

Tightbeam 314

November 2020



Encounter
by Angela K. Scott

Tightbeam 314

November 2020

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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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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.

Editorial

This issue — something very different. A half century ago, Harlan Ellison edited *Dangerous Visions*, a brilliant collection of short stories presenting visions that were intended to be ill-received by many readers. In this issue, Tamara Wilhite gives us an extended interview — the longest we have ever published — with sf/fnal writer Andrew Fox and his new short story collections *Hazardous Imaginings*. This being 2020, many of the hazardous imaginings are political, so the interview is at the back of the issue, categorized as *Political Science Fiction*. Like Ellison's work, many of the imaginings will be ill-received by someone. After all, if they were not ill-received by someone, they would not be hazardous.

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Letter of Comment

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Dear Neffers:

Thank you all for two more issues of Tightbeam...I fell behind again, but am now making the serious effort to get some correspondence out to all the zines I get. Now for commentary on issues 311 and 312.

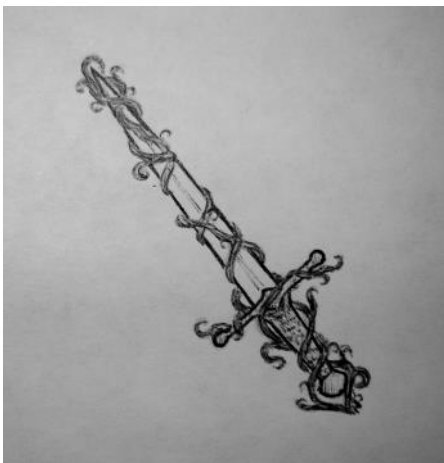
311... Greetings to Rich Dengrove. Fandom has a subjective definition for each person involved, so all of our efforts to fix/change/support it makes it what it is today. The unification of fandom is a good idea, but too many of us seem to need to look down on others in order to raise ourselves up. Many of us remember the literary vs. media SF battles of the past, not to mention the paper zine vs. e-zine fights of more recent times.

Good to see a fanzine review column. I have tried that in the past, but I was relatively unsuccessful. I wanted to be a critic, but I found it difficult to be critical when there were so few zines out there, and also the amount of work that goes into each one. I was just pleased to see each one.

Cliff Simak has been one of my favourite SF writers. My training was also in journalism, but I was never able to work in it. Simak's novels were like his stories and columns; short and lean, with the entire story told in a minimum of words, the mark of a good writer and a good journalist.

312... This time, my thanks to Rich Dengrove on a rare bit of egoboo. I do write anywhere between 200 to 300 letters a year. Writing about non-human intelligences on other planets is one thing, when more and more wonder about human intelligences on this planet. No, I won't get political, although I certainly could...

I quickly Googled over to The Geek Galaxy, and while much of it is a good idea, it just looks like a large group of unused chat rooms. I hope that will change. One of the reasons I write the letters I do is to appeal to as wide an audience as a fanzine will allow. There is too much opportunity to scream, insult and hurl abuse in small rooms. Yet, the rooms can allow for the most intricate interests, and build a tiny community.



Sword Vines by Angela K. Scott

More good information about Anthony Boucher. I have been to at least two Bouchercons, both in Toronto. We were on the committee of the first one in 1992. Working the others proved to be impossible timewise.

I can never do the kind of job I want to do when it comes to letters, but here is what I have. It is mid-afternoon, and I can barely keep my eyes open...I think this is a symptom of being inside too much.

Every so often, I go out for long walks, and maybe it's time for another one. Anyway, I am done. Thanks for these two issues, and I will look for more soon.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney.

Anime

King's Raid: Successors of the Will Review by Jessi Silver

The demons return after a century long slumber...

Streaming: Funimation

Episodes: 26

Source: Game

Impressions: Screen captures are taken using the official legal stream of the series.

Summary: A century ago, the Kingdom of Orvelia quelled a demon invasion. Since then, the country has been peaceful, and that's the only world that apprentice Knight Kasel knows. His biggest concerns are whether he'll complete his apprenticeship with his mentor, the Knight Clause, and whether his dinner (usually something like cooked spider that would make most folks turn up their noses) will upset his stomach. His friend, a local priestess named Frey, is one of the few people with whom he shares these feelings.



But the nobles of Orvelia are beginning to hear rumblings of a new demon invasion at the borders of their country. There's some disagreement about how to deal with this, but one rogue noble offers a suggestion – hire the mercenary group Black Edge, comprised of Dark Elves willing to fight for a price. Unfortunately, racism against Dark Elves runs deep in Orvelia, and the other nobles aren't convinced about letting them fight on behalf of the nation. The Dark Elves also have their own goals; as a reaction to the suffering inflicted upon their people by the humans of Orvelia, they're out to seek revenge. With demons now responsible for taking out an entire Orvelian scout party, what choice will the country ultimately make?



Kasel engages in combat training.

I knew I was taking a little bit of a risk when I watched this episode. I wanted to check it out in the short amount of time I had between getting out of bed and leaving for a pretty lengthy excursion to go pick up some mead from a local winery. I was worried that I might not have much to say about it to begin with, and with a few hours between my viewing and sitting down to write this review (not to mention, several delicious mead samples and a nap after I got back home) I thought I might end up forgetting all about it. To be blunt, that impression has much more to do with the content of

the episode than it does with my schedule or Sunday afternoon habits; that may be all that some readers need to hear in order to know just exactly what my opinion is.

This appears to be a pretty toothless fantasy story where the heroes are unquestionably good and compelled to battle against the oncoming horde of evil creatures who are beginning to appear. Our protagonist, a level 1 fighter character if I ever saw one, appears ill-equipped to take on the challenge, but his dutiful nature ensures that he'll be compelled to avenge his fallen brothers in one way or another. He's already got a second member of his party in Frey, a priestess who I assume based on her presence throughout the episode also has some sort of latent ability. The monsters are your average demonic horde, in this case comprised mostly of goofy-looking skeletons wearing armor. It's typical sort of D&D stuff and for the most part doesn't leave a strong impression.



Spooky, Scary Skeletons!

There definitely is one aspect of the story's world building that stuck out to me, though, and that's its incorporation of some classic fantasy-style racism. The citizens of Orvelia pretty clearly don't like Dark Elves; that's one of the first really strong stances anyone takes throughout the episode. When a Dark Elf character walks through the town, the townspeople beg Kasel and Clause to remove him. It comes out in bits and pieces throughout the episode that there was some kind of conflict in the past which lead to this distrust between the races; whatever the exact nature of that conflict was isn't outlined in detail. Needless to say, they're a maligned faction and we're clearly meant to pick up on that within the first minutes of the episode.



Okay, pal.

I think typically this would be an opportunity for the story to explain this persecution in more detail, or perhaps introduce a sympathetic Dark Elf character to help add some nuance to the narrative. Nope! We soon learn that the Dark Elves we meet are part of a faction trying to infiltrate the government and take over the country as a form of revenge. The revenge is for prior genocide committed against them, so at least it's not for undefined reasons. Unfortunately, that leaves us as viewers disliking the Orvelian government for being corrupt, disliking the Dark Elves for their ham-fisted "eye-for-an-

eye" perspective (seriously, it would have been child's play to get us to sympathize with them, but instead they're framed as shift and murderous), and having to fall in line behind Kasel, whose major personality trait is that he'll eat anything. This doesn't make me feel very optimistic.

There's a little bit of action sprinkled throughout the episode which gets surprisingly graphic a couple of times (some dismemberment and an arrow through a man's head for some flavor), so if that's your bag you might get some momentary pleasure out of watching it. I've personally gotten a little particular about action animation and editing over the years, because I can think of so many great examples of anime for which this is a major feature. So when the majority of the battle looks sort of hokey and doesn't really add much to the flow of the episode, it feels extraneous.

One thing I'm always curious about with these game-based properties is whether they require some familiarity with the game to be enjoyable, or whether my like or dislike of them is purely based on the adaptation's own merits. One thing I will say is that the episode thankfully doesn't feel like it's based directly on a game; it's not obsessed with the explanations of its own mechanics and its setting and story seem merely generic rather than slavishly adherent to some other material. Even the Dark Elf... stuff is kind of a tried-and-true fantasy trope – one that I wish would fade away into the night, but which is definitely nothing new to the genre. So I suppose one nice thing about this episode is that it doesn't appear to rely too much on its parent property.



Frey is Kasel's friend.

There's nothing else very distinct about this series, and I kind of doubt it will end up being one of the season's more memorable titles. It seems to be a roughly-competent fantasy story of the type we're familiar with in the West – nothing more, nothing less.

Pros: It does not feel beholden to the game on which it's based.

Cons: A very rote execution of a cliché story. Some fantasy racism. The various factions just aren't sympathetic.

Content Warnings: Violence/gore (blood and dismemberment). Racism. Mild fanservice (low-angle camera shots, silly outfits).

Grade: C-

Cosplay

Planet With with Jessi Silver



Well, friend, it's Halloween season, and while I typically don't put a ton of effort into my costumes, I thought this year deserved something a little better than minimal effort. Typically, I like to base the costume on some meme or something that the anime club has watched recently. This past Summer I was lucky enough to convince people to watch one of my recent favorites, Planet With.

With how cold it's been recently here in Minnesota (like, I know we're known for being cold and snowy, but October has really been unseasonably cold) my mind started to turn toward something that could both keep me warm and convey the basics of a character. Kigurumi/onesie character pajamas have been a fun costume option in the anime fandom for a while, and for good reason – they're comfortable and cute. They're also pretty dang expensive if you buy them from a reputable source (the one's I've seen have been somewhere in the \$75 range and I know they can run more expensive than that). It's not that they're not worth that price, but it did influence my decision not to buy ready-made

ones and alter them. Having decided on the format, the character choices were obvious – Planet With literally has a race of people called the “Kigurumians,” after all.

I drafted the pattern for the costumes myself, using a tutorial I found on YouTube. Basically I used a hooded sweatshirt I already had, plus a couple of length measurements I took from my husband, to draw out the pattern pieces on some cheap wrapping paper I had left over from a previous Christmas. The main parts of the costume are constructed from solid-colored fleece (\$3.99/ yd on sale at JoAnn's!) and the hoods are lined with solid colored flannel. I briefly considered lining the entire body of the costumes in flannel as well, but now I'm pretty glad I didn't; it would definitely have been too hot. I bought about 5 yards each color of the fleece; I probably could have gotten away with less if I were more efficient at laying out my pattern pieces, but now I have some decently-sized pieces I can use for something else. I bought a couple yards of flannel and have about half of it left. Some things I might do later on are add detachable tails and add some pockets, so the extra fabric will come in handy for that.



It had been a while since I'd used my sewing machine, so there was some extra time re-learning how to do that. Also, fleece is very lint-y fabric, so there was some time cleaning that out of the machine and oiling the machine to counteract that situation. In between the Sensei costume and my costume, I made a few changes to the process; I decided to skip putting elastic in the wrists of the second costume, because I didn't feel it was really necessary (it turns out I was right, though I kept the elastic around the legs which is still helpful for keeping it in place properly). I had also misinterpreted a couple parts of the construction process the first time around, so I was able to fix that and save myself some time. Overall I'm really proud of how the costumes turned out in the end. It goes to show you that watching endless hours of costuming YouTube videos over the past couple of months can really be helpful if you're that type of learner!

