

The Stf Amateur 17



***The Stf Amateur* 17**

February 2025

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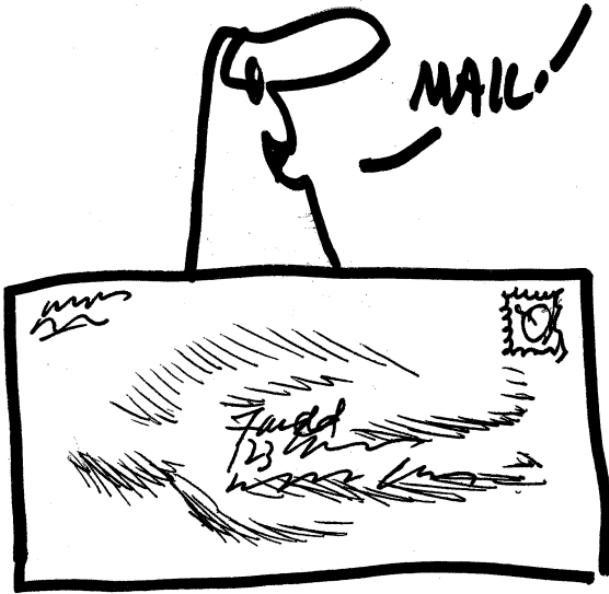
You can learn more about cover artist Ross Chamberlain at <https://rossworx.net>.

The Stf Amateur is a bundlezine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; 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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We also heard from: William Breiding, Marcin Klak, Perry Middlemiss, Ken Rudolph, and Octávio dos Santos.



—William Rotsler

Michael Dobson

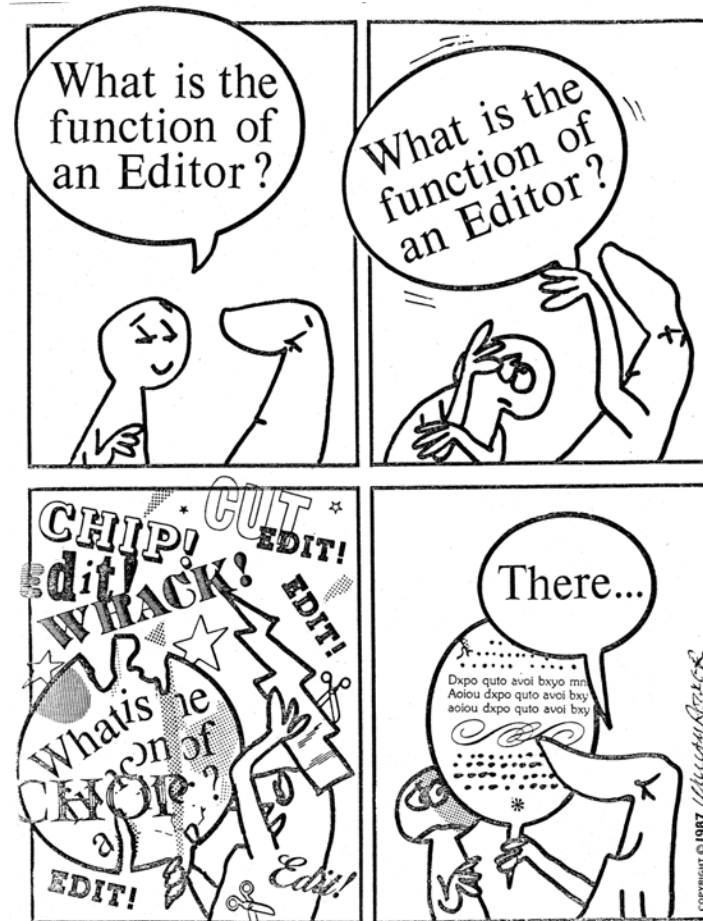
I ... [checked] out the most recent issue of *The Stf Amateur*, and enjoyed it. I think it's a great idea to reprint apazines in a genzine format, since so much great writing only gets seen by a handful of members. I try to recycle good bits into something else I'm writing, but just publishing the apazines themselves is a great alternative. I might have to edit here and there when apa members are discussing something DNQ, but it does sound like a good idea.

[I appreciate the kind words! I've found that the bundlezine approach has been a lot of fun. Not only does my writing reach a wider audience than that of the apae in which I'm active, some months—like this one—I'm surprised by just how much I have to say.

