State, first breaking into professional ranks by writing free lance articles for local newspapers. He then moved to Los Angeles, where he became a writer for the animated TV series He-Man and the Masters of the Universe, She-Ra: Princess of Power, and The Real Ghostbusters. He got into live-action television with Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future, Jake and the Fatman, a revival of The Twilight Zone, and finally Murder She Wrote, before creating Babylon 5 and its spin-off series Crusade. Sometime during this period he also found the time to write a horror novel. After Crusade went off the air, he had a very negative experience with the Showtime series Jeremiah. Consequently, he left television for several years to work on comic books, including Spiderman, Thor, and three Superman graphic novels. He returned to Hollywood with his original screenplay for the film Changeling, which starred Angelina Jolie and was directed by Clint Eastwood. He wrote four more screenplays that were filmed, including one of the Thor movies and World War Z. He finally went back to television by writing the Netflix series Sense8 with the Wachowski siblings.

Based on information he has received over the years, Straczynski confirms a widely-held fan theory that Paramount stole many of his ideas for Babylon 5 and used them for Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. He also reveals the sad story of Michael O'Hare, the original star of Babylon 5, who suffered from mental illness. (I once saw O'Hare at a convention, where he was attended by a nurse.) Straczynski's book is quite fascinating, moving, funny in places, and inspiring. The scenes of abuse are very vividly written, so it may be difficult for some people to read, but otherwise it is an excellent memoir. This is the only finalist in the Best Related Work category that I read, but the others would have had to be really, really good for me to have ranked them higher than this book. It did not win. Instead, the other voters awarded the Hugo to Jeanette Ng's Campbell Award acceptance, in which she denounced Campbell as a fascist, and which I did not consider Hugo-worthy. Becoming Superman finished number four.

Novels and Anthologies

Bentley Little's *The Ignored* Review by Will Mayo

Here is a book all of us set aside, weird folks can relate to. It is a novel in which one man, Bob by name, is ignored by all and sundry including his boss, his family and countless passersby until one day another man ignored by the conforming majority, a fellow named Philippe, introduces him to a whole town of bland, unmannerly ignored people wherein they plot their revenge on society at large. Ralph Ellison, author of the African-American classic *The Invisible Man*, would love this book, were he alive today, as would countless science fiction and fantasy writers present in today's

world. Check this one out. It's a gem.

Existence by David Brin Review by Sam Lubell

I like big idea science fiction and this book had ideas in spades. Yes it has flaws, there are too many viewpoint characters and the dolphin/Uplift plotline went on too long if it was just a nod to his most popular series but was dropped 2/3rds of the way into the book. The time jump of a couple of decades means the effort of the rich super-elites to reimpose feudalism and the confrontation between the first two alien objects found are both summarized rather than shown even though most of the previous pages had been devoted to setting up these conflicts. Still, the ideas carry the book

Basically, humans discover alien objects. The first, studied with much publicity, promises eternal life and what seems like a galactic community until the object declares the races never met each other. The stone is actually a chain mail letter since civilizations tend to destroy themselves, but can upload members of their species into these chain mail letters and send them off into space. Meanwhile another stone, studied by a secret Chinese group, says the first stone is populated by liars.

Is the reason why we don't hear signals from space because the civilizations don't last long? Was the Enlightenment really a bad idea requiring the efforts of the richest (and therefore presumably the wisest) to rule the rest of us? What is the best way for human society to continue after the invention of artificial intelligent robots? Books like this one make the reader think, long after the names of the characters have faded.

Sercon

Anthony Boucher Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. N3F Historian

Anthony Boucher was the most-often used pen name of William Anthony Parker White (August 21, 1911 – April 29, 1968), an author, critic, editor, teacher, translator, and book reviewer.

White also used the pseudonyms of H. H. Holmes, Theo Durrant, Parker White, and Herman W. Mudgett. It has been claimed that he became a fan of using pen names when a Library of Congress search revealed that there were already 75 authors named William White.

He sold his first genre story to *Weird Tales* when he was 15, authored as by A. P. White. The story was published in the January, 1927 issue of this “unique magazine.”

Asthma and other ills kept him bedridden for much of his early life, but both his parents were physicians; and he eventually re-



gained his health and was able to excel in many areas, including writing. He decided to study languages in college, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from USC in 1932, majoring in German.

He used pen names because he wanted to save his real name for his playwriting. As Boucher, he wrote science fiction (SF), fantasy (F), horror (H), and detective stories, sometimes stories that combined two or more of these genres, as in the novel described in the paragraph below.

Boucher's Rocket to the Morgue

Rocket to the Morgue is a 1942 locked room SF/mystery novel by Boucher, originally published as by H. H. Holmes, an early Boucher pseudonym. This pen name was a private joke, as it was also the name of a 19th-Century American serial killer. Fictional versions of contemporary SF authors Robert Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard, Jack Williamson, Edmond Hamilton, Cleve Cartmill, and Boucher himself were characters in the story.