Fanzines

Fanfaronade: Celebrating Current Fanzines

Justin E.A. Busch

One of the pleasures of diving into fanzines, old and new alike, is the sheer variety of the offerings. Sizes range from 1" x 1.5" to veritable newspapers; pages come in every color imaginable, and some perhaps not; fonts run the gamut, and illos likewise; and, of course, the written contents vary vastly and intriguingly. One has the sense, especially over time and multiple issues, of an ongoing community of conversations. Topics that were hot half a century ago return in unexpected ways, and topics that were all the rage last year disappear altogether.

Some of this variety can be found in this month's crop of fanzines.

Journal of Mind Pollution (JOMP) 44 (September, 2020). Editor, Richard A. Dengrove, 2651 Arlington drive, #302, Alexandria, Virginia, 22306. No specifics offered, but probably available on request or possibly for submissions of art. Dengrove probably isn't looking to trade: "I don't know what to do with the truckload of zines I get."

There are two JOMPs: the issue at hand ("my autobiography") and JOMP, Jr. ("my strange articles"). Most SF fans would probably find the latter more immediately interesting, but ignoring the former would be to miss some amusing tales from the life of a Federal bureaucrat. Some are short and self-contained; others, longer, could sometimes use a bit more background detail. Various fillers, some relevant and some humorously irrelevant, break up the text (which betrays its on-line origins through occasional headlines split between columns). The lettercol, oddly enough, is mainly concerned with JOMP, Jr. #37, so some of the discussions will seem a bit unclear. Cartoons by Teddy Harvia (one old, one new) and Brad W. Foster (a new one from the surreal-- i.e. outright weird-- side of his catalog) wrap up the contents.

Pablo Lennis #395, October, 2020. Editor, John Thiel, 30 N. 19th St., Lafayette, Indiana, 47904. Available for the usual or 2.00/copy.

The cover art, "based on a conception by John Polselli, purports to be by "Ramos Fumes," but is probably by the editor, as suggested, for example, by the fact that an earlier cover by the same artist appeared under a different name, as well as a comparison with a smaller piece in the same style, initialed "J.T.", in *Lan's Lantern* #22 (February, 1987). In any case, it's striking, edgy, and disturbing; I look forward to seeing more work by the artist, under whatever name. Perhaps he will contribute to N3F publications.

Inside the cover is the usual collation of essays, fiction, and poetry; *Pablo Lennis* is reliable both as to schedule and contents. Thiel's "Fandom" column is noticeably expanding and growing more focused. Two issues of F&SF get a thorough going-over, followed by some catching up with N3F e-zines edited by Thiel. This is followed by several shorter reviews of (mostly print, so far as I could tell) fanzines; Thiel encapsulates the flavor of each effectively. I sent off trades for a couple.

Portable Storage Four. (Autumn 2020). Editor, William Breiding, 3507 N. Santa Rita Ave., #1, Tucson Arizona, 85719. Copies for "letters of comment, trade, contributions of writing and visuals, or endowments of cash."

Within the exuberant Brad W. Foster wraparound full color cover (done in his most flamboyant style) we find an issue harking back to the occasional jumbo fanzines of the 1950s through 1980s: 140 pages of articles, poems, illos, and letters. There is no overarching theme; topics range widely (many only

marginally or passingly connected with fantasy or science fiction), and are linked mainly by approach: personal accounts which more or less transform into analyses of the subject at hand.

The intersection between the personal and the general shows clearly in Andy Hooper's "Paper Lives: Fanzines and Their Fans in Review." Hooper knows whereof he writes; he's been active in fandom for decades. His article is filled with striking insights into fandom as a historical phenomenon and fanzines as personal elements within that phenomenon. I learned much; you will, too.

Similarly compelling, although for quite different reasons, is Cheryl Cline's "The Road to Cimmeria," about her own encounter with the much-maligned but still widely read Robert E. Howard and three subsequent sword-and-sorcery writers: Leiber, Russ, and Delany (there's a small error of attribution here, although I'm not certain whether it's Cline's or Delany's: C.L. Moore wrote the Jirel stories, not Leigh Brackett).

Cline has a superb sense of pacing and delivery, as in her opening account of first reading Howard:

"...home sick and casting around for something easy to read, I picked [the collection of Howard's tales] up. And put it down hours later. These stories were great! Maybe the Theraflu heightened the dream-dust sparkle, or fever affected my rational mind. Or maybe it was because that impressionable age when a thud-and-blunder hero swaggering around a pseudo-medieval Eurasiafrica battling muahaha villains in thrall to an ancient and evil race of aliens sounds like The Shit."

I was fifty-six.

Good stuff, this.

The lettercol alone is longer than many fanzines (Breiding seems to be among the few editors who has overcome the reluctance of fans who read e-editions to send e-mails of comment; in fact, it's not even clear that he accepts paper letters). The letters are mainly concerned with the preceding issue (dedicated to stories and memories of San Francisco), and thus perhaps a bit vague to first-time readers. But the bulk of the letters are enjoyable on their own-- and Gary Hubbard has one of the most poignant evocations of passing time I've ever read: "After that initial visit, we talked about going back, but never did, and now we're too old to go anywhere."

This is a fanzine well worth seeking out in its physical form. Rare will be the fan who finds everything of equal interest; even rarer will be the fan who cannot find anything of interest.

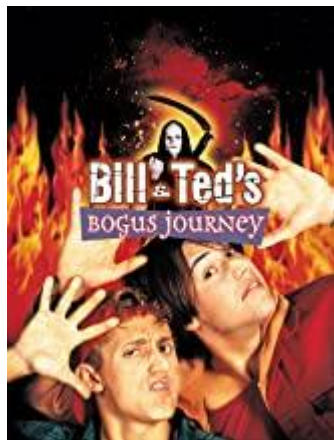
Purrsonal Mewsings #75, September, 2020. Editor, R. Laurraine Tutihasi, PO Box 5323, Oracle, Arizona, 85623-5323. Available "for the usual (a response of any kind, including letters, e-mail, and phone calls of comment; trade; contributions of illos, fiction, or articles; or even money: \$5.00 per issue)."

Another reliable zine comes through as expected. It opens with a wide-ranging cargo of photographs (the fiery view from the editor's front porch; various birds seen around the house, along with two rabbits kissing (awww); two lovely nebular shots by Mike Weasner). These are followed by a convention report (ReCONvene, hosted virtually by NESFA), StippleAPA mailing comments, and the lettercol. The whole is well-guided by editor Tutihasi, who maintains an even and welcoming feel throughout.

This is the second column with just a few fanzines to review, which seems a bit thin to me-- like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. If you publish a fanzine and would like it reviewed here, send a copy to Justin E.A. Busch, 308 Prince St., #422, St. Paul, Minn, 55101.

Films

Interscope Communications's Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey Review by Jim McCoy



Sometimes you need the best of Science Fiction and Fantasy. There are days when only a desperate struggle against an implacable foe will do. When that one character standing in the breach is the only thing that prevents the total annihilation of all we hold dear. You know the drill: The cavalry isn't coming. The world ending supernuke is armed and waiting. From out of nowhere comes our plucky hero with their knowledge and know-how for a bit of daring-do that saves us all... And sometimes you don't. Sometimes, a bit of slapstick goes well with your craving for the strange and unusual. Sometimes, what you really have to have is a couple of goofballs playing air guitar. And believe me, there are times when "evil robot us-es" are the only thing keeping you from losing your mind. On those days only Interscope Communications's Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey will do.

I'll be the first to admit that this isn't Heinlein. That's not the point. If you're looking for deeply meaningful, masterfully written, high falutin' SF/F I really would suggest something else. The adventures of Ted Theodore Logan and Bill S Preston, Esquire are not for those impressed only by careful wordsmithing. Their words, while well meaning, are a bit annoying. If ever there were a male equivalent to the "Valley Girl" it's Bill and Ted. When the most meaningful line of a movie is "Be excellent to each other" you're not going to be impressed with the carefully crafted dialogue. This is a movie for someone who wants to have fun, not for some stuffy lit-er-uh-chooer aficionado.

With Bill and Ted traveling from Earth to Hell to Heaven and back, I can't quite help but wonder if Dante Alighieri isn't rolling over in his grave. This can't be quite what he had in mind when he wrote it. There are no theological points to be made here, no attacks against enemies. Bill and Ted's version of Hell is actually quite comical. And our heroes shouldn't feel bad. I can't do pushups either. Heaven is a bit different than Dante wrote it too. That's fitting. But please Lord, if I ever do get there, don't let THAT happen to me just as I'm about to walk in...

It's weird though, because this is a strangely inspirational type film. Bill and Ted are two guys who just don't know when to quit. They literally escape from Hell and come back from the dead on their journey to save their girlfriends. They don't let a little thing like not knowing how to play their instruments stop them from winning the Battle of the Bands. In the process they actually save the world. It doesn't get any tackier.

Yes, my friends, this is a schlock-fest. This is the type of thing you'd want to force feed to that high school Lit teacher who made you read *The Scarlet Letter*. B&TBJ is the be-all end-all of goofiness. There are no redeeming features for the arrogant snob who demands only the deepest in meaning. There are no extensive metaphysics here. This is a movie that sees no need to drag us all through a bunch of depressing BS just so that we can come out "better" at the end. The only good thing about this work is its entertainment value but let's face it: If I want to "improve" myself there are any number of religious or self-help texts I could read. Since I watch and/or read my SF/F as a form of escapist fun though, I can make a guilty admission: I really, really enjoyed this movie.

Honestly though, I'm at a loss at to describe what I liked about the movie without giving too much away. I mean, a wimpy Grim Reaper is funny, but I don't want to give his best line away. The way Bill and Ted eventually get into Heaven is EPIC but I don't want to say too much. Their reaction upon reaching Hell is way too metal for me. I mean, dude it's just..uhh... yeah. I don't want to go there. There may very well

be a human being on the planet who hasn't seen this yet. I don't want to ruin it. It's only been twenty-five years since it came out (True story, bro. It was released in theaters in 1991.) so I have to be careful here...

A word about the special effects is in order: They were goofy but good. The robots (both good and evil) were really well done. Of course, the phone booth has to appear. The guns in the movie worked a little too hard to look futuristic but it's Bill and Ted. They had to look more funny than menacing. Ok, so some of the costumes were a bit too garish for words, but again that's the movie and the way things are supposed to look. I love the fact that this flick doesn't take itself too seriously. Really. Case in point: Two awesome robots were built out of vacuum cleaners and other assorted oddities. Death thought about trading in his scythe for a garden hoe. The whole movie constantly got goofier.

Maybe the best part about this movie was all of the other stories it reminded me of. I've already mentioned The Divine Comedy. There was also a scene that reminded me, oddly enough, of just about every Battletech or Mechwarrior I've ever played, watched or read. One particular scene played like a cross between Weird Science and The Six Million Dollar Man. The Bill and Ted movies came out around the same time as the Wayne's World movies and there a billion similarities at least. I loved it. The only problem(?) is that I'm going to have to go back watch a bunch of other stuff now.