I was flattered by your use of the term "genzine," though I recognize I'm still publishing in a genzine format more than I am publishing a genzine proper. Some day... Regardless, the *Amateur* qualifies as a genzine for the 2024 Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards, so that's something. Last year, it was included under perzines. Maybe my efforts to include other contributors are heading in the right direction!

As I said in my recent letter of comment, I enjoyed your recent *Random Jottings* #22b and intend to dig into the bumper #21 Real Soon Now. Keep publishing, and we'll keep reading, regardless of how you choose to distribute!—HR]

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; or via fax to 323-916-0367.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #145

Jan. 2, 2025

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; 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

I am home alone
for the holidays, so I
watch movies and read

Caitlin went to Michigan to see her mother and brother Christmas week, so I was home alone with the cat. The movies I watched were reviewed last week, and while I read—a lot—it was mostly comic books. I have read so many comic books in the last week or so, about two short boxes. I've already sold one box to my favorite local comic book shop for store credit, and I have another box about ready to go this weekend.

The more science fictional comics I discuss in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #26 for eAPA. And on New Year's Day, I drew my first comics in a very long time. In the current issue of *Meditation Funnies*, M. Elias Hiebert requests drawings of beasts and robots. If you, too, would like to send Hiebert such artwork, you can do so via P.O. Box 200394, Denver, CO 80220; meditationfunnies@gmail.com.

My wife returned home last Saturday. It's good to have her back.

The Ignorable Theme: Holy Grail Movies

"What is your holy grail movie—or film you've always wanted to see but haven't been able to yet?" Until recently, my answer would have been *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* (T&T #142), but that is no longer the case. I've now succeeded in seeing it, and it exceeded my expectations.

Otherwise, I tend not to maintain holy grails for anything I might want to experience, because so much is readily available and I can usually satisfy any itch I'd like to scratch with ease. But the topic inspired me to think about the risks of immediate gratification—and another movie I recently saw that I didn't even know I wanted to see. I should have been wanting to see that particular flick for decades.

Before the mainstream adoption of the Web, one had to make do with what one had, or what one could

find locally in used and new bookstores, comic book shops, record stores, and the like. There were some national mail-order outlets you could use to track down something that might be more challenging to locate—Blacklist Mailorder, the J&R Music World catalog, Video Search of Miami, and video tapes sold via *Filmfax*, for example—but we were much more reliant on local vendors and revival screenings.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 16, 1959

The Internet changed all that. Now, thanks to Amazon, eBay, the *Internet Archive*, and other sources, you can pretty much obtain anything you might possibly want, relatively inexpensively. That golden age and pre-code comic books are now available as PDF and CBR/CBZ files is mind blowing. As convenient as that is, such ease of access might not entirely be a good thing.

For one, if your budget allows it, you can accumulate more than you might need—or might be able to enjoy given available time. That can lead to clutter. But perhaps more importantly, if you are easily able to obtain anything, will you actually read, listen to, watch—or value—anything?

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Los Angeles Times, Jan. 30, 1959

When I was younger and my funds were more limited, I had to satisfy myself with what I already had because I wasn't able to obtain more. That led to something I recently realized I missed. The reading and rereading (and rereading and rereading) of a given book, magazine, or comic book. The same is true for records. There are comics I probably read dozens or hundreds of times as a child, and there are records I might have listened to as often. Some records are so familiar that I know what song should come next in sequence, and the overall listening experience is of the whole rather than any individual song. The songs sometimes don't sound the same—or right—if not in their expected order. That familiarity can also lead to a deep knowledge or experience of a given piece of work, if not a deep understanding. You've listened to the lyrics a thousand times before. A specific panel or image is burned into your optic nerve.

Widespread availability accomplishes the opposite effect, at least in my experience. Instead of lingering with one text or recording, you dabble, dip, and drift. You skim. You might read, listen to, or see a little bit of a lot of stuff, but very rarely all of anything.

In my case, I recently experienced that while reading the short box and a half of comic books. I didn't read them when I bought them. Instead, I bought others. (And spent my time doing other things, to be fair. I still read, listen to, and watch a lot.) In the last week or so, I read about 150 comic books, some of which I've owned for several years, unread. Why didn't I read them when I first bought them? I enjoyed them immensely even at this late date. I look forward to reading more. But I was struck by what turned out to be delayed gratification rather than immediate gratification.