The novel was reprinted as a Dell paperback in 1952, with cover art of a falling man and a rocket by Robert Stanley. A question on the back cover asked: "Was it murder through the fourth dimension?"

This popular novel was dedicated to Heinlein, Cartmill, and the Mañana Literary Society – to which many Los Angeles SF professionals belonged during the 1940s and 1950s.

Boucher was also a member of the Elves', Gnomes', & Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder, & Marching Society, a San Francisco Bay Area SF club, founded in 1948. Boucher's friends, Poul and Karen Anderson, were also members. The Rhodomagnetic Digest was an early fanzine published by the club.

Work in Other Media

The 1940s proved to be a very busy and productive decade for Boucher. In 1945 he launched into a spectacular three-year radio career, plotting more than 100 episodes for The Adventures of Ellery Queen, while also providing plots for the bulk of the Sherlock Holmes radio dramas. By the summer of 1946, he had created his own mystery series for the airwaves, The Casebook of Gregory Hood, intended as a summer replacement for Sherlock Holmes, but which lasted as an original series until 1950.

Boucher left dramatic radio in 1948, "mainly because I was putting in a lot of hours working with J. Francis McComas in creating what soon became The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction. We got it off the ground in 1949 and saw it take hold solidly by 1950. This was a major creative challenge and although I was involved in a lot of other projects, I stayed with F&SF into 1958." The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction (F&SF) is still being published today.

Jesse Francis McComas (1911 – 1978) was a SF author and editor. He was co-editor, with Raymond J. Healy, of Adventures in Time and Space (1946), one of the early SF



Moon Keeper by Angela K. Scott

anthologies. With Boucher, he was a founding editor of F&SF (originally *The Magazine of Fantasy*) in 1949. He worked as an editor or advisory editor of the popular SF/F/H magazine until 1962. During the 1950s, he reviewed SF books for *The New York Times*. He wrote SF under his own name and under his pen name of Webb Marlowe.

Boucher's Private Life

Boucher married Phyllis Mary Price (1915 – 2000), after meeting her at a party at her home. Her father taught in the German Department at the University of California, Berkeley, where Boucher was working on a master's degree – a degree that he completed in 1934.

Major Genre Collections

Far and Away (1953)
 The Compleat Werewolf (1969)
 The Incomplete Boucher (1998)
 The Compleat Boucher (1999)

Popular Genre Short Fiction

“Snulbug” (1941)
 “The Barrier” (1942)
 “Q.U.R.” (1942) [as by H. H. Holmes]
 “Elsewhen” (1943)
 “Expedition” (1943)
 “Sanctuary” (1943)
 “Star Bride” (1943)
 “Mr. Lupescu” (1945)
 “Transfer Point” (1950)
 “The Star Dummy” (1952)
 “They Bite” (1952)
 “Nine-Finger Jack” (1952)
 “A Shape in Time” (1970) [published posthumously]

Major SF Editing

The Best from Fantasy & Science Fiction (1952 - 1959) [with McComas]
 A Treasury of Great Science Fiction, Volume 1 (1959)
 A Treasury of Great Science Fiction, Volume 2 (1959)

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

Three Hugos for Best Professional Magazine when he was editor or co-editor of F&SF.

Worldcon GoH at the 1950 NorWesCon, and FGoH at the 1965 Westercon 18.

The annual Anthony Boucher Memorial World Mystery Convention, founded in 1970, was named in his honor (Bouchercon).

Special Wonder: *The Anthony Boucher Memorial Anthology of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by McComas, was published in Boucher's memory in 1970.

Boucher was involved in many different projects during his lifetime, including helping to found The Mystery Writers of America (MWA) in 1946. That same year, he was the first winner of the MWA's Edgar Award for his reviews in the San Francisco Chronicle.

Critical Comments/Activities

With respect to his scripting of the Sherlock Holmes radio dramas, Nigel Bruce, who played Dr. Watson in the series, had this to say: "Boucher was a San Franciscan who had a sound knowledge of Conan Doyle and a great affection for the two characters of Holmes and Watson."

Remembering Anthony Boucher, distributed at Bouchercon 25, had mostly positive reminiscences of Boucher by such genre authors and fans as Poul Anderson, Robert Bloch, Bill Crider, and Len & June Moffatt.

He was the first English translator of the work of Jorge Luis Borges.

He once defined SF as "the literature of disciplined imagination" and he often said he worked in science fantasy rather than in science fiction.

He is still famous in fandom for his statement: "All knowledge is contained in fandom."

Some Concluding Comments

In addition to all of his literary activities, White was a devoted poker player, a political activist, a rabid sports fan, an active "Sherlockian" in the Baker Street Irregulars, a musicologist, a gourmet, and a chef.

His wife called him A. P., but most of his friends called him Tony. He attended the first Staplecon in 1943 at the home of Forrest J Ackerman. He was also a friend and mentor of SF author Philip K. Dick.

He hosted Great Voices, a series of historical opera recordings, for Pacifica Radio.

