

Tightbeam 362

November 2024



UFO Over City
By Jose Sanchez

Tightbeam 362

November 2024

What is Tightbeam? We are the N3F literary fanzine, not the novel and anthology fanzine, but the fanzine that tries to cover all tastes in fandom, such as anime, comics, cosplay, films, novels, biographies, poetry, music, short stories, food, ...

The Editors are:

George Phillies phillies@4liberty.net 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester, MA 01609.

Jon Swartz judgeswartz@gmail.com

Art Editors are Angela K. Scott and Jose Sanchez. Art Contributors are Tiffanie Gray, Alan White, Cedar Sanderson, and Artist Fish.

Anime Reviews are courtesy Jessi Silver and her site www.s1e1.com. Ms. Silver writes of her site "S1E1 is primarily an outlet for views and reviews on Japanese animated media, and occasionally video games and other entertainment." Cedar Sanderson's reviews and other interesting articles appear on her site www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/ and its culinary extension. Jason P. Hunt's reviews appear on SciFi4Me.Com Jim McCoy is now found at Jimbossffreviews.substack.com

Tightbeam is published approximately monthly by the National Fantasy Fan Federation and distributed electronically to the membership.

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

To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines.

Memberships with TNFF via email are \$6; memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18. Zines other than TNFF are email only.

Additional memberships at the address of a current dues-paying member are \$4.

Public (non-voting) memberships are free. Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah NV 89049. Pay online at N3F.org. PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org.

Table of Contents

Art

Front Cover ... UFO Over City by Jose Sanchez

Back Cover ... Real Martians by Tiffanie Gray

Letter to the Editors

4 ... Lloyd Penney

Anime

4 ... Kino's Journey ~The Beautiful World ... Review by Jessi Silver

Graphic Novels

8 ... They Called Us Enemy - Expanded Edition Written by George Takei, Justin Eisinger and Steven Scott. Art by Harmony Becker ... Review by Jim McCoy

Health

10 ... Saccade - Through Your Eyes ... Cedar Sanderson in her substack

Rolegaming

11 ... Happy Golden Anniversary Dungeons and Dragons by Jim McCoy

Sercon

14 ... Michael Bishop Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz,

Food of Famous Authors

16 Kibbeh in a Pan ... Cooking by Cedar Sanderson

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: All material in this issue, unless expressly noted otherwise, is contributed for one-time use only in this publication in its various print and electronic forms including electronic archival libraries. All other copyrights are retained by the contributor. Other use of any other portion of this publication in any medium requires the express permission of the current (at time reproduction is to be made) President and Directorate of N3F and the original copyright holder.

Letter to the Editors

Dear George and Jon:

Many thanks for Tightbeam 361. Life is getting back to normal after a long week at the World Fantasy Convention in Niagara Falls, New York, and other responsibilities are making their demands. Here goes...

Some very nice cover art from Alan White, probably one of SF's least appreciated artists. My loc... Taral's passing was certainly marked by many in the fanzine and furry communities. Outside of these communities, though...many local fans in Toronto had heard of him, few had actually met him, and even fewer had seen the quality of his artwork. Perhaps we are never quite as well-known as we think we might be.

The Superman comic...I am not a comic reader, but I can ask some questions. Does the world need heroes? Yes, it does. Superhero comics wouldn't be nearly as popular as they are. Do we need powerful people without morals and restraint? I think we already have too many of them, and some of them are involved in politics. Some have that power, but have yet to learn how to use it safely, and for the benefit of the masses.

World Fantasy Convention...we knew this wasn't the kind of convention we used to go to, and we knew it was more of a professional conference, but still, we had some fun. Yvonne and I ran a table for Amazing Stories in the dealers' room, and while sales were good at this literary gathering, to be honest, sales were better at the Buffalo NASFiC. It was worth going down from Toronto to Niagara Falls early, and we left for home late on the Sunday of the con. This convention also saw my very first autograph session for Amazing Stories: Best of 2023, and while I didn't sell or sign any books, it was still exhilarating. Our next convention, our final one for the year, is Loscon 50. I hope to sell and sign some books there, and otherwise meet up again with old friends, help out, and end our year with a bang.

Thank you for this issue, and I am sure another will be along soon.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

Anime

Kino's Journey ~The Beautiful World Review by Jessi Silver

Episode 3 – Bothersome Country – Crunchyroll – Hulu – Funimation
Content Warning: Use of military weaponry.

Kino encounters a setback while traveling which doesn't present an immediate solution, so decides to sleep on it until they come up with some way to address it. While Kino is napping, Hermes feels the ground begin to rumble. They first suspect an earthquake, but the source of the shaking turns out to be something much less natural – it's a huge country on wheels, traveling across the land on an unstoppable, never-ending journey.