Was Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey a perfect movie? Yes it was. NOT!!! Nothing is perfect but there are times when things do get a wee bit annoying. The continuous air-guitar thing was a bit over the top. Robots playing basketball with their own heads -while funny- stretched the believability limits past their breaking point. There was a scene with Station that was quite frankly grosser than it needed to be. Overall though, this movie was a rocking good time. Now party on and be excellent to each other!

Bottom Line: 4.5 out of 5 Excellent Guitar Riffs

Novels and Long Works

Atul Gawande's Being Mortal: Medicine And What Matters In The End Review by Will Mayo

[Editor: Immortality is a traditional sfnal theme; here is how it contacts the mundane world.]

This is a book about the end of life, about the limits imposed by our biology and by time and it is a book about life itself. Here, Dr. Gawande ponders cases he's had during his career as a physician and the lives they've touched including his own and he also includes questions of mortality important to him and his family including his terminally ill father. While he admits that there is a place for assisted suicide he notes that those places that have it as a legal option, including here in the United States, are sadly lacking in hospice care and other palliative remedies. When he spreads his father's ashes on the Ganges River in India, achieving eternal reunion for his father with all the souls that have come before, his take on a thorny problem confronting our world comes to an end and the reader is left pondering life itself, when to hold onto it and when to let go. Recommended for all readers, young and old, considering the mundane and the eternal in a mortal life.

Fantastic Schools, Volume 1, edited by Christopher Nuttall and L Jagi Lamplighter Review by Pat Patterson

A great good afternoon to all my friends and neighbors out there in Internet Land! And to family members who dropped by, NO! This isn't horror, I don't READ horror!

I THINK I remember when the request for stories went out for this volume. I was rather intrigued, since I had been Dean of Admissions at a tiny, private, non-magical school for a bit over three years, and I wondered if there was any way I could make a story out of my experiences that would fit in with the theme. I couldn't see it happening. But, who knows? There IS a story here about getting admitted; there is another story about the problems of budgets.

For now, though, it is ENOUGH to read, and enjoy, which is what I did. I actually said to myself, "these stories are quite charming!" but I refuse to repeat that, because magic, charms, you know.

DO NOT!!!! skip the intro by Christopher Nuttall. He says some things that HAVE to be said, and it's just lovely to detach from some of the spider webs associated with literature that parallels this work. And along those lines, the title of my Amazon review (they posted it almost INSTANTLY!) is "If you mention H*** P*** or J K R***, I might slap you." There IS a tie in with his intro.

Here's my thinking about the stories, and what follows is contained in my Amazon review, and my Goodreads review.

"A Note From The Editor," Christopher G. Nuttall. Oh, hurrah, hurrah! Some things truly needed to be pointed out explicitly, particularly for those who think everything worthy was invented this morning around half-past ten. Discover these for yourself, but I must cheer the point that there is an extreme pathology of boarding schools that has NOTHING to do with magic.

"Little Witches" by Mel Lee Newmin. Anyone who has ever been affiliated with an educational institution knows the EXTREME importance of The Budget, and schools which are not supported by the state often must close their doors. Institutions of magic are not excepted. Loved it (but romance doesn't happen that fast).

"Path of the Phoenix" by Emily Martha Sorensen. I have heard that in some matters, if you aren't cheating, you don't deserve to win. I can't testify to the truth of that statement, and whether or not Rulisa, our protagonist, deserves to win is up for discussion. However, she DID know what she was doing when she accepted enrollment in a school. Consequences are...intense.

"A Firm Hand" by Aaron Van Treeck. Some schools welcome you with a reception, including food and handshakes. Not THIS school. Clearly, their school is modeled on basic training/boot camp for a uniformed service. As a graduate of D-7-2 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, I can say that the only significant inaccuracy is that harsh treatment at this magic school actually has a training goal in mind.

"Asymptote at Three O'Clock" by Steven G. Johnson. For anyone who has EVER watched the clock, longing for release, this story will take that experience, and add another dimension. You see, time really does go slower, but not for the reason you think.

"Practical Exercise" by George Phillies. I have found that education is a great leveler of differences. Well, that's the way it appears, at least; those who maintain a fiction that their differences matter more, somehow manage to linger on for quite some time. A punch in the snoot would have done them some good, in their earlier years.

"The Ascendant Cup" by Thomas K. Carpenter. High-stakes testing is something that seems to bother adults and educators more than it bothers students, at least initially. Perhaps that is because they don't recognize just how high the stakes are. This test: it can kill you. Our protagonist knows this, but sometimes the win IS worth the risk.

"Doom Garden" by Benjamin Wheeler. Warren G. Harding was a wizard. The gardener has a shotgun

that never runs out of ammo. And both of those things are needed, because all gardens are not alike. I loved this one, particularly the fact that the point of view character is a.....Methodist? No, that's not right...

“Crucible” by Frank B. Luke. This is an intriguing world, in which those who work magic come in three flavors: Good, Neutral, and Evil. It’s not QUITE an accurate set of descriptors, though. The subtle differences matter, because this test can be lethal.

“The Last Academy” by G. Scott Huggins. In the world of the mundanes, there is a huge drop-off between the number of people who enroll in the fall, and the number who eventually graduate. Why shouldn’t this be true with schools of magic as well? But, where would the drop-outs go? And what CONCEIVABLE use could they be?

“Finals” by Bernadette Durbin. The only people who like finals are those who have over-prepared, and a few instructors who are looking for a break from classes. Even those don’t want the routine to be disturbed. But sometimes, outside events trump academics.

“Metamorphosis” by Roger D. Strahan. Listen: just because your parents are monsters, and school is awful, that doesn’t mean that you get to go another way. That NEVER happens! Well, hardly ever. It would take a miracle.

“How To Get Into Magic School” by Erin N.H. Furby. I spent 7+ years working in college admissions. I only was threatened a few times. But then, magic wasn’t a factor. This lad is a recruiter for a scholarship program. I think he needs to seek additional reimbursement.

“Deep School Tuition” by Denton Salle. Private school tuition is outrageously high, but there ARE those who can afford it. Even so, defaulting on loans is a really bad idea. So: make SURE you understand the terms of the contract before you sign it. And if they want you to sign it in blood? Should be a clue.

“Gennady’s Tale” by Christopher G. Nuttall. It’s rather an old tale: the fresh-faced idealist who toddles off to college, and returns as an obnoxious know-it-all. The rules at college are just DIFFERENT than the rules at home; everybody changes, one way or another.

I did not ENJOY reading all the stories at the same level, but that's because a couple of them dealt with subject matter that was uncomfortable, particularly the last one. That is NOT a reflection on the quality of the stories, which I found to be excellent. It's just a matter of taste. I recommend them all to you, and, with the exception of "Gennady's Tale," I would be pleased to have 14 year old Alicia Ann and almost 16 year old Kenneth read these, unsupervised. With "Gennady's Tale," I'd want us all to read it together, and then discuss it. I DO hope you understand that minor caveat.

SerCon

Cyril Kornbluth Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian

Cyril M. Kornbluth (July 2, 1923 – March 21, 1958) was an American science fiction (SF) author and a member of the New York Futurian Society, the club that had many influential figures in SF fandom in the 1930s and 1940s. He used a variety of pen-names, including Earl Barons, Gabriel Barclay, Cecil Corwin, S. D. Gottesman, Edward J. Bellin, Kenneth Falconer, Walter C. Davies, Simon Eisner, Jordan



Park, Arthur Cooke, Paul Dennis Lavond, Martin Pearson, and Scott Mariner – usually when collaborating with other members of the Futurians. When he collaborated with fellow Futurian Judith Merrill, however, they used the joint pseudonym Cyril Judd.

Kornbluth came into SF fandom through the Washington Heights Science Fiction League, but soon joined the Futurians, where he later lived at various Futurian houses. Richard (Dick) Wilson introduced him to the Futurians.

Kornbluth was one of the six SF fans who were excluded from the 1939 Worldcon in the infamous Exclusion Act. He was also a member of FAPA and participated in the Blitzkrieg, a 1940 effort by some fan to get other fan “to do their duty.”

In 1939, he published the fanzine *Aanthor Argus* with Donald Wollheim and Dick Wilson, when all three of them were active Futurians.

Principal Publications

Kornbluth started writing in 1939 with “The Rocket of 1955,” which was published in the fanzine *Escape*; but he then enlisted in the army – where he served as an infantryman (and was decorated) -- and did not turn to professional writing until the late 1940s. During his decade of writing professionally, he excelled in short fiction that included classics like “The Little Black Bag,” “Two Dooms,” and “The Marching Morons” -- but he also wrote SF novels.

His novels included *Outpost Mars* (1952) [aka *Sin in Space*], with Judith Merrill (writing as Cyril Judd); *Gunner Cade* (1952), with Merrill (again writing as Cyril Judd); *Takeoff* (1952) [his first solo SF novel]; *The Space Merchants*, with Frederik Pohl [considered by genre critics to be a classic SF novel]; *The Syndic* (1953); *Search the Sky* (1954), with Pohl; *Gladiator at Law* (1955), with Pohl; *Not This August* (1955); and *Wolfbane* (1959), also with Pohl.

A number of Kornbluth’s short stories remained unfinished at his death; some of them were eventually completed and published by Pohl. One of them, “The Meeting” – published in the November, 1972, issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* (F&SF) -- was the co-winner of the 1973 Hugo Award for best short story.

More than a dozen collections of Kornbluth's short fiction have been published. Some of his early pseudonymous work was collected in 1970 in *Thirteen O’Clock and Other Zero Hours*, edited by SF author and critic James Blish, another former Futurian. Almost all of Kornbluth's solo SF stories were collected in *His Share of Glory: The Complete Short Science Fiction of C. M. Kornbluth* (NESFA Press, 1997).

Awards/Honors

In addition to the Hugo Award, described above, he was a recipient of The Prometheus Hall of Fame Award in 1986, and was elected to the First Fandom Posthumous Hall of Fame in 1995.

Critical Comments

Many genre critics have written that, when Kornbluth died, he had only just begun to mature as a writer, and that the field lost much by his early death.

A couple of Kornbluth's solo novels (*The Syndic* and *Not This August*) were seen as a bit deficient by some genre critics (perhaps wrongly), and were revised after his death before they were reprinted. Pohl did the revisions. In evaluating the two writers and their collaborations, genre critics have stated that Pohl "was less fluent and competent at the construction of raw story than Kornbluth."



Concluding Comments

The "M" added to Kornbluth's name was a tribute to his wife, Mary Byers Kornbluth (1920 -- 2007); by adding the "M" he was acknowledging that she was a collaborator in his writing. Kornbluth's colleague, collaborator, and fellow Futurian Frederik Pohl confirmed Kornbluth's lack of any actual middle name in at least one interview. Kornbluth's widow compiled the anthology *Science Fiction Showcase* (1959) as a memorial to him.