I recently re-read the ten genre stories included in a paperback reprint of his collection, *The Compleat Werewolf*. All of them were published in the 1940s; but they are still worth reading today. His most memorable SF/F/H short fiction appeared in *Astounding* and *Unknown*, when both were being edited by John W. Campbell, Jr. Some critics saw his and McComas' genre magazine, *F&SF* as a sort of melding of *Astounding* and *Unknown*.

He died of lung cancer on April 29, 1968 in Oakland, CA.

Boucher rhymes with "voucher".

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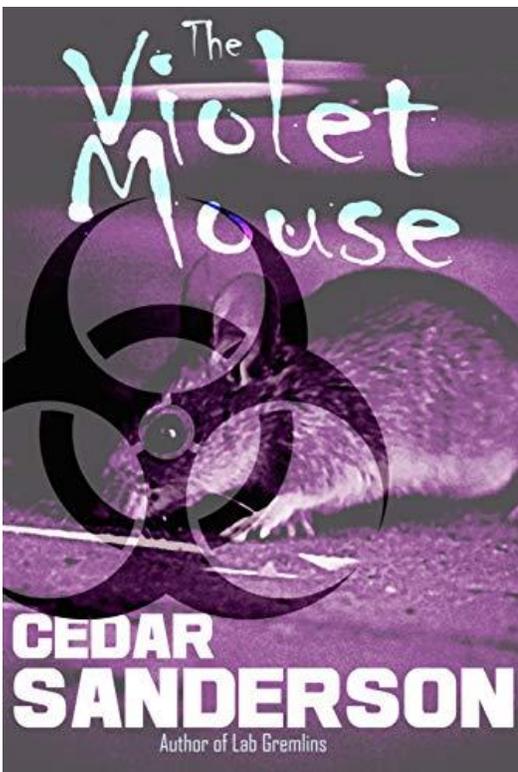
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An Interview with Cedar Sanderson by Tamara Wilhite

I had the opportunity to interview science fiction and fantasy author Cedar Sanderson shortly after her novel "The Violet Mouse" became available.



Tamara Wilhite: What led you to write so many combination magic and mystery novels from the Witchward series to the Pixie Noir series?

Cedar Sanderson: I never intended to write so many fantasy tales. I wanted to write science fiction – after all, I was becoming a scientist when I started my writing career, and am one now. However, the idea of magic being real has always intrigued me. Clarke's Law, that technology can be indistinguishable from magic, that's driven my magic realms in that I want them to have physical bounds and rules. But writing fantasy allows me to explore outside the realm of the possible and that frees me to have fun with the stories.

Tamara Wilhite: How do these fantasy universes differ from each other?

Cedar Sanderson: Witchward is a world where magic is real, but rare. It's also openly occurring, albeit misunderstood, often misused, and generally taboo. I wanted to write a police procedural with a fourth sense, where a detective had something extra, but still has to be able to produce evidence that will stand up in a court hostile to magic.

Pixie Noir is my homage to pulp fiction, to the hard-boiled detective, and I opted to set it in a world where humanity doesn't realize magic exists. One pixie has the job of keeping it that way, by keeping magic users dwelling in the human realm from blowing their cover. Underhill is vulnerable to human force and doesn't want to be overrun... that's where the story starts.

Tamara Wilhite: These aren't your only fantasy series. "Children of Myth" is another example.

However, you also write science fiction. “Tanager's Fledglings” comes to mind. What is it about?

Cedar Sanderson: Funny you should pair these two. Both are actually science fiction. However, Tanager is classic space opera, written in homage to Heinlein’s Citizen of the Galaxy and Andre Norton. I was looking for that small story of a boy coming to manhood, struggling to make a living. The Children of Myth duology (which will eventually have more books) is science fantasy. A parallel universe powered by powerful nanotechnology had opened a portal to our own in the distant past, and refugees from that world into our own became the gods of myth and legend.

Tamara Wilhite: What do you think has broader appeal or sells better – fantasy or science fiction?

Cedar Sanderson: Fantasy sells better, overall. I’m going to keep writing science fiction because it has so much potential to inspire real-world discoveries and it keeps us yearning for the stars.

Tamara Wilhite: And what genre is “The Violet Mouse”?

Cedar Sanderson: The Violet Mouse is hard science fiction, it’s a short story inspired by real people I know, working in real molecular biology laboratories. And it has so much potential, at the end, that the reader is left wondering ‘what comes next?’ and that’s good Hard SF.

Tamara Wilhite: Your childhood spent on the Oregon coast is reflected in the settings in your book. In your bio, you describe jobs from body artist to apprentice shepherdess. Does that diverse experience ever influence your stories.

Cedar Sanderson: I grew up a military brat. I spent a lot of time in Oregon, with my grandmother, who is an amazing human, teaching me about nature. I lived in Alaska for years after Dad got out of the Air Force, which is where the settings of other books come in — like my upcoming novel of Alaska and Siberia, The East Witch. I’ve done a lot of things to earn a living. It’s definitely given me experiences I could put into stories. It’s brought me into contact with a broad spectrum of people, and I draw on them for characters. I find that I like to watch people, figure out what makes them tick, and use that in my writing.