Kino hails the country and they seem very welcoming. They're met at ground level by a diplomat, who then accompanies them above and gives them a tour. The country is very clean and modern, and runs on caterpillar tracks that are almost always in motion (if they stop for too long, the giant generator that powers the country will overheat and explode). There are cameras hovering outside the metal borders that send back images of what's going on outside. The top floor

is a beautiful park – the one place where the sun shines and people can enjoy the natural light. The children about to graduate from primary school are even painting a striking mural on the outside wall of the country, depicting the most memorable sight they witnessed during their days in school. Kino is impressed by the place's modernity and the many creature comforts (like clean sheets and hot water – very important to a traveler who's used to drinking from dirty streams and rarely getting to bathe). The place seems like a dream.

It's a few days into Kino's stay when the host country encounters an obstacle – another country whose border wall spans the area between two mountains. This country is understandably unhappy about potentially having their assets (infrastructure and agricultural fields) crushed beneath the wheels of a giant vehicle, and once negotiations go sour (almost immediately), they open fire. While the missiles don't have much of an effect on the strong outer walls of the moving country, they do begin to mark up the children's mural. Kino volunteers to take out the missile tracking system in order to prevent any further damage, and is hailed as a hero when their shots deftly hit their targets (with no loss of human life in the process). After the ordeal is over, Kino continues traveling, having used their time aboard the moving country to avoid their earlier setback.

Episode 4 – Ship Country – Crunchyroll – Hulu – Funimation
Content Warning: non-lethal gun violence and a stabbing injury.

Shizu and Riku continue to look for a permanent place to settle. At the shore, they encounter a giant ship whose population is there to trade for supplies. This famous “ship country” is as mysterious as it is huge, and this piques Shizu's interest. He and Riku board the ship to both gain passage to the Western continent and to see what, if anything, its cloaked figures are hiding.

Once aboard, Shizu is given a choice by the country's leaders: either join them and serve as an overseer to the workers living in the ship's belly, or join those workers in their labor and living conditions. Shizu chooses the latter. The people living in the ship's internals seem perfectly kind and welcoming to the traveler in their midst. They provide Shizu with a guide, a very quiet girl named Tifana or “Ti” for short. Ti doesn't say much, but she does show Shizu around the ship, including some abandoned areas in disrepair. Shizu becomes concerned because there are so many seemingly essential areas of the ship that are falling apart, flooded, or otherwise inaccessible and it's soon clear that the country won't be afloat for much longer unless something is done to address the maintenance situation. The working population (who as Shizu begins to notice, don't actually seem to be doing much or have anything to do in the first place) seems unconcerned, and claims that the overseers will take care of them. Shizu decides to discuss the issue directly with the leadership.

The overseers are specifically uninterested in talking the matter over, and send one of their members to silence Shizu. That individual turns out to be Kino, who also boarded the ship some time ago and chose to aid the overseers when given the initial option. When Shizu explains the situation with the ship he then invites Kino to join him in his quest to get the overseers to see reason. When they arrive atop the leaders' tower, however, the situation becomes even stranger. The overseers ask Shizu whether his concern over the populace indicates that he plans to become their king. When he answers somewhat in the affirmative, the overseers collapse into nothingness before their eyes. Shizu brings the ship ashore and sets the people free, but instead they become angry and return to the ship's underbelly. They've never known life outside the ship, the land doesn't have the comforting tremors that they're used to, and who does Shizu think he is, anyway? As they're leaving and the doors are closing, Ti remains. She was an outsider to begin with, abandoned by her parents and shunned by the other humans on the ship. The overseers, really a complex AI system, raised her. Now they're abandoning her, just as she was abandoned by her blood family. It's only after a tense few moments that Shizu invites Ti to join Riku and himself on their travels. Kino leaves, perhaps to meet them again someday after Shizu finds a permanent settlement.

I mentioned in the opening of the post that I felt that these episodes, much like episodes 1 and 2, had some similarities that made them a surprisingly good pair. We talked a lot about the morals, ethics, and rules-lawyering related to how the act of killing is seen and portrayed in the different countries and stories depicted in episodes 1 and 2. This time the initial similarities between the two episodes is more visual and physical – they both involve countries that are constantly on the move and the unique issues and problems that occur as a result of this. As one would expect, though, both takes provide some unique insight into the types of consequences that occur as the result of such a massive conglomeration of parts and people being anything but stationary.

Episode 3 is interesting to me because of how conflicted I was by the end. The citizens and leadership of the moving country all seem very nonchalant about the inevitable destruction involved in their constant travels. The diplomat expresses some minor sadness about the huge tracks they leave in their wake (“Anyone who travels leaves their mark behind”), but since the consequence of their not moving is their inevitable destruction from their overheating generator, it appears that any other ethical dilemmas resulting from their continued movement are outweighed by their duty to survive. This is all well and good until they literally trample over another country's agricultural fields to make their forward progress. The walled country is nominally given a choice – either get out of the way willingly, or by force – but is this really a choice? On the other hand, the walled country seems like it's populated by grade-a jerks – it's not because they start shooting off missiles at the moving country, because that to me seems like a typical, expected response. As we learn at the end of the episode, however, they tried to extort Kino when Kino attempted to pass into their country, by attempting to take one of Kino's weapons as a “toll.” It sounds as though the wall they put in place was explicitly to facilitate the strong-arming of people attempting to pass through, so perhaps the world would be better off if that country had a hole bored through said wall.

