

# The Stf Amateur 16



***The Stf Amateur*** 16  
January 2025

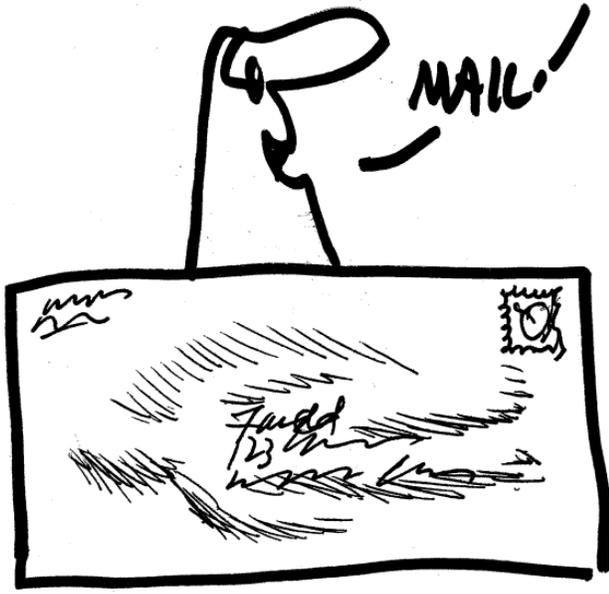
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You can learn more about cover artist Christopher Blosser  
at <https://allmylinks.com/christophersdoodles>.

*The Stf Amateur* is a bundlezine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for members of the United Fanzine Organization and select others, available via *eFanzines* (<https://efanzines.com>) and the Fanac Fan History Project (<https://fanac.org>), as well as for the Usual. Letters of comment, cover art, and spot illustrations are welcome and desired—as are other contributions. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

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—William Rotsler

**Mick Taylor**

Thank you for the latest *The Stf Amateur* bundle! They are always enjoyable, but the Portugal trip reports with lovely photos made this bundle my favorite yet.

[It is a special place, for sure.—HR]

**Garth Spencer**

Happy New Year! And thank you for the latest *Explosion Containment Umbrella* [for eAPA]!

[Happy new year to you, too! Another year, another month, another ish. Thank you for serving as Official Editor of eAPA. I enjoy participating and regret missing last month.—HR]

Re: your comments to me in *The Stf Amateur* #15—When I mentioned Jean-Paul GB (I don't know why I used those initials), I meant Jean-Paul L. Garnier, the owner of Space Cowboy Books who produces a regular newsletter, podcast, and small-press publications.

[That's whom I thought you meant, but I didn't want to assume. If readers of *The Stf Amateur* are ever in the area, you should be sure to stop by Space Cowboy Books at 61871 29 Palms Highway, Joshua Tree, CA 92252. It's a wonderful used book store. You can check out most of Garnier's activities at <https://spacecowboybooks.com>. I'm relatively productive, but Garnier's range of activities impresses and inspires me.—HR]

If I understand Cy Chauvin's letter of comment correctly, he tells us Peter Nicholls included a hoax reference in his work *Genre Fiction: The Roaring Years*, telling everyone that John W. Campbell had compiled a sort of guidebook on constructing imaginary galactic civilizations, for the reference of his more serious writers. Now I wonder if *Genre Fiction: The Roaring Years* itself existed.

[I know you're joking, but it sure does. You can obtain a copy from Dave Langford's Ansible Editions at <https://ae.ansible.uk/?t=roaring>. John D. Berry designed the book's cover, and the book was also reviewed in *BSFA Review* #19. Of course, that's all accepting as given that Chauvin, Nicholls, Langford, Berry, and the British Science Fiction Association exist. They might be elaborate hoaxes, all.—HR]

And what about the persistent Northwest Coast legend of the drowned civilization of Sitnalta, the land that will rise again when the Great Big Earthquake strikes? Or the prophecy that the Star People will come again to steal all our Venetian blinds? It's circumpolar, is what it is.

[Did you read the piece in the new issue of *The Alabaster Chronicles* about the Venetian conspiracy to steal all the Mars bars? That's why they're called Milky Way bars in the United States; they've gone undercover as part of the snack food relocation program.—HR]

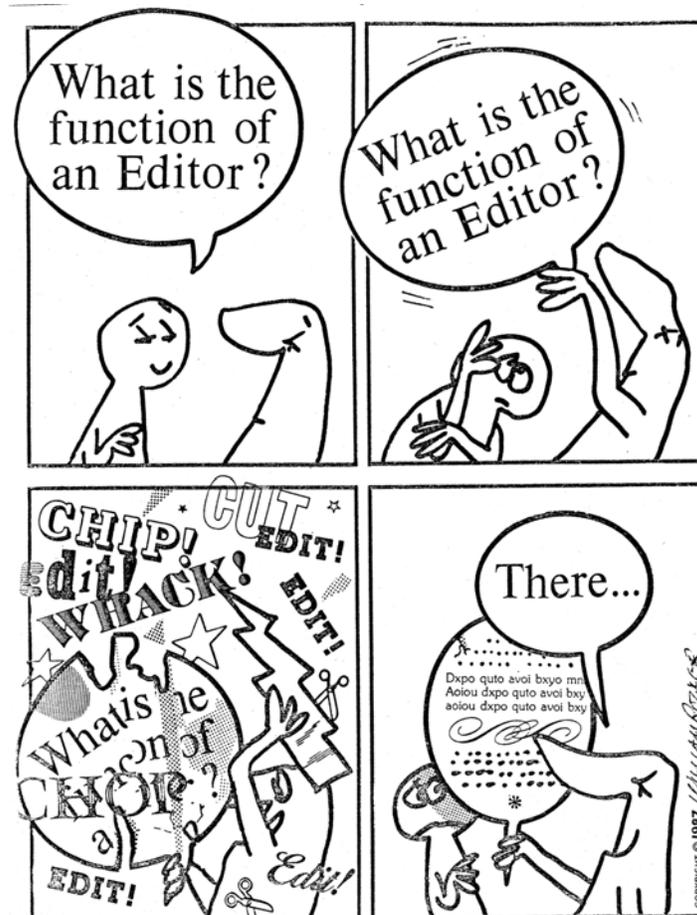
Touching on movie reviews, I watched *Gattaca* and appreciated it; I also saw part of *Predestination*, and immediately spotted that it was based on Robert A. Heinlein's story “—All You Zombies—.” It's a curious thing, how some movies get all the attention and others sort of coast under the radar.

[Both movies are really very good. I think they should be a bigger deal than they are. Glad you enjoyed them!—HR]

We also heard from: William Breiding, Perry Middlemiss, George Phillies, and Octávio dos Santos

In *This Here...* #82, Nic Farey made some kind remarks in a review of *The Stf Amateur* #15. While Lloyd Penney has yet to appear in this lettercol, he told me at Loscon that he reads every issue. That's good enough for me!

# Call for Submissions



—William Rotsler

Do you write or draw? As *The Stf Amateur* continues to evolve from an interconnected assortment of standalone apazines to its current bundlezine format, it's only natural that it eventually becomes a proper genzine. Effective immediately, *The Stf Amateur* is open to submissions of all kinds.

*The Stf Amateur* is hereby requesting the following:

- sf, fantasy, and horror news
- fanart, illos, and fillos
- cover art
- poetry
- filk songs and lyrics
- short fiction
- articles and essays
- fanzine, book, movie, television, and other reviews
- con reports
- jokes
- letters of comment
- ... and other material

If selected for publication, material will initially be included in one of my apazines, as well as a monthly issue of *The Stf Amateur*. Cover art will be considered solely for *The Stf Amateur*. Contributors will receive the issue in which their material appears.

Send your contributions to Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); or via fax to 323-916-0367.

## Telegraphs & Tar Pits #141

Dec. 5, 2024

*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to APA-L, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

### Last Week's Senryu

Back on LA time  
Travel, holiday, and con  
all behind me now

As much as we enjoyed our month in the northern interior of Portugal, it's good to be home—mostly because of the cat and area friends. (My weekly movie night returned Tuesday!) We spent the night Monday, Nov. 25, in a hotel near the airport in Porto, flying back to Los Angeles via Paris—with a several hour stopover—on the 26th. We arrived home before midnight that night.

Since then, I took the day that Wednesday to check in at work to see if anything had broken or progressed and prepared materials for the Loscon 50 Fanzine Corner. Thursday, Caitlin and I recognized Thanksgiving, sharing a dinner of chicken instead of turkey, green beans, mashed potatoes, homemade cranberry sauce, and sweet potato pie. And Friday was the start of Loscon—partial conrep below.

I returned to work at the office Monday, and it's been an intense reentry—and a very productive work week so far. (I even got the December issue of *The Stf Amateur* out!) There aren't many days until the end of the year, and still so much to do.

### Fandom in Strange Places

A free copy of the Dec. 2, 2024, issue of *People* magazine arrived in the mail earlier this week. I don't know why. I am usually not prone to read *People*, but I do have fond memories of it from childhood. My mother's hairdresser often had copies on the coffee table in her waiting area, and I'd flip through it while waiting for my mother—or for my own haircut.

Perusing the issue Wednesday afternoon, it was somewhat comforting to see that the magazine hasn't changed overmuch. What I remembered was red carpet fashion photography of celebrities, brief pieces about someone doing good by volunteering or overcoming a personal challenge, celebrity profiles, and perhaps a true crime article. That is what *People*

still publishes.

However, I was surprised to see fannish interests addressed not once, but four times. The Dec. 2 issue of *People* includes a two-page article about fantasy—perhaps romantasy—author Rebecca Yarros, who wrote the dragonriding novel *Fourth Wing*, soon to be the first in a trilogy. The piece focuses on her becoming embroiled in an online firestorm (including death threats) after expressing anti-war sentiments.

Her family was forced to move to maintain privacy, and the article largely focuses on her overcoming that difficulty, as well as ongoing health issues. It also concentrates on her mundane contemporary romances including *Variation*, published last month, and the forthcoming Empeyrean series title *Onyx Storm*.

A full-page Hasbro advertisement includes the *Magic: The Gathering Foundations* Starter Collection and the *Dungeons & Dragons 2024 Player's Handbook* in a roundup of seven gift recommendations. There's a full-page ad from Scholastic for Dav Pilkey's Dog Man, Cat Kid, and The Adventures of Captain Underpants books—which are genre adjacent and could very well serve as gateways to other comics and fantastic fare.



Los Angeles Times, July 8, 1955

Despite the problematic nature of J.K. Rowling in recent years, Scholastic has not canceled her. There's also a second full-page ad from the publisher for several Harry Potter-related and other Rowling books. The titles featured include *Christmas at Hogwarts* ("Experience a favorite holiday moment from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in this luminous picture book for the entire family!"), a collectible boxed set of the first three books in the Harry Potter series, and *The Christmas Pig*—a holiday fantasy in which "a boy and his ... toy pig ... embark on a journey together." Rumor is they go to Pacoima.

Fantasy is alive and well in the pages of *People* magazine. To quote another book, "That's some pig."

### Trip Report: Portugal (cont.)

Our penultimate weekend in Portugal, my wife and I took a car trip to Lisbon for the weekend. On the way Friday midday, we stopped in Coimbra, the fourth-

largest urban area in the country as well as home to the oldest university in Portugal. The first Portuguese university opened in Lisbon in 1290, moving to Coimbra in 1308.

We parked at the edge of the city, near the Mondego River and procured lunch at Café Santa Cruz, a notable, historic eatery located next to the similarly named church, part of a 12th century monastery. We walked to Mercado Municipal D. Pedro V, the public market, which was no longer actively selling but still open. On the way, we stopped at Fonte da Manga, a beautiful fountain beside Restaurant Jardim da Manga, where we partook of traditional local pastries.

Driving on to Lisbon, we settled in at our hotel at the end of Avenida da Liberdade between it and Parque Eduardo VII, a Central Park-like green space—as well as the impressive Marques De Pombal monument. We walked up and down the avenue, checking out the Cinemateca Portuguesa Museu do Cinema, before seeking dinner, settling on a wonderful Tibetan restaurant—vegetarian—called Os Tibetanos.



Saturday morning, we walked back down the avenue toward Lisboa Rossio, exploring the train station before making our way to the Jardim Botânico de Lisboa, a beautiful oasis in an otherwise active city. Just beside the entrance to the garden, we browsed Livraria da Travessa (<https://www.travessa.pt>), a delightful shop with an excellent range of literature, including a healthy number of Portuguese books. We then made our way back toward the hotel to meet with a couple of science fiction friends, Octávio dos Santos (T&T #113) and Bruno Martins Soares, for lunch.

They introduced us to Alto Minho, a restaurant specializing in the cuisine of the region we tend to frequent. We talked about the city, their experiences

living there, our careers in journalism, the state of publishing in Portugal, and Soares's efforts to bring Portuguese speculative fiction writers to English readers via ebooks, Brodom Publishing. (<https://brodompublishing.com>) Both are authors in their own right, dos Santos writing *Espíritos das Luzes* and other books, and Soares publishing the Laura and the Shadow King series in English, as well as other books.

After our discussion-filled lunch, we made our way to a nearby screening (see below) before returning to the hotel, spending some time with our book selections, eventually seeking dinner for the evening. Continuing our culinary theme, perhaps, we enjoyed a very tasty meal at nearby Olá Nepal, making our way down the Himalayas. The food there was also excellent.

The next morning, we met a friend from Sweden who's lived in Lisbon for a decade, Johan Gustafson, for a historic walking tour—in Portuguese!—offered by Green Trekker (<https://greentrekker.pt>). Titled in translation *Lisbon of Spies*, the walking tour focused on the following:

In the cafés of Rossio and Avenida da Liberdade, or in the streets lit by street lamps and illuminated signs, diplomats, spies, royalty and refugees cross paths, coming from all corners of a Europe in the “dark.” Portugal had not yet fired a single weapon in this Second World War, but in the capital, the weapons were different: intrigue, opportunism and betrayal! Dances and counter-dances between members of the German, British and American secret services. On this new tour, we will pass by hotels and cafés, veritable nests of spies, and get to know the bohemian life of Lisbon in a Europe plunged into terror. We will meet the spies who influenced the course of the War from the capital and the female spies, because this world is not just for men!

Presumably largely inspired and informed by the book *Lisbon: War in the Shadows of the City of Light, 1939-1945* by Neill Lochery, the tour touched on locations frequented by storied double agent Juan Pujol García, James Bond author Ian Fleming, and Josephine Baker. Gustafson occasionally translated key tidbits for us, but we were largely able to pick up on what was happening by listening for names and then using the mobile Web.



Finishing the walking tour on the water by the Terreiro do Paço, we made our way back near the hotel for lunch with my friend’s family at Lída Restaurante & Bar, where we enjoyed the pleasant weekend weather at a sidewalk table.

Caitlin and I then returned to Póvoa de Lanhoso.

### The Ignorable Theme: Loscon 50

“Did you go to Loscon? What was your experience like?” Why, yes, I did! While I didn’t volunteer to staff this year, I did buy a membership and volunteer to run the Fanzine Corner with fellow eller John Hertz. The corner offered several entry points for those familiar with or interested in fanzines: informational fliers, a range of sample fanzines to peruse, free back issues of APA-L and LASFAPA for the taking, and art supplies members could use to contribute to *Losconzine* #50, our conzine.

The Fanzine Corner was located in the huckster room this year instead of in a more accessible space, near some other fan tables. To my right, Terry and friends promoted the Montreal (Canada) 2027 Worldcon Bid. (<https://bid.montreal2027.ca/en-ca>) Tel Aviv, Israel, is also bidding to host Worldcon. (<https://worldcon.sf-f.org.il>)

I spent the con sharing time between tabling—mostly asking passers by if they liked to write or draw once I settled on that way to engage fellow members—ambling about the huckster room to converse with authors at the con to discuss short fiction or article submissions inspired by their work, exploring the Art Show and reaching out to participants for art submissions, browsing the various book vendors—giving no little money to the LASFS table—and checking out programming of interest.

Parking at the Hilton Los Angeles Airport was challenging, but Friday morning I found a space on the lowest level. It’s an expensive place to park: \$59

generally, or \$20 with the discount offered hucksters, of which I was one. (My badge wore its first ribbon: Dealer. I was a dealer of fanzines!) Food was also somewhat challenging. On-site food options were expensive, with my Friday morning omelet breakfast with coffee costing about \$30 and a Reuben panini across the lobby running \$20. Within walking distance, there were less expensive options, including Carl’s Jr. and Denny’s, which was a godsend.

You can look forward to my programming remarks in future fanzines, but I thoroughly enjoyed my roughly 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. days—I went home evenings—and conversations with fannish friends and new acquaintances. *Losconzine* #50 is going to be a bumper number. We got a respectful number of art submissions, including some from Art Show participants, and the upcoming issue will include more short fiction than it ever has before.

With more than 800 members, the 50th Loscon was a visible success. Even Dave McCarty was there. Kudos to all involved.



—William Rotsler

## Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

### *The Night of the Hunted*

During our weekend trip down to Lisbon, we were aware that the Lisboa Film Festival was occurring. (<https://leffest.com/en>) On that Saturday, Nov. 16, we realized that after lunch with friends, we could make a screening within walking distance nearby. To my surprise and delight, the film showing at Medeia Nimas Cinema, a small independent theater, was Jean Rollin's 1980 sf feature *La Nuit des traquées*.



*Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1955

But I didn't know it was sf. All I was aware of in terms of Rollin was his erotic vampire cinema such as *The Rape of the Vampire*, *The Nude Vampire*, and similar fare. So I was somewhat able to prepare Caitlin for what we experienced in French with Portuguese subtitles.

The festival programmer's introduction to the movie was enlightening. After failing to find commercial success with his erotic horror cinema, Rollin had turned to pornographic films in order to make ends meet. *The Night of the Hunted* was made after a string of skin flicks and was originally intended

to be what Ron Goulart might call a screwie. Rollin persuaded the producers to let him make an sf flick using the budget of a nudie film, which led him to enlist some of the actors he'd worked with in more erotic projects. The speaker also said the film was the closest to a "cult movie" they were screening during the festival, but they also showed David Cronenberg's *Crash*, so I don't know about that.

The result wasn't quite the Rollin I expected, but was adjacent—there are consistencies: beautiful women, bright red blood—and quite interesting in that it was an sf film more than it was a horror flick. In a somewhat Ballardian tale, a young man rescues a young woman he finds on the roadside. (Her naked friend hiding in the underbrush.) He soon realizes that her memory is imperfect, flawed, and very short term. She doesn't remember who she is, even forgetting events shortly after they occur even while with him.

Regardless, they make love, and when he leaves his apartment, she is taken back to some sort of a facility by a couple of mysterious figures. The rest of the movie occurs there, just outside, and in a nearby trainyard. It appears that some sort of scientific research is being done on subjects exposed to radiation, causing their memories and sense of self to erode. They sometimes remember family members or friends, or at least their connection to another person, and as their memories fail, all that remains is more animalistic instincts and experiences.

It was an interesting experience watching this movie in multiple languages I don't understand. At least once, Caitlin leaned in to whisper a key revelation, but I was largely able to understand what was going on in a general sense. I seem to have the movie on DVD at home, so at some point I might watch it again in English, but I might not need to. A wonderful chance opportunity while traveling!

### *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*

This 2017 film inspired by a long-running BD series aired on Portuguese television as *Valérian e a Cidade dos Mil Planetas*. Despite the publication of almost 30 Valérian and Laureline volumes between 1970 and 2022, the movie has not yielded a sequel, and I'm afraid the filmmakers missed their chance to establish what could have been quite the franchise.

For the most part, the movie is a faithful adaptation of the BD—first published in *Pilote* magazine in 1967—in terms of sf tropes and some imagery. Valérian and Laureline are enlisted to retrieve a pilfered item, which seems to be an important living remnant of an alien race displaced by the destruction of their home planet.

The special effects portraying the ever-growing

mobile space station, its urban environment and diverse population, as well as the interplanar market accessed utilizing virtual reality-like headsets are excellent.

What is lacking comes down to the protagonists. While I found the actress who portrayed Laureline, Cara Delevingne, to be compelling as the heroine, I fear that Dane DeHaan, then 31, didn't have the presence or mavity necessary to capture the potential of Valérian.

Similarly, while the chemistry between the two agents was amply resonant with that in the BD, too much focus was given to their love affair. In the BD, at least what I've read so far, it's either pure tension and potential—like Fox Mulder and Dana Scully in *The X-Files*—or an established, assumed love. In the movie, Valérian is portrayed as a bit of a wayward lothario who needs to persuade Laureline of his dedication and love.

The filmmakers, including BD fan Luc Besson, didn't need to make this flick a love story, or even address their relationship at all—if they'd been playing a long game. The two could have been portrayed similarly to Emma Peel and John Steed in *The Avengers* or Sapphire and Steel in, well, *Sapphire and Steel*.

Regardless, if you've enjoyed the BD, the movie is worth experiencing. And if you haven't read the BD yet, you should do so (at least one volume)—either before or after seeing the movie. It could have been the start of a stellar series.

### Comments on APA-L #3097

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #84, **Matthew Mitchell** informed ellers of his new tablet. I, too, have had recent experiences with new devices. You see, following my return from Portugal, Thanksgiving, and Loscon, apparently my mind had been wiped clean. Sunday night, I could not for the life of me remember the PIN for my work mobile, so I had to turn to my laptop to check the upcoming workday calendar.

After trying every single PIN I could think of, I gave up on it and checked online at work to see whether I could update my corporate mobile PIN. I could wipe and reset the device, so I did that, but when I tried to reassert my account to use the mobile, I got stuck in a login loop. So I had to request a new mobile for my day job. It arrived today, and I spent some time at the office getting it back up and running.

While I used to access work apps on my personal mobile, I've kept the two devices separate for some time now. I find that I prefer the more cleanly delineated work-life boundaries and like knowing that I'm not using too much of my personal mobile

services for work purposes—I'm not reimbursed—but I've missed having the work mobile the last few days. It's a hassle to have to go to my work laptop to check on the next day's schedule in the evening, and I'm glad to be back up and running again.

I'm sorry to hear about Nick's fall. I hope he heals fully and quickly. That's funny; we've been eating soup, too! We had to restock our oyster crackers as a result this week. What kind of crackers do you prefer? When I was younger, I was a Ritz man. Now I think they have too much sugar in them and have converted to Triscuits, which Caitlin prefers. (I grew up having Ritz, Triscuits, and Wheat Thins around.)

The naming of Triscuits is an interesting story. The cracker's name is either an indication of its three ingredients—whole grain wheat, canola or sunflower oil, and salt—or the wonderful phrase “electricity biscuit.” According to one food researcher (<https://mashable.com/article/triscuit-name-origin-electricity>), “Triscuit's early selling point . . . was that it was ‘baked by electricity’—the company was run out of Niagara Falls and powered the production process from the then-novel invention.” “They were ‘the only food on the market prepared by this 1903 process.’” Isn't that electrifying?



*Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1955

When I was involved in the child custody evaluation and shared custody, we used *DissoMaster*. Like you, I am flabbergasted that its producer is discontinuing it. I wasn't aware of anything else like it. *Xspouse* looks like one option. Belated happy birthday greetings to Quentin. We missed you at Loscon, though I appreciate your prioritization of family.

Though I missed the recent DVD-related Ignorable Theme, I can weigh in now that while in Portugal, I enthusiastically ordered the British DVDs for the past year's *Doctor Who* 60th anniversary specials, the Christmas special, and the season just past featuring Neuti Gatwa from *Amazon* in Spain. They're not available on NTSC or in the United States yet, though the 60th anniversary specials will finally hit our shores Dec. 10. (That's next week!) While overseas, I watched all three specials—one with my wife—and the Christmas special with my wife and a friend. I have not yet watched any of the recent series yet and

look forward to catching up when we return.

I'm not sure about ghost readers, but at Loscon last weekend, there was a panel discussion of the value offered by beta readers. I also quite like utility box art, which is occasionally arranged by local utility companies. Several of my artist friends have been able to design and paint utility boxes. I will share your feedback with cover artist Rev. Ivan Stang.

**John Hertz's** *Vanamonde* #1620 included a haiku mentioning Charles Young Drive North. Might that be Charles E Young Drive N just north of UCLA? It might be named after the Charles E. Young Research Library, in turn named for the university's longest-serving chancellor. I read and appreciated your recollections of using the IBM 1620. I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White.

And in *Toony Loons* #783, **Joe Zeff** shared the challenges of shaving a scabbed face. Are you *sure* you enjoy shaving with the new razor? I enjoyed reading your mention of snow in Colorado. It's been snowing lightly in southern Wisconsin, but not yet in New York City, though a colleague told me temperatures fell 20-30 degrees in the past week.

I will share your feedback with, I'm presuming, cover artist Rev. Ivan Stang. The piece adorning the cover of APA-L #3096 reminded me of Pokemon. I am intrigued by Lux Radio Theater's two-CD set of *The Adventures of Luke Skywalker*. According to the description on *Internet Archive*,

This audio drama is a period live recreation of a live 1940s radio broadcast of the Lux Radio Theater. It retells the story of George Lucas's 1977 film *Star Wars*, with added narration and recast with the stars of the 1940s, with the likes of:

- Mickey Rooney as Luke Skywalker
- Humphrey Bogart as Han Solo
- Katharine Hepburn as Princess Leia
- Jack Benny as Uncle Owen
- Mae West as Aunt Beru
- Laurel and Hardy as the droids

That sounds amazing—and the production might have come up at the audio drama panel discussion at Loscon. I'll check my notes when I prepare upcoming con reports. Thank you for expanding on the provenance of Riff-Raff Sam. I'll seek out *Sahara Hare*.



Los Angeles Times, July 29, 1955

## Telegraphs & Tar Pits #142

Dec. 12, 2024

*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to APA-L, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

### Last Week's Senryu

Weeks without printing, collating, or mailing, and it's good to be back.

Having opted to do one more PDF distribution the weekend of Loscon, last week was the first print distribution since I went to Portugal in late October. I must admit that it felt good to arrange participants' contributions in Adobe Acrobat Pro, print them using the trusty ol' Canon, collate the resulting hard copies using the expandable collation rack Marty Cantor gave me, staple the distributions, and prepare them for mailing. It also felt good to go to the post office last Friday morning to put them in the flats slot for mailing. Just like old times again.

The printing, collation, and preparation didn't take as long—or occur as late—as some weeks in recent history. Over the weekend, I also had time to finish an issue of *De Profundis*. After a calendar page-only edition in October and skipping November entirely, returning to *De Prof* felt even better.

I sometimes forget that Cantor's last issue of *De Prof* as editor was #580/581 in September 2021. I didn't step in as editor until February 2023, about a year and a half later. While at Loscon, Heide Nichols reminded me of the role *De Prof* plays for LASFS members who aren't able to participate in meetings. Other than individual friendships and perhaps the LASFS-related groups on the *Facebook*, *De Prof* helps members far and wide remain associated with the club. Now that I'm no longer scribe, we're still figuring out the rhythm to gather Condensed Cream of Menace and board meeting minutes, but I expect a strong year ahead in 2025.

### Trip Report: Portugal (cont.)

Our final weekend in Portugal late last month, Caitlin and I spent much of Saturday in Porto. We'd originally planned to spend the day with my friend Álvaro de Sousa Holstein. Our eagerly awaited itinerary included a walking tour featuring a garden, a

beautiful library, an area of galleries and independent bookstores, as well as two noble houses and several museums before joining his family for dinner that evening. Unfortunately, Holstein contracted the flu and was unable to spend the day with us.

We ventured into Porto regardless, beginning our day where we'd planned to meet him—and made our way through the city on our own. Parking underground at the Palácio de Cristal, we briefly explored the gardens surrounding Super Bock Arena, including a grand band shell, before seeking lunch. I'd read about a nearby restaurant specializing in sandwiches in one of the newspapers, and we thoroughly enjoyed eating at Baco Coffee Lab.



After lunch, we walked through a number of neighborhoods toward the train station Porto São Bento and Teatro Nacional São João, where we'd made arrangements to meet friends from Braga for a play that evening. Our walk was somewhat meandering but concentrated on visiting several nearby bookstores.

We almost walked past Livraria Trama (<https://www.instagram.com/livrariatrama>) but backtracked to locate the cozy little downstairs shop. Conversing with the owner and staff, we explored the store's selection of forward-thinking fiction and nonfiction, as well as a healthy wall of graphic novels—including material from Drawn & Quarterly. Trama is very supportive of local cartoonists, and the art installation at the time featured pages from a recent local anthology, *Quem e que tu pensas que es??*, edited by contributor Rita Mota. (<https://bdportuguesa.com/2024/10/01/quem-e-que-tu-pensas-que-es>) Printed in orange—the art hanging on the wall was also orange—it's a solid introduction to local comics creators.

In addition to the comics anthology, I also picked up a couple of other texts, including the *Outro*

Modo-published collection of essays *Os Tres D Dos Media: Desigualdade, Desprofissionalizacao e Desinformacao* and Kit Mackintosh's *Neon Screams: How Drill, Trap and Bashment Made Music New Again*, which makes a cultural creative case for autotune. Its publisher, London-based Repeater, looks very intriguing.

Trama frequently hosts philosophical talks, readings, and other cultural events. I've already messaged a little with the owner since visiting and look forward to returning in the future. "[I]n Porto there aren't many people who know the world of graphic novels and D+Q well," she wrote. We'll have plenty to talk about!



We also stopped by a delightfully cluttered shop called Livraria TimTim por TimTim, which specializes in vintage Portuguese paperbacks—including a wide array of sf selections—comic books, and BD. Holstein described it as “a second-hand bookshop where you can find true bibliographical treasures.” I did. Upon entering, I declared that I must have found heaven. In the short time I allowed myself to browse, I picked up two volumes of Richard Kadrey's *Metrofago* published in Portuguese as part of the Colecao Argonauta line of paperbacks in 1990, an issue of *Akim*—a Tarzan knockoff—published in Brazil, and two *Heavy Metal*- or *Metal Hurlant*-like periodicals: the Warren-related *Zona 84* and *Comix Internacional*, both published by Toutain-Editor in Spain. TimTim's pricing was extremely reasonable, the staff friendly and helpful, and I shall return in the future. I will have to restrain myself!

Finally, we ventured into *Térmita* (<https://termita.pt>), a highly literary bookshop tucked beside a bar that also features an art gallery. After examining the art installation, which included films projected on the wall and a hands-on exhibit of photographic prints, we

explored the local poetry while talking to the fellow working behind the desk. He turned out to be the publisher of the imprint Contracapa (<https://www.livrariasnob.pt/category/editoras-a-l-contracapa>). I walked away—after paying, of course—with the anthology *Sonhador Definitivo e Perpetua Insonia*, a collection of French surrealist poetry translated into Portuguese, and a book by a local poet, Sem Titulo's *Odete Espelhos Invios*. I expect to enjoy discussing literature and publishing with that fellow again, too.

Checking out a couple of vintage or antique shops, as well, we eventually made our way to Porto São Bento, where we navigated the construction to visit the train station, which was hosting an informative display on western cinema—westerns. We ate dinner at the nearby Mille Pinsa Trattoria Romana Porto before arriving at the Teatro Nacional São João. We thought we were early, but we were right on time for the production of August Strindberg's *O Pelicano*, or *The Pelican*. Our friends were glad to see us! The play, while excellent, is somewhat bleak and unrelenting, exploring the impact of the death of a patriarch on his family and their relationships.



After the performance, we spent some time conversing over beverages and light bites at a sidewalk cafe before returning to our car—and home.

### **The Ignorable Theme: New Participants**

“Do you know anyone that you could encourage or invite to participate in APA-L? Can you commit to inviting a few people to consider doing so in the new year?” I'm sure I do, and yes, I can. I like to think I've had a hand in bringing in the relatively new participants I now enjoy interacting with weekly—Matthew Mitchell and Derek LaPorte—as well as those I wish were able to participate more frequently, such as Jean-Paul L. Garnier and Beverly Warren. But we still have room for fresh blood.

In 2025, I'd like to work more closely with LaPorte or whomever serves as the LASFS registrar, to ensure that sample distributions and fliers make it to meeting guests with regularity and alacrity. At Loscon, my clarion call to passers by was "Do you like to write or draw?" That might be a compelling question for guests, as well.

Once *Losconzine* #50 has been completed and distributed, I plan to explore whether any of its contributors are interested in participating in APA-L on an ongoing basis. And I'll soon refine the Call for Submissions at the end of *De Profundis* so it's less a tease of rekindling *Shangri-L'Affaires*—which I now believe to be unlikely—and more an offer to help writers and artists find friendly homes for their work in our pages and elsewhere.

We can concentrate our efforts on identifying new participants for the apa. We can also encourage people to contribute art and writing to our own fanzines—which could bring new material—and people—to the apa even if someone isn't able to commit to contributing an elzine ('L-zine?') weekly.

If we each try to recruit a newcomer over the course of 2025, we'd pretty much double our active participation. That would be very, very cool.



—William Rotsler

## Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

### *The Abominable Dr. Phibes*

I am writing this in advance of APA-L #3102's Ignorable Theme on holy grail movies (see the APA-L TOC), but this movie has been mine for some time. I've long known about the 1971 Vincent Price vehicle. I didn't know much about the flick but considered it an "organ movie" or akin to phantom-related flicks such as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Phantom of the Paradise*. I also knew that it had something to do with facial disfigurement and expected a grand reveal at some point. (Oh, there is!) But I'd not yet been able to see it—until recently.

I'd even bought the movie on DVD, which should have made seeing it easier. One would think! However, the first DVD I ordered didn't work, and I was unable to watch it. So I ordered another. That, too—perhaps from the same production batch—didn't work, and I was unable to watch it. Instead of buying a third copy of the DVD—the charm!—I remained resolute. I would have to see the movie another way.

So I was pleased, upon returning from Portugal, to see that *Svengoolie* had aired *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* on Nov. 9, quickly followed by *Dr. Phibes Rises Again* on Nov. 16. I usually forgo watching *Svengoolie*, instead taking inspiration from its screenings to watch movies on DVD or streaming. As much as I enjoy and appreciate the long-running horror host, why watch a movie with a runtime of one hour and 34 minutes in two and a half hours? (Because you like *Svengoolie*, of course.) With the program's new, longer timeslot, we don't need to worry as much about editing as we do padding, with interstitial commentary as well as advertisements.