Tamara Wilhite: What else has influenced your writing?

Cedar Sanderson: I grew up with no TV. Easy enough when you spend part of your childhood with no electricity. I was also homeschooled. Between those, I became a voracious reader and an autodidact who loves to research. I know that has influenced my writing. When you run out of stuff to read, you start telling yourself stories!

Tamara Wilhite: Congratulations on the new release. What else are you working on?

Cedar Sanderson: I have a novel set in the same world, but not with the same characters, as Pixie Noir. It is in editing now. That is The East Witch, set in a parallel Siberia where the Rus did not overrun the entire East, and where Baba Yaga is a very real threat. I’m also working on a serial novel, The Case of the Perambulating Hatrack, which is available for free on my website until I’m finished, at which point it will disappear until after editing when it is published.

Tamara Wilhite: Is there anything you’d like to add?

Cedar Sanderson: Thank you for interviewing me! I always figure things out about myself while I am trying to answer interview questions. I really hope some of your readers enjoy some of what I wrote – it’s eclectic, but so am I, as an author, an artist, and a scientist.

Tamara Wilhite: Thank you for speaking with me.

Video

Doctor Whom? An Analysis from Several Years Ago By Chris Nuttall

I was not surprised, a few days ago, when it was announced that the Thirteenth Doctor would be a woman.

I expected it, to be frank, from the moment Missy made her appearance as the latest regeneration of The Master. (The Mistress, get it?) Missy had a somewhat more shaky start than either of her two predecessors – I’m not counting any of the pre-reboot – Masters – but she rapidly grew into the role. Dark Water did not sell me on Missy, but The Magician’s Apprentice did. Missy might well have served, along with a handful of throwaway lines about transgender Time Lords, as an unobtrusive way to test the waters. If fan reaction to Missy had been savagely negative, I suspect the BBC executives would have ditched any plans to turn the Doctor into a woman.

But they didn’t.

Cynics pointed out, of course, that this is hardly the first time a popular show had a female lead. Captain Janeway took command of Voyager back in 1995, while the reboot of Battlestar Galactica also featured a gender-bent Starbuck, now known as Kara Thrace. Both of these observations are of limited value. Captain Janeway might have stood alongside Kirk, Picard and Sisko, but she was not replacing them; Thrace started out so differently to the original Starbuck that the only thing she had in common with him was the name. And, like everyone else on the rebooted Galactica, she went sharply downhill midway through the show’s third season and never really recovered.

Doctor Who is unique in that there is a string of actors playing the main character. This is not a show where Major Kira replaces Captain Sisko, which she could have done with aplomb; this is a show where the newcomer effectively is the main character. The task facing any new Doctor, therefore, is to keep the essence of the character while putting their own spin on it. This is not easy. Indeed, I think it is fairly true to say that all of the newer Doctors – with the possible exception of Nine – have started out rather shakily and then improved as they grew into the role.

That said, there are effectively two sets of complaints being made about the new Doctor.

The first is that a female Doctor Who represents yet another Social Justice Warrior intrusion into a beloved SF franchise. Actual storytelling will be pushed to the back; social justice and gender politics will be pushed forward. A genuinely decent role model for young men will be replaced by yet another perfect woman, etc, etc. And the show will be ruined forever.

The second is that this isn’t good enough. The Doctor shouldn’t be replaced by a white woman, the Doctor should be replaced by a black man or a black woman or a transgender (never mind that

the Doctor and the Master are both effectively transgender, to the point where the Master's casual misogyny sounds more out-of-place than appalling). The BBC isn't being representative, etc, etc. And the show will remain a bastion of straight white males. I think we can simply ignore these complaints.

Is there any validity to the first set of complaints? Well, yes and no.

The version of Doctor Who that opened with Rose made more reference to social justice issues than any previous version of the show. Sometimes, this was subtle; I didn't like Mickey Smith when I first saw him, but I came to like him after his second appearance. (To be fair to the actor, he was very much a second-stringer compared to the Doctor and Rose and the pilot had no time to develop his character.) And in other times it was blatant and annoying – Jack Harkness's open sexuality always struck me as out of place in a show kids would be watching. And it would go on to do immense damage to Torchwood.



I have nothing against gay or lesbian characters. Bill Potts was a good character who really should have stayed around for longer. But Doctor Who is not about sexuality, nor is it focused on Very Special Episodes. We watch Doctor Who to follow the adventures of a mad(wo)man in a box, to believe that one man can challenge evil and cling to his principles even in his darkest hours, not to have his or their sex lives thrust in our faces.

Beyond that, there is a more worrying trend. Female characters like Major Kira, Susan Ivanova and even Kara Thrace are strong on their own merits, but other characters are strong because the male characters next to them are degraded. The movie version of Hermione Granger was turned into a superwoman, while Ron was turned into a cowardly jerk. Some of his best lines and greatest moments were outright given to Hermione. (I haven't watched the live-action version of Beauty and the Beast, but I have been assured that the same problems are present there too.)