Like several other members of the Futurians – Donald Wollheim, Jack Gillespie, Damon Knight, David Kyle, John Michel, Richard Wilson, and Robert A. W. Lowndes – Kornbluth was a founding member of The National Fantasy Fan Federation in 1941.

Kornbluth's essay, "The Failure of the Science Fiction Novel in Social Criticism," published in *The Science Fiction Novel* in 1969, is still worth reading today. It is an excellent analysis of much of the proto-SF many of us have read and enjoyed.

Kornbluth died at age 34 in Levittown, New York. Scheduled to meet with Robert Mills in New York City to interview for the position of editor of the SF magazine *F&SF*, Kornbluth had to shovel the snow out of his driveway, which left him running behind schedule. Racing to make his train, he suffered a heart attack and died. His death in 1958, along with other prominent SF authors and fans (including Henry Kuttner and E. E. Evans), led to fandom later referring to 1958 as the "Year of the Jackpot" (after the Heinlein short story).

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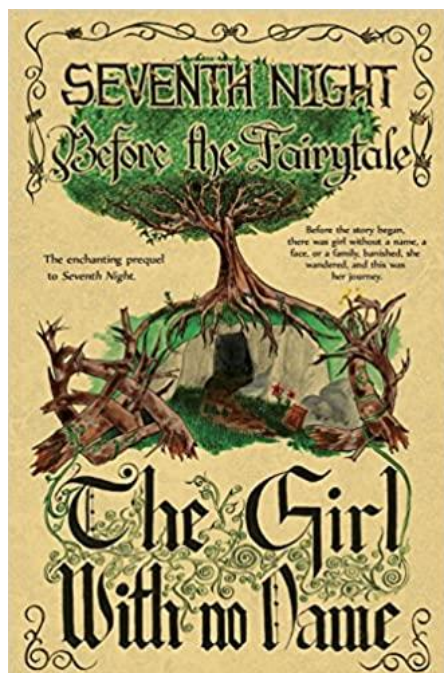
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Note: In addition to the above sources, several Internet sites were also consulted.

An Interview with Iscah By Tamara Wilhite



“Iscah is too young to be called old and too old to be called young. It is rumored that Iscah was born, and it is prophesized that Iscah shall one day die. As yet the prophecy goes unfulfilled. When not lost in imaginary lands, Iscah lives in the city of music.”

Heck of a bio. So who is Iscah? Iscah is the author of several fantasy books, including the “Seventh Night” series. And I had the opportunity to interview her.

Tamara Wilhite: You use the name Iscah to focus on the stories instead of the storyteller. Do you think that authors in general spend too much time promoting a personal brand instead of their stories?

Iscah: No, for myself the distancing felt important. I am atypical in many ways so I did not want my age, race, gender or personal background to influence reader expectations. But some authors draw strongly from personal experience, and that is fine too. Unfortunately self-promotion is part of the reality of the business right now, and so I do not fault anyone who puts in the effort.

I do get a little annoyed when the author name starts getting bigger than the story title. That is probably more often a publisher decision, but it was something I promised myself when I started writing, that my name would never be bigger than the title. We made a bit of a joke of it by dropping the author name altogether from “The Girl with No Name” cover. Initially, it was an accident, but it worked really well with that title. Likewise, I think publishers have become a little unwise trying to push a lot of the promotional work onto authors. There are exceptions, but I'd say the majority of writers are introverts. Writing well and marketing well are different skill sets.

Tamara Wilhite: You’ve published three books to date in the same fantasy world: “Seventh Night”, “The Girl with No Name” and “Horse Feathers”. Can you tell me about this fictional universe?

Iscah: “Seventh Night” is the core book. I wanted to write something that captured the feel of The Princess Bride without being the same story. So it's a tongue-in-cheek action adventure that is a blender of folk and fairytales and the adventure films I loved in childhood. While it doesn't have the story within a story aspect of The Princess Bride, there's a metafiction aspect to it like how the book is divided into acts. I also aimed for the same family audience. Is it for kids? Yes. Is it for adults? Yes.

The others are a set of four stories called Before the Fairytale that cover the younger years of the main characters and act as a prequel. Because it's not a linear series, I used a different style of writing in each book intended to reflect the character's personality.

The world itself is a Medieval-ish fairy-tale world. Not historically accurate and not earth, though I drew a lot of details from 11th-13th century Europe. Unicorns are common and generally considered to be soldier mounts. Pegasus are often for merchants and messengers (and the plural of pegasus is pegasus). Winged unicorns are generally reserved for nobility.

Tamara Wilhite: Fantasy isn’t all you write. What other fiction genres have you been published in?

Iscah: Many planned, nothing else published of my own writing. I've edited a multi-genre anthology called Tomato Slices, and while I did not write any of the stories, poems, or recipes in it, I tried to ar-

range them so you get all the emotional highs and lows of reading a novel. I am proud of how it turned out. My other "published" written work is mainly on T-shirts and a few short stories on Fictionpress.

Tamara Wilhite: You're an artist as well as a writer. I've seen your DeviantArt page and CafePress shop. May I ask how well these things sell relative to your content? And do they tie into your books? For example, did you create your own book covers? Have you created anyone else's?

Iscah: I did the book covers for Tomato Slices and the Seventh Night hardback. Maxim Nossevitich did the covers for The Girl With No Name and Horse Feathers and I hope he'll get to finish out the set because I really like his work, though I did the interior artwork in both books. I've drawn out a map for the Seventh Night world and did a full layout for Pinnacle Castle as well as the Pride of Cordance, but this was mainly done for my own notes to keep things straight in the story.

The Amoeba Ink Cafepress shop (which has a clone on Zazzle) is a shared shop with five or six different artist contributors. Three of them are significantly better artists than I am, but I was the one who always wanted to design T-shirts, so I have more sections. There is a section for Seventh Night with art and word shirts (and other merchandise) inspired by the book. Most of the shop is an odd mishmash of things. My bestsellers are designs I did for Dexter, Pretty Little Liars, and NCIS (and the now gone Cartoon Network and ET) through Cafepress fan portals, but my personal favorites are probably The Surrealist Court section.

I have not done a book cover for any other authors, but I did an illustration or two for stories in the Tomato Slices anthology.

Tamara Wilhite: What works inspired you to become an artist and author?

Iscah: Timothy Zahn's Heir to the Empire trilogy is what made the lightbulb go off in my head that I could be an author. I was thirteen and before I read that I had the idea that great books were all things written a long time ago. Not sure where I got the ego to think I could write a great book, but I knew that was what I wanted to do. There were many, many other books that have fed my imagination, but that was the one that set my career goals.

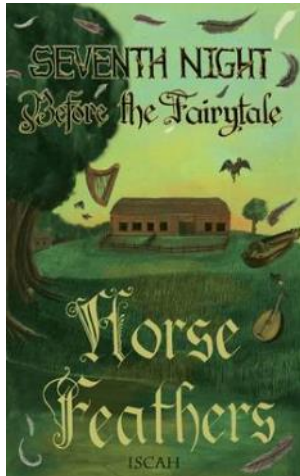
The artist thing was more accidental. Two of my best friends are both fantastic artists, and employed full time at it. So I mainly feel like I dabble and have only in the past few years really started to think of myself as both. My art was mainly about getting story ideas out so better artists could draw them. But some of it was okay, and Photoshop lets me tweak it into something that doesn't embarrass me too badly. I did get a minor in design because I enjoy art and respect it as a medium to communicate. (I have a degree in television production which I've done embarrassingly little with). My artist friend and I briefly considered starting a T-shirt business in middle school, and that and desire to design greeting cards (which I've also done very little of) inspired the Cafepress Shop.

I'm also rather enamored with the whole print on demand idea.

Tamara Wilhite: A lot of people create art and write in their spare time. What do you like to do for fun?

Iscah: I designed a T-shirt that says "This IS what I do for fun" because of previous encounters that question. I have tried to always choose jobs that are fun for me. Writing and drawing, yes, but my day jobs have generally involved caring for young children, books, and organizing things because those are fun for me. Beyond that I do like to read, watch movies and series, swim, sing, lurk in SCA groups, learn things, and sometimes cook. I have a couple restaurant concepts, one I hope to do and the other I will probably work into a story. I like to keep the line between work and fun blurry.

Tamara Wilhite: I believe you're working on a budgeting book, "Living Single on Minimum Wage". Do you want to talk about it?



Iscah: The first edition is out under my other pen name. What I'm working on is the second edition. I think the core advice in the book is good, but the examples are dated. Also it was my first published book, so there's a lot about it I would like to improve. The focus is basic budgeting for low income singles. Right before the fire, I had just wrapped up a year long combination video and research project for it...and lost most of that footage and all my notes in the fire. I'm going to do something with what I had salvaged, but not sure the exact form that will take yet.

Tamara Wilhite: What non-fiction works have you had come out?

Iscah: So far just the budgeting book. Non-fiction doesn't come as naturally to me. My co-writer was extremely valuable organizing everything into a useable format. I've had ideas for other books but have not started any yet. I do have a massive long term project, which will probably come out in book form eventually. I've developed a pretty effective education system for infants and toddlers, and I want to write it up in some format where others can use it, as well as propose a restructuring of public schools through high school. The latter may be more of a manifesto.

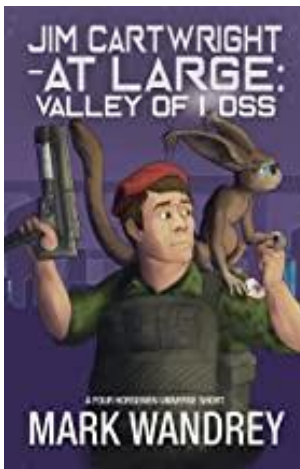
Tamara Wilhite: Thanks for speaking with me.

Note: For her other art: DeviantArt is <https://www.deviantart.com/>

Shorter Works

Valley of Loss: Jim Cartwright—At Large, Chapter Two By Mark Wandrey Review by Pat Patterson

A great good afternoon, to all my friends and neighbors in Internet Land. And to family members who have dropped by: fr I E nds, and n E I ghbors. I think that's Weird. Or is it Wierd?



This is a 36 page Kindle document, as it is currently formatted on my screen. How can I justify a LONG review, of a SHORT document? And yet, I am known for long reviews. Sometimes, that's how I find them. I page rapidly through the Amazon reviews, my eye only caught by verbosity.

Admittedly, I was sucked into a black hole of circumstances, just after I brought myself current on all of the related storylines, and thus I MIGHT be wrong, but:

THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT LOYAL READERS WILL KNOW ABOUT, THAT THE CHARACTERS DO NOT.

Now, for the reader, that likely only enhances the experience. Alas for the poor reviewer, though! We dast not violate the no spoiler rule in our reviews!

Over the next few galactic cycles, I plan to convene a reviewer council to come up with a comprehensive program. Until then, I plan to mask spoiler-sensitive material with some sort of snark. You'll know it when you see it.

Jim Cartwright, the youthful, obese but dieting commander of Cartwright's Cavaliers, has a closely defined set of goals for his mercenary company. At the top of his list: obtain as many of the massive, ancient fighting machines, known as Raknars, and restore them to function.