But watch it, I did. *Svengoolie*, advertisements, and all. And it made me very happy. *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* offers a wonderful counterpoint to the other phantom- and organ-related movies mentioned above. It follows a fine tradition. It also takes cues from stories such as *And Then There Were None* in which a group of individuals is visited by a vengeful force one by one. Basing the methods of death on the 10 plagues of Egypt is intriguing. The religious underpinnings are weak, but they make for noteworthy deaths.

What struck me most about the movie, however, was the set design, the music—its score and soundtrack—and one loose end. The visuals of the film are very bright and colorful, almost surreal in their garish cartooniness. The automated stage band—made up of actors wearing what might be papier-mâché heads—was delightful and reminded me of *The Prisoner* and *The Wild Wild West*. And the final method of death—death of the firstborn—involved an



of interest to any sf or fanzine fan. And if you do read comics, it continues to offer a wealth of recommendations and rabbit holes. Even rereading it, there are several aspects of early comics and related fandom that I need to learn more about.

And now, even the earliest source material is more widely available. We no longer need to satisfy ourselves by just reading about such lost comics and heroes—the purpose served by the columns and first edition of the book—we can track down and read the actual comics, either reprinted or online.

After reading this book, I turned to the first issue of the new *Justice League Unlimited* series published by DC. It had just arrived in the mail, a surprise given how long it's been since the previous JLA series. (Apparently, when a series ends, Midtown Comics and DC just roll subscribers over to the next series, keeping your name on a list.)

Written by Mark Waid and drawn by Dan Mora, the new series is a far cry from the comics loved and remembered by the contributors to *All in Color for a Dime*. I wonder what they'd think of the comics of today. Regardless, *Justice League Unlimited* #1 continues the tradition, still featuring characters that date back to the golden age of superhero comics—Superman, Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel (erm, Shazam), and Batman—as well as more recent creations such as Star Sapphire, Firestorm, and Black Lightning.

The issue is bookended by introducing a new member of the Justice League, Air Wave, and the Flash takes the newcomer on a quick tour of the Watchtower, in turn reviewing key components of the Justice League, its purpose, members, and activities. The team faces dangers posed by the mega-machines of an organization called Inferno and bioluminescent pods in a forest, and Air Wave's first day is a trial by fire. His presence, however, brings a touch of suspense because he's "here to kill them all."

Personally, I'd rather read older comics—perhaps those mentioned in *All in Color for a Dime*—but that reading the anthology inspired me to read a comic—any comic—immediately upon completion suggests something. The columns and book might have achieved their purpose. And, clearly, comics fan are sf fan.

***Downward to the Earth*** by Robert Silverberg (Signet, 1971)

I read this book immediately following Loscon on the recommendation of Jean-Paul L. Garnier. In fact, he bought it for me expressly so I could read it. While I've read other Silverberg—*Lord Valentine's Castle*

and his anthology *New Dimensions 1* (T&T #23)—in recent years, I haven't read a lot of his work. This book was absolutely astounding and has changed my estimation of his writing generally.

Reportedly modeled after Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the novel focuses on the return of a former colonial administrator to a planet he'd been stationed on after the world's return to its intelligent native species. He has returned to make amends for what he now considers misbehavior or abuse of the local populace, having changed his perspective on the people and lands previously under his authority.

The novel explores the changes that have occurred on the planet after its colonists largely departed—though some have stayed behind, finding new employment, but not all finding good ends, falling prey to dissolution and rot—its buildings and infrastructure reclaimed by the land, new alliances between two intelligent life forms on the planet, and other developments.



*Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 12, 1955

The former administrator encounters and seeks out people he once knew, introducing an aspect of biological sf or what might be termed by some as body horror. A woman previously found highly desirable is now practically disgusting, her relationship with a potentially symbiotic gelatinous life form—worn as clothing—concerning him. Areas and aspects of the once-colonized world that once concerned or repulsed her no longer do so, and while she hasn't entirely gone native, she's much more accepting of the planet's flora and fauna.

While seeking another former colleague—hiding out in a fog-enshrouded part of the world having committed an unspeakable crime—he encounters other aspects of societal decay, or the colony returning to a more natural state. One scene is particularly shocking and brilliantly portrayed. The protagonist faces his past, as well as those he wronged while stationed there, and sees what happened to another colleague who also sought to make amends—by participating in the alien world's rebirth ceremony.

The story is a tour de force, a relatively linear journey, but increasingly startling, important, alien, and outre. As I neared the end, I wasn't sure what was going to happen, but I was certain what I didn't want to happen. It did, after a fashion, resulting in a philosophical revelation and confusing near-

psychedelic section that merits rereading. I'm still not entirely sure what happened exactly, but something sure did. Boy howdy. The philosophical revelation alone is thought provoking.



Los Angeles Times, Aug. 19, 1955

In addition to the novel's science fictional wonders, it's a highly literary book, almost reading as a straight novel with slipstream elements—though it wasn't at all marketed as such. My estimation of Silverberg's skill and craft as a writer has elevated substantially, and I'll never approach another book of his the same way again. They can't all be *Downward to the Earth*. But maybe, just maybe, they can come close.

### From the Reading Pile: BD Reviews

**Valerian: The Complete Collection Volume 1** by Pierre Christin and Jean-Claude Mézières (Cinebook, 2017)

Inspired by watching *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* on television while in Portugal recently, (T&T #141) I dug out my copy of this BD collection that compiles the first three storylines and four albums. Published to piggyback on the release of the movie, this edition includes the first part of an interview with director Luc Besson, Christin, and Mézières that explores the series evolution from the pages of *Pilote* to the big screen; a 2007 essay by Stan Barets on the origin of the BD; and synopses of the stories in the book.

The collection features *Bad Dreams* (1967), *The City of Shifting Waters* and *Earth in Flames* (1970), and *The Empire of a Thousand Planets* (1971). The two 1970 albums are a two-part series and best read in sequence, as well as in close proximity. The front matter serves as useful context, elucidating on the development of the characters, artwork, and story over time, as well as key themes apparent in the work.

As a BD, *Valerian and Laureline* is an energetic, compelling read, and the beginning is an excellent place to begin. *Bad Dreams*, the most simplistic of the works, introduces the characters to readers as well as to each other, taking Valerian to the Middle Ages. Despite its early form, the cleanly comedic cartoonishness is a delight rather than a hindrance.

*The City of Shifting Waters* expands on the development of time travel, suggesting that it was invented in 2314—and that the time between 1986 and the 24th century is largely a mysterious era: “the dark ages of the Earth.” Our two heroes return to 1986 New York City to find that the urban area has flooded. Galaxy's only political prisoner, Xombul, (from *Bad Dreams*) has returned to the past himself, utilizing robots to loot various locations. Encountering characters caricaturing Sun Ra and Jerry Lewis, the spatio-temporal agents strive to capture him.

The story continues in *Earth in Flames*. Laureline is shrunk down to a diminutive form, western elements come into play, and another time machine is discovered. The narrative comes to a head at a secret

space station. *The Empire of a Thousand Planets* proves the most poetic and visually stimulating of the series, featuring most of the aspects that suggest the producers of *Star Wars* were inspired by the BD's visual imagery.

A masked leader controls a large trading city, plotting the Earth's demise. This album or chapter might be the most fully formed of the series to date and suggests what riches might exist in future editions. Combining time travel tropes with elements of space opera and space western-like adventure storytelling, Christin and Mézières deserves more attention and readership in the United States. The narrative remains densely intriguing, and the increasingly detailed artwork and page design offers an impressive scale and scope not present in many American comic books. (The larger page size of BD certainly helps.)

If you've never read *Valerian and Laureline*, I encourage you to do so.

### Comments on APA-L #3098

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #85, **Matthew Mitchell** wrote about recent hail, as well as Thanksgiving. We, too, decided against a turkey for the two of us. And just last night, my wife and I were discussing the pleasures of sliced ham—so I quite enjoyed your mention of croque monsieur. That also resonated with the Reuben-like sandwich I had in Porto, and the Reuben panini I had while at Loscon. Your TV viewing on the holiday also sounds wonderful. I enjoyed your recollections of Loscons past. We missed you this year. Maybe next year!

**Derek LaPorte's** *Inbetweens* #8 also commented on Loscon—his first! I'm glad you had a good time, and I really enjoyed our time together. Looking forward to the next time we hang out, and I owe you an email. I heard there were just more than 800 members of the con, so it was definitely a good size this year. Heading in the right direction.

Thank you for your comments on Simon Jimenez's *The Spear Cuts Through Water*—and your mention of Will Stepp's 1986, which I think we discussed at the con. I will share your feedback with cover artist Al Sirois.

In *Vanamonde* #1621, **John Hertz** recognized Thanksgiving. He also reported on the recent Loscon, traditionally held that weekend. While I wasn't able to participate in any of the Classics of SF book discussions, I look forward to reading the selections regardless. I'd seen the Rotsler Award display in the Art Show, but I'd forgotten that its recipients are announced at Loscon. What a delight that Espana Sheriff, who often appears in your pages, was so recognized.

I believe there were at least five of us wearing propeller beanies at the con: you, me—though I forgot mine at home Saturday—Nola Frame-Gray, Bob in the lab coat, and another fellow whose beanie was white. That might have been the most propeller beanies I've seen at a Loscon in recent years! Glad you were able to get yours repaired. I will share your feedback with cover artist Damon D. Brown.

And special recognition of **Nola Frame-Gray's** bacover thish. It was a joy to see you at the con. Not only did Nola give me several bacovers while at Loscon, she drew them there!



*Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 19, 1955

## Faculae & Filigree #38

Dec. 13, 2024

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### Trip Report: Portugal (cont.)

With this entry, my October-November trip report on our recent time in Portugal comes to an end. After a wonderful day in Porto (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #142) Nov. 23, all that was left was to prepare the house in which we stay to leave, to pack our suitcases, and to travel back to the United States—by way of Paris.

We spent Monday night at a hotel near Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport in Porto and left mid-morning the last Tuesday in November. We much preferred our several-hour stopover at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport to our time at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol earlier in the trip. (*T&T* #137) Not only was the airport itself more pleasant and comfortable, but the food available—and the newsstands!—were better.

While at the airport, I took advantage of my final opportunity to avail myself of European fannish media. Various newsstands offered multiple periodicals and books of interest. Along comic book lines, I procured copies of *Picsou Magazine* #582 reprinting 195 pages of Disney comics, Panini Comics' *Les Icones Marvel* Vol. 7 collecting Spider-Man stories from 1964-2002 (including *Amazing Spider-Man* #252), *Fluide Glacial* #581 (November 2024) offering humor comics and BD, and *Spirou* #4519 (Nov. 20, 2024), the most recent issue of that long-running BD weekly. I can read a little French, but they're beautiful to look at and a good survey of French comics sold at the airport.

In terms of magazines, two stood out. *Japan Max* #11 (Sept.-Nov. 2024) reminded me of *Otaku USA*, covering anime and manga. And *Geek Magazine* #48 (Sept.-Nov. 2024) addresses all things fannish. According to a cover line, it's "le magazine de tous les imaginaires," encompassing "cine, TV, jeux, BD, and culture." There's no American magazine like it, and it's a joy to behold.

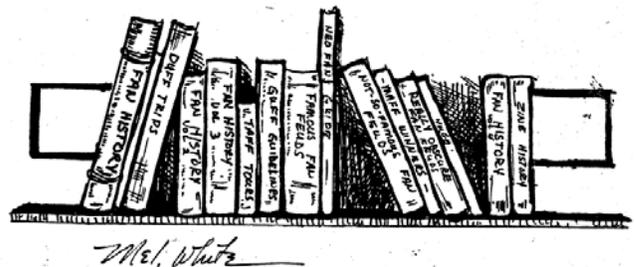
Science fiction literature was also present at the newsstands I explored. I picked up two mass-market paperbacks. Laurent Gaude's *Chien 51* is a 2022 novel described by Amazon as follows: "One morning, in a poor neighborhood in Zone 3 of Magnapole, a body is

found cut open along the sternum. Zem Sparak, a 'dog' by trade, is called to the scene eaten away by acid rain. Placed under the supervision of Salia Malberg, an ambitious inspector from Zone 2, he embarks on an investigation that will break the renunciation in which he has long entrenched himself." Seems a little noir, a little sf. *IMDb* describes the forthcoming movie adaptation: "In a future Paris divided by class, an AI named Alma oversees society. When Alma's creator dies, cop Salia teams with Zem to unravel a mystery questioning their segregated world."

Bernard Werber's *Le Temps des chimères* also looks promising: "This is the crazy project of Alice Kammerer, a young and brilliant scientist, who manages, in the aftermath of the Third World War, to invent new hybrid species: chimeras, half-man half-animal. While she watches, fascinated, the evolution of these babies equipped with wings, claws or fins, a different world is built." *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, anyone?

On our way overseas in late October, I picked up a paperback copy of Brandon Sanderson's *The Lost Metal* to encourage fannish options in airports. I read it throughout our time in Portugal but have yet to finish it. Compared to American airports, there was an impressive amount of fannish material available at Charles de Gaulle.

During the flight home, I tried to stay awake so I could return to local time as quickly and easily as possible. So I watched two movies to punctuate my customary reading and meal times. The media center offered a lot of superhero movies, Kong and Godzilla flicks, Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, Planet of the Apes, *House of the Dragon*, and animated features. I opted for the 2021 *Dune* and 2024 *Dune: Part Two* in order to prepare to watch the new Max series *Dune: Prophecy* upon my return home. It's easy to be a fan in the air.



### From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

*Wildsmith* by Ron Goulart (Ace, 1972)

I picked this up along with several other books by Goulart from the LASFS book table at Loscon at the

end of November. It's a slim read—128 pages—and somewhat sloppily edited; the text contains multiple misspellings or typographical errors. The cover line of “What does one do with a willful robot?” while intriguing, isn't really answered.

Regardless, the book does feature a robot—an android that works as an author of popular fiction—that develops a mind of its own, after a fashion. The scribe of such novels as *Confusion on Thy Banners Wait!*, *Consider This Small Dust!*, *Hence Vain Deluding Joys!*, and *When the Stars Threw Down Their Spears!*, robotic Alex Wildsmith goes on a bit of a bender—perhaps embracing the lifestyles of writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer. (It's actually part of his programming!)

As Wildsmith becomes increasingly unpredictable and uncontrollable, the book primarily focuses on the people around him: his public relations handler, publisher, the hosts of television programs on which he appears—*Right Now Show* and *The Dog Hour*—and other media celebrities. Those include Magic Sam, whose “dramatic TV cassette” is titled *Kiss My Ass*, *Whitey*, and the mentioned but never present cartoonist (“graphic humorist”) Joe Chuck, whose comic strip is titled *Tiny Boob the Hillbilly Midget*.

You might guess that the novel is relatively comedic; it is. In the end, the book is less about the android and more a parody of the publishing industry and literary promotional tours. Goulart focuses on a PR agent's relationship with Magic Sam, her relationship with the protagonist—Wildsmith's PR handler—the protagonist's relationship with his ex-wife, and the PR agents' misadventures and budding romance as they practically chase Wildsmith around the world on his blitzkrieg book tour. In addition to TV appearances, the tour also makes stops at a Greengrocers Guild convention and at university campus.

Along the way, the misbehaving android becomes involved in an assassination plot undertaken by a popular Brazilian author who's active in a radical political group. Portuguese is spoken and fado is mentioned in the book, which was neat to see. Pornographic television tapes—screwies—also come into play, even a “science fiction screwie” in which one of the actors wears a space helmet.”

At times, the book reminded me of Frederik Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants*, which tackles advertising and marketing more generally. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #32) Wildsmith is a delightful treatment of the publicity inherent in publishing, the stereotypes and myths surrounding literary lions, and

the book tour experience. A clever, no-holds-barred little book that loves the media industrial complex while it laughs.

### A Brief Remark on Loscon

I began my Loscon 50 conrep in *T&T* #141 but still have many notes to process and write up for future fanzines. For now, let's just say that it was absolutely wonderful to meet Janice and Chip Morningstar in person. I enjoyed our brief conversations in passing and hope you found your way to finagle entrance to the Dead Dog Party after the con.

I'll be turning my attention to editing *Losconzine* #50 after the new year. If you were at the con, consider contributing to the conzine! It's going to be a bumper number.



*Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 26, 1955

### Comments on LASFAPA #574

I quite like that the cover trumpets LASFAPA #589. We have traveled to the future! I almost did the same when working on a recent APA-L distribution. I'd told cover artist Alan White that his next issue was #3984, not #3094—but corrected myself in time. That would have sent ellers more than 17 years into the future. As it is, LASFAPAs have only gone forward a year and a quarter. Happy new year and then some! (I'm not making fun, I'm enjoying myself.)

In the Tin Commandments, I misread “roster limit” as “Rotsler limit.” That seems like something that should exist. What would the Rostler limit restrain? At what value would it remain, theoretically?