Part of this, I suspect, lies in a reluctance to portray female leads as having any flaws. Yet the Doctor is a flawed character. Nine's obvious PTSD made him snappy at times, unwilling to relax; Ten's god-complex pushed him into doing stupid and dangerous things just to prove a point. Will a female Doctor have flaws of her own? Or will she be portrayed as practically perfect in every way?

It will depend, I suspect, on the actress – and on the scripts. And Doctor Who has been quite iffy over the last three years. Twelve has had some good scripts, but also some bad ones. And some of the bad ones were howlers (although they never quite sunk to the level of Love and Monsters.)

If I was doing it, I wouldn't even acknowledge the issue. The Doctor being female shouldn't be portrayed as any more or less important than the colour of her hair. She's the Doctor – so what? The Doctor is not human. The Time Lords should, by all rights, be energy beings by now. (One of the things I dislike about the new show is its portrayal of the Time Lords.) He/she is unlikely to care about our human natures. He may even simply fail to notice them.

There is a problem, these days, in far too many books, television shows and movies. And that is the problem of the message overriding the story. And that is a problem, because people hate being preached to. It might have been possible to have Tom Baker replaced by a woman, back when Baker left the show, without ranting and railing from both sides of the culture wars. Now, when gender-swapping and race-bending characters is nothing more than a gimmick – and critics are

blasted as sexists and racists rather than being listened to – the message is stronger than ever. But it is the story that determines if people will stay.

I'll give the new Doctor a chance. But if I don't get good stories, I'll watch something else.

I want characters I care about, not characters that tick demographic boxes. I want enemies I love to hate, not unsubtle pokes at current affairs and politically-correct villains. I want action and adventure, not gender/sexual/racial politics.

And I want to sit back and relax, not be lectured.

Is that really so wrong?

Rabid Ears: Ravings of a TV Fiend By Cathode Ray

The new issue of TV Guide just slithered through ye olde mail slot, so it's time for another edition of "Rabid Ears: Ravings of a TV Fiend," an occasional column about the best and brightest in sf, fantasy, horror, and other genre television programming. Let's see what's what—now, and next—on the old boob tube, shall we? Oh, for sure, most certainly, let's. Just wiggle your antenna and... that's right. Just like that.

Shame upon shame, nothing good made "America's Most Watched 25 Top Shows" as determined by Nielsen Media Research for June 15-21, 2020. No science fiction. No fantasy. No horror. Nothing. Aren't you people watching television? Your assignment, should you choose to accept it, is to watch TV. That's it. That's your only job, and there is no Plan B. Skip the Redbox and stay in for once. There's plenty to see, as this column will most surely show. (There is one bright spot on that page, though: Nickelodeon's working on a new Smurfs cartoon; look for a premier in 2021. And if you see Peyo, say hi for me.)

In "The Roush Review," critic Matt Roush devotes a full page to *The Twilight Zone* and *The Vast of Night*. The new *Twilight Zone* season premiered on CBS All Access in late June and includes episodes featuring body switching, telepathy, and a "futuristic housewife." As long as the future of housewives is nothing like *The Stepford Wives*, sign me up. And if you haven't seen *The Vast of Night* yet, shame on you. It is so, so good. So good. Set in a deliciously moody 1950s New Mexico, there's a totally crush-worthy couple, popular mechanics and science, radio broadcasting, static and raster lines, and UFOs. The ending will truly get you. If you get it. In my household and circle of friends, there's some debate over just what exactly happened at the end. Watch it, and write your humble scribe care of this fanzine to share your take on the ending. Just what exactly happened? You tell us, true believer.

NBCUniversal launches its own streaming service, Peacock, in mid-July. There's a free tier. There's a paid tier. And there's some shows of note: An original *Brave New World* series based on the Aldous Huxley novel; a Dreamworks cartoon titled *Cleopatra in Space* (I have no idea what it's about, but that title is to blast off for!), and a reboot of *Battlestar Galactica*. Or a reboot of the reboot. Or a prequel to the sequel. Only time will tell. Sigh, Lon, sigh!

Pencil these in your calendar, fans and fellow freaks: Wednesday, July 8, *The 100*, sf drama on the CW... Saturday, July 11, *Early Edition* on Decades: A guy gets tomorrow's newspaper today;

how'd I miss this show's run 1996-2000?... The UnXplained on History: William Shatner hosts this program about Harry Houdini's mysterious escapes; if you loved the Shat's DVD Club and Full Moon Fright Night, you might like this. Wonder if he's going for his own version of In Search Of...?... Warrior Nun is a new series streaming on Netflix: "an ancient order of religious women ... are in the habit of fighting evil forces on Earth." Get it? "Habit"? Oh, never mind...