While certain members of his team don't quite understand the degree to which these devices inspire him, Jim can always count on his drop-dead gorgeous, passionate, faithful, and utterly committed girlfriend Adayn. Somehow, out of all the human females, she alone has discerned the bodacious hunk hidden inside Cartwright's corpulence.

Jim is also the recipient of support from his good buddy Splunk, a harmless and playful alien of limited intelligence; perhaps a savant, though, for somehow this miniature creature has been able to discover ways to harness the potential of the Raknar.

Exciting things ensue.

This is a delightful background interjection into the main story lines of the Four Horseman Universe, and **MUST** be read that way.

The Collected Novellas Of Gabriel Garcia Marquez Review by Will Mayo

These then are 3 stories about death in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's fictional Latin American town of Ma-combo. The first, "Leaf Storm," involves the coming and going of a leaf storm that brings people, prosperity, amusements and all manner of past and future only to take it all away as it swirls about an old man's effort to get a hanged man, a despised man in the community, a proper burial. The second tale, "No One Writes To The Colonel," is an excellent tale likewise and involves an aged colonel, a veteran of his country's civil wars, who, in the face of hunger and impending death and all manner of troubles, continues to hold onto his dreams with his cockfighting rooster. Every sentence is a thing of beauty. While the last novella in this book, "The Chronicle Of A Death Foretold," involves the entire town's complicity of a death of a man, the seducer of a rich man's fiancé, in an honor killing. Every sentence and every paragraph has the ticking of a clock and the hand of fate, as the hunted man, Santiago, goes obediently to his demise. I suggest that you read these 3 stories about death. They are well told and show each in their own way why Senor Marquez won the Nobel Prize For Literature.

It is an honor richly deserved. Enjoy every word.



Video

Rabid Ears: Ravings of a TV Fiend By Cathode Ray

The new issue of TV Guide just escaped from a maze of twisty little passages, all alike, so it's time for another edition of "Rabid Ears: Ravings of a TV Fiend," a periodic 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? What do you mean it's not working? Did you unplug it and plug it back in?

In the Oct. 12-25 issue, a reader named "Rob" (if that even be his real name) writes in to "Ask Matt" commenting on the "tonal shifts" of Lovecraft Country on HBO. "One week it seems to be a dramatic

allegory about racism, then it's a horror ghost story, then an Indiana Jones adventure," he writes. "Was this a creative decision by different writers and directors or just happenstance?" Matt Roush responds that the "mashup of tones and genres is intentional." Um, duh. Does this "Rob" even watch TV? I still haven't seen the program, but his description sounds absolutely awesome. I love horror ghost stories!

Keep your eyes peeled for dueling Uber Eats commercials featuring Mark Hamill and Sir Patrick Stewart. A series of TV ads for the food delivery service plays off on the rival fandoms associated with the actors' respective franchises. But if there's one thing that Star Trek and Star Wars fans can agree on, it's that food delivery is convenient. All you have to do is press Pause.

"The Roush Review" showcases two programs of note: *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, which premiered on Netflix in early October, and *Next*, which airs Tuesdays on Fox. I didn't quite connect with *The Haunting of Hill House*, the series' predecessor—but this effort seems to have more oomph behind it: oh, just all of Henry James's supernatural writings! *Next* also seems promising; "a Silicon Valley Dr. Frankenstein ... created an electronic monster in an advanced artificial-intelligence program." Oh, so? Tell me more!

Season two of the HBO series *His Dark Materials*, based on the novels of Philip Pullman, debuts this month. I didn't watch the first season, but I did see the 2007 movie, *The Golden Compass*, so my expectations are, well, let's just say, low. Have any Neffers seen the series? Is it worth checking out?

The issue dedicates an entire page to *Star Trek: Discovery* because its third season began Oct. 15. In this new season, the crew jumps 930 years into the future to 3188—the 32nd century, and a mere seven past that of Buck Rogers. I suppose that's one way to solve continuity problems for prequels. Huh. I've almost finished the second season, so I'm really looking forward (heh; get it?) to these new episodes—even if I think the gimmick is a cop out.

The final seven episodes of *Supernatural* began airing on The CW on Oct. 8. The actual series finale is scheduled to air in mid-November. I'm more excited, to be honest, about the return of *The Mandalorian* to Disney+ at the end of October. I watched the first episode while folding laundry last weekend, and it's a good return to the show—kind of a monster-of-the-week episode that gently reintroduces us to the ongoing storyline. I've really been enjoying the space western tenor of the show—as well as the callbacks to George Lucas's original wipes.

Some Neffers might be interested in *Fear the Walking Dead*'s return mid-October, but, frankly, zombie TV doesn't really interest me. Slightly more interesting, perhaps, is Eli Roth's *History of Horror*, which returned to AMC mid-month, as well. And 2021's going to bring a whole slew of potentially interesting shows, almost entirely on The CW: *Batwoman*; *Black Lightning*; DC's *Legends of Tomorrow*; *The Flash*; *Nancy Drew*; *Riverdale*; *Roswell, New Mexico*; *Supergirl*; and *Two Sentence Horror Stories*. DC Comics fans are going to plotz!

The middle of October also brought a couple of fun debuts on Hulu. Season two of *The Purge* began, continuing the film franchise's TV outing. And *Helstrom* premiered, based on Marvel Comics characters.

The Oct. 12 crossword, Puzzle #1399, proffered just a few fannish clues. 26 Across is "Logan's ____." 42 Across is "mystical deck of cards." 8 Down is "ALF's home planet." And 41 Down is "Salem, on Chilling Adventures of Sabrina." Mail all entries on a postcard, care of this fanzine.

In the Oct. 26 to Nov. 8 edition of *TV Guide*, writer Kate Hahn shares some details about a *Game of Thrones* spinoff. *House of the Dragon* is based on George R.R. Martin's 2018 novel *Fire & Blood*, which takes place 300 years before the *Game of Thrones* novels. Martin co-created the show, which has cast its first actor—Paddy Considine as Viserys Targaryen—and is slated to start filming next year.

Matt Roush included Star Trek: Discovery in “The Roush Review,” addressing the challenges faced by jumping so far forward in time. “The temporal shift enlivens the fabled franchise with a new sense of adventure and purpose,” Roush writes. (Yawn.) Meanwhile, at the end of October, Heroes & Icons aired the 1969 original series episode “Whom Gods Destroy” — “the one where the dancing green lady tries to seduce Captain Kirk.” (And Star Trek Beyond aired on CBS at the start of November, so it’s been a good couple of weeks for Trekkers!)

Pencil these in your calendar, fans and fellow freaks: The new series Barbarians is now available on Netflix. Set in 9 A.D. during the Roman Empire, the show focuses on a group of Germanic warriors who confront the Romans. The six-part series dramatizes a true story about rebellion—and betrayal. Truth Seekers finally premiered on Prime Video. Starring Nick Frost and Malcolm McDowell, the series is a horror-comedy focusing on paranormal investigators and conspiracy theorists. I expect good, good things. And that’s the truth!

The anthology series Soulmates continues on AMC. In one recent episode, a troubled rancher takes the genetic test to find his soulmate, but she’s already dead. So he joins a church that promises to connect them. I’m sure that went well for everybody. While I know I dissed zombie TV above, I do occasionally like zombie movies, and, well, Jim Jarmusch’s The Dead Don’t Die airs on HBO on Saturday, Nov. 7. Steve Buscemi, Bill Murray, Iggy Pop, and Tilda Swinton lead the cast. I highly recommend this movie—so much that I even mention it. (Alert, attentive readers might have even noticed that I mostly neglect movies in this, ahem, TV column.)

Moonbase 8 premieres on Showtime on Sunday, Nov. 8. The workplace comedy featuring inept NASA astronauts in a simulated lunar colony is sure to be good.

And the Oct. 26 crossword, Puzzle #1400, was fit to burst with relevant brain ticklers. 4 Across is “Space habitat on The 100.” 15 Across is “Iris on The Flash (2 wds.).” 20 Across is “_____ Lance on Arrow.” 27 Across is “Star Trek: Deep _____ Nine.” 36 Across is “_____ Expanse.” 48 Across is “Superman, for example.” 49 Across is “_____ Possible.” 51 Across is “Collins of Supernatural.” 2 Down is “Renee of DC’s Legends of Tomorrow.” 6 Down is “Chilling Adventures of Sabrina star (2 wds.).” 8 Down is “The truth is _____ there.” 9 Down is “Salem’s _____.” 22 Down is “Riverdale star KJ _____.” 23 Down is “Alfred Pennyworth was once in this group (abbr.).” 24 Down is “Bruce Wayne’s dog on Batman Beyond.” 31 Down is “Father of Arya and Sansa Stark.” 38 Down is “Jeremy of Watchmen.” 39 Down is “Marvel’s Jessica _____.” 41 Down is “Love interest on Smallville.” 42 Down is “G.I. Joe’s organization.” 43 Down is “Leonardo of Swamp Thing.” And 44 Down is “Mahershala of Marvel’s Luke Cage.” If you’ve never been moved to send in your entry in the past, this is the one to participate in. Send in your educated guesses, care of this very fanzine. It’s a bumper crop!

It’s been awhile since I’ve dug around to see what’s hiding between the lines for the readers of this column. (The best part is always the programming grids.) But I have to tell you that the most exciting thing on television these days has its own programming grid—and isn’t even included in TV Guide. Pluto TV offers hundreds of free TV channels and thousands of movies and TV shows—all streaming online 24-7. The service is on the Web at <https://pluto.tv/>, available via apps for Apple and Android, and even on select smart TVs. And it’s a veritable treasure trove for the sf and fantasy fan.

Here is a select listing of Pluto channels worth your attention and exploration: 50 James Bond movies, 66 Fantastic films, 75 Horror, 76 Terror, 109 Cult Films, 112 Flicks of Fury (martial arts movies), 115 The Asylum, 150 Star Trek, 151 Sci-Fi, 154 British TV, 488 MST3K, 489 RiffTrax, 511 The Addams Family, 532 Doctor Who Classic, 535 Dark Shadows, 542 Shout Factory TV, 669 Paranormal programming, 830 Anime All Day, and 848 Tokushoutsu, or tokusatsu series. The channel numbers change occasionally—and are already different from when I first documented my personal channel guide—so if the grid looks slightly different, poke around a little.

Because it’s just streaming live, you get to drop into whatever’s airing whenever you tune in. To this

long-time TV junkie, that's part of the fun. What's on right now? You tell me! Until next time, true believers, this is "Cathode Ray," fishing around for Almond Joys in the Halloween candy leftovers. Turn on, tune in, and blast off!

The Last Jedi Analysis by Chris Nuttall

The Last Jedi proved to be a highly controversial movie when it came out and several years (and a pair of underperforming follow-ups) have done nothing to redeem it. The movie is both objectively and subjectively terrible, with widespread character assassination, shrilling and – bluntly – a complete disregard for the factors that made Star Wars popular in the first place. However, that alone is not enough to seriously damage a franchise. The far more dangerous aspect, and the one that did serious damage, was the response to criticism.