While I shall be forever proud of receiving a Stevie, it only occurred because I missed the deadline last month. (Pro tip: Miss the deadline!)

In *It's Still Rock and Roll to Me* #6, **Rich Lynch** mentioned the LASFAPA digital archive. During my world travels, I've been remiss in keeping up with applying optical character recognition to back issues. I've now done up through #181, and David Schlosser's scanned up through #387. I'll get back on

that horse soon! If you, too, would like access to the archives, email me or Schlosser. We'd rather not publish the URL lest it stray from participants.

It's good to hear about the continuation of fannish holiday parties. I fear I joined the LASFS too late to enjoy even a gift exchange or picnic, though such could still occur. (Eylat Poliner did at one time rekindle the Greater Angeleno Gourmet Society, which included Samuel Edward Konkin III and other members of the LASFS in the late 1970s, and I've floated the idea of a fannish outing to another local restaurant.) I have been invited to a couple of birthday parties, which I appreciated immensely but was unable to make work, as well as one memorial.

Your run of 19 Worldcons is impressive. I'll have to explore the serial options on Filmrise. *Zombies of the Stratosphere*, *Radar Men from the Moon*, and *The Phantom Empire*... oh my! Music to my ears. Speaking of music, I've long been intrigued by the musical group Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen. Saith Wikipedia, "The band's name was inspired by 1950s film serials featuring the character Commando Cody and from a feature version of an earlier serial, *King of the Rocket Men*, released under the title *Lost Planet Airmen*." Any listeners among LASFAPAns? More grist for the mill!

Your remarks to Alan Winston on COVID-19 resonated with me. Upon returning from Portugal—masking on the plane but less strictly than we have been while traveling otherwise—and after Loscon, during which I largely did not mask, I came down with what turned out to be the common cold. I tested negative, which was a relief. My wife also caught the cold—and also tested negative. Now that the recommended age for pneumonia vaccination has lowered, we're scheduling those nurse visits. Perhaps next week during the slow pre-holiday time at work as colleagues begin their vacations.

Almost meeting Roy Rogers was intriguing enough, but to have met Harry Warner Jr.! (And Walt Willis! And Bob Shaw!) I'm glad that you at least tried to meet Rogers. "The Scariest Walk" was also fun to read. It reminded me of two things, neither as dangerous as the walk you undertook. In the town I grew up in, there was a railroad bridge across the Rock River. It's now the Glacial River Trail, part of Wisconsin's rails to trails network. Anyway, when we were younger—preteens, teens—my friends and I would sometimes walk across the railroad bridge even though the rail line was still active.

Trains didn't cross the river going very fast, but I—perhaps apocryphally—remember at least one frantic dash across the bridge when we were just a little close to the train's arrival. I was a pretty cautious

youth, so that might not have happened. It's more likely that I heard about another youth's close call, perhaps as a cautionary tale.

The fog and mist reminded me of listening to Samhain on cassette with my Walkman while standing in our yard after dark. I was perhaps 13. Again, it's a safe situation, but I remember the dark, powerful music combining with the inky black night and strong winds high above. Overcome by the forceful strength of nature and emotional response to music, I had to hurry inside. I felt so small, alone, and isolated even though I was just outside my childhood home. I'm glad you made it across the ice safely!

LOS ANGELES  
WEST JEFFERSON  
BOULEVARD  
AND  
RODEO  
ROAD

THUR., SEPT. <b>8</b>	FRI., SEPT. <b>9</b>	SAT., SEPT. <b>10</b>	SUN., SEPT. <b>11</b>
FRI., SEPT. <b>16</b>	SAT., SEPT. <b>17</b>	SUN., SEPT. <b>18</b>	

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**THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH**

*Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 2, 1955

Nick Smith's *Labyrinthine Lines* for November shared some frustration with more lax approaches to Zoom event security. I can't imagine having the time or inclination to crash someone else's online gathering, but perhaps it's the modern-day equivalent of the prank telephone call.

More concerning, perhaps, have been the somewhat recent rash of convenience store robberies in which large groups of people coordinate via social media and messaging. In September, there was a string of such robberies in the Los Angeles area—including "dozens of teens" or "50 juveniles." Some of the video footage I've seen really makes me feel bad for 7-11

employees.

I enjoyed your recollections about the trip to meet Lyndon B. Johnson. I've not met a president, though friends of mine have worked for a president. Your review of L. Ron Hubbard's *Death's Deputy* was an interesting mix of book review and review of book as object. I found your history of the book slightly more interesting than the description of the book itself.

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SOUTH SIDE Los Angeles	PANORAMA Van Nuys	CROWN Pasadena	COVINA Covina	BAY Pac. Palisades

Los Angeles Times, Sept. 2, 1955

In *November Brain* (ooh! punny?), Alan Winston mentioned turning 65. A belated happy birthday! With your saying "I was thinking 65 didn't look so bad," I kept waiting for something bad to happen—which certainly occurred. Geez, the outcome of that election. All of your concerns are valid, and I hope that this turns out to be a four-year thing rather than a forever thing. My mother, who's in her 80s, is sorrowful that she won't likely see a woman president in her lifetime. After decades of working with the American Association of University Women to fight for women's rights, she's demonstrated that we need to

continue to speak up. It'll be important to not just assume or accept what might occur. One of the reasons Caitlin and I will seek our pneumonia vaccines soon is because we're not sure whether public health will remain a concern. If steps are taken to do away with social security, I expect us all to take to the streets. I know I'll want my money back.

In *The Title Goes Here* dated Oct. 8, Janice Morningstar also discussed the recent election. My wife and I engaged in postcard- and letter-writing, phone and text banking in the months leading up to the election. My primary concern is that as many citizens vote as possible, regardless of their political ideology, so I focus my efforts on helping people remember, prepare, and plan to vote. Since the election, we've been alarmed by the reportage that people who believe things that are true tend to vote Democrat—and people who believe things that are false tend to vote Republican. That's oversimplifying the dynamic, but it's the general gist. (<https://news.northeastern.edu/2024/01/12/identify-fake-news> and <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-disinformation-defined-the-2024-election-narrative>—though neither explicitly makes this contention. I'll continue to seek a useful citation.)

We've also seen signs that the different speech standards applied to political advertising came into play. One Elon Musk-funded company flooded the Internet with blatantly false ads. (<https://www.npr.org/2024/10/30/g-s1-31042/elon-musk-kamala-harris-facebook>) "Experts told NPR that there is nothing illegal about the ads, since the First Amendment protects political speech, even when it contains lies." So there's also a growing misinformation, disinformation, and media literacy problem.

It boggles my mind that we hold our political officials and speech to a less stringent set of standards than I face in, say, the workplace. (Though those standards, too, might erode.) What kind of example are we setting for youth? I think your point No. 3 is valid. This election, we saw the Israel-Hamas war divide people who might generally vote similarly in some pretty problematic ways. I recognize that the war is a major issue and that strong stances must be taken, but for someone who otherwise votes liberally to not support Kamala Harris because of a single issue seems counter-purpose.

Moreso, I think you're right about Harris's race and gender serving as an unspoken deterrent. It saddens and surprises me that such a terrible man—any man—could be considered a better choice than a woman. I believe him to be a bad-faith employer, a criminal, an abuser, and a rapist. (That's our president?) And No. 2? I think that comes down to



## Telegraphs & Tar Pits #143

Dec. 19, 2024

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### Last Week's Senryu

Fresh banana bread  
after dinner: Does it count  
as dessert, or fruit?

In recent weeks, I've benefited from the bounty of my wife's cooking. In addition to the loaf of banana bread, she recently made a wonderful quinoa dish with roasted sweet potatoes, tomato, and onion; as well as a clafoutis to use up some strawberries.

At work earlier this week, we had a team holiday party of sorts, which included a team lunch at a nearby restaurant: Simonette in Culver City. I didn't have dessert after my croque madame, but my manager later brought a Trader Joe's Belgian Cookie Collection tin into the office. With "12 delicious varieties," I've been snacking on the items featuring chocolate. He estimated that between the two of us, we'd eaten one-sixteenth of the assortment Tuesday alone.

### Holiday Reading

Every year, I make a point to read Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* close to the holiday, sometimes reading it to completion on Christmas Eve day, if not Christmas Day. When my son was younger, I discovered J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Father Christmas Letters*, which is wonderful, though I haven't consistently succeeded in augmenting my annual holiday reading. Before the week ends, I'll locate my copy to set it aside. I've already located the Dickens.

Planning ahead, I started thinking about and researching other holiday-themed speculative fiction—and discovered that there's a fair share of intriguing options available. I haven't read all of the following yet, but perhaps you have. If not, you might enjoy seeking them out like I plan to during the holiday season.

In mid-December 1988, *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* published Asimov's "Christmas Without Rodney." The piece was later included in the Martin H. Greenberg-edited anthology *Christmas on Ganymede and Other Stories*, which also includes

stories by Michael Swanwick, Barry N. Malzberg, Frederik Pohl, and Gordon R. Dickson. The story was also featured in the Gardner Dozois- and Sheila Williams-edited *Isaac Asimov's Christmas* anthology of stories from the prozine.

I was wholly unaware of L. Frank Baum's *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*. Reportedly adopting more of an expository historical tone rather than Baum's customary whimsy, the book is sure to be enjoyable, regardless.

Ray Bradbury's "The Wish" was first published in the December 1973 issue of *Woman's Day* (slick alert!) before being collected in *Long After Midnight, Bradbury Stories: 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales*, and other such books.



*Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 16, 1955

Some authors—like Orson Scott Card—have written entire novels related to the theme. Card's *Lost Boys* (HarperCollins, 1992) is a horror novel featuring a Mormon family and the challenges they face after relocating. Some of the story takes place on the days leading up to Christmas, as well as on Christmas Eve.

Arthur C. Clarke's "The Star" first appeared in the November 1955 edition of *Infinity Science Fiction*. Later collected in *The Other Side of the Sky* and widely anthologized, it reportedly fits the theme in an

unusual way.

In addition to *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens also wrote a short story titled “The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton.” Originally included as part of chapter 29 of *The Pickwick Papers*, it’s a tale of the supernatural.

James Patrick Kelly’s “The Best Christmas Ever” first appeared in the May 26, 2004, *Sci Fiction* on SciFi.com. A last-man-on-Earth story featuring androids, it’s been anthologized and collected several times. One such anthology is the Paula Guran-edited *Season of Wonder* (Prime, 2012), which also includes writing by Harlan Ellison, Charles de Lint, Gene Wolfe, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and others.

Seanan McGuire’s “Fresh as the New-Fallen Snow” is a horror short story originally collected in the Christopher Golden-edited anthology *Hark! The Herald Angels Scream* (Blumhouse/Anchor, 2018). That anthology also includes work by Joe R. Lansdale and Jonathan Maberry. The McGuire story was later collected in Subterranean’s *The Proper Thing and Other Stories*.



*Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 30, 1955

Terry Pratchett also wrote an entire novel related to the holiday theme. The Discworld novel *Hogfather* was nominated for the British Fantasy Award’s August Derleth Fantasy Award (Best Novel) in 1997.

John Scalzi’s *A Very Scalzi Christmas* (Subterranean, 2019) looks very promising. The collection features a number of short stories, poems, and essays. Titles include “The 10 Least Successful Holiday Specials of All Time,” “8 Things You Didn’t

Know About Your Favorite Holiday Music,” and “Resolutions for the New Year: A Bullet Point List.”

“Zwarte Piet’s Tale” by Allen Steele was first published in the December 1998 issue of *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*. The Near Space novelette touches on the colonization of Mars, politics—and Santa Claus.

Charles Stross’s novelette *Overtime* first appeared on Tor.com 2009. *The Internet Speculative Fiction Database* describes the piece, a fantastic horror parody that involves demons, as follows: “Bob earns a little extra money taking care of the office during the Christmas break. He also tries to deal with a prophecy saying, this will be the last Christmas (party) for the office.” The story is set in the Laundryverse, and one *Reddit* participant says, “This story is what got me hooked on the Laundry novels.” Early next year, it’ll be collected in Orbit’s *A Conventional Boy*.

Between 1991-2014, Connie Willis wrote several holiday-themed short stories. They’ve been collected in *A Lot Like Christmas* (Del Rey, 2017)—which looks absolutely wonderful. Stories include items such as “In Coppelius’ Toyshop,” “Just Like the Ones We Used to Know,” and “deck.halls@boughs/holly.” The book also includes several essays focusing on Christmas movies and television programs she recommends, as well as additional holiday stories and poems.

Finally, the Kathryn Cramer- and David G. Hartwell-edited anthology *Spirits of Christmas* (Wynwood, 1989) also looks excellent. Contributors include Gene Wolfe, Martha Soukup, Richard A. Lupoff, Michael Swanwick, and others. Kevin J. Anderson’s two-volume anthology *A Fantastic Holiday Season* might also be worth checking out.

What are your favorite tales this time of year—either holiday- or winter-oriented? What science fiction shorts should I seek?

### **The Ignorable Theme: Person of the Year**

“Which person or people currently living do you think will have the most impact on the world and its future? Who would be your Person of the Year?” It’d be too easy to follow in the steps of *Time* magazine and its Person of the Year for 2024. Similarly, I don’t quite feel comfortable mentioning the CEO of Tesla Motors and CEO, chief designer, and product architect of SpaceX; or the executive chairman of Amazon. I don’t like the current impact they have on the world we live in and hope for less rather than more influence on the future.

Rather than concentrate on whom I think will have the most impact, I’d like to focus on groups of people.

One might be tempted to turn to the 2024 Nobel Prize winners. While I'm sure they have important work ahead of them, I'd like to focus elsewhere.

My support goes to the MacArthur Fellows (<https://www.macfound.org/programs/awards/fellows>), the 22 people selected for their contributions—and potential—in a wide range of practices and professions. I'm a fan of the program, which funds its recipients to the tune of \$800,000, paid over the course of five years in quarterly installments.

It's one of the best ways we can encourage promising and already productive people to do more than they might otherwise, if they had to worry less about making a living. And the grants seem to free recipients' creativity, increasing their output.

When jazz musician Ken Vandermark received the MacArthur in 1999, it was somewhat controversial because he was in his mid-30s and mostly known in the Chicago area. He used the funds to support the formation of the Territory Band, a big band bringing together musicians from North America and Europe.

In 1999, Vandermark released or appeared on nine recordings. He'd been on 12 the previous year, so the MacArthur doesn't seem to have had an immediate effect. 2000 brought 10 recordings, 2001 four, and 2002 12, so there might have been some delay—or inconsistency—in terms of recordings that might have benefited from the grant. The Territory Band, for example, released six recordings between 2001-2007.

Perhaps less visible and less celebrated, but perhaps even more important are judges and school board members. During elections, they can be the most challenging candidates to research, but given the current political climate, they will become increasingly important. No one such person will be the most important—though Supreme Court justices can certainly prove to be—but in the aggregate, they could make or break the world, at least at the local level.

### Comments on APA-L #3099

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #86, **Matthew Mitchell** reported on going to a "Secret Movie" and indulging in snacks at the cinema. Last weekend, I felt desire to go to the movies and checked the Cinemark showtimes on my phone, but nothing seemed worth going to. Most recently, I've heard good things about Daniel Craig in *Queer*, which is based on a William S. Burroughs novel.

When consultations confirm but don't show up, are they still charged at all? When I was working with my attorney, I don't think I'd have done that—scheduling with such professionals is challenging enough as it is. Thursday this week I had a dermatologist appointment. I go in annually to monitor moles and

such in order to not be surprised by skin cancer. I started going a couple of years ago to establish a baseline and forgot to schedule last year, so it's been a while. Some dry skin on my cheek was precancerous, and we froze it so healthy skin could grow back. So far this afternoon, it's darkening but isn't yet shriveling up or leaving a red mark. I'm kind of curious to see how it progresses.

*Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 7, 1955

Work in the first half of this week had definitely not slowed despite people starting their holiday vacations. Monday to Wednesday were surprisingly intense and full on, though today felt decidedly

slower. I expect Friday and Monday to be quite quiet, which will allow for some focused work. I still have a couple of things I'd like to accomplish before the end of the year.

Thank you for recommending Roxanne Mills, Steve Smyth, and Kirk Honore. All three would be welcome in APA-L. I don't think we'll coordinate encouragement centrally, so feel free to reach out to them on your own. Ellers should feel free to send recent distributions as samples if you receive the PDF or access the online archives. And if you'd like me to email you sample PDFs and the informational flier, I can also certainly do so to aid such outreach. The main idea is to identify people we'd like to participate, and to commit—or challenge one's self—to invite at least one person.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Joe Pearson. The name you chose for your smartwatch made me chuckle. Well played, good sir! To be fair, *Magic: The Gathering* and *Dungeons & Dragons* were in the same Hasbro ad in *People*. Regardless, I was pleasantly surprised.

My work phone PIN was either six or eight digits, and any of the combinations I thought were correct didn't work. When I received the new phone, I think I remember that the new PIN had to be eight digits. At least, the PIN I selected is eight digits. Thank you for mentioning the origin of graham crackers. When my son was growing up, I found that they were a good snack to keep on hand because if I had some, he wouldn't want any—or want something else instead. He doesn't like graham crackers. Something else for me to learn about!