Thursday, July 16, Killer Camp premieres on The CW: It's like a reality competition show, only set in an '80s horror movie whodunit. Tell me what you think; I'll be hiding behind these fingers... Saturday, July 18, Believers on Travel: Dramatizations of paranormal encounters... Unidentified: Inside America's UFO Investigation on History: Nuff said, true believers.

But the best part is always the programming grids. Let's see what's hiding between the lines: Afternoons brings us One Step Beyond, Bradbury Theater, and Doctor Who on Retro; and The Munsters on Cozi. We could just stop there! But when night falls, there's more. Mondays air Star Trek: Deep Space Nine on BBC America; Quantum Leap, Battlestar Galactica, and Stargate SG-1 on Comet; Star Trek, Star Trek: The Next Generation, and Star Trek: Deep Space Nine on Heroes; and Beyond the Unknown and Buried Worlds on Travel. Tuesdays have Star Trek: Deep Space Nine on BBC America, DC's Stargirl on The CW, Comet's sf lineup, Heroes's Star Trek sequence, and Ghost Adventures on Travel.

Wednesdays offer Star Trek: The Next Generation on BBC America, Marvel's Agents of SHIELD on ABC, The 100 on The CW, Comet's evening fare, Heroes's Star Trek sequence, and more paranormal programming on Travel: Paranormal Caught on Camera and Expedition Bigfoot. Thursdays sport Star Trek: The Next Generation on BBC America, the old chestnuts—the good chestnuts!—on Comet and Heroes, and Ghost Adventures and The Dead Files on Travel. (That network should just change its name already. Geezo, Beezo.) Fridays bring the tried and true from Comet and Heroes—best networks ever!—Unidentified and Ancient Aliens on History, The Dead Files on Travel, and on July 10, a James Bond marathon on ThisTV.

Weekends are also worth watching. Saturdays include The Six Million Dollar Man and Bionic Woman on Cozi; The UnXplained on History; Drain on NatGeo ("Egypt's sunken city" and "The Atomic Ghost Fleet" are two episodes.); and My Haunted House, Paranormal Emergency, Believers, and Hotel Paranormal on Travel.

And Sundays end the week with DC's Stargirl on The CW, Stargate SG-1 or Battlestar Galactica all night long—all night!—on Comet, War of the Worlds and the Star Trek sequence on Heroes, Secrets of the Lost and Unearthed: Seven Wonders on Science, Snowpiercer's season finale July 12 on TNT, and a Batman double feature that night as well—with a Tremors marathon July 19 on Sundance.

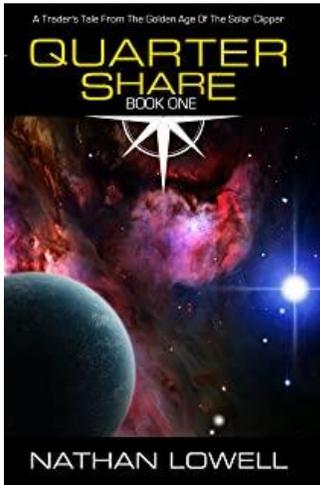
And don't you dare miss Dark Shadows weeknights at 9 p.m. on Decades. Monday through Friday, Barnabas Collins, people.

We fans even sneak into the crossword. 26 Across is Doctor ____, 33 Down is Boris' cartoon partner, and 45 Down is Fantastic Four hero the Human _____. Send in your guesses care of this fanzine. We are legion. We will take over the worlds.

Until next time, true believers, this is "Cathode Ray," slinking off somewhere between the test pattern and the American flag TV sign-off at the end of the day. Don't drop the remote on your best foot forward. And dust Charlotte's web off your rabbit ears. Turn on, tune in, and blast off!

Food of Famous Writers

The Creamy Fish Chowder of Nathan Lowell Cooking by Cedar Sanderson



I'd discovered Nathan Lowell's space opera series last year after seeing several people recommend it, and promptly binge-read it after a tentative first dip into Quarter Share, the first book. He writes a well-paced story with great characterization that will draw you along, I thoroughly enjoyed reading the whole series.

He was quite amenable to being asked to participate in the ETWYRT, suggesting his Tanyth Fairport books and a creamy fish chowder. Readers of my blog will recall that Tanyth was on the Tough Old Ladies book list a while back. A character right up my own alley, she is travelling to discover and record herbs and medicinal plants, with adventures along the way. You'll want to start with Ravenwood.

Now that you have your reading material, let's get cooking!

Creamy Fish Chowder

Ingredients

- 1 lb firm-fleshed white fish (I used cod filets)
- 2-3 slices bacon, baked or fried crisp and chopped.
- 1 large onion, chopped fine
- 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3-4 potatoes (I like the yukon golds for this)
- 2 c fish stock (or water and chicken bouillon)
- 1 c heavy cream
- Handful of fresh tarragon, julienned
- 2 cups chopped kale



Instructions

In a heavy saucepan, put bacon grease (or scoop out the bacon after frying, leave the grease and put the bacon aside for later) and turn to medium heat. Add the diced onion and garlic and cook until translucent.