My first question is related to that line of thinking – what are your thoughts on the justification either side has to their position (moving forward to ensure the survival of their country and citizens, versus the right to build a wall and collect {perhaps unreasonable} tolls on others)? It's stated in the episode that every country (much like every person) causes some degree of bother



or inconvenience to others simply by existing. Do you think that this is enough justification for what transpires?

Throughout the episode, the term 迷惑 (meiwaku – trouble, annoyance, bothersome) is used repeatedly. It's a concept that's culturally important to Japanese people – they don't want to be a source of "meiwaku" to others. Do you think that this

term and concept adequately indicates the degree to which each country is affected by one-another?

It seems to me that there might be other solutions for the traveling country's issue of their overheating generator; that its overheating could be addressed in some other way, if they decided to expend some resources studying it (they're clearly technologically advanced enough to do so). How do you interpret the fact that they've chosen to let it be?

I found myself interpreting this episode (as well as episode 4) in terms of things that countries do and have done in "real life." While there hasn't yet been a case where a country has physically driven over a neighboring country (that I know of), there are almost countless cases of countries having invaded others, imposing their will and leaving much more than footsteps behind. Do you have any thoughts on this?

Episode 4 was compelling to me not so much due to the makeup of its moving country, but more so for the consequences to its bottle civilization which after many generations eventually came to the surface. Like the moving country from episode 3, there are clearly some issues that could have been addressed at some earlier time that would have allowed the ship to remain functional and the populace to have a greater concept of the outside world and their potential opportunities to exist elsewhere than beneath the ship. The AI may have avoided simply becoming overseers and chosen instead to educate the children further on the ship's functions, ensuring that generations to come could maintain the vehicle and prevent it from deteriorating. The AI could have explained the existence of the outside world and allowed more freedom. But of course, perhaps as an effect of the AI not being human itself, this didn't happen and the two groups settled into an easy, though eventually self-destructive, relationship. Looking at how things ended up in the episode, it's almost as if Shizu was a virus, disrupting the balance of the relationship and altering the makeup of the ship's "body" going forward.

I don't have as many structured questions related to this episode in particular (though I would love to hear people's general thoughts about the episodes as well – please don't feel obligated to stick to a "script" if you have any personal responses to share), but I did have a couple of thoughts:

Much like in episode 3, I found myself relating this country's situation to real-life ways in which countries haven't done right by their own existences. Specifically, I was struck by the concept that the "broken parts" of the ship have been left in place to deteriorate rather than anyone taking the initiative to replacing them. I think this is a powerful concept that relates very closely to some of the things my country (USA) has approached some of its many social issues. What are your thoughts?

More than once, a character (in at least one case it's Riku, the very wise talking dog), refers to the ship country as "this country, or rather this ship..." I personally found it odd because it's both a ship and a country, but do you find any particular significance in the fact that they corrected themselves in this way?

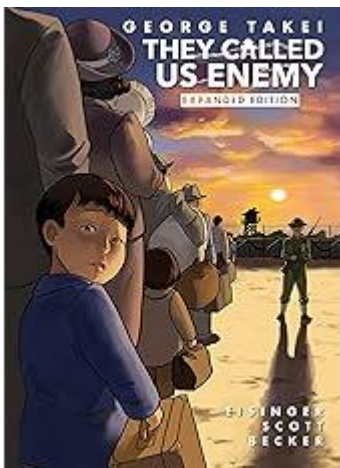
Shizu unfortunately finds out that, while making a change he thought would be positive for the ship country's people, he acted without knowing the entire truth of the matter. I find this to be a very telling realization especially since I feel this is something which occurs in relations between actual countries. It begs the question – while it is natural to want to correct injustices as we see them, what can or should be done (if anything), if the people being affected by injustice don't see it as such?

I didn't get much into Kino's specific motivations this week, but I feel that there are at least some things that happen in episode 3 that might make it interesting to explore that a little further, so feel free to discuss that as well. This series continues to fascinate me, especially when doing these deep-dives. I hope everyone else is having a fulfilling watch-along so far, too!

Graphic Novels

They Called Us Enemy - Expanded Edition Written by George Takei, Justin Eisinger and Steven Scott. Art by Harmony Becker

Review by Jim McCoy



Life as a young boy in my the McCoy household centered around three things: Star Trek, sports and World War II movies. I've seen more John Wayne flicks than John Wayne. I knew the names of the bridge crew of the Enterprise before I could name most of my friends' parents. And don't get me started on sports or the creative way my own dear father was known to use profanity while watching our local Detroit teams play (and trust me, the man was a master.) It really kind of sucks then that I'm not more excited about sharing an experience that involved both George Takei from ST:TOS and World War II.

Don't get me wrong. They Called Us Enemy by George Takei et al. is actually a very well written and well drawn graphic novel. (I'm going with the name "graphic novel" even though novel

implies fiction and They Called Us Enemy is a true story because there is no word or phrase for a comic book that's non-fiction, at least to the best of my knowledge and belief.) I just kind of wish it hadn't been written.