**Joe Zeff's** *Toony Loons* #784 mentioned avoiding a too-early lunch. My wife and I don't eat out often, but I have twice in the last week. Last weekend, after getting our fingerprints taken for an FBI background check—Don't be worried or get excited; it's not for anything cloak and dagger.—we ate brunch at a nearby Roscoe's Chicken & Waffles. The food was good but expensive: about \$60 for the two of us, which surprised me. And this morning after my dermatologist appointment, I got coffee and a breakfast burrito at 10 Speed Coffee in Santa Monica. The burrito had been prepared by The Rooster, whose food trucks I've seen out and about, and coffee refills only cost \$1. Eating out can be a rare treat.

I still plan to schedule a nurse's visit for the pneumonia vaccine soon, as well as a visit to the optometrist for my annual eye exam. We'll see if those occur by the end of the year or early in the next. I will share your feedback with cover artist Joe Pearson.

In *Vanamonde* #1622, **John Hertz** continued his report on the recent Loscon, focusing his attention on

the Classics of SF discussions. I found your exploration of Isaac Asimov's *The Currents of Space* interesting and look forward to reading the book.

You might have already done so, but if you haven't, you should consider reaching out to Jim Tanenbaum! (*T&T* #43) According to the biographical sketch I wrote, his birthday is coming up: Dec. 27! What does Caitlin consider letter-writing paper? What she was looking for at the time was traditional stationery. Any paper can be used to write letters, however.



*Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 28, 1955

## Emulators & Engines #20

Dec. 20, 2024

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### Holiday Mainstreaming

Last year at about this time (*E&E* #8), I assessed roleplaying game materials available at the Culver City Target in late October. At that time, the store offered an impressive array. Friday morning this week, I stopped by Target to buy a couple of small padded mailing envelopes and a packet of Sharpies. I plan to mail *Tinny Dungeons* (<https://studio2publishing.com/products/tinny-dungeons>) to a couple of family members so they get a small taste of RPGs.

This year—at least in late December just before the holiday—there’s much less on offer, even with the recent release of the 2024 *Dungeon Master’s Guide* for *Dungeons & Dragons*. While I expected at least the new *Player’s Handbook*, the DM’s Guide, and perhaps the most recent Starter Set, options were few.

I did see two potentially interesting *D&D*-related books: Adam Lee’s *Dungeons & Dragons Worlds & Realms* (Ten Speed, 2024), which “[c]elebrate[s] fifty years of the spellbinding settings and planes of *Dungeons & Dragons* with [a] beautifully illustrated exploration of the multiverse;” and Jeff Ashworth and Tim Baker’s *The Game Master’s Book of Instant Towns and Cities* (Media Lab, 2024).

Otherwise, there were a couple of relevant items, including a *D&D* Beholder Figurine and *The Game Master’s Deck of Boons and Banes*, the latter also published by Media Lab Books.

Regardless, what impressed me this year was the relatively wide range of game-inspiring fiction on stock at Target. Appendix N was in full effect. There was a single-volume collection and a boxed gift set of J.R.R. Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings trilogy, *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion*, and *The Fall of Numenor*—so much Tolkien!—as well as a five-book boxed gift set of George R.R. Martin’s Song of Ice and Fire. In addition, shoppers could also avail themselves of a three-book boxed gift set of Frank Herbert’s *Dune* Saga, *Dune* alone, and Matt Dinniman’s more recent LitRPG novel *Dungeon Crawler Carl*.

Roleplaying games themselves might not have been as richly represented, but the books behind the games—or inspired by such games—were on hand.

Any of those fantastic boxed sets would make a wonderful present.



*Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 28, 1955

### Game Report: Kerzmielzorg

While in Portugal, I missed several sessions for the Kerzmielzorg campaign DM’d by my friend John. Based on the group’s *Discord* discussion, it looks like they played Oct. 27, Nov. 10, and Nov. 23. The group planned to gather for Dec. 14 but canceled and chose not to reschedule to Dec. 8 because of other commitments. I thought we might play Dec. 29 or 30, but it looks like we’ll resume in the new year.

What follows is tablemate Karen McMullan’s report on the Oct. 27 session. There were three PCs:

- Varh (Chris): A human barbarian with braided hair—later revealed to be a changeling or lycanthrope, but not all PCs know that yet
- Murnald (Karen): A Harengon warlock and bookkeeper
- Inkspot (Mike): A tiefling warlock (I think)

“After all that, we decided to go to Noirmire to lay low and make good on the promise to Amazor. Torrential rains threatened levies and when the crew made landfall in Loregaw, things were precarious. So

precarious that no sooner had they taken lodging that floodwaters rose and washed them downstream where they struggled to higher ground, fought an ochre jelly and two crocodiles, and then woke up ‘harvested’ by lizardfolk. They found a wayfarer, Farsheed, looting harvested belongings and fled with him and two other survivors. One of them, Shielda, survived. Murnald additionally collected a hand’s worth of fingers from one of the corpses to bribe Screwtape with.

“Farsheed helped them find the remains of Sizeril Thistledown’s blue-roofed hut (brilliantly floated by Varh’s Shape Water spell). An investigation revealed that Thistledown anticipated the storms, built a raft, and floated into the Mist ahead of the storm surge. We learned that Shielda was looking for her sister Becca, and promised to keep an eye out for her as we headed into the Mist. We found a settlement of Mist Hunters called Old Trapper’s Post. There we learned of Old Nan and her husband-sons who kidnap people to enslave and eat.

“Inkspot cowed and impressed the very suspicious and fearful locals of the Post by ‘driving off’ Screwtape, who Kreezy, the shopkeep, thought was Old Nan come to take them all. We learned that Old Nan had been through with her husband-sons and a train of poor souls headed deeper into the Mist and suspected that we’d find Thistledown there, and maybe Shielda’s sister Becca. We also promised to return to help June, Kreezy’s ‘wife’ return to her home.

“I contracted some sort of bog rot. Words are insufficient to describe the depth of my distaste for the Noirmire.

“We pursued the rumor of Thistledown further and came upon a woman afraid, looking deeper into the Mist. By some flash, I mistrusted her and she—it turns out—was indeed the hag, Old Nan, who lured us into traps and ultimately to her lair where we fought her and her two husband-sons. After a bitter fight, with both Varh and Farsheed falling, we managed to rally them both and recover Becca, Thistledown, and other things from the hag’s hut (notably: Wyrmlaw, a selection of trinkets (ask Inkspot or Screwtape what they were), two sets of fine elven studded leather, and 130 in coin and gems). Inkspot and I took the armor and the coin and gems, we split, saving a share for Wami and also a 10-gold fee for Farsheed who we might invite back to Kerzmielzorg, though he would stand out there like, well, Varh. So, maybe not.

“The bog rot got worse. I owe Thistledown, Varh, and Inkspot a (cosmic) debt for laboring over a rite to cleanse me of Noirmire’s corruption.

“I deeply despise Noirmire and will be marked by it forever.”

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Los Angeles Times, Oct. 21, 1955

## Solo Game Report: Portugal

Even though I'd taken *2D6 Dungeon* and Cleron Andarilho's *Mundo de Zephyrus RPG* with me, I spent my time exploring other games. Oct. 29, I focused on *Pocket Hex* (<https://lanecraft.itch.io/pocket-hex>). I've played it before but started this session with a new character, Vadut Winezefter, named using Fishwife Games' *100 Names for Male Adventurers and PCs*. I fleshed the character out slightly utilizing *NPC Development Character Traits*, continuing my practice of digging into my Google Drive for RPG resources I've accumulated over the years.

That led to the following sketch of a character:

- Speech: Breathless
- Hair: Wiry
- Facial features: Acne
- Plays with his hair
- Major traits: Prudent and Honest
- Minor traits: Jolly and pleasant

For this session, I decided to utilize a short time pool of 48 days (8d6). Winezefter began his journey in hex 4:11, his hometown of Friant—named using Polgarus Games' *101 City & Place Names*. It's an impoverished and largely forgotten locale. He was leaving home on market day—a prized pig was offered for sale—and it was also the day of an execution. Friant is a small hamlet, pretty much only a market, which is nondescript at that. A blacksmith is present half the time, and no tailor is ever present.

Attempting to slip away unnoticed and unchallenged—he didn't want to confront his family or friends—Winezefter was not seen or stopped by anyone. However, a complication arose involving animals, which came up after leaving the hamlet of Friant.

Having left the comforting outer boundaries of Friant shortly before the sun was at its highest, Winezefter walked north for a couple of hours. For most of that time, he kept a small section of elevation at the horizon in view to orient his direction of travel. As he neared that rise, it seemed to be a long line of hills or some kind of dramatic slope or ridge line. Finally, standing at its crest, Winezefter realized it was the circular rim of some kind of caldera or crater—much of the landscape within, similar to that outside. About a mile in diameter, it's just as easy to walk across as around—and so he does.

About halfway across, Winezefter experiences some kind of seismic activity or unstable land. He stumbles but does not fall. (I'd predetermined that he'd encounter a Living Crater, but he does not yet realize it's an enemy. He determines that being on the

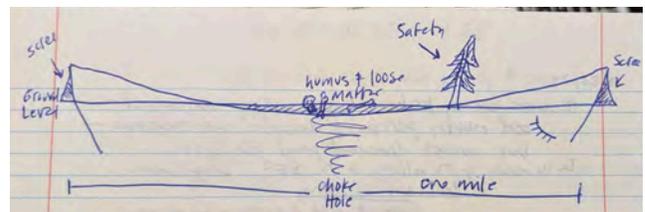
ground is the problem.) Rather than try to run to the other side (75 percent likely), he decides to climb a tree (25 percent likely) to see if the seismic activity stops. Looking around from the branches of a medium-sized tree, he doesn't see anything untoward (the Living Crater's choke hole or remains of its previous victims) other than what appear to be a previous traveler's personal effects.

He descends the tree to see what the items are. While the seismic activity had slowed or stopped while Winezefter was perched in the tree, it resumes once he's on foot again. The personal effects on the ground include a length of well-woven rope (Elven Rope), a Scroll (Prophecy spell), a battered helmet (Helm of Insight), a Silver Flail, and an Obsidian Dagger (1x day summons 1d4 skeletons). He doesn't recognize any of the items as special and leaves the Scroll behind. (Items were selected using the "Strange Loot Table" in *Axebane's Moldy Codex* #1.)

I determined that Winezefter could make it safely to the other ridgeline if he succeeded at three out of five checks, three at moderate difficulty and two at hard given the increasing seismic activity. He failed, succeeded twice, and failed twice again. So he fell, close to the distant ridgeline, finally recognizing the creature as what it is—a Living Crater. He attacks, taking less damage than he doles out, eventually defeating the Living Crater.

Rolling his Luck check for the day, the outcome is Unobjectionable, and he finds adequate food, as well as a safe and comfortable camp site. However, his Foible check results in Stutter, and his feet fail him—I'll say they did: stumbling as he ran across the crater. Winezefter beds down for the night to rest.

The Living Crater can detect the passing of potential victims as long as they remain in contact with the ground. They cause seismic ripples to try to cause potential victims to fall and make their way toward the creature's choke hole—where the remains of other victims might be found. Those efforts increase in intensity. Victims are choked down and digested, their remains spat back up.



The next morning, Winezefter continues into hex 3:11, the low hills turning to grassland. (Determined using Atelier Clandestin's *Sandbox Generator*) The

Landmark included a Hazard and Treasure. A natural Sabotage/Trap was present, as was a Religious Idol.

Winezefter spots a nearby shrine. It's not alongside any kind of path but is just out in the middle of nowhere. He is suspicious and wary. Not a religious man, he avoids it—approaching to look more closely but not entering the shrine or touching the idol. Based on Two Bit Tables' *Statues of All Shapes*, it's a granite or stone statue of a dead or wounded kraken on a cylindrical base. The idol has been corroded or is eroded. Our hero doesn't find the treasure because he doesn't hazard the trap.

On the next day, Winezefter heads north again, to the right, to hex 2:11, more grassland—and a dungeon! The Cells of Doom (Theme: Burnt, so marked by the presence of ash, perhaps the remains of an explosion) is made up of five levels. It's a sprawling complex, with levels containing between 12 and 45 rooms.

I continued play Oct. 30. While walking through the grassland, he finds the entrance downward, offering the cool misty promise of dungeon and treasure. But he cannot descend beyond the daylight struggling inward. Unfortunately, Winezefter doesn't have any torches.

He is aware of a village to the southeast, but there is a complication: He has no money and doesn't want to be seen by anyone. Regardless, he decides to sell some of what he found, to rest, and to buy some torches. He finds that the stead of Rundurton is a medium-sized city of about 1,500 people, marked by a castle, the aged Raven Keep. Local residents eke out their existence brewing, farming, and smithing metal. It's a filthy, corrupt locale, unwallled but patrolled by guards (about 90).

Raven Keep is a square or rectangular castle of four levels. It's defended by a catapult, composed of stone walls and towers, and surrounded by rounded wooden palisades. There's a gatehouse with a wooden door protected by a portcullis.

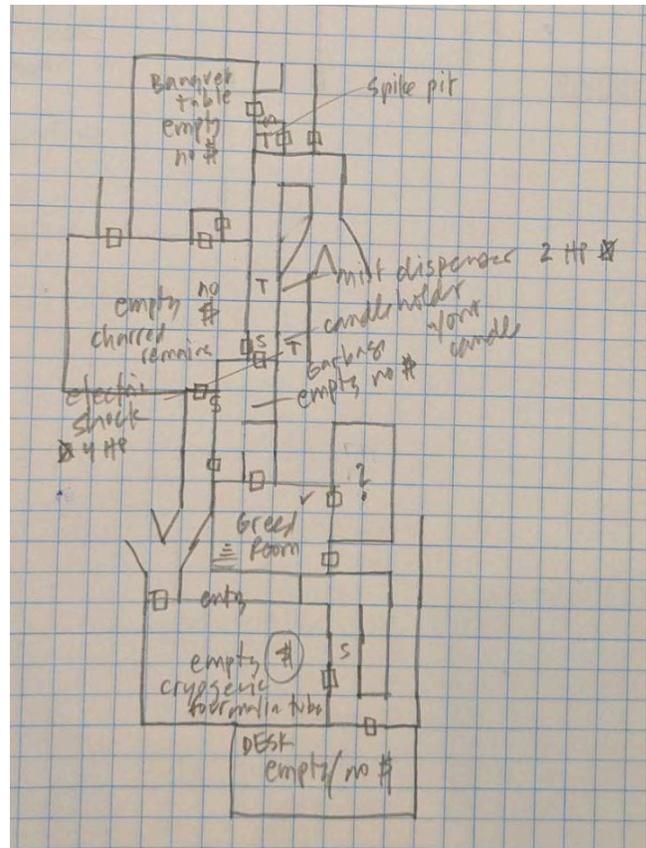
The initial disposition of the locals toward Winezefter is hostile, a further complication. A wedding ceremony is being held that day, and he ventures forth to attempt to sell at least the Silver Flail.

He approaches an inn (detailed using *TinyZine #5* and *Book of Random Tables: Inns & Taverns*) called the Wagging Dog. Despite a friendly sign outside, it's in a criminal part of town between a bar and an opium den. Owned by a male halfling named Samlot Stoud, the inn's menu features trout, carrots, pine nuts, and beer, served by a gnomish waitress named Lila. Winezefter's room has a magical bath, and the other

clientele seem to be hard working and underpaid, bearing a grudge against the rich.

While seeking new equipment, I consulted James and Olivia Embry's *Raven of the Scythe*, as well as *Town and City Builder 2: Downtime*. Receiving 40 sp for the Silver Flail, Winezefter invests in a short sword, a light shield, a large sack, and four torches—estimating that that would allow him to explore the nearby dungeon for several hours.

After spending an evening transacting his business, he spends the next day resting to heal from the damage he'd received fighting the Living Crater. That night, he engages in low-end carousing and encounters a shady-looking town guard who mistakes him for a suspected criminal. Winezefter must pay a fine of 10 sp or spend a week in jail. He chooses to pay the ~~br~~fine and heads back out the next morning.



Along the way back to the entrance downward, Winezefter's travels are uneventful, and he reaches the Cells of Doom around 2 p.m. Level one of the dungeon features 28 rooms and one faction—dwarves—otherwise populated by level one creatures. There's a 2-in-6 chance of wandering monsters.

The entrance room is a Greed Room—a mysterious treasure is suspended near the ceiling, unreachable—in which time moves twice as fast. He's tempted by

the Greed Room but doesn't spend much time in it before getting bored or giving up. Spending half an hour trying to figure out a way to reach the treasure takes 60 minutes, and his first torch sputters out. Winezefter doesn't necessarily notice that time moves faster, but he's surprised by how fast the torch burned down. He considers the room a waste of time.