I'll read and release these comics and continue to strive to not buy more in order to keep reading what I already have. And I've found that I'm keeping relatively few for future rereading or other purposes and reasons. That's kind of fun. One doesn't need to keep everything one has.

Juvenalia: "Eagle River Remembered"

When I was young, we went up north for our summer vacation. We'd pass Lake Ripley and Lake Ripley Lanes and travel swiftly down the winding, bumpy road flanked by white fences. In places, the wood had rotted and dropped to the ground. After a considerable distance, we were dwarfed by towering pine trees smelling of sap. The smell was that of a recently cleaned house: fresh, crisp, delightful.

Soon, the pavement halted and the bumpiness became more extreme. After being jolted about, you eventually got used to it. Along the dirt and gravel

road were many side roads leading to private, secluded resorts for wealthier families. Then, after hours of driving, we came to the sign.

The sign was a brown plank of wood set on a similar post. On it was written, "7-Mile Pinecrest Resort. Visitors welcome." We turned right and drove for a short while. We passed an old tennis court surrounded by a wall of trees. In places, weeds and small trees had broken up through the slabs of concrete. Past that, the road opened up into a small parking lot. It was a gravel lot with a low rock wall toward the lake.

We'd park, and my father would get out of the car and stride into the lodge. On one side of the lodge was a house. On the other, a pool room, equipment room, and office. The pool room smelled of smoke sometimes. Scattered around the room were piles of magazines. Some new, some old, some musty. On one wall there was a cue stick rack with five cue sticks for different-sized people. On the wall to the left of that was a staircase leading into the office.

The office was a small room with a basket full of volleyballs, baseballs, and so forth. Next to that was a counter. On the wall to the right of that was a door leading outside. The wall opposite the counter was covered with paintings of animals and a brochure rack. There was a door leading into the owner's house. Mr. Otterstatter, the owner, had a white beard and a raspy voice.

Beyond the parking lot was a log staircase going down to the beach. As you walked down, you could hear the waves rolling gently into shore. The cabins were mostly white. Our favorite was cabin No. 2. Facing the shore on No. 2 was a screened-in porch. The floor was rough with sand and paint. There were metal chairs that were very uncomfortable. Between the chairs was a table, used for scaling fish.

Not many people used it for that purpose, though. Instead, they usually cleaned their fish in a small shack up by the lodge. Inside the shack was a freezer to your left, a scale to your right, and a sink and table on which you scaled and cleaned your catch.

After the porch came the cabin itself. As you walked inside, you automatically felt at home. To the right was a kitchen, complete with rust-stained sink, table, chairs, and gas stove. Past that was the main room. On the back wall was a couch covered with an old bedspread that was either never straight or off the couch completely. It was a deep couch, and you had to try not to slouch. Across from the couch was a television: black and white, and difficult to watch.

There was a table beside the TV and a chair next to that. On the table was a lamp. The lamp didn't give off much light. To the right of the couch was a heat vent

and a short hallway leading to the bathroom.

Everything in the bathroom was rust stained, and the water tasted of iron. The bedrooms were under heated. There was a small closet, a chest of drawers, and a double bed.

There were many secret forts I found during my stays. My favorite was one called the Land of the Dam. It was an old, wooden dam that had burned down. On one side of the stream was a rock overhang. There was a wall of posts on one side so that it looked like a room. The stream led into the lake.

On the resort's portion of the lake, the Otterstatters had chained an old, rotting log to a tire. It was fun to try to stand on it. On the beach was a long lineup of brightly colored beach chairs. Past those were a few fire pits and a swing.

I really enjoyed my stays there.

This undated piece was written in cursive in pencil on loose-leaf notebook paper. Written in an unbroken form, the manuscript was marked up to suggest paragraph breaks and excisions, also in pencil. 7-Mile was located on Sevenmile Lake east of Eagle River, Wis. After the Otterstatters retired, we began vacationing at 3 D's Resort on Dam Lake between Eagle River and St. Germain. I love those places.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 30, 1959

The Real-World Multiverse

While in Monrovia on New Year's Day, after a delicious lunch at Luscious Dumplings and a brief exploration of the nearby Good Fortune Supermarket, my wife and I encountered what I initially thought was a sizable stack of rat traps along the wall between Ballet Kukan Academy and Yi Mei.

They were in fact piles and piles of the 2025 *Chinese Consumer Yellow Pages* (<https://www.cryp.com>), a 1,824-page volume showcasing such businesses in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. The hard copy directory is between three and four inches thick; it's an impressive, hefty document.