Add potatoes to onion mixture. Pour in the stock, cover, and let simmer for 20 minutes until the potatoes are tender.

Put the fish, cut into spoon-sized pieces, into the pot. Add the cream, kale, and tarragon. Stir gently. Cover, and allow to simmer for another 10 minutes. You don't want to cook this too long, or the delicate fish will fall apart.



When the fish is opaque and flakes at pressure from the wooden spoon, remove from heat.



Taste, add salt and pepper to suit yourself. Serve in bread bowls with a handful of the crumbled bacon sprinkled on top.

I like to cut the onion small enough that it will cook into the soup base and not be noticeable.

Tarragon, for Tanyth, the herbwoman. Tarragon is a milder flavor that pairs well with fish and chicken.

The fish is too delicate to let cook the whole time. At this point, the base could be used for simple potato soup, add clams for clam chowder, throw a bunch of seafood in for seafood chowder! The possibilities are multifarious.

All this is prepped and ready to slide into the soup. I will say that if you are trying to stretch the meal, doubling the potatoes, stock, kale, and leaving the fish and cream amounts as-is will work just fine.



Creamy Fish Chowder served in a fresh bread bowl, with blood orange soda. So filling and delicious.

PolSciFi

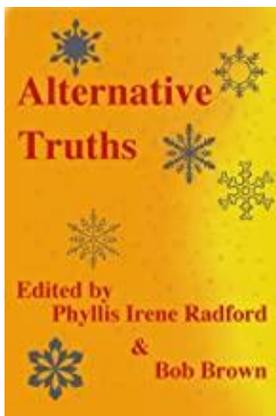
Alternate Truths

Edited by Phyllis Irene Radford and Bob Brown

Review by Chris Nuttall

Alternate Truths is a tricky anthology to review

Contrary to Mr. Burns' opinion, public figures in the United States (and Britain and the West) have always been fair game for satire. This is a good thing because it helps remind us that they too are mortal. However, at the same time, it is easy to forget that they too are human – and go too far, branding them as everything from saints to monsters without any real appreciation of the political, economic and social realities. Worse, it is very easy to use words as cudgels without realising that it is quite easy to lose credibility.



Indeed, one explanation for the rise of Donald Trump is the simple observation that every GOP candidate over the last twenty years was branded a racist, fascist, sexist, homophobe, etc. Unsurprisingly, society reached a point where large swathes of the American population automatically discounted such accusations – and rightly so, as such accusations rarely had much (if any) grounding in truth. ‘The Boy Who Cried Wolf’ is not just a fairy tale, but a devastatingly accurate comment on human nature. If Trump is the wolf, everyone who screamed ‘wolf’ over the last twenty years bears something of the blame for his election – and for the personalisation of politics.

Alternate Truths bills itself as ‘a look at the post-election America that is, or will be, or could be.’ This is a valid project, although I suspect that attitudes to the anthology

will depend hugely on one's attitude to Trump. And yet, in many ways, it does not come close to a successful study of potential futures. I would say, rather, that it is an illustration of the problem of the 'resistance' – there is no valid examination of why Trump won, how everyone from Hillary Clinton to Jeb Bush affected the election results, nor is there any coherent plan for a post-Trump world. Trump sold his voters a vision – his opponents did not.

Trump looms large throughout the stories in this book – Trump the fool, Trump the monster, Trump ... Trump the caricature. Indeed, the opening stories in the book are the weakest – an odd editorial decision – that make fun of Trump, rather than assessing his strengths and weaknesses. They are absurd and in some cases funny, but they contribute nothing to an assessment of post-election America and the world. And a number of them really go too far.

A secondary set of stories plays with the concept of otherworldly invention: cloning, time travel, alien involvement, even reality manipulation. Bruno Lombardi's story is particularly amusing, but all of them shy away from a fundamental fact: saint, sinner or mortal man, Trump was elected for human reasons, not because of outside intervention. You can't blame Trump on anything other than the American voter, who had to make a choice between two candidates.

A third set of stories try to suggest what life might be like in Trump's America. None of them are particularly cheerful; most of them are exaggerated, almost to the point of scaremongering. Others blame Trump for problems – healthcare issues, no-knock raids, government overreach – that existed prior to Trump becoming a serious candidate for the nomination. Trump may or may not make them worse, but it is disingenuous to blame a sitting President for problems caused by his predecessors.