Listen folks, I know that the United States has done some screwed up stuff in its past. I have a BA in History, I've studied a bunch of it. From the Indian Wars (and yes, conquest is common throughout history, but paying a bounty for scalps of your enemies is not) slavery/racism, etc. None of that is good and all of it bothers me, but I can't help but have a special hatred of the in-

internment of Japanese citizens of the United States, at the time when Hitler was killing camps full of Jews, a little bit worse than the rest of it. Maybe I'm wrong for that, but it is what it is.

For all of that though, *They Called Us Enemy* is a well written, entertaining, touching and oddly honest depiction of what George Takei went through when his family was forced into a camp. I say oddly honest because he speaks of train trips from camp to camp almost fondly when I would have expected nothing but vitriol. He also makes a point at the end about Americans being willing to talk about the camps and about the beauty of American democracy even if it does screw up at times. It would have been very easy for him to be much more bitter and he's not. That says a lot about him as a person.

The story is told simply but well. This is not some unreadable treatise by some academic hack. It almost feels like sitting on my grandma's couch cracking nuts and listening to my grandpa tell stories. The writers of this story hit the perfect note. I followed the story from place to place and from event to event easily. Some of it I could readily sympathize with.

We get a really good look at young George and the Takei family. He does his best to show his readers his parents point of view. His pride in his father's accomplishments and hard work is both obvious and well deserved. His pride in his mother's accomplishments and ingenuity is both of the above as well. Sneaking a forbidden sewing machine into an internment camp was quite the trick and it was every bit as necessary as it must have been frightening to pull off.

The art in the book is simple but beautiful. It's well drawn and pulls the reader in but it's not too much. It's this weird mix of "we need to use the art to tell the story" and "we need to keep the art from getting in the way of the story" and somehow Harmony Becker pulled it off. I don't know how that's possible, but I saw it with my own eyes. Her drawings depict what happened but without any type of an artistic flourish. This was art that was written by someone who was dedicated to sharing a story and not by someone who wanted to show off.

I'll take it one step further: The art in *They Called Us Enemy* is all in black and white and that was a great choice. I like it for two reasons. One is that I grew up on black and white World War II movies and the monochrome look is not just nostalgic, but it evokes that old world feeling for me. With the lack of color I'm transported to a time that feels familiar even though it was over three decades before I was born. The other reason is a little more complicated, but I'll try to explain it like this:

There are some things that just need to be shown in a somewhat muted manner. I'm not saying they should be silenced, but I am saying that too much color can give a somewhat celebratory mood. No one goes to a fireworks show to see black and white explosions. Patriotic types in the US (and this is a group I belong to) talk about the "red, white, and blue" and not some monochromatic depiction of the American flag.

Another black and white comic I talked about, *Maus*, used a black and white color scheme to good effect as well. It is good to keep somber subjects (and the internment of Japanese citizens is certainly something that no one should be proud of) in a darker, more solemn setting.

I find it necessary to repeat something I said about *Maus* though: I would be careful giving this type of a comic to a young person, or a classroom full of them, if they didn't have the historical background to go with this. I linked my *Maus* review earlier. There were some statistics I point-

ed to at the time regarding the fact that younger people aren't taking the Holocaust as seriously as they should be. I sometimes wonder if that's because of things like comic books about these events.

I've been told that works like *Maus* and *They Called Us Enemy* are the only way to get the emotional impact of their respective events across. That may very well be true. It's also true that most people don't take things they read in comics seriously. I know that Spiegelman and Takei both intended their work to bring attention to important subjects and get a message out. I just hope that their work doesn't accomplish the opposite of what they intended.

So if you're going to hand a copy of *They Called Us Enemy* to a young person, make sure you give them some historical background. Make sure that they know this is one family's story and that there were many more families and camps than just the ones in the book. And make sure they know this isn't some made up story. That it actually happened. But read *They Called Us Enemy* and share it because it's both a good story and an important one. Just do it right.

Health

Saccade

Through Your Eyes

Cedar Sanderson in her substack

Health Benefits of Literary Fandom

When we read, our eyes alternate between saccades, rapid movement from one part of the text to another, and fixations, where the cognitive uptake of the text is occurring. Only, as with so much else in science, it isn't quite that simple. There is no clear understanding of why the brain decides it will saccade to the next word or phrase, and saccades may occur so rapidly in a fast reader they become almost instantaneous. What is clear is the connection between the ability to successfully saccade and cognitive abilities. Loss of the reading comprehension, due in part to inability to focus on words and comprehend them as the eye wanders randomly, is a determination of dementia and other cognitive disorders.

Reading, as I think most of us understand even when we haven't stopped to think about it, improves with practice. Speed isn't necessarily the factor here - you don't need to read quickly to comprehend well, and contra, you don't necessarily lose comprehension if you are a very fast reader. This is characteristic to every reader, and there are connections between difficulty in sustaining saccadic eye movement and ADHD. Dyslexics find it sometimes easier to read 'floating' or moving text than they do fixed text on a screen or page, due to the smooth eye movements needed to follow the drift of the text. There are many ways to read, and exploring the options is a very good thing. Reading is the whetstone of the mind.