There were essentially two groups that criticised The Last Jedi. One group felt that it was a poorly conceived, poorly written and poorly directed movie that laughed in the face of previous canon (and expanded universe/legends canon). They had legitimate complaints. The other group was composed of misogynists and racists. Their complaints were not legitimate. The response from the film's producers and supporters, however, was to smear the first group with the second. The bad apples in fandom were used to attack the rest of fandom.

This is a cunning tactic, in the short term. If you regard your critics as misogynists and racists (and homophobes, transphobes, xenophobes (etc, etc)), and insist this is true regardless of all evidence of the contrary, you can delegitimize their complaints. This absolves you of the responsibility to listen to their complaints, let alone act on them. Who wants to give even the slightest hint of legitimacy to misogynists and racists (etc, etc)? No one.

It's easy to see why someone would feel that this is a reasonable tactic. The Last Jedi was not cheap. Disney invested a Hell of a lot of money in the franchise. Delegitimizing the critics, at least in theory, saved the producers from having to admit they'd made a serious mistake. In practice, it undermined the franchise by making it clear that the producers simply weren't interested in listening to criticism, let alone improving upon their work. It's possible to argue that The Last Jedi, Solo, and The Rise of Skywalker made money and therefore the producers weren't too far wrong. However, the franchise significantly underperformed after The Last Jedi. Given the sheer magnitude of the fanbase, this should worry anyone with an eye to the bottom line.

The producers and their supporters argued that the fans were over-entitled. There's some truth to this. However, it is also true that vast numbers of fans kept the faith from the moment Return of the Jedi rolled the last credits until Disney produced The Last Jedi. Those fans purchased books, computer games, toys, endured the prequel trilogy ... in short, they were emotionally invested in the franchise. It is not unreasonable to feel that one has a right to expect a reward for such investment, even though – objectively speaking – the fan has no claim on the producers. Nor is it unreasonable to feel personally insulted if you've been called a misogynist, a racist, or one of a dozen other things you know you're not.

This touches on something I've mentioned before. A good-faith attempt to address the complaint, by accepting it is valid or explaining why it is not, would have gone a long way towards solving the problem before it got out of hand. It might not have satisfied the critics, but it would have convinced outside observers that the producers were taking the complaints seriously enough to write a refutation. Bad faith responses – calling someone a racist, for example – simply undermine credibility. It suggests, very strongly, that there is no good answer to the complaints. And once you start insulting people, any hope of a peaceful solution goes straight out the window (not least because it's impossible to prove a negative.)

The Last Jedi is just a movie. Fundamentally, it doesn't matter what happens to Star Wars. But what happens when this approach is taken to ... well, everything? Over the last few years, we have found out. It isn't pretty.

It is not easy to see things from someone else's point of view. A very rich and powerful person, with all the trapping of his wealth and rank, simply cannot grasp how carefully a poor person must manage money. He can very easily push for supermarkets to stock only expensive foodstuffs because, to him, they are not expensive at all. He cannot understand that he's just made life harder for the poor person, who now has to somehow find the money to pay for food or starve. Said rich and powerful person might push for criminal justice reform without thinking through the consequences, because – at base – he does not have to face the consequences. The man who lives in a gated community, with a private security force, doesn't have to deal with criminals on the streets. He cannot understand why the poorer people would sooner lock the criminals up and throw away the key.

And because he doesn't understand that, he doesn't understand why the poor hate him.

People are not generally selfish. But they are motivated by self-interest. If you fail to take someone's self-interest into account, and to accept that their feelings are valid, you should not be surprised when they come to hate you. If you delegitimize their feelings, and effectively delegitimize them, they come in turn to delegitimize you. And then they don't pay any attention to you. Why should they?

Going back to The Last Jedi, the producers were attempting the impossible. They wanted a movie that would both appeal to the fans and the general public. To do the former, they would have had to assess what made Star Wars popular in the first place and do more of it (the thinking that led to the Thrawn trilogy). To do the latter, they would have had to streamline the plot as much as possible. Instead, they ended up with what was once called – quite aptly – a beautiful disaster.

This could have been avoided. A clear-sighted assessment of what viewers – both fans and the general public – wanted could have been done. (As Marvel did when it started creating the MCU.) It would have required, however, an understanding of their fanbase – and what the fans wanted – and this was verboten. Instead, they drove away their fanbase without bringing in replacements. They chose to attack their fans instead of accepting they'd made a mistake and trying to fix it.

But, in this day and age, admitting a mistake can be fatal.

Food of Famous Writers

Eat This While You Read That: Tedd Roberts by Cedar Sanderson

In with the traditional novel-length writers, I've sprinkled a few folks who are more difficult to stuff into a pigeonhole. This man is certainly not a person you can define with a single role. Or sentence. Renowned scientist, science fiction fan, and author of short stories and numerous science articles related to science fiction topics, Tedd Roberts is also the man of many names.

You can find his fascinating science articles at Baen.com, in formats easily downloadable to ereaders, perfect for contemplation while cooking and eating up his delicious dinner recipe. Food for thought and the body! For his short fiction, you may have to wait, as the latest story is coming in June inside the Black Tide Rising anthology (set in the very best zombie universe created by John Ringo). So what's your fancy? Putting the Science in Science Fiction? Growing organs outside the body? A Translunar laboratory? Brain Implants? Are we wired differently? Once you have that, let's get cooking!



Speaker – I did mention he’s the man of many names? The one I know best is Speaker to Lab Animals. Anyway, Speaker sent me a family recipe to cook up and tantalize the readers into trying it themselves.

Chicken Enchilada Casserole It’s a colorful dish, and a delicious one.

1 whole chicken or 6 chicken breasts – boiled, de-boned and chopped into small (1/2 inch) cubes
2 small tomatoes, chopped,

1 pkg of flour tortillas
1 small to medium onion, chopped
1 clove of garlic, minced
1/2 stick of margarine or butter
1 jalapeno or green chile pepper, chopped
1 cup of mushrooms, chopped
1/2 bell pepper, chopped
1 can Campbell’s condensed Cream of Chicken soup
1 cup chicken broth (from boiling) or 1 cup water with 1 cube chicken bouillon)
8 oz Monterrey Jack cheese, grated
4 oz Colby/Jack cheese, grated

1 tsp cilantro
1/2 tsp cumin
1/8 tsp salt



Pre-heat oven to 300°.

Chicken should be fully cooked before preparing casserole – boil whole chicken or chicken breasts, or microwave boneless chicken breasts (save 1 cup or broth for the “salsa”).

Sauteing the vegetables until softened.

Salsa: Saute onions, garlic, bell peppers, and mushrooms in butter or margarine. Add tomatoes, chilies, spices, and chicken broth. Cook until well-blended, and liquid thickens, but do not boil off all of the liquid..

All the sauce cooking down together – a great way to develop and fully blend flavors.

Grease 9” x 13” glass deep casserole dish, layer bottom with a double layer of tortillas (whole or cut into triangles). Layer with one-half of the chicken, condensed “Cream” soup(s) (but not the Pepper Jack soup), salsa, and 4 oz. Monterrey Jack or Mexican shredded cheese. Top with a single layer of tortillas, then layer with remaining chicken, condensed “Cream” soup(s), salsa, and 4 oz. Monterrey Jack or Mexican shredded cheese. Top with a double layer of tortillas.



Enchilada casserole

Layering ingredients into the dutch oven before baking.



Leave the top dry. Bake for 30 minutes @ 300°, or until top is very lightly browned. Remove from oven, top with 4 oz. shredded Colby/Jack cheese and bake for 15 minutes or until cheese is bubbly.

Cedar's notes: I wasn't at all sure about making this with flour tortillas, I have never had enchiladas using flour – always corn tortillas. If – the First Reader says when! – I make this again, we will use corn tortillas which soften up when cooked with liquids. The flour tortillas were very chewy. But the flavor was delicious, so it didn't matter.

I served this with chopped fresh tomato and the other half of the bell pepper. They added a nice bit of crunch and flavor to the rich, creamy casserole. The dish is spicy but not very spicy – slightly less than medium, rating by store-brand salsas.

Political Science Fiction

An Interview with Andrew Fox by Tamara Wilhite

Science fiction and horror author Andrew Fox's first novel was "*Fat White Vampire Blues*". He's continued to put out a steady stream of science fiction and fantasy that's equally edgy and entertaining. For example, he recently released a short story collection titled "*Hazardous Imaginings: The Mondo Book of Politically Incorrect Science Fiction*". And I had the opportunity to interview him.

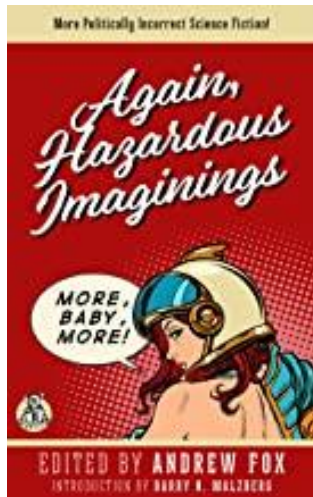


Tamara Wilhite: *Hazardous Imaginings* seems to be modeled off of Harlan Ellison's "*Dangerous Visions*". Is that intentional?

Andrew Fox: Most assuredly. Not long after Harlan died, I watched a documentary on him that had been made pretty late in his life. Watching it and mulling over his career, I thought, "If *Dangerous Visions* were published today, what kinds of stories would it include?" That got me thinking about the issue of taboos in science fiction, what gatekeepers, editors, and opinion leaders in the field shy away from, discourage, or ignore. What was taboo back in 1967 is not only acceptable in the science fiction field today, it is celebrated and widely published and awarded. Today's science fictional taboos are viewpoints and ideas that fall outside the progressive bubble that so many of present-day editors and gatekeepers inhabit.

I also remembered, with sadness and resentment, the treatment of my good friend Barry N. Malzberg, an award-winning science fiction writer with a fifty-year-long career whom I've admired since I was a teen, by the editors and readers of the *Bulletin of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America* (SFFWA) in 2013. Barry and his frequent collaborator, fellow award-winner Mike Resnick, had a long-running column in the *Bulletin* called "The Resnick-Malzberg Dialogues".

They covered all sorts of topics pertinent to science fiction writers and professionals, from how to best break into the magazines to the worthiness of convention attendance in building a career, often in a semi-comical tone reminiscent of *The Odd Couple* or *Grumpy Old Men*. In 2013 they turned in a two-part article on the history of women editors in science fiction, which focused mainly on a handful of obscure



but worthy ladies who toiled in the pulp magazines in the 1930s and 1940s. Their “mistake” was to unwittingly stumble over a woke trip-wire by referring to their subjects as “lady editors” and by relating a humorous anecdote from the 1950s that turned on the attractiveness of one of the editors in a swimsuit and how this got some male fans in trouble with their wives.

The gates of Woke Hell were opened, and the two writers were subjected to every sort of online abuse and name-calling for weeks on end. The end result was that their column was cancelled, the *Bulletin*’s (lady) editor was fired, and the magazine ceased publication for six months while all traces of “bad think” were thoroughly purged.