I imagine that the businesses listed in it are Chinese owned and operated, employ people who speak Chinese, and otherwise want to develop and support a Chinese-American clientele. And it's an interesting

doorway into a community of people and professionals parallel to my own everyday understanding of the world in which we live. I know that the phone directory is much thicker than any of the usual phonebooks I receive in the area. One could only do business with companies listed in the *CCYP*. So many are represented that they suggest a parallel or shadow economy.

What other diaspora communities could be served by such a directory? Is there a Spanish- or Japanese-language corollary? 36 percent of people in Los Angeles speak Spanish. In the early 1930s, Teikoku Insatsujo and Empire Printing Co. offered the 64-page 22nd edition of *The Southern California Japanese Telephone & Business Directory*. And—while not serving a specific immigrant community—hard copies of *Boatersbook* are available in various coastal regions on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. I've seen them in the Marina Del Rey Marina.

We won't necessarily hold on to the copy I took home to peruse, but it's interesting to think about parallel and adjacent communities and networks one might not recognize until you're well inside.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

Brewster McCloud

While this wasn't actually a holy grail movie, it very well could have been. And perhaps should have been. I can't believe that I was previously unaware of this 1970 comedy-fantasy directed by Robert Altman. He's even a director I seriously appreciate. (Again with the skimming vs. deep experience!)

Brewster McCloud is one of the most confusing, interesting, and well-produced movies I've seen in a long time. Caitlin chose it as her movie selection for New Year's Eve, and I selected the 1945 noir *Escape in the Fog*. At one level, the movie is the story of a disturbed young man (Bud Cort) who's hidden himself away in the fallout shelter of the Houston Astrodome in order to perfect a winged apparatus that will give him the gift of flight.

At another level, it's a mystery. A number of people have been found strangled in various locations throughout Houston, their bodies speckled with what appear to be bird droppings. A police detective arrives from San Francisco—adeptly parodying movies such as *Bullitt*—to investigate the series of crimes. Victims include a woman who sings "The Star-Spangled Banner" before games at the Astrodome, a vicious book collector and manager of a series of elderly care facilities, and an abusive husband and cop on the take. Viewers don't necessarily feel bad about who's found strangled—some of them even deserved it—but at least in the case of the singer, they're not necessarily entirely bad people.

The connection between birds on the scene of the crimes and the mysterious deaths introduces the elements of the fantastic in the movie. While McCloud claims responsibility for the deaths, it's not entirely clear whether he was the killer. That element of the fantastic is exacerbated by the initially unexplained presence and involvement of Sally Kellerman's character. At one point, she's depicted topless, bathing McCloud before he falls asleep, and scars can be seen on her back and shoulder blades, suggesting the removal of once-present wings. She encourages McCloud's tinkering and does her best to keep his youthful attention on his project and goal—rather than on the women around him.

Those women are similarly bizarre, either the rambunctious employee of a health food store who sneaks McCloud his provisions or Shelley Duvall's winsome maiden who surprisingly readily bounces from the titular protagonist to an ex-boyfriend, now secretary to a politician. Kellerman's character had warned McCloud about girls like her.

Like much cinema in the 1970s, the movie is

slow-paced, quiet, subtle, and luxurious. I was never quite sure what to expect, or what would happen next, and it was wonderful to just let the movie unfold itself at its own pace. Even the fantastic elements were muted. They're never directly addressed and certainly not explained. They're just offered as truth and assumption in the movie.

Brewster McCloud: If you haven't seen it, you must. It's perplexingly beautiful.

Comments on APA-L #3101

In *Vanamonde* #1624, **John Hertz** continued reporting on his experiences at Loscon. This issue's conrep focused on Regency Dancing and the fiction of Georgette Heyer, the Memory Wall, and the lack of a Masquerade.