The eye is controlled by the brain, harnessing tiny ocular muscles to control the light allowed entrance to the eye, and the direction of that focal lens, a wonderful system. Like any other muscles, the eyes should be exercised. Maintaining a reading habit not only gives the mind sharpness, but helps the eyes as well. You should be reading! And I can hear you thinking so loud it echoes off the screen, "I don't have time...!" You do. You must. It is a rare person who

has not even a few moments to spare from their daily obligations. If you find it difficult to focus on reading, that should be a sign to you that you will need to rebuild the ability to saccade. If we don't use the eyes, we lose the ability to fixate, to saccade smoothly, but this can be regained.

There has been a great deal of buzzing online recently about boys (and then, to men as they grow) not reading. Many are concerned, but some are more blasé about it. 'What is the big deal?' they seem to ask. The ability to read isn't an easy discipline to regain, and a lifetime without it takes a toll on reasoning skills, the ability to learn empathy with others, contact on thinking outside your own sphere and last but certainly not least, your own imagination. Reading, far more than video, sparks your imagination when it comes to fiction, to fill in the details the author left for you to work in on your own, in a pleasant collaboration. Boys who give up reading because there is nothing that interests them are impoverished for it. We need more books for them, for their minds and their eyes and their souls to be nourished by reading.

Here's my challenge to you, then. If you don't already read every day, try in this coming month. Set a timer, make a quiet space, and get a book in front of your eyes. Practice your saccades and fixations. Practice your focus. It will help if you choose something pleasant to read at first, which you enjoy. Read for ten or fifteen minutes a day, at least. I think you will find that you can make that a longer interval in time, if you struggle with reading to begin with. If, like me, you tend to be lost in the book and don't have time to spend hours with it, use the timer's sound as a cue to put it down and pick up the next task. I suspect you'll find yourself scheduling reading time as a reward, before you know it! Quiet time with a book, a cozy place to sit, perhaps some music, and a cat if you have one. Bliss. Your brain will thank you.

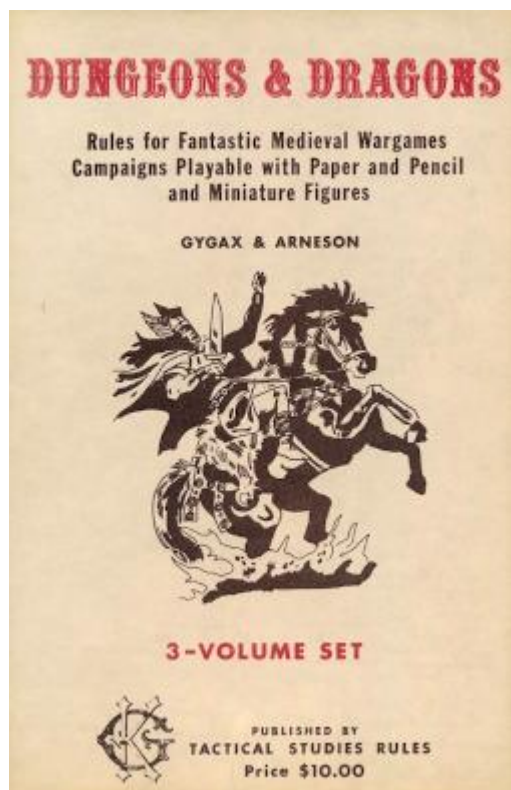
Our lives become a hectic whirl the further we get from childhood, it seems. The eye's saccadic movements have nothing on our daily schedules. Remember, though: the brain doesn't retain any information during saccade. It's during fixation, when the eye is at rest, when it takes up what is on the page (or, yes, screen) and comprehends it. If we don't slow down to a standstill once in a while, we stop learning. Our minds stiffen and age. If you value your brain, give it what it needs. Read.

Rolegaming

Happy Golden Anniversary Dungeons and Dragons by Jim McCoy

Once upon a time, long ago, a cousin of mine who probably wouldn't admit it anymore introduced me to a game called Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, a game which was then in its Second Edition. It was a game that had everything a young man could ever want: Dragons, Dungeons, Gold, Fighting, Dice...

It was an adventure that never had to end because, once you were done with the current adventure, you could queue another one up. When I got tired of my dwarven fighter/mage/thief I could switch to playing my elven bard or my human paladin (which I -on no level- fudged the rolls to make, unless you count reality) and off I would go in pursuit of more treasure, or that one annoying twit that kept arresting people and wanted to know what happened to the magistrate's amulet and why someone said they thought they saw me wearing it. (And that NEVER



HAPPENED. Now, had someone said they saw it in my backpack, that may have been a different story.)

Now, if you were in the mood to be pedantic (and if you're reading this, you're most likely a geek, a nerd, or both) you may be tempted to point out that my introduction to the game Dungeons and Dragons wasn't really my introduction to D&D overall. I had loved the cartoon when it was on Saturday mornings, even if I thought the Dungeon Master was a little creepy. But honestly, who wouldn't? I kind of still do.