The wokeness plague in science fiction has only grown more virulent since that episode. Other prominent writers have been publicly defamed for trivial matters, the names of science fiction’s founding fathers and mothers, including John W. Campbell and Alice Sheldon/James Tiptree, Jr., have been yanked off annual awards for perceived transgressions against wokeness, and writers and editors have been physically expelled from conventions where they were serving as guests for daring to question political correctness during discussion panels. No editors outside of Baen Books (which concentrates on military and adventure science fiction and fantasy) will touch material that comes across as politically right of center.

Yet in this time of accelerating technological change and resultant social change, we need a healthy, vigorous, daring, and courageous science fiction, more than ever. Science fiction — unfettered, uncensored science fiction — can serve as our telescope, allowing us to ponder what is coming and prepare. In order for science fiction to serve as an early-warning radar for dangerous technological and social trends, its practitioners cannot wear blinders. We can’t afford the luxury of disregarding a whole swath of potentially invaluable viewpoints.

I originally wanted to call the anthology I’d envisioned *Today’s Dangerous Visions*. I contacted the Harlan Ellison Estate to ask whether Harlan’s widow, Susan Ellison (who passed away not many months after I tried contacting her), would approve of this and whether she would like to be involved. The Estate is very protective of Harlan’s trademarks, among them the brand “Dangerous Visions”, and they weren’t interested. In fact, they ordered me to cease and desist even mentioning Harlan Ellison and his legacy (“Harlan Ellison” is also a trademark of the Ellison Estate) in crowd-funding appeals to raise money for story royalties.

So I changed my title and went off in my own direction. I gathered a wonderful selection of stories from writers around the world, and I ended up writing so many tales myself that fit the theme that I ended up dividing the envisioned book into two volumes, the first made up of my own stories, and the second of the stories submitted to me.

Tamara Wilhite: I’ve noticed a number of similar science fiction collections like yours such as “Forbidden Thoughts”. What is driving the publication of these anthologies? And what has the demand for them been like?

Andrew Fox: Science fiction has always had more than its share of contrarians. Count me as one of them. There is a long history of contrarian anthologists pushing back against whatever the “in” thing is in science fiction by soliciting stories that break the widely accepted mold. Judith Merril did this with her Year’s Best SF anthology series, of which twelve were published between 1956 and 1968. During the late 1950s, a time when the Campbellian ideal of science fiction as the solving of problems by “the capable man” still held wide sway, Judith was selecting what would now be called slipstream stories, literary fiction with slight fantastical elements by non-genre authors such as Eugène Ionesco, John Steinbeck, Donald Barthelme, and Jorge Luis Borges. She strongly believed that in order to flourish, science

fiction had to break out of its genre ghetto and merge with mainstream literature. Both she and Harlan Ellison championed science fiction's New Wave in the latter half of the 1960s, a movement in both Britain and America that injected the stylistic experimentation of modernist and post-modernist literature into science fiction, focused on "inner space" rather than "outer space", and expanded the range of themes that could be expressed in science fiction. The New Wave movement was bitterly opposed by science fiction's more traditionalist editors, writers, and readers, who saw its oftentimes darkly pessimistic and sometimes nihilistic outlook as a decadent betrayal of science fiction's mission, which in their view was to illustrate how technological advances could solve humanity's problems and to warn against wrong turns in future technological developments.

Nowadays, to be contrarian or counter-cultural means to be outside the progressive consensus that has swept over much of high and popular culture, the educational establishment, and is now assimilating much of corporate America, even the realm of professional sports. To be contrarian means to be anti-woke, or at least non-woke. I was discussing with a correspondent of mine just recently how, regarding diversity of cultures, practices, sexual preferences, etc., the left has moved on from "live and let live," an attitude I'm fully in accord with, to trying to enforce not just toleration, which is essential in a multiethnic society like ours, but also affirmation and celebration of their favored flavors of diversity. I think that's where a lot of the resentment from those not on the left comes from — the sense that they are being pressured and bullied into affirming and celebrating behaviors and qualities they are willing to tolerate in others but are not in favor of for themselves or their families. Progressives can be very aggressive about claiming fresh territories; there's a lot of truth to Robert Conquest's Second Law of Politics, "Any organization not explicitly right-wing sooner or later becomes left-wing."

In the science fiction world, we've seen the Second Law at work with the science fiction imprints at the major publishing firms, with the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, with the World Science Fiction Convention and their Hugo Awards, and with a wide range of regional science fiction conventions and awards committees. Locus Online, the field's primary news magazine with a long and storied history, had a Black Lives Matter banner on its home page the last time I looked. The slogan is innocuous and anodyne, but the organization of that name is pernicious in many ways. And besides, what do that slogan and its namesake organization have to do with news of the science fiction world? As Glenn Harlan Reynolds has been known to say, "you will be made to care." (Mind you, I admire very much what Locus does and loved Charles Brown's long run as editor there; their people have always been gracious with me, and I have a stack of their old issues in my basement. But I don't need a daily dose of Black Lives Matters with my science fiction news.)

Most people don't like being forced to favor, or pretend to favor, things they really *don't* favor. They don't appreciate being called deplorables and thought of as outside the pale of polite society. That's where the energy for the Sad Puppies uprising came from, and presumably for the *Forbidden Thoughts* anthology, which involved many of the same participants. I'm referring to a visceral reaction against the progressive science fiction and fantasy that all the "best people", the genre's elite tastemakers, praise and promote — "I say it's spinach and I say the hell with it!"



The Panther by Angela K. Scott

My own motivation for putting out the *Hazardous Imaginings* books goes a bit beyond that. I believe very strongly that we are entering a hazardous era in human history, primarily due to the geometric growth of consumer-grade technologies that give ordinary people powers of creation and destruction formerly limited to national governments, militaries, and large scientific establishments and jealously guarded by them. In order for us to

successfully navigate this dangerous era, we need the cognitive habits of the best science fiction, and science fiction needs all hands on deck. We're handcuffing ourselves if we let a whole contingent of writers self-censor what might prove to be their most illuminating and valuable insights because they fear being exiled from the commercial markets for wrongthink.

That's a really long answer to the first half of your question. Now I'll address the second part: what has the demand for these counter-cultural science fiction anthologies been thus far? Not nearly as high as it should be.

This part of my answer probably won't make me very popular, but I think the conservative and libertarian media outlets need to greatly up their game when it comes to getting the word out regarding projects like these. I'm a regular consumer of a wide variety of right of center news and commentary sites, along with arts and policy sites of all stripes. I'm also pretty much an ideal customer for the anthology *Forbidden Thoughts*, which featured an all-star lineup of science fiction writers and championed freedom of expression and conscience. Yet I never came across so much as a mention of the book in any of the sites I read several times per week. I only discovered *Forbidden Thoughts* when I was trying to publicize my crowdfunding campaign for *Hazardous Imaginings*, when one of the *Forbidden Thoughts* editors emailed me to tell me he and his group had put out something similar.

This shouldn't have been the case. I'd need the toes of a centipede to count the number of prominent conservative and libertarian commentators who regularly push the notion that culture is upstream of politics. Well, do you know what is upstream of a whole lot of popular culture? *Prose science fiction*. Film, television, and gaming science fiction do not generate original science fictional ideas. They borrow them from written science fiction, often science fiction that is fifty years old or older. Media science fiction has already strip-mined much of classic science fiction. Eventually it will catch up with more contemporary works. If conservative and libertarian voices are absent from widely available contemporary prose science fiction, the only science fiction films, streaming series, and interactive video games will be based on progressive fiction.

I am very appreciative of the support Liberty Island has shown my *Hazardous Imaginings* project, along with Christian Toto of Hollywood in Toto and Sarah Hoyt of Instapundit. But no other conservative or libertarian outlets have shown any interest at all in this landmark pair of volumes, and I've sent information and announcements regarding the books to virtually all of them. I'm not an Andy-Come-Lately; I have a nearly twenty-year track record in publishing, both traditional/commercial and indie publishing, and I've been writing about free speech and cancel culture issues in science fiction for many years now. The *Hazardous Imaginings* books contain serious, incisive extrapolative examinations of a number of issues near and dear to conservatives' and libertarians' hearts, including the societal dangers of intersectionality; environmentalism taken to a horrible extreme; groups involved in extreme competition for top victim status; the pariahdom suffered by any researchers into potential biological and cultural factors contributing to differences in average intelligence levels between groups; and the great hazards of judging governmental social programs by the beauty of their intentions, rather than the reality of their actual results. To the best of my knowledge, my novella in *Hazardous Imaginings*, "City of a Thousand Names", is the first work of science fiction to take the concept of intersectionality to its logical, absurd, and eventually murderous extreme.

These books are exactly the sort of cultural products the pundits say we need to see a whole lot more of, aren't they?

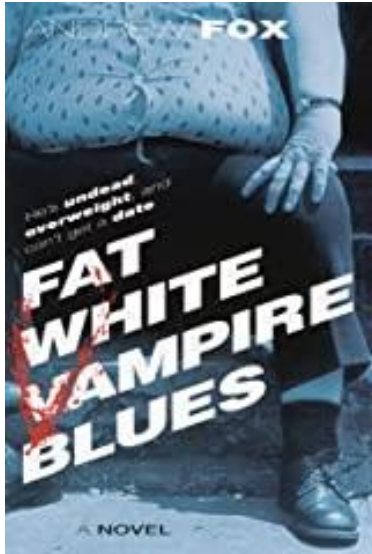
So the big-time conservative and libertarian mouthpieces need to back up their rhetoric with some actual support. Be our cheerleaders! Let our potential audiences know we exist! Help us build a community of readers! Or projects like mine will die on the vine due to a lack of awareness. Conservative and libertarian nonfiction does just fine. The market for non-woke, non-progressive fiction, on the other hand, needs to be nurtured in order to grow. Especially a market for fiction that intends to provide readers with more

than simple entertainment, that seeks to explore ideas and extrapolate existing trends in an intellectually serious fashion.

If the big-name pundits with their mighty platforms can't get behind a project like this, I don't want to hear them bewailing the reality that culture is upstream of politics ever again.

Tamara Wilhite: Your first novel was "*Fat White Vampire Blues*". What was the inspiration for that?

Andrew Fox: In 1998, I was living in New Orleans, recently divorced and recovering from a badly broken ankle. I'd set aside my writing for almost a year, but I was starting to develop the itch again, wondering what my next project would be. My new girlfriend was a big SF and horror fan, and she loved gossiping with her eccentric landlady. Turned out this landlady went to the same Uptown New Orleans beauty parlor as local celebrity author Anne Rice, and soon my girlfriend was filling my ear with stories of how said author had ballooned to an impressive size.



The image stuck with me. New Orleans, of course, is famous for its food, one of the world's most calorie-laden cuisines, heavy on the cream sauces. New Orleans regularly contests for the title of America's Fattest City, most often with Philadelphia, whose Philly cheese steaks can't hold a candle to our andouille gumbo or fried trout almonidine. I reasoned that, if vampires actually "lived" in New Orleans and subsisted on the blood of New Orleanians, they'd be sucking down a stew of cholesterol and fatty lipids with every meal. After a century or so, a New Orleans vampire would look a heck of a lot more like John Goodman than Tom Cruise.