In another room, he rifles through a desk. The room contains a lantern with a flesh shade that casts an eerie red light when lit, a carpet knit from human hair, and a cursed ruby (causing murderous possessiveness). (Items identified using *Glumdark's "Things Found in a Dungeon"* [<https://www.glumdark.com/?tableUuid=772b90fa120744b86c83>])

After exploring seven rooms of the first level of the dungeon, encountering several traps and finding no creatures or treasure—but just creepy stuff—Winezefter heads back to town to rest and procure more torches. Following a day of recovery, he decides to return. *Role Generator* offers several rumors (<https://www.rolegenerator.com/en/module/rumors>):

- A mercenary soldier was seen by a beggar near the lighthouse—a demonic priest nearby
- A bodyguard was seen with mice down by the warehouse district. Ghouls, too.
- An elvish comedian told jokes about the governor talking to an animal near a brothel. The punchline includes a draconic fighter.

The session ended with Winezefter returning to the dungeon. Despite his failure so far, it seems too good to just ignore!

Nov. 4, I decided to switch games, turning my attention instead to the 1978 printing of the John Eric Holmes-edited *Dungeons & Dragons*. My intent was to play through the Sample Dungeon (p. 40). To compose a party, I created five simple characters:

Lirael Shieldbreaker

Fighter 1 / Neutral

S 11 / I 10 / W 10 / Co 11 / D 11 / Ch 10

Sp 16 / MgWd 13 / DR 12 / TtSt 14 / DBr 15

HP 7 / AC 2

Chainmail, shield, sword, backpack, five torches, tinderbox, waterskin, standard rations, plate mail (obtained later)

Riordan Soulforge

Cleric 1 / Neutral

S 10 / I 8 / W 17 / Co 8 / D 16 / Ch 9

Sp 15 / MgWd 12 / DR 11 / TtSt 14 / DBr 16

HP 3 / AC 4

Turn Undead: Skel 7 / Zomb 9 / Ghoul 11

Chainmail, wooden cross, shield, mace, backpack, six torches, tinderbox, iron rations, stakes 'n' mallet, waterskin, wolvesbane  
(Died)

Thandria Stonebreaker

Dwarf 1 / Neutral Good

S 10 / I 8 / W 10 / Co 11 / D 9 / Ch 11

Sp 14 / MgWd 11 / DR 10 / TtSt 12 / DB 14

HP 6 / AC 2

60' infravision, languages (Dwarven, Common, Gnome, Kobold, Goblin), detect underground construction 1-2/6, listen at doors 1-2/6

Chainmail, helm, shield, hand ax, battle ax, backpack, waterskin, iron rations, plate mail (obtained later)

Darian Quickfinger

Thief 2 / Chaotic Good

S 7 / I 11 / W 11 / Co 8 / Dex 14 / Ch 11

Sp 16 / MgWd 13 / DR 12 / TtSt 14 / DB 15

HP 6 / AC 7

Open locks 20%, move silent 25%, remove trap 15%, hide in shadows 15%, pick pockets 25%, hear noise 1-2/6

Leather armor, light crossbow, 28 quarrels, dagger, 12 iron spikes, 50' rope, backpack, six torches, tinderbox, waterskin, iron rations

Kaelthas Nightbinder

Magic User / Chaotic Neutral

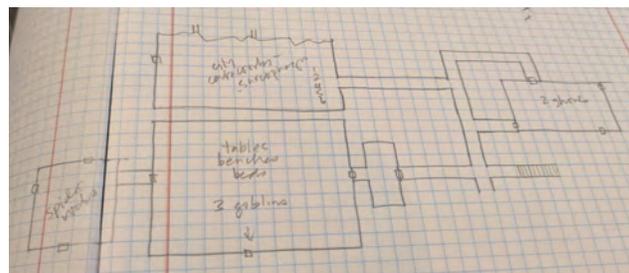
S 12 / I 15 / W 13 / Co 8 / Dex 10 / Ch 8

Sp 15 / MgWd 14 / DR 13 / TtSt 13 / DB 16

HP 2 / AC 9

Spells: Read Magic

Dagger, 10' pole, small sack, waterskin, backpack, lantern, three flasks of oil, iron rations



The party members meet at the Green Dragon Inn in Portown and plan to plunder the abandoned wizard's tower just to the west—the former domain of Zenopus.

While exploring the tower, they encounter and kill two goblins, but one goblin escapes. They search the room and find several chests. One is trapped, and the thief falls asleep for two turns. They spend more time

searching and find a potion of growth.

A room full of webs spooks the party and they decide to get out while ahead. They return to Porttown and spend three days resting before returning to the tower. Encountering two ghouls, three party members are paralyzed. After the ghouls are defeated and the paralysis wears off, the party returns to town to heal up again for two more days.

Returning to the tower's catacombs, they find a sarcophagus room. Shieldbreaker falls, victim to noxious gas, for three turns. Stonebreaker claims a magic sword for her. Soulforge turns a skeleton.



*Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 28, 1955

Of the two games, I had more fun and spent more time with *Pocket Hex*. There's no character generation—at least not to the extent of *D&D*—and combat is much more streamlined, so I could devote more time to exploration and world building. I enjoyed the single session playing the Holmes *D&D*, but it was much more combat oriented, and relatively brutal at that. The party explored one or two rooms each time before returning to town to heal, and one character died. (I replaced that character with the same character.)

I also found that not playing *D&D* somehow freed me to be more whimsical and creative in the resources I drew on to flesh out the world and play experience. I felt much less wed to a game system because of how light *Pocket Hex* is. That intrigued me. I could have easily drawn on the same resources for the Holmes session but for some reason didn't. If I had, I might have limited myself to *A&E* and *Dragon* up to 1978.

Perhaps it was because of the detail given in the Sample Dungeon and the Illustration of Sample Floor Plan (p. 41). I didn't even make up any details for Porttown despite the time the party spent there. No made-up inns or taverns, etc. Porttown might as well have been Nowhere.

Zach Howard adapted the Holmes Sample Dungeon for 5E as *The Ruined Tower of Zenopus*, which I've yet to check out. He dedicates a page to the setting, as well as to the dungeon, offering ideas for using it as an adventure site in *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, which is set in Greyhawk. I'm more likely to return to Rundurton than Porttown—or Friant.

Neither game captured my attention, and after Nov. 4, I didn't play again before returning to the United States at the end of the month.

### The Ignorable Theme: Rules That Soothe

The prompt for this was "Rules that make the GM's life easier." I fear I don't have much to say on the topic other than to make some brief remarks.

The rule that makes a GM's life the easiest is DM's fiat, as far as I'm concerned. As you can see in my solo play reports above, we're all just Making Stuff Up most of the time, and that often works better than any other rule or reference. When in doubt, Make Something Up. It doesn't really matter, anyway.

Beyond that, this is also not really a rule, but I think the dictat Have Fun should rule the day and every time we share table. If the DM or players aren't having fun, someone's doing something wrong, and we should always err on the side of Fun.

Everything else is just gravy.

### Comments on Alarums & Excursions #589

In *Tantivy* dated Oct. 27, **Lee Gold** mentioned her and Barry's birthdays. A belated wish for a wonderful year ahead for both of you. Also, chag Hanukkah sameach.

**Jim Vassilakos's** Hawktauh spell made me chuckle, having recently learned about the "Hawk Tuah" Girl. (<https://tinyurl.com/thehawktauhgirl>) Don't take investment advice from a social media influencer!

In *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #398, I enjoyed **Lisa Padol's** discussion of the Smartest Guy in the Room, which echoed Vassilakos's remarks on flawless characters. I'm glad the other players are able to balance his big ideas with actual gameplay.

**Mark A. Wilson's** *Bumbling Through Dungeons* #59 reported on his gaming club's 24-hour charity gaming marathon. What a neat idea! My son's Scout troop held an overnight event annually at a local video game arcade and laser tag facility when he was a Scout. A group of the Scouts also played *Dungeons & Dragons* but never did so during the overnights. When I was growing up, my friends and I would always play *D&D* during church youth group overnights.

In *The Seedling* #43, **Mark Nemeth** said, "I'd like to know who, by name, is responsible for the existence of the attunement rule." A Google AI Overview—a questionable source—suggests that "[t]he concept of 'attunement' for magic items ... first appeared in the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (AD&D) edition of *Dungeons & Dragons*, specifically in the *Player's Handbook* released in 1978." We might start there.

Otherwise, RAEBNC, one and all. Happy holidays!

## Telegraphs & Tar Pits #144

Dec. 27, 2024

*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to APA-L, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

### Last Week's Senryu

Cryotherapy  
for precancerous lesions  
was my morning task

At my dermatology appointment last week, the doctor froze a spot on my cheek that seemed precancerous. Everything else checked out okeh. The frozen spot darkened slightly, and dried up to flake off last weekend. Hopefully, healthy skin will replace what was removed.

I'm not overly worried about the experience, but my father has had skin issues over the years. It's good to keep an eye on such things, and I'll go in annually for checkups now that we have a baseline. (I first went two years ago and neglected to return last year.)

Early this week, I made an appointment for a pneumonia vaccine—that afternoon! I also called to schedule an annual eye exam, which will occur this weekend. We'll see whether my prescription has changed. I seem to have clustered all of my annual exams at the very end of the year—or first thing in the new year. That can be a busy time with patients wanting to utilize their health insurance within the calendar year, and it's kind of a hassle, but I haven't yet seen fit to move off the holidays.

May we all remain healthy in the year to come!

### Happy Holidays!

Last weekend, I wrote and addressed more than 60 holiday postcards to send to friends and family. They were just random postcards I've accumulated over the years while traveling, but the message was a holiday greeting. The postcards from Maine, New Mexico, Wisconsin, and other locales will serve as my Christmas cards this year. I didn't send holiday cards last year, and two years ago, I sent fewer—just family.

While going through our address book, I was struck by how few fannish friends I've included among family and other friends. This year, I sent very few cards to people I know through zines, comics, fanzines, and fandom more generally—even though I

might know more fen than ever before.

It felt good to send out the greetings, and I've been thinking about holiday cards. Even if you keep in touch with some family members or friends only once a year, it's important outreach. I stamped each postcard with our address, so they serve to update or remind recipients about our mailing address.

Such cards are also an invitation to write back—which is their primary purpose, really. I'm sure that some of the addresses I have will no longer be good. I haven't sent cards to some people for several years. Perhaps those will be returned with a forwarding address. (We're not sure if the post office does that with postcards.) Regardless, the cards that arrive accurately will hopefully inspire correspondence in return—either cards, holiday letters, or some kind of note in response.

Fanzines are also an invitation to correspond. In apae, that's baked in. We comment on each other's contributions frequently. But when a faned sends out fanzines to readers—either in print or as PDF—I think they're also hoping for correspondence in kind, either a fanzine in trade, or a letter of comment. Even just a letter that's not intended for publication.

Whether you recognize or celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas, Festivus, or Krampus—or pay heed to Ghu, Roscoe, Foo, Clod, the Great Spider, or Herbie—I'll offer you the same greeting I wrote on those postcards:

Happy holidays! I hope that you and yours are doing well. May 2025 bring only the best and brightest.

Much love, Heath.



*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 25, 1955



—William Rotsler

## Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

### *Beast from Haunted Cave*

This was the second movie in my mini-series of screenings over the holiday while my wife was out of town. On the same *Elvira's Movie Macabre* DVD as *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians* (see below), the version I watched combines opening and ending segments, and interstitial scenes featuring Elvira; punctuation commentary throughout the movie—by way of subtle circular overlays in the lower left-hand corner; and the movie itself.

The Gene Corman-produced and Monte Hellman-directed 1959 film is appropriate for the holiday season because it's, well, snowy—shot in South Dakota. Several criminals plan a heist to burgle a bank, using a cross-country ski trek as an alibi—as well as to escape to Canada with the gold bars. Unfortunately, they also encounter a creature living in an abandoned mine.

The movie blends outdoors and downhill skiing

cinematography, which is wonderfully wintry; scenes focusing on the relationships between the characters—the criminal leader and his frustrated gun moll who wants out, her developing relationship with the ski instructor and backcountry guide; one of the criminals putting the moves on a barmaid and the ski instructor's sister; and another criminal's flirtation with a backcountry housekeeper—and footage of the beast from haunted cave.

The creature is a sort of giant spider that secures its victims in webbing before moving them to the abandoned mine, where it drains their blood over time. It's portrayed using practical effects, and the modeling and large-scale puppetry is relatively awkward and unconvincing, though the use of webbing proves extremely atmospheric.

Of the two movies on the DVD, it's the better flick. The opening, closing, and interstitial segments focus on Elvira laying off her production crew in order to save money—and realizing what skills they bring to the show's production. That's communicated in part through “accidental” closeups on her cleavage. I wax and wane in appreciation of Elvira. At one level, it seems to be merely boob humor, but at another level, Cassandra Peterson's self-awareness and ability to build such a strong career is impressive. Watching this duo of movies inspired me to procure her memoir, *Yours Cruelly*, for the Kindle.

### *House IV*

This week's movie night was rescheduled from Tuesday to Thursday, hence the one-day delay in this's distribution. We watched the fourth outing in the House franchise, a 1992 horror-comedy starring—in a manner of speaking—William Kratt, perhaps best known for *The Greatest American Hero*. While watching the movie, we speculated whether his scenes were shot in just one day. His character dies relatively early in the movie, but he appears throughout, via flashback, a film projection from the afterlife (in midair, not on the walls of the room), and a return near the end of the flick.

The movie goes more for laughs than frights, though there's at least one effective jump scare, a truly gross moment, and a spiritual underpinning to the storyline. The gist of the flick is that a couple with a teenage daughter has inherited a house after the death of the husband's father. They want to keep the house—which is built over a healing well considered sacred by the local Native Americans—but a dodgy stepbrother wants to sell it so it can be razed and used to hide toxic waste.

After a car accident, the death of the husband, and the paralysis of the daughter, two of the stepbrother's

hooligan hangers on strive to frighten the now-single mother and her wheelchair-bound daughter out of the house—and into selling it. But the healing well also attracts the spirits of the lingering dead who have yet to move on to the afterlife, and there’s a protective force at play.

My friend Matt and I speculated who the mysterious housekeeper might be, whether the girl’s legs would be healed, and whether the flick would end with the house in flames or with a fresh coat of paint; it looks pretty dreary throughout.

There’s not a lot to this movie, and I have no idea what connection it has to its predecessors, but there are two notable moments: the threatening pizza face and a scene that involves the extraction and consumption of large quantities of phlegm. That scene is especially icky.

### *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians*

This was my holiday movie for the season. Inspired by Stephen R. Bissette, who posted about the flick on the Facebook, I watched it on an *Elvira’s Movie Macabre* DVD. I don’t remember what the framing host sequences concentrated on, but I will remember the movie. While I usually enjoy movies of questionable estimation, this took several sittings to get through.

It’s pretty slow paced, the acting is relatively wooden—though adequate—and the storyline saccharine and pat enough that you pretty much know what’s going to happen before events occur. The movie’s narrative explores what might happen if Martian children experience television transmissions from Earth portraying Santa Claus and the joy of the holiday season, and—not having a Martian Santa of their own—fall into depression and despondency.

A Martian leader takes several colleagues—including the bumbling and comedic Dropo—to Earth in order to abduct Santa, returning to Mars to bring its children the spirit of the season. They also abduct two terrestrial children who witness their arrival.

An automated toy production line is established on Mars, and Santa is forced to make presents for Martian children. The leader’s colleagues think he’s making a mistake and do their best to sabotage the efforts. Dropo is mistaken for Santa Claus after a long day of producing toys.

The movie ends as one might expect it to. Good overcomes evil, and the holiday spirit looms large. No one is harmed. There are reasons the movie was included in Harry Medved and Randy Dreyfuss’s book *The Fifty Worst Films of All Time*. There are also reasons the movie remains notable in fannish attention.

The title alone is stellar. The theme song, “Hooray

for Santa Claus” is well worth listening to—it’s utilized at least twice in the movie, and themes from the piece recur throughout the film’s score. The movie’s cast includes a young Pia Zadora. And the movie was adapted as a comic book, a 1966 Dell one-shot that retells the tale faithfully. (I recommend you watch the movie before reading the comic. They make a nice pairing.)

While one might think you couldn’t do much worse than this for a Christmas movie, I can’t imagine that there’s not worse mundane fare. *Rotten Tomatoes* ratings suggest that *The Christmas Candle*, *Fred Claus*, and *Surviving Christmas* are worse, for example. How bad can a movie be if it’s better than one starring Ben Affleck, Christina Applegate, or Kelsey Grammer?

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Los Angeles Times, Nov. 25, 1955

## The Ignorable Theme: A Fannish Syllabus

“If you could offer an introductory course of study to fellow fen, on what topic would it be? What would be on the syllabus?” Given how late I am with this distribution, rather than suggest my own syllabus, I’d like to recommend several resources.

One can’t go wrong doing their best to read all of the Hugo and Nebula winners over time. You’ll receive extra credit if you read all the nominees. Similarly, *The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society’s Recommended Reading List of Speculative Fiction*, though not updated since 2002, offers a treasure trove of must reads. As does its corollary *Recommended Reading List for Children and Young Adults*.

For movies, TV, and home video, check out the annual Saturn Awards winners, which date back to 1972. The 2002 *LASFS Recommended Viewing List* is also a necessary resource.