And it didn't stop there. I discovered the various game world box sets: First Greyhawk, then Spelljammer, Forgotten Realms...

I could go on. The really important part is that the box sets led to books. I was introduced to The Dragonlance Chronicles by my friend Jeff Cauldwell, and I fell in love with the world of Krynn and fantasy literature in general (IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT, JEFF!!). My sister grabbed me one of the Greyhawk novels for Christmas

one year. The Dark Sun novels were freaking painfully amazing and gave me flashbacks to the Thomas Covenant novels. Then came Spelljammer and it's take on space travel. OMG DUDE!!! Trek/Wars in D&D. I was in love.

And then came the Dwarven Nations trilogy. I have a serious love for the dwarven folk and, while I enjoyed Flint Fireforge (and named both D&D and Everquest characters after him) the reason I'm writing a dwarf centered novel, the reason I'm reading an unrelated series about dwarves now, and the reason I started the last campaign I DM'ed in a dwarven town was really The Dwarven Nations Trilogy. I love the little buggers. Hardworking, no-nonsense taking, and yes, I am one of THOSE McCoys (if you don't believe me ask a Hatfield) never giving up, stubborn asshole, and orc skull splitting dwarves are the most bestest things about fantasy fiction.

Wait what?

You disagree? You're wrong. Dwarves are objectively the best thing that ever happened to fantasy anything. There is no counter argument.

But I digress.

As usual.

Digression is, however, my strongest skill as a blogger.

Anyone who reads fantasy fiction and hasn't read R.A. Salvatore's Forgotten Realms novels needs to have their head examined while they're wandering off to the bookstore to grab copies.

Start with Drizzt Do'Urden and then head over toward Cadderly the cleric afterward. I haven't reviewed the books here because it's been a long time since I read one, but they are magnificent. What's more, the Forgotten Realms are extremely popular in not just Salvatore's novels, but in pretty much everything D&D that takes place in digital form: Baldur's Gate, Neverwinter Nights, even Tiny D&D Adventures the old Facebook app before the Google Play store was a thing. And, of course, for pretty much all of the D&D movies.

I know I'm in the minority in that I loved all four of the movies. I know that most of you would disagree. I know that the first three movies basically felt like bad B movies. I've also sat at more than one gaming table and I have to say that most of those tables couldn't even aspire to be B movies.

And the thing with D&D is that it doesn't even matter which form you prefer. Someone else out there loves it as much as you do and they'll be happy to discuss it with you. I've seen it happen. Two geeks sitting next to each other, not knowing each other, and all of a sudden someone mentions painting minis or playing video games and two hours later they're best friends talking about stuff they've done in the game. I have personally walked up to someone reading a copy of a D&D novel at the library and started a conversation. She was cute, too, only I was married at the time. (But if you're reading this, I'm divorced now!) It happens.

And listen...

I'm not here for the Edition Wars. I've never played Basic D&D regardless of what color the box was. I started with Second Edition, but my buddy Pat (RIP, brother. I told you that shit was bad for you.) had a first edition copy of Unearthed Arcana and it never really occurred to us to convert anything. I've played Third Edition, missed Fourth, and have played and DM'ed 5e. It's time for the proverbial "every edition has its strengths and weaknesses" routine, only I'm not going to bother. Play what you like. Leave others alone and, if you're not a dick, you can sit at my table.

The crazy part is that D&D is not just a game either. It's a creative outlet. The first worlds I created, I created for D&D and for the Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game (First Edition). If you can read through all of the various subclasses and/or kits and can't come up with a new twist on an old trope (even if it's just by tweaking something there) then I can't help you. It's all there. And if it's not there, you can create it.

That is why, in my opinion, the greatest of all forms of D&D is the homebrew edition. Why? Because it's all about a DM, their players, and what works for them. I've never seen the sheer volume of homebrew that I see in D&D anywhere else. Even if you play modules, I can pretty much guarantee your group is home ruling SOMETHING at your table. The Rules as Written have been trampled over so many times that it's laughable. I LOVE THAT ABOUT THEM.

Oh, right. Podcasts. I forgot the podcasts. That's probably because I don't listen to them because I suck and you should hate me. Or sumfin'. If my cousin Hallie finds out I haven't watched/listened to Critical Role, she's probably gonna kick my ass. I'll get around to it at some point. Probably. I should probably watch/review a season of something at some point. Someday. When I get the time. But never mind me. I know a lot of people love them and that's what matters.

Oh crap, I forgot the art. I love the art. Larry Elmore is basically the greatest artist ever to pick up a paint brush but there have been a whole bunch of amazeballs fantasy artists and a lot of them have made D&D related artwork. And then there are the magazines...

Listen, I've gotta work in the morning. I need to end this here.

And yes, I know the whole gaming license thing made some people mad. Wizards retracted all the crap and fixed the problem. Everyone is back to making their money again. It's all good. Let's all move on.

Roll those dice. Have fun storming the castle. Kill the dragon. Loot the horde. Whine to your DM because you can't afford full plate at first level. But fire it up folks and let's lay some D&D. Thank you, Mr. Gygax for the endless hours of fun and fellowship your creation has provided. Here's to hoping it lasts at least another fifty years.