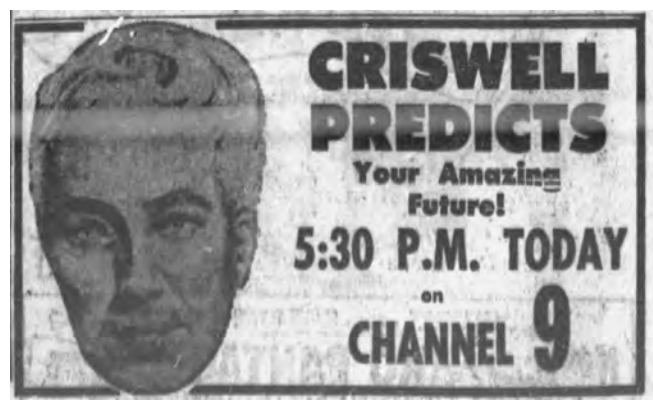
I, too, found the hotel elevators somewhat confusing. For the most part, I took the stairs; they required less waiting, weren't as densely populated, and afforded a good view of the lobby so you could scan for people you might know or want to know. Some of my best conversations occurred at the top or bottom of those stairs. I will share your feedback with cover artist Joe Pearson.

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #88 updated ellers on his workload leading up to the holidays. I will share your feedback with cover artists Mark Bondurant and Al Sirois. Your remark that Yosemite Sam was also known as Seagoin' Sam, Shanghai Sam, and Colonel Sam makes me wonder. What if they're not all the same character? What if there's a whole Sam family? Oh, yes, the YosemiteVerse. Wonders await!

Waitaminute... there are movies based on Terry Pratchett's writings? I mean, I know about the *Good Omens* TV show based on his collaboration with Neil Gaiman, but are there other Pratchett movies and adaptations? Indeed there are. Many! There are TV series titled *Truckers*, *Johnny and the Dead*, *Soul Music*, *Wyrld Sisters*, *Johnny and the Bomb*, *The Colour of Magic*, and *Going Postal*. There are movies—and TV movies—such as *Hogfather*, *Wyrld Sisters* (a double whammy!), *Maskerade*, *The Abominable Snow Baby*, and *The Amazing Maurice*. There were *Discworld* and *Companion Vilja* video games, and there are podcasts or audio dramas for *Discworld: Tiffany Aching*, *The Colour of Magic*, *Hogfather*, and *Good Omens*. That's three more double whammies. And here I am listening to the Big Finish *Doctor Who* full cast audio drama *Cold Fusion*.

Thank you for your help drumming up interest in APA-L. Former participants in The Gallifreyan Home Companion seem like naturals.

An end note to utilize some of this empty column. I went into work today for the first time since before the holidays. I wasn't laid off before the end of the year, and I was able to log in to our corporate systems from home this morning. My badge worked for the parking lot, exterior, and interior doors. (There's speculation that there might be additional layoffs early this year, but we shall see!) It was a light work day just after the holiday. There weren't many people in the parking lot or office, but there was full lunch service, and I availed myself of a midday meal to punctuate work periods at home and in the office—before turning my attention to APA-L. At least where I work, the holidays still continue to some extent.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 6, 1959

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #146

Jan. 9, 2025

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Last Week's Senryu

Spooner bit Caitlin
so hard that she caterwauled.
Cat's in the doghouse

As Spooner gets older, he sometimes plays with us a little more aggressively than we might like. It seems to be more of a thing with Caitlin than with me, or I'm more able to handle the rough housing. In any event, one of the things he likes to do with Caitlin is sit and watch her, usually her arms, and then, when the time is right, pounce. She sometimes encourages it by moving her hands to draw his attention—under a blanket that's usually okeh—but she is also sometimes unprepared for it, and when he bites her, at least, it can be quite strong. Again, with me, he doesn't seem to bite as hard, or it bothers me less.

That got him in trouble last week, and we're paying more attention to how often he bites us more aggressively than we might like to determine whether it's something we need to be concerned about. To a lesser extent, I also got in trouble. I didn't spring to her rescue, and I admit that I don't always respond to such play—or vocalization—with alarm. I'll pay more attention, though. This time, my wife's caterwauling might not have been performative.

Administrivia: APA-L's Shared Fund

When I took on the duties of Official Collator for APA-L, Marty Cantor handed over to me his accounting documents (and available funds at the time) for individual participant accounts, as well as a shared fund to cover the cost of printing covers and tables of contents, and mailing contributor copies to cover artists. I covered those shared costs myself for the end of 2022, but over the course of 2023-2024, we have more than depleted any previously existing shared fund to cover such costs.

In 2023, we collectively spent \$252.36 on covers, tables of contents, and cover artist postage. In 2024, we spent \$232.74, and the shared account currently stands at -\$69.72. I've been floating those costs in the

near term. According to the current roster, included in this distribution, we have 14 participants and recipients (including myself). This week, I will deduct \$22 from everyone's accounts to get us back in the black (\$5), crediting the shared fund—and to cover our average shared costs for the year (\$17). Please continue to maintain a positive balance in your individual accounts. I'll continue to communicate with participants individually when your balance gets low, and I sent an end-of-year account balance this week so you know where your account stands.