*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 2, 1955

Any trekkers in the mix should consider enrolling in Starfleet Academy to take advantage of its structured self-led courses. Over the years, I’ve dabbled with the College of Ranks and Insignias’ TOS Rank Recognition course (why, I don’t know) and explored the College of Treknology’s course on TOS characters. At the least, the courses offer a structured approach to explore whatever aspect of the franchise intrigues you, even if you don’t complete the work or seek credentials. Every media fandom could offer this.

Overall, I’d encourage any fan to follow their interests. If you read a review in a fanzine that piques your interest, check it out. If an author mentions another in a book or interview—as an inspiration or offhand—follow up on it. Read the authors respected by authors you respect. I keep a running list of things I want to explore based on other reading and the recommendations of other fen.

Finally, don’t worry about things like syllabi, lists, or canons. Read and watch what you like, whatever the reason. One thing I still need to learn is that I don’t need to finish a book or movie I’ve started. At least I’ve already realized that I don’t necessarily need to read books or watch movies in order—reading the third volume in a series before the first is totally okeh

if you enjoy the book.

No one has to do anything in particular to be the best fan they can be. But you can’t go wrong if you return to the classics you’ve yet to experience.

## Comments on APA-L #3100

In *Vanamonde* #1623, **John Hertz** continued reporting on the recent Loscon, focusing his attention on the Art Show, the Rotsler Award, the second Classics of SF book discussion, and other topics. I particularly enjoyed his tangent on fan names and nicknames.

**Matthew Mitchell’s** *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #87 recounted busyness at work leading up to the holidays. I initially thought I’d work on the days in between the holidays, but I chose to take Thursday off to spend the day hanging out with friends and today to catch up on the distribution I didn’t finish preparing Thursday. I’ll likely also take Monday off once Caitlin returns from her travels. (She’s seeing *Nosferatu* [2024] as I write this. I am jealous.)

I enjoyed your review of the comic book *Masks*. Dynamite’s done a relatively good job keeping heroes of the past (radio, TV, film, and comics) in the public eye. The Green Lama, for example, was originally a pulp hero before appearing in comic books and on the radio. In addition to the modern comics treatments, there have also been modern pulp offerings featuring the hero.

I was also intrigued by your commentary on the Dynamite *Dark Shadows* series. I actually have a copy of the issue pictured and quite like the opportunity comics afford for “lost” seasons of a given series. A similar approach has been taken for *Star Trek* and *The X-Files* by various publishers. Your discussion of pitfalls and opportunities resonated with me.

Not to be a sourpuss, but because you didn’t participate in Loscon this year, you can’t contribute to *Losconzine* this year. I love that you wanted to, though, even if you weren’t inspired. There’s always next time. I’ll turn to editing that in the new year.

Your comment on the membership of the Justice League of America resonated with me. I always figured that the makeup of super teams such as the JLA, Avengers, and even the X-Men depended on which characters were selling well at the time. While the teams do serve a purpose to try out lesser-known characters, most team changes are intended to boost sales of the team title.

I’ve yet to volunteer for Gallifrey One, but if hospitality will have me, I’d like to participate again—and structure my volunteer hours so I can also actively explore the portions of the con that interest me. (I’ve yet to see the Christmas special.)

And in *Toony Loons* #785, **Joe Zeff** updated ellers

on ongoing health concerns and his ongoing exploration of the options available through Bespoke Post. I'm sorry to hear about Marcia's difficulties at work—but relieved to see the power of the union in action. The 7 a.m. shift start seems to be pretty obvious retaliation, which is also something that shouldn't occur. I hope that the situation is resolved so the best possible outcome occurs.

Enjoy your fruitcakes. With my wife out of town, I didn't indulge in a holiday meal but have been eating... leftovers. I was wondering if anyone would pick up on the recent tendency toward undersea covers. Perhaps there's something in the... water. Seriously, though, if they were all submitted by Jose Sanchez (APA-L #3084, #3090, and #3099), I think it's because I was struck by those submissions in particular. I particularly like #3099's use of layering to suggest the light diffraction of water. I don't know why Sanchez's been focusing on the theme, and I suppose I could try to space out similarly themed covers more consciously so it's less noticeable. Those feel pretty spread out as it is.

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DIRECTED BY JACK ARNOLD • SCREENPLAY BY ROBERT M. FRESKO and MARION BENKELEY  
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Too TOUGH to be Afraid!

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Los Angeles Times, Dec. 2, 1955

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JOSEPH E. LEVINE presents  
**SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS**  
IN SPACE-BLAZING COLOR

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Blast off for Mars...with Santa and a pair of Earth Kids!  
Science-Fun-Fiction  
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JOSEPH E. LEVINE presents  
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The Fantastic Martian Toy Factory!  
Earth Kids Meeting with Martian Kids!  
Space-ship Journey from Earth to Mars!  
Santa turn Mars-Robot into a Mechanical Toy!

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COMING! "SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS" LAST DAY!



The green-face Martians think they have captured SANTA CLAUS and friends in SANTA CLAUS conquers the MARTIANS an Embassy Picture

COMING! "SANTA CLAUS conquers the MARTIANS" LAST DAY!



SANTA CLAUS

Out-of-this-world fun 'n' action...  
as two Earth Kids  
are whisked away  
with him  
to Mars!

**SEE:** Santa's  
North Pole  
Workshop!

JOSEPH E. LEVINE presents  
**SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS**  
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IN SPACE-BLAZING COLOR  
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## The Explosion Containment Umbrella #26

Dec. 31, 2024

*The Explosion Containment Umbrella* is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to eAPA and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.



### From the Reading Pile: Science Fiction-Related Comic Books

Since I finished cataloging my comic book collection, I've all but ceased buying new comics—I'm down to Stan Sakai's *Usagi Yojimbo* and the occasional stray title—and have decided to read and release the comics I've accumulated otherwise. In the last week or so, I've read perhaps a short box and a half, and I've already taken one short box to my favorite local comic book shop to sell back for credit. I'm almost done with a second short box now.

In that week's worth of reading, I've come across a handful of notable titles and issues that might be of interest to the more general sf reader. These aren't reviews, per se, but the descriptions and commentary will hopefully pique your interest. Superheroes aside, there's still plenty of sf—and plenty of pulp—in modern comics.

American Mythology Productions (<https://www.americanmythology.net>) publishes a number of nostalgia- and genre-adjacent licensed titles, including series featuring Laurel & Hardy, the Three Stooges, Zorro, *Return of the Living Dead*, and *Stargate Atlantis*. They also offer several Edgar Rice Burroughs licensed comics. Among those, I recently read *Beyond the Farthest Star Chronicles* #1-2 (2022).

That series reprints backup stories taken from issues of DC's *Tarzan* series that adapt the ERB novel *Beyond the Farthest Star*. Originally published in 1964, the book contains two novellas written in 1940: *Adventure on Poloda*, which was originally published in 1942; and *Tangor Returns*, which wasn't published

until 1964.

The first issue of the reprint series includes four pieces written by Marv Wolfman and drawn by Dan Green and Howard Chaykin that originally appeared in *Tarzan* Vol. 25 #213-216 (October 1972 to January 1973). In a storyline perhaps intended to introduce a new series similar to the Barsoom or Pellucidar tales, a wartime pilot finds himself 450,000 light years from Earth. He encounters several warring groups, befriends some “scraggly old men” in a ruined village, plummets into the sea, develops temporary gills, and struggles to survive the ongoing conflict.

The second issue draws from #217-218 of the DC series, featuring writing by Wolfman, Denny O'Neil, and Robert Kanigher; and artwork by Green, Chaykin, Murphy Anderson, and Ruby Florsos. Crashing in the Forest of Peril, the displaced pilot evades numerous monstrous creatures before he encounters primitive humanoids and the Princess of Doom.

The reprints aren't overly cleaned up, and the resulting reproduction retains many of the imperfections of the original periodicals' coloring. Not having read the backup stories when they were first printed, this isn't much of a nostalgic read—but does inspire me to seek out the source material, ERB's fiction. Given the presence of backup stories in these reprint issues, it seems that American Mythology planned to build on the story with new material.

At the end of the first issue, there is a five-page preview of a new series in the Edgar Rice Burroughs Universe, *Beyond the Farthest Star: Warriors of Zandar*. And at the end of the second issue, there's a new eight-page chapter featuring contemporary art and writing, as well as a three-page preview of a non-ERB series, *Cursedverse*. While I find the reprinted material compelling—as a gateway to the original novel—the new material didn't really speak to me. Regardless, it might be worth seeking out *Tarzan* back issues to see what other ERB writing was adapted in the 1970s.

Readers of the original Gold Key comics might be pleased by the relaunch of that publishing imprint. The modern-day Gold Key Comics (<https://goldkeycomics.com>) has run two Kickstarters so far to fund two titles: Jay Stephens's *Figgy Furthermore—The Spirit Guide Dog* and *Boris Karloff Gold Key Mysteries*. I read #2 of the latter series; there hasn't been a third issue yet.

Similar to the recent EC Comics relaunch series published by Oni Press, the Karloff title is a horror anthology featuring the long-standing movie icon. The second issue includes three stories, including the continuation of “Where House,” which features

Karloff's exploration of a mysterious house that occasionally appears on a studio lot; the wartime "Trenchfoot," which considers the Nazi development of super soldiers; and the Lovecraftian "The Town with a Million Eyes," which suggests that those who imprison you might be less threatening—or dangerous—than the world outside.

Despite the cover's slightly vintage design and color palette, the innards are largely modern. I found "Where House"'s artwork most pleasingly dark and brooding, though the portrayal of Lovecraftian horrors in "The Town with a Million Eyes" is also worth experiencing. A promising concept. I'm curious why there hasn't been a third issue yet!



*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 9, 1955

Speaking of horror hosts and icons, David Avallone continues his run of high-quality—and high-comedy—comics featuring Elvira, Mistress of the Dark (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #144), with *Elvira Meets H.P. Lovecraft*. The first issue of the Dynamite series was published this year, with four subsequent issues. Following the very fun *Elvira in Horrorland (Faculae & Filigree* #17) and *Elvira Meets Vincent Price*, the pairing with Lovecraft proves very promising.

Avallone ably captures the occasionally risqué patter of Cassandra Peterson, as well as the antiquarian stodginess of Lovecraft, as he enlists her assistance to save the world. The script addresses Lovecraft's misinformed racism, the snootiness of avid readers ("You confuse the Great Old Ones with the Elder Gods."), and the monstrous wonders of weird fiction. Kewber Baal's portrayal of Nyarlathotep, the crawling chaos, at the end of the issue is a delight.

Regardless of whether you approach the series because you appreciate Elvira or Lovecraft, there's sure to be something here to amuse or intrigue you. Avallone's Elvira comics are not to be missed.

In 2022-2023, Opus Comics published a handful of Frank Frazetta-inspired comics. The company subsequently came under fire for not paying its contributors or fulfilling orders, and its presence online seems to have largely been obliterated. I'm not sure whether the controversy has been resolved, but despite the amazing artwork of Frazetta—and the presence of variant covers featuring his work—it's a

challenging gambit: Is a painting enough to inspire an ongoing comic book series or long-form story? Or was this merely an attempt to grab cash capitalizing on the output of an important artist?

Reading *Frank Frazetta's Dawn Attack* #1 (November 2022) and *Frank Frazetta's Tales of Science-Fantasy* #1 (April 2023), I'm tempted to think this was more an attempt to grab cash. The first comic builds on Frazetta's 1991 painting for the *Writers of the Future* Vol. 7 anthology. The second was inspired by the painting *Alien Crucifixion*, originally published in the June 1972 issue of *National Lampoon*.

Neither comic is particularly compelling or interesting, though the *Dawn Attack* issue suggests potential for an ongoing presence like the occasional Barbarella comics (*T&T* #7). Instead, one looks forward to the panel or page mirroring the original Frazetta work in the context of the narrative—or one wishes they'd bought the Frazetta variant cover instead of whatever cover a reader procured. Regardless, each issue includes a variant cover gallery in the back, so you can at least look at the Frazetta original.

Nevertheless, if you aren't able to pay your creators or fulfill orders, there's little hope for the revitalization of a sustainable FrazettaVerse. If you're going to build on the work of a master, your creativity and production needs to be at least close to masterwork level. Otherwise, you're just riding on the coattails of another, hoping that something adjacent though lesser will still attract fans. I admit it; I bought the comics because I like Frazetta. I still appreciate his work, but these comics were not satisfying. It might be better to just look at the original paintings and imagine your own stories.

Sometimes, however, an adaptation really works well. The Ablaze Publishing adaptation series *Lovecraft: Unknown Kadath* (*F&F* #17) continued to be excellent. I recently read #5 and #8—and had read the original *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* not long ago. (*T&T* #80)

Not only does the writing of Florentino Florez and artwork of Guillermo Sanna ably capture H.P. Lovecraft's weird fiction in comics, the two play with the medium. The Winsor McCay *Little Nemo*-like portions remain a favorite aspect of the series, leavening the cosmic horror with cartoony comedy. And Ablaze reprinted the original fiction at the end of each issue so you can return to the source material after experiencing the comics adaptation.

The eight-issue series was collected in 2023, so you can experience it all in one read, should you so desire. The 200-page trade paperback reprints the

series along with a cover gallery, bonus material, and the original prose story in full, rather than serialized. This might be the best Lovecraft comics adaptation I've ever read, even though I read it piecemeal—and incompletely.

I picked up *Orson Welles: Warrior of the Worlds #1* (Scout Comics, August 2023) on a whim. I suppose Jules Verne- and H.G. Wells-inspired or -hosted comics might make a lot of sense, but I was skeptical that Welles—despite his involvement in the Mercury Theatre on the Air's radio adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*—was a strong enough figure to carry an sf comic.

In some ways, Welles is merely a stand-in for Wells here—radio producer rather than author, as in *The Infinite Worlds of H.G. Wells* (T&T #11)—but the gambit works. What if the radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* wasn't audio drama, but reportage? Perhaps that idea has been explored before. In this comic, upon Welles's death, a colleague of his begins to find clues among his radio and movie projects that suggests that not everything was fiction.

That leads her to encounter some Men in Black, perhaps alien agents seeking to cover up what Welles had learned and experienced, as well as to find a device that seems to transport her to the past of 1938. Milton Lawson's writing and Erik Whalen's artwork combine to tell the story in a darkly moody style that reminded me of *The X-Files*. Whalen's depictions of the fighting machines are wonderful, as is a two-page spread showing a battle of the wills between Welles and an alien interloper.

I didn't seek out the second issue at the time, but I'm not averse to doing so. However, I'm not sure you can! Originally intended as a seven-issue series—with a trade paperback collection also solicited—it looks as though only the one issue was published. There'd even been reports that a television series based on the series was in development. In early 2024, Scout faced financial difficulties, and the collection—if not the series—remains in limbo. Perhaps it was abducted by... aliens.

Will Meugniot's cover to *Planet Comics #10* (Antarctic Press, July 2022) reminded me so much of the work of Wally Wood that I just had to buy it. Not only are the two women in the foreground excellently reminiscent of Wood, I can almost hear the BEM in the lower left-hand corner exclaim "Potrzebie!"



*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 16, 1955

In recent years, Antarctic has moved beyond its traditional focus on Amerimanga-styled comics and furry fare such as *Albedo Anthropomorphics* and *Furlough* to in some cases relaunch a number of notable series of the past such as *Exciting Comics*, *Horror Comics*, *Jungle Comics*, and *Planet Comics*. The new anthology comics have little to owe publishers such as Ned Pines and Fiction House other than the titles and themes for each series, but the straight line to history remains.

*Planet Comics* is, of course, the science fiction anthology, and could be read in parallel with the current Oni/EC *Cruel Universe*. Of the four stories in this issue, nothing comes close to the coolness of the cover, but so it goes. In addition to two continuing serials, two stories struck my fancy. "Five of One, Half Dozen of Another," written by Dan Johnson and drawn by Dan Philips, nears the sense of wonder of old-school space opera. I enjoyed the alien landscape, ray guns, and rocket ships. And the black-and-white "Robot," written by Marcello Bondi and drawn by

Vincenzo Michieli, would have found a comfortable home in a 1970s fumetto.

Like any anthology series, the contents will be a mixed bag. I'm not sure I need to read *Planet Comics* on an ongoing basis, but this cover alone is glorious. That two of the stories also stood out was an unexpected surprise.



*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 23, 1955

In 2023, Marvel Comics launched a new imprint to accommodate its 20th Century Studios licensed material. Also featuring series based on *Alien* and *Predator*, the imprint debuted with *Planet of the Apes*. After reprinting the 1975 series, *Adventures on the Planet of the Apes*, the new *Planet of the Apes* series is set in the reboot film series universe but doesn't feature specific characters from the movies.

I read two issues, #1-2 (July 2023). David F. Walker's writing and Dave Wachter's artwork is worth exploring, and if you like the new movies, chances are good you'll enjoy the comic. (Now knowing that they also reprinted *Adventures on the Planet of the Apes*, I definitely need to check that out.) It looks like Marvel published five issues—and launched a subsequent series, *Beware the Planet of the Apes*, as well.

The five issues of this series have been collected in a trade paperback titled *Planet of the Apes: Fall of Man*.