Sercon

Michael Bishop Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. N3F Historian



Michael Lawson Bishop (November 12, 1945 – November 13, 2023) was an award-winning science fiction (SF) writer. He quickly became noted for the intelligence and imagination of his fiction. He was nominated for major awards, and won several.

Early Life

Bishop was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, and educated at the University of Georgia: BA, 1967; MA, 1968, both in English. He was raised as an “air force brat” and later served in the U. S. Air Force (and taught English at the USAF Academy Preparatory School, during 1968 - 1972).

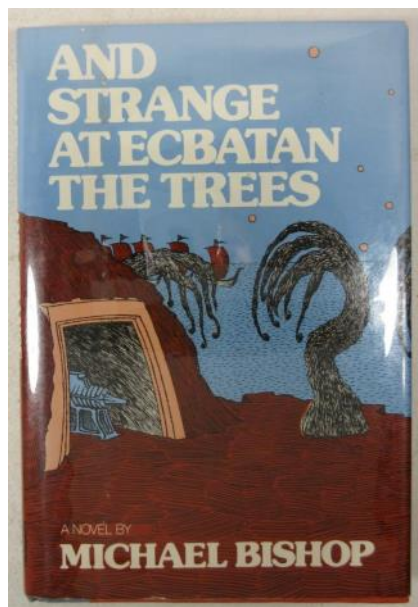
He became a freelance writer in 1974, after teaching English at the University of Georgia.

Initial SF Publications

First SF publication: “Piñon Fall” in *Galaxy* (October, 1970). First SF novel: *A Funeral for the Eyes of Fire* (1975). First SF collection: *Blooded on Arachne and Other Stories* (1982).

Critical Evaluations

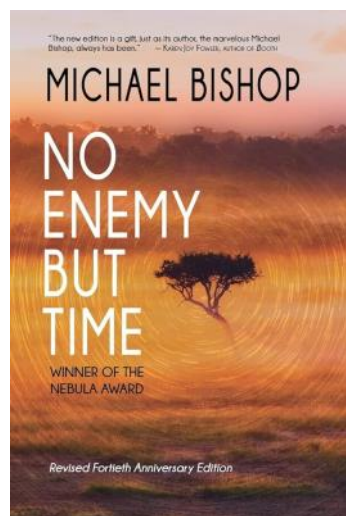
Often referred to as “a writer's writer,” Bishop was considered one of the genre’s finest literary authors, a premier humanist writer of SF who also wrote poetry, reviews, and a screenplay. His writing about writing is considered to be very insightful. In addition, Bishop was known in SF



circles for a controversial article he wrote for *Amazing*, “Should SFWA Abolish the Nebula Awards?” that appeared in the May, 1990 issue.

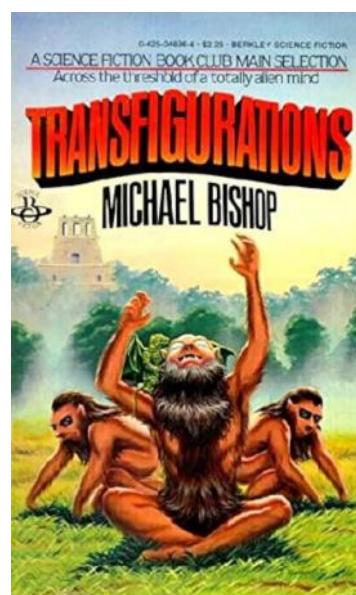
Books

His popular books included *And Strange at Ecbatan the Trees* (1976) [also published as *Beneath the Shattered Moons*], *A Little Knowledge* (1977), *Stolen Faces* (1977), *Catacomb Years* (1979), *Transfigurations* (1979), *Under Heaven's Bridge* (1981) [with Ian Watson], the horror novel *Who Made Stevie Crye?* (1984), the collection *One Winter in Eden* (1984), *Ancient of Days* (1985), *Close Encounters with the Deity* (1986) [a short fiction collection], *The Secret Ascension* (1987), *Unicorn Mountain* (1988), *Apartheid, Superstrings, and Mordecai Thurbona* (1989), *Emphatically Not SF*, *Almost* (1990), and *Count Geiger's Blues* (1992). Many of his stories are set in the American South.



Several of his books were finalists for World Fantasy Awards, including *Brittle Innings* (Best Novel). A more recent book was *Blue Kansas Sky* (2000), a collection of four novellas, one original. A collection of previously uncollected stories, *Brighten to Incandescence: 17 Stories*, appeared in 2003. Another short fiction collection was *At the City Limits of Fate* (1996). Appearing in 2005 was the nonfiction work *A Reverie for Mister Ray & Other Ambivalent Animadversions About Speculative Fiction*.

He edited the anthology *A Cross of Centuries, 25 Fantasies about Christ* (2007), and wrote two mysteries (as by Philip Lawson), two poetry collections, a screenplay, and the mainstream novel *An Owl at the Crucifixion* (1980).