One of my favorite New Orleans novels, and one of the all-time great comic novels, is John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*, which features gargantuan Ignatius Reilly getting into a series of misadventures in 1960s New Orleans while fighting a losing battle against the twentieth century, progress, and all forms of "aesthetic abomination." *Confederacy* got added to my recipe. My vampire character quickly started taking shape — Jules (named for a favorite overweight coworker) would be a member of New Orleans' shrinking white working class, left behind during the rush to the suburbs, chained to his old, decaying neighborhood by nostalgia and a genuine love for the central city. Over the long decades, his weight had gradually crept up, until he reached the point where he was too big and slow to chase down victims anymore. Once he hit four hundred pounds, he took up driving a cab, because trapping his victims in the back seat was the only way he could capture a meal. Finally, circumstances force Jules to consider the four-letter word he hates the most: D-I-E-T.



Tamara Wilhite: And how on Earth did you end up writing sequels like "*Fat White Vampire Otaku*"?

Andrew Fox: I have a very active imagination. And I love mixing my passions from various genres. That's how a trio of Japanese super-heroes end up in New Orleans after my version of Hurricane Katrina. They are there as International Red Cross volunteers — my house on the West Bank of New Orleans was about a mile away from the staging area used by the Red Cross and first responders from all over the country after Katrina, and my local coffee shop, P.J.'s, was the first business in the area to reopen. So all the police and EMTs and fire fighters and Red Cross volunteers from all over would crowd in there every morning for their morning cup of joe, and

that's where I did my writing, between chatting up all those folks. I loved that place and that time. Such a fantastic sense of fellowship.

Tamara Wilhite: Would it be fair to say that a lot of your works like "*The Good Humor Man / Calorie 3051*" are absurdist?



Andrew Fox: I prefer the term “gonzo,” stolen from the late Hunter S. Thompson. A lot of my novels and stories come from the sort of questions you ask yourself while taking a shower or trying to fall back asleep in the middle of the night. My yet unpublished novel *The End of Daze*, which MonstraCity Press will probably put out in 2021 or 2022, grew out of such a question. Nearly every religious tradition has its own version of eschatology, or end of days times. Although some of these may overlap in certain ways, they can't all come true. So I asked myself, what would happen if one of those end of days scenarios came to pass? Specifically, what would happen if it were to be the Jewish version? What would Christians and Muslims think? What would the *Jews themselves* think, with so many American Jews being devoutly secular?

With *The Good Humor Man*, or, *Calorie 3051*, the question I asked myself was, what if our Western mania for thinness gets completely out of hand and we find a technological way to thin ourselves to death? I had previously written a short story about a former liposuctionist in the future who is obsessed with recovering a lost relic, the preserved, liposuctioned belly fat of Elvis Presley. I added him into the story, then patterned my plot on that of Ray Bradbury's classic *Fahrenheit 451* (originally a novella called “The Fireman”), except that, instead of having firemen in fire trucks racing around burning up banned books, I'd have Good Humor Men in Good Humor vans racing around burning up banned high-calorie foods.

Tamara Wilhite: You've written more serious fantasy, as well. What is “*Fire on Iron*” about?



Andrew Fox: When I was a boy, I was fascinated by Civil War ironclads like the U.S.S. *Monitor* and the C.S.S. *Virginia*. I checked out the American Heritage young readers' book *Ironclads of the Civil War* so many times from my elementary school library that the librarian called in my mother and asked her to order me my own copy; I still have it on my shelf. Again, I enjoy mixing up things that I love with one another.

I was eating my lunch at the food court near work when an image popped into my head that really stuck with me — Civil War ironclads battling elemental fire demons on some backwoods Southern river. Don't know where that image came from. My initial bright idea was to write a series of dark fantasies and science fiction novels all having the titles of bad sci-fi B-movies from the 1950s; I figured I'd call this one *Navy vs. the Night Monsters*. I didn't stick with that idea for long, which was probably for the best.

Here's the precis of the plot: Lieutenant Commander August Micholson lost his first ship in reckless battle. Now he's offered a chance to redeem himself — he can take the ironclad gunboat USS *James B. Eads* on an undercover mission to destroy a hidden rebel boatyard and prevent the Confederates from building a fleet of ironclads that will dominate the Mississippi. But dangers far more sinister than rebel ironclads await Micholson and his crew. Micholson is faced with a terrible choice: he can risk the fiery immolation of every American, both Union and Confederate, or he can risk his soul by merging it with that of



his greatest enemy. MonstraCity Press will publish the second book in this series, *Hellfire and Damnation*, in August 2021. There's also a third book in the series, *Fire on the Waters*, that will come out after that. Lots and lots of Civil War steampunk dark suspense!

Tamara Wilhite: You had “*Hazardous Imaginings*”, “*The Man Who Would Be Kong*” and a zombie Sherlock Holmes story, “*Watson Has Killed Me, Alas*” come out in October, 2020. Do you have anything in progress or coming out soon?

Andrew Fox: I have a very full publishing slate of books coming out from MonstraCity Press over the next year. This December, as I mention above, I'll be putting out *Again, Hazardous Imaginings: More Politically Incorrect Science Fiction*, the international anthology that features one of your stories. In February 2021, I'll be issuing *The Bad Luck Spirits' Social Aid and Pleasure Club*, a dark fantasy about a cabal of evil spirits who plot to destroy New Orleans with a Katrina-like hurricane.

In April 2021, the third book in my Fat White Vampire series, *Fat White Vampire Otaku*, will come out in paperback (it's been available in ebook form for a few years). For June 2021, MonstraCity Press will publish the fourth book in the Fat White Vampire series, *Hunt the Fat White Vampire*. In August 2021, I'll put out the sequel to *Fire on Iron*, Civil War dark fantasy *Hellfire and Damnation*.

I'll probably do another Fat White Vampire book before the end of 2021. Also in 2021, Potomac Press will be putting out a non-fiction book of mine concerning the implications of Promethean technologies, consumer-grade tech that gives ordinary persons the sort of creative and destructive powers once only available to national governments, powerful militaries, or well-funded scientific establishments.

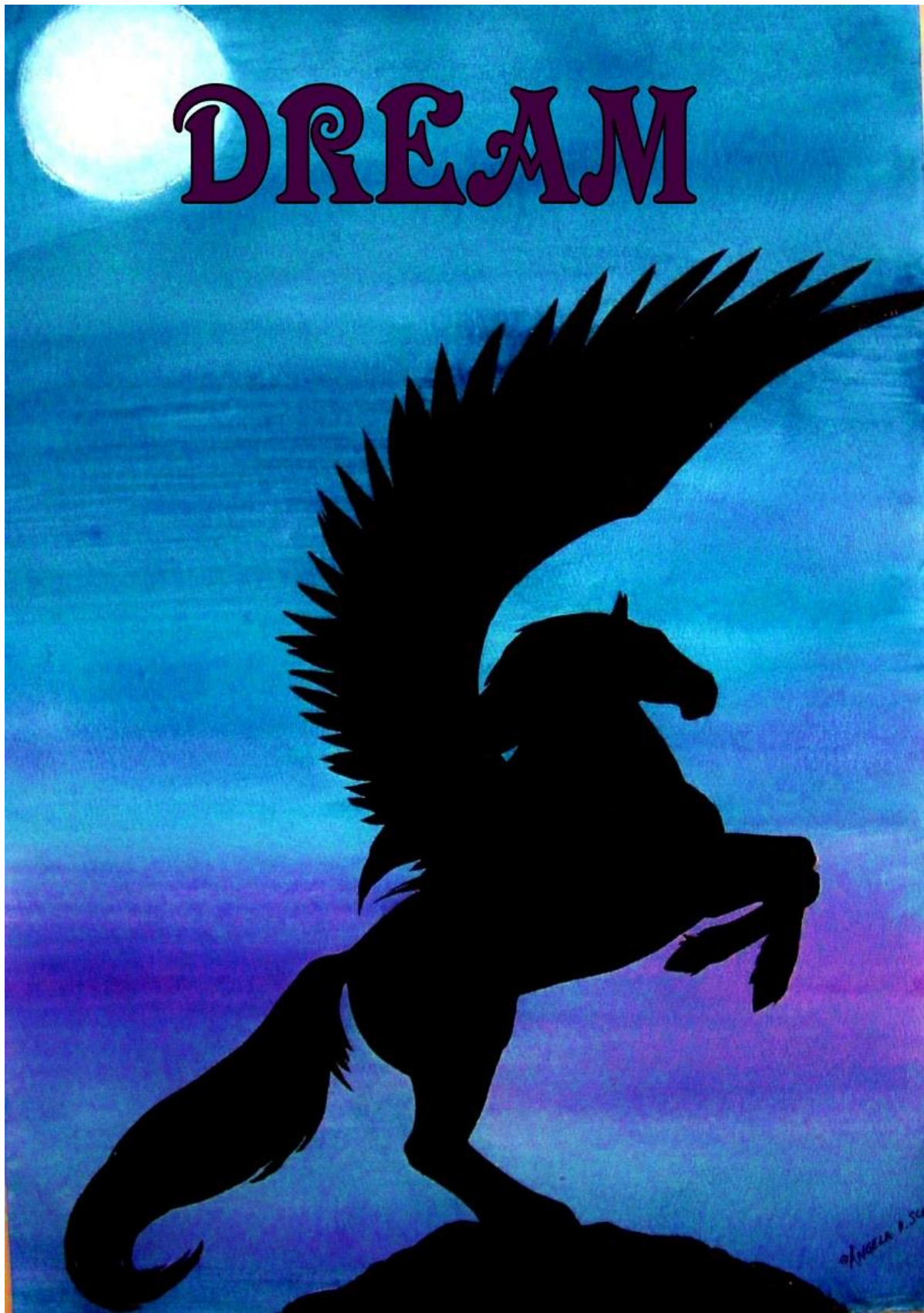
For 2022, I have a number of *Hazardous Imaginings*-type, politically incorrect novels I'll be putting out, all of which are guaranteed to set Woke Zombies' hair on fire. If the first two *Hazardous Imaginings* story collections do reasonably well, and I very much hope they do, I'll commission a third book in the series.

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

Andrew Fox: Readers can sign up for my newsletter and receive a free ebook, my Tinseltown fantasy “*The Man Who Would Be Kong*”, by going to my Story Origin landing page (<https://storyoriginapp.com/giveaways/dc4d4238-1158-11eb-b989-17741766d0ce>). What a deal!

One last word to any big-name pundits who might be reading this: *bang your drums loudly for the Hazardous Imaginings project!* It's what you've been asking for for years now! *Hazardous Imaginings: The Mondo Book of Politically Incorrect Science Fiction* is available in paperback and ebook now, and *Again, Hazardous Imaginings: More Politically Incorrect Science Fiction* will be out in December and will be available for preorder. They make great Christmas or Hanukkah gifts!

Tamara Wilhite: Thanks for speaking with me.



Darkwind — Dream
by Angela K. Scott