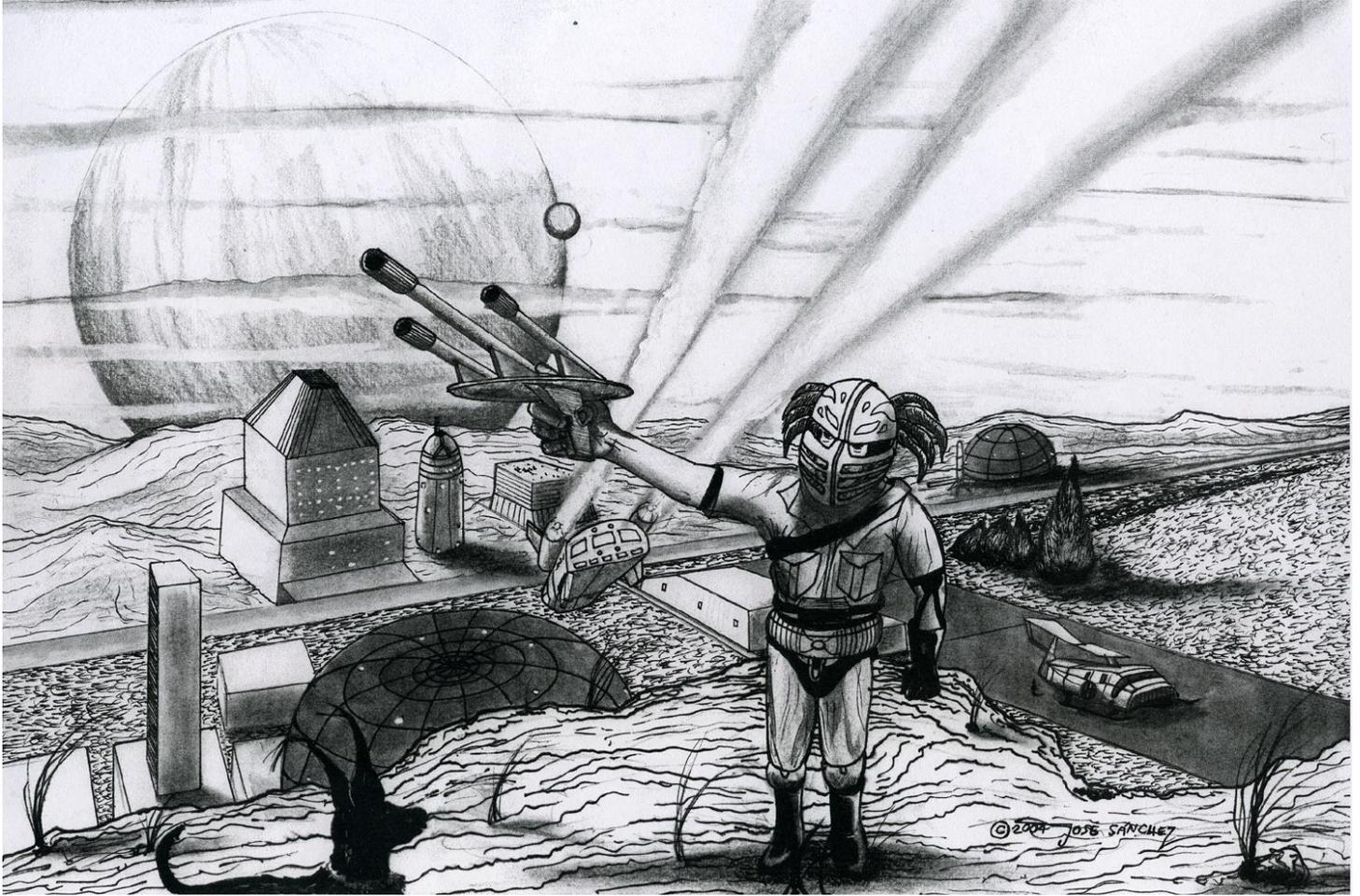
None of these stories (with a couple of minor exceptions, which I'll get to in a moment) address the crucial question – why did people vote for Trump? Indeed, most of the writers seem to have the same reluctance to understand that people might have (or at least thought they had) good reasons to vote for him. "I don't understand how Trump got elected – I don't know anyone who voted for him." Instead, they brand his supporters racists, sexists and deplorables ... which does not convince them to vote for anyone else. The condescending arrogance shown by establishment figures like Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton provides yet another reason for Trump's election.

It's All Your Fault is a chat log depicting the aftermath of a church shooting, showing both how events can rapidly become politicized and, more importantly, how common sense is whacked on the head and buried in the backyard. It's an excellent outline of how fingers are pointed, blame is ducked, insults are hurled and the truth is rapidly lost, as everyone but the shooter himself is blamed for the tragedy. But the story is rapidly spoiled by the inclusion of alien manipulators.

Your attitude to Alternate Truths will probably depend, a great deal, on your attitude to Trump. Some of the stories are worth reading, others take satire too far to tell us anything useful about potential futures. And you really need to read the whole book to pick out the good stories from the weaker ones. (Luckily, it's on Kindle Unlimited.)

I'd like to close with a quote from Walks Home Alone At Night. It is, perhaps, the closest Alternate Truth gets to understanding the reasons behind Trump's election.

"What most people don't realize—or don't care to admit—is that safety is a privilege of the financially secure. It's easy to warn others against wandering the streets after dark when one knows they'll be tucked away safe behind locked doors in their gated communities long before evening falls. Everyone else? Well, everyone else takes their chances."



FutureScape
by Jose Sanchez