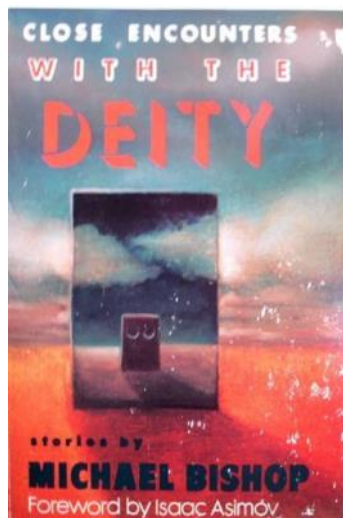
Pseudonym

He occasionally used the pseudonym of Philip Lawson (joint pseudonym with Paul Di Filippo) when they collaborated on two (1998, 2000) mystery novels.

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

His many honors included Phoenix, Rhysling, Nebula, Mythopoeic, Clark Ashton Smith, Shirley Jackson, and Locus awards. He was also nominated for several Hugo and World Fantasy Awards.

In addition, he was GoH at several conventions, including the 1992 World Fantasy Convention.



Interviews

Interviews with Bishop were published in *Locus*, with “The Blessing and the Curse,” appearing in the November, 2004 issue. Bishop on his writing: “I never started out to be a science fiction writer. I had mainstream ambitions early on, but I never wanted to restrict myself to that, either. I wanted it all.”

Some Concluding Comments

He died on November 13, 2023 in Pine Mountain, Georgia, after a long struggle with cancer.

He was survived by his wife Jeri, daughter Stephanie, and grandchildren; his son Jamie predeceased him.

A new collection, *A Few Last Words for the Late Immortals* (2021), has been published by Kudzu Planet Productions/Fairwood Press. This collection of 50 short pieces (34 stories, 15 poems or prose-poems, and one play about writing SF) spans his entire career.

Sources

Pohl, Frederik, Martin Greenberg, & Joseph Olander (eds.). *Galaxy – Thirty Years of Innovative Science Fiction*, 1980.

Reginald, R. (ed.). *Contemporary Science Fiction Authors*, 1975.

Smith Curtis C. (ed.). *Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers*, 1981.

Stableford, Brian. *Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Literature*, 2004.

Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were consulted, including *Fancylopedia 3*, *ISFDB*, and *Wikipedia*.

Food of Famous Authors

Kibbeh in a Pan

Cedar Sanderson

The recipe started with Claudia Roden’s *A Book of Middle Eastern Food*, but I’ve made some adjustments and additions. So what follows is what I made for supper last night. It turned out very well, and I’ll make it again sometime! To feed 12, I doubled the recipe, and baked it in an 11x17 pan. I suspect a single recipe should feed 6, or four if you have teens at home, and will likely work well in a 9x9 pan.

The general idea is that there is a pastry part, and a filling. Both include meat, which can be beef or lamb. Ground works just fine. I took exactly one photo while working on this, as I hadn’t planned to blog the recipe. That’s ok! This is what the filling looks like on the bottom layer of ‘crust.’

For the 'crust':

- 1 lb meat, ground or cut into small pieces
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp Kibbeh Spice
- 1 c fine burghul

Soak the burghul (cracked wheat) in warm water for about ten minutes. Drain, and squeeze to press out as much moisture as you can. There will be bits of burghul everywhere. This is a very hands-on, messy prep dish. It's fun!

I used a food processor to make this, as you'll take the meat, spices, and salt to a paste, then add in the onion and finally the soaked burghul. You'll likely have to start, stop, and scrape down the bowl several times. The traditional preparation is done in a mortar and pestle which is likely great for an upper-body workout.

For the filling:

- 1 medium or 1/2 large onion, finely chopped
- 3-4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1/2 lb ground or chopped meat
- 2 tsp Kibbeh Spice
- Salt
- 1 bunch parsley, chopped
- 1/3 c pine nuts
- oil for frying
- 1 stick butter, melted

Fry up the meat until browned, adding in the spice towards the end of this process. Add the garlic and onion and fry until translucent. Turn off heat, but leave on the burner, and stir in the parsley and pine nuts.

Preheat the oven to 390F, I was using convection for this dish. Heat to 400F for a conventional oven.

Divide your 'pastry' into halves. With wet hands to keep it from sticking too much to you, press one half into the bottom of the pan. Smooth it out nice and level. Spread the filling evenly over this. Then take portions of the remaining 'pastry' and flatten it out in your hands, until perhaps a half-a-finger thickness. Place these on top of the filling and carefully smooth them into one another until you have a nice smooth top with no seams or holes.

Cut with a sharp knife or dough blade into the portions you desire. Diamond shapes are traditional. You can decorate with pine nuts if you like. Pour the melted butter over the top as evenly as you can.

Bake at 390 (with convection, 400 if not) for 30-40 minutes, until the edges are crispy and browned, and there is bubbling from the filling around the edges. Allow to cool briefly, then

serve with a yogurt sauce, fresh lemon wedges, or pickled vegetables to cut through the richness.

Spicy goodness!





Real Martians
by Tiffanię Gray