For any readers who are enthusiastic about cryptozoology, urban legends, *Fortean Times*, or the board game *Horrified: American Monsters* (T&T #43), the Ahoy Comics' series *Project: Cryptid* might be up your alley. I read #1 (2023), which includes two pieces

focusing respectively on yeti and the Mongolian death worm. Each story opens with some rudimentary information on the cryptid before a comic featuring the creature.

Mark Russell and Jordi Perez's "Ballroom of Death" is the stronger of the two. In addition to its concentration on mountain climbing treks and the abominable snowman, it also addresses themes of wealth and privilege, authority, class divisions, respect, and comeuppance.

By comparison, Paul Cornell and P.J. Holden's "Wormy and Me" goes for laughs. Setting up the potential for an *X-Files* or *Special Unit 2*-like (*Emulators & Engines* #14) ongoing series, its take on a law enforcement team composed of cryptids is intriguing. In the end, the Mongolian death worm is primarily used to charge mobile phones.

Of special interest, however, is the text feature at the end of the comic. To celebrate its fifth anniversary, Ahoy enlisted 13 writers to collectively compose a piece of serial fiction titled "Partially Naked Came the Corpse!" (<https://comicsahoy.com/news/partially-naked-lineup>) Opening with a contribution from Grant Morrison, the round robin piece of prose was published in several different comics series between September and December 2023. Subsequent writers included Carol Lay, Alex Segura, and others. The first chapter is available for free online.

Beginning with Morrison was a smart move, and I'm almost tempted to seek out the 12 other chapters. What a neat idea!

Finally, there's *Vampirella: Mindwarp* #4, published by Dynamite in 2022. One of many *Vampirella* comics offered by that publisher in recent years, it's a good way to continue enjoying the adventures of the long-running alien vampire, even if it's a bit discombobulating entering the storyline so far along.

The Elvira-like (in this series) heroine dances ecstatically and encounters cybernetic human-animal hybrids in the snow before meeting the baroness they serve. I didn't really understand everything, but I appreciated the mention of Drakulon and the *Exorcist* joke. The former was a nice connection to the original magazine series.

A total of five issues were published, and they were subsequently collected into a trade paperback in mid-2024. You might get more traction if you set out to read the whole thing. As it was, reading #4 alone was a bit of an amuse-bouche.

Two other items piqued my science fictional interest. *Men of Mystery* #105 (AC Comics, 2017) included two sf items in the bumper collection of golden age

comics. “The Red Comet,” originally published in *Planet Comics* #19 (July 1942), featured the artwork of Saul Rosen. Apparently, the sf hero—set in the year 2040—appeared in about 20 issues of *Planet*.

The eight-page story pits the Comet against the vale crab fishermen, who’ve killed the inhabitants of Karnu. Rosen’s depictions of the Comet’s rocketship and his battle with a vale crab are energetic. At least two public domain collections of all the stories are available from Classic Comics Library and Fruit Comics, as well as via *Digital Comic Museum*.

And the anthology ends with a Space Ace story originally published in *Manhunt* #6 (March 1948) featuring art by Fred Guardineer. According to *Grand Comics Database*, the Manhunter of the 21st Century mostly appeared in *Manhunt*, *Extra Comics*, *Jet Powers*, and his own short-lived series between 1947 and 1958. The tentacled alien and spacecraft in this story are astounding visually. Issues of *Manhunt* and *Jet Powers* are available via *Digital Comic Museum*.

*Adults Only!* #1 (Last Gasp, 1991) also included an unexpected bit of sf in what’s otherwise an anthology of erotic underground comix. Amidst pornographic work by the Vaquero Kid, Larry Fuller, Wiley Spade, E.J. Pullag, and D. Bold are five pages of “Scenes from the... Space Bordello.”

The “plates,” each with the same title banner at the top, depict “exterior view and lounge,” “boob lust,” “mechanical bliss,” “the chamber of dangling maidens,” and “Dr. Donger’s erotic surgery & laboratory.” All examples of “where science serves sin,” portraying a “warm boob-le bath” and “tunnel of love,” vehicular breasts, love robots, and body modification.

Credited to R. Harp Tesseract, the scenes are as prurient as they are imaginative. Returning to the issue now, I also notice that the five-page “Zelda—The Mistake” story is also somewhat science fictional in its inclusion of futuristic vehicles, but that doesn’t seem to serve much narrative function. Regardless, the artwork, which reminds me of Matt Howarth, is wonderful.

### Comments on eAPA #248

In *In the Meantime* Part 6, **William McCabe** updated eAPAs on his ongoing healthcare issues. I was heartened to learn that you might be on your path to wellness. I hope that the new medications, ongoing tests, and potential for minor operations combine to improve your health and wellbeing. What an arduous journey it’s been!

Your remark that “[t]he nature of dichotomy is a simplification” resonated with me. Things are rarely either/or or black and white, and it’s a good reminder.

I enjoyed your discussion of computers in the late 1950s to the late 1970s. Welcome, Kat Templeton! I’m glad you decided to join eAPA and am sorry I missed your first issue in #247. I’ll have to return to that to catch up with you. I also appreciated McCabe’s comments on translating literary works from other countries. Your proposed reasons why translation doesn’t happen more often seem sound, especially that related to volume.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 16, 1959

When a given country has an ample amount of literature available in its dominant language, the need to translate work from other countries and languages diminishes. So we see less available in translation here in the United States. In countries with smaller publishing industries, they might be more likely to translate works from adjacent countries—or from English—because of the amount available to draw on. That likely results in English material being translated in other countries while those countries' books aren't necessarily translated into English. That seems pretty simple. I still think English readers are probably missing out on a lot of high-quality reading.

Henry Grynnssten's *Wild Ideas* #54 sported a glorious cover that over indexed on sky and under indexed on moon—an unexpected delight! In the main essay, the author makes the case against colonizing other planets. Your exchange with William McCabe about the connection between caffeine consumption and dementia gave me food for thought. As much as I enjoy coffee, there are days I'm glad I'm down to about a cup a day from my previous levels of consumption. "Are you willing to take the risk that you happen to drink just enough to avoid cognitive decline?" Is the choice really all or nothing? (That goes back to McCabe's comment above on dichotomies.)

I think it's wonderful that Ahrvid Engholm inspired you to obtain your first personal computer. "[T]he existence of the sofa" made me chuckle. You're right on to proceed to discuss the impact of mobile phones. I still lose more time to my mobile phone than I find comfortable. Recently, I've been exploring *Facebook* Reels of argumentative people in public places and fender benders. Hardly time well spent. The photograph indicating the impact of caffeine on spiderwebs offers more food for thought. I'll have to revisit *Wild Ideas* #15.

Your main essay is thought-provoking and compelling. My primary concern about efforts to colonize or industrialize space is that we don't have our knitting in order on our home planet. If we continue our current approach to human and animal rights, and environmental resource management on other planets, we're sure to muck things up there, as well as here. We'd be better off getting our house in order before we seek another home.

In *Intermission* #149 Ahrvid Engholm commented on the outcome of the recent presidential election in the United States of America. We were in Portugal when the results came in—we'd voted before we left for the month of November—and the results were a disappointment. I remain hopeful, however, that the next four years don't dismantle the American

experiment in democracy. As I plan to fight whatever requires fighting in the years to come.

I'd much rather read and think about poetry, the Eugen Semitjov exhibition, and *Allan Kämpe*. Thank you, also, for the conrep on Swecon. Your experience with the Fantikvariat reminded me of my book buying at the recent Loscon. I still need to sort the two bags of paperbacks I obtained into storage boxes. I'm intrigued by Åke Ohlmarks's *Tolkien and the Black Magic*.

As always, I also enjoyed the History Corner, especially the exploration of the SF-lovers list, which was new to me. The closest I ever came to that was likely rec.arts.sf.written on Usenet. That seems relatively active still on *Narkive*. So much to return to and spend more time with. I'll have to reread on my tablet rather than the laptop!

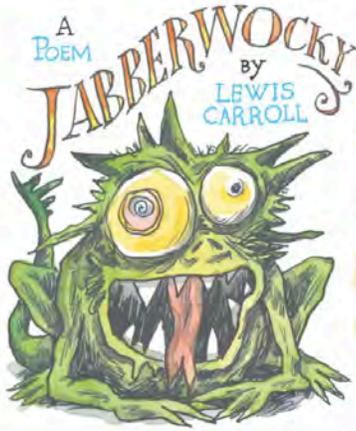
And Garth Spencer's *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #228 commented on his Web publishing efforts, publishing and media production in Canada, the new issue of *Beam* (which I still need to read!), the tobacco contamination of one's home, and other topics. Sometimes, reading fanzines can be frustrating—they just lead to more required reading! As Henry Grynnssten says: "[T]hat's a danger—there are only so many hours in a day!"

Today is New Year's Eve day, and I am writing this at almost 6 p.m. PT, so it's arguably already New Year's Eve. It's time for me to return to my wife to begin our countdown to 2025. Food will be eaten. Movies will be watched. Fanzines will be read.

Happy new year, one and all. I am glad to have you—and your words—in my life, and I wish us all only the best and brightest in the year to come. Let's make the most of it, eh? Be the best you you can be. I'll do the same.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 16, 1959



'T WAS BRILLIG, AND THE SLITHY  
TOVES DID GYRE AND GIMBLE  
IN THE WABE:



ALL MIMSY WERE  
THE BOROGOVES,



AND THE MOME  
RATHSOUTGRABE.

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THE JAWS THAT BITE,  
THE CLAWS THAT CATCH!

BEWARE  
THE JUBJUB  
BIRD,



AND SHUN THE  
FRUMIOUS BANDERSNATCH!



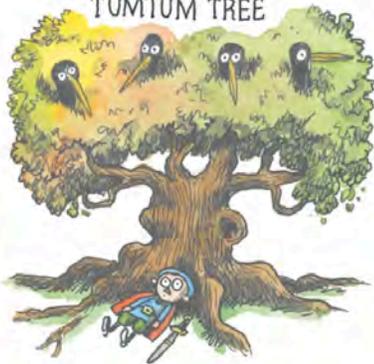
HE TOOK HIS VORPAL SWORD  
IN HAND;



LONG TIME THE MANXOME FOE  
HE SOUGHT—

12-3 ©2024 LINIERS, DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE @LINIERSCARTOON

SO RESTED HE BY THE  
TUNTUM TREE



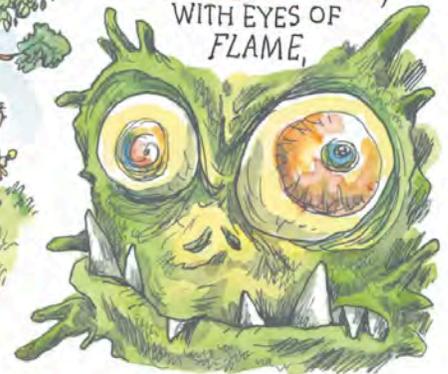
AND STOOD AWHILE  
IN THOUGHT.



AND, AS IN  
UFFISH  
THOUGHT  
HE STOOD,



THE JABBERWOCK,  
WITH EYES OF  
FLAME,



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### Fantastic Comic Strips

Every so often, I prepare collections of the comics pages from the *Los Angeles Times* to send to my sister in the Midwest. We get more comic strips here than she does in Wisconsin. I remove the pages from the newspaper, denude them of any non-comics material on the jump page—setting the Sudoku aside for my wife—and tuck the smaller piece inside the other, full folded page for the day. Sometimes I send my sister several months' worth of comic strips at a time. (Regardless, she'll read them within the week!) Last weekend, I went through the month of December hoping for a smaller mailing. The Dec. 2-7, 2024, run of *Macanudo*, an Argentine strip by Liniers that is generally wonderful, was especially so. I include them here for your fannish enjoyment. The strip has been translated into English since 2018.

CAME WHIFFLING  
THROUGH THE  
TULGEY  
WOOD,



AND BURBLED  
AS IT CAME!

ONE,  
TWO!



ONE,  
TWO!

AND THROUGH AND THROUGH  
THE VORPAL BLADE WENT



SNICKER-

SNACK!

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HE LEFT IT DEAD, AND  
WITH ITS HEAD HE  
WENT GALUMPING BACK.



AND HAST THOU SLAIN  
THE JABBERWOCK?



COME TO MY ARMS,  
MY BEAMISH BOY!



O FRABJIOUS DAY!  
CALLOOH! CALLAY!



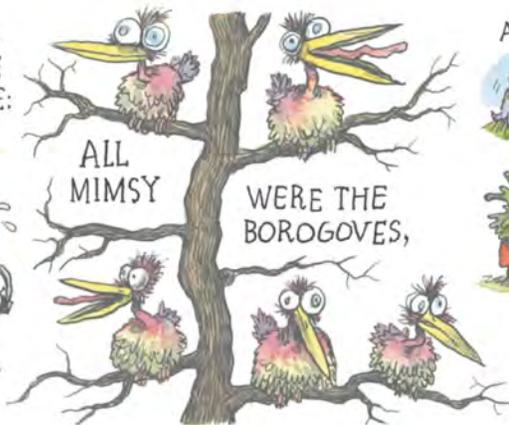
HE CHORTLED IN HIS JOY.

12-6 ©2024 LINIERS, DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE @LINIERSCARTOON

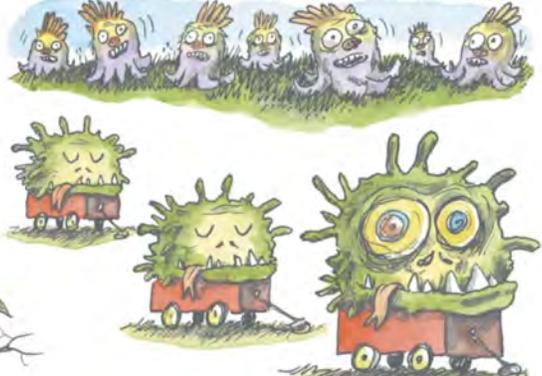
'T WAS BRILLIG, AND THE  
SLITHY TOVES DID GYRE  
AND GIMBLE IN THE WABE:



ALL  
MIMSY  
WERE THE  
BOROGOVES,



AND THE MOME RATHS OUTGRABE.



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# The UFO Checklist

The United Fanzine Organization (UFO) is a group of small press creators who come together to support and encourage each other, and to promote higher standards of quality in small press. Applicants may contact Chairman Steve Keeter, 10118 Mason Dixon Circle/ Orlando, FL 32821 (stevekeeter@gmail.com). Official UFO Website at <https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com> and the United Fanzine Organization Facebook group at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tfrags>. Newsletter \$3.50 for non-members, \$20 for 6-issue subscription.



**TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS! (THE UFO NEWSLETTER)** (\$3.50 for non-members, or a 6-issue subscription for \$20 from Steve Keeter, 10118 Mason Dixon Circle, Orlando, FL 32821. Or you can use PayPal to: [stevekeeter@gmail.com](mailto:stevekeeter@gmail.com) )

The Official Newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization features articles, artwork, and more from co-op members.



**THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY #11** (available for only \$10 PayPal to [jecarrales@yahoo.com](mailto:jecarrales@yahoo.com), or send to email [marisolinskikitity@gmail.com](mailto:marisolinskikitity@gmail.com), or contact Joe Ely Carrales III via FB Messenger) Characters created by

Ryan Howatt and Ken Bailey join the adventures of Mari and Niko, as our heroes leap into a portal to another world and find themselves involved in a strange war! Humor, magic and more in one epic comic. The New Peoples Journal is an added treat. Also: check out that gorgeous cover by Trish Ellis!



The Stf Amateur 9

**THE STF AMATEUR #9** (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230, or, PayPal to [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com) or @Hrow . Outside US rates inquire via email. Free PDF Available @ <https://efanzines.com/HR/index.htm>).

Keith Row's absorbing apazine continues. A highlight of this issue is a series of back and forth correspondence between editor Heath and William Breiding. Much more is included, including talk about fanzines, sf movies and tv, and a gorgeous front cover by Larry Johnson.



**THE STF AMATEUR #10** (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row) Reviews of SHE FREAK, GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN, AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR, and other sf/fantasy/ adventure films are a prominent part of STF #10. Lots of engaging apa comments, and a visit to Antiquarian Los Angeles (with color photos) are highpoints.



**THE STF AMATEUR #11** (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230) Of especial interest to sf/fantasy fans, Heath examines the BUCK ROGERS: 2429 newspaper strip, with numerous reproductions of artwork, ads, and the strips themselves. There are many comix and zine reviews, including TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS!, THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY, and other United Fanzine Organization titles. STF #11 is a satisfying read and highly recommended.



**TACITURN #4** (\$10 from Kurt Erichsen, 2539 Scottwood Ave., Toledo, OH 43610-1358. Also you can order this book on [www.amazon.com/stores/Kurt-Erichsen/author/](http://www.amazon.com/stores/Kurt-Erichsen/author/)) Beginning with two amazing covers by Dan Burke and Brad Foster, this anthology title features some of the finest talents in the alternative press, and includes classic comic stories along with new material. Featured are strips by Larry Johnson (a magical Lew Brown adventure), "Valerian the Barbarian" by editor Kurt himself, Neil Riehle's "The Incredible Time Saving Device" and much more!