Thank you in advance for your contribution toward our shared costs.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 6, 1959

Heavy Weather

There are multiple wildfires active in southern California this week (<https://www.frontlinewildfire.com/california-wildfire-map>), exacerbated by the Santa Ana winds. In our neighborhood, a neighbor lost a tree around the corner from us, and I've had to reattach a couple of corners on a sun shade in the backyard using carabiners, but other than heavy winds and spooky skies midweek, we're largely unaffected—except emotionally.

Tuesday afternoon, I could see smoke to the west while driving home from work. A friend sent a couple of pictures of the view from where he works to show the increasing smoke over the course of the day. That night, a couple of friends texted to make sure everything was okeh. At work, several colleagues

reached out to me Wednesday checking in on our wellbeing. My manager, who also lives nearby, decided that we could work from home if we wanted to. Another colleague canceled a social lunch midweek because she planned to work from home because of the air quality.

Friends of ours have been more directly affected than we have been, and we know several families that have evacuated their homes, relocating to nearby hotels or the nearby homes of friends. We'll be hosting a friend and her cats for a few days, as well. So far, their homes don't seem in danger, but many structures are. A restaurant we enjoy in Malibu, the Reel Inn, for example, was destroyed by fire.

(<https://tinyurl.com/Reel-Inn-fire>)

Perhaps more importantly, however, Will Rogers's historic home, located within the Will Rogers State Historic Park, was also destroyed. (<https://tinyurl.com/Will-Rogers-fire>) My wife last visited Rogers's home in early October with her brother; the last time I hiked in the park, I didn't go inside. I regret that. It's one of my favorite places, and the existence of the park is a gift to LA. While there a few months ago, Caitlin took the following pictures of books Rogers had in his personal library.



—Photographs courtesy of Caitlin Dixon



You'll note several titles of interest to fen, including books by Edgar Rice Burroughs, L. Frank Baum, and Charles Dickens. After learning about the destruction of Rogers's home, I reached out to a friend whose mother lives nearby to inquire about their wellbeing. As of Wednesday morning, her home still stood.

I hope that all of you are safe and healthy, regardless of where you are in the area and world.

On the Eaton Symposium

On Jan. 8, Phoenix Alexander, Jay Kay and Doris Klein Librarian for Science Fiction and Fantasy at the University of California, Riverside, organized a day-long Eaton Symposium online. He invited me to participate in the opening panel, which focused on the legacy of the Eaton collection—how people contribute to, engage and interact with the materials.

The others on the panel were much more experienced and involved than I am. Fellow participants included Astrid Bear, fiber artist and daughter of Poul and Karen Anderson; Michael Capobianco, author, former president of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (now the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association), and its de facto archivist; and Jaymee Goh, author and

editor for Tachyon Publications. I represented fen and faneds, as well as people who donate fannish materials to Eaton and other archives.

We talked about our relationships with the Eaton Collection—such as donating Marty Cantor’s fanzine collection and the ongoing digitization of APA-L and LASFAPA—how the speculative fiction community archives itself and how creators preserve their work, our experiences with fandom, and how sf/f has changed in recent years. It was a fun opportunity to talk about the LASFS, Loscon, APA-L and LASFAPA, and other Los Angeles-area fanac. (It was also my first experience on a panel at an sf event.)

In the spirit of reusing written text, I provided a fannish bio for the purposes of the panel—and Alexander read the whole thing! (I expected him to edit it and felt slightly sheepish, to be honest.) Here’s my fannish bio for the panel:

Heath Row has been involved in publishing zines and related fandom since 1988, when he first encountered *Maximum Rocknroll* magazine. His first zines were mundane, primarily punk rock fanzines—*No Drama*, *Blow*, and *Fifth Man*—but his focus on reviews soon led to the reviewzine *Karma Lapel* and a number of perzines.

His involvement in mundane amateur press associations such as the American Amateur Press Association and National Amateur Press Association (to which he contributed “The Critic’s Report” in the late 2000s) led to sf apae. A long-time member of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (at one time Row edited *The National Fantasy Fan* and served on the club’s directorate) and former scribe for the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, Row currently serves as Official Collator for APA-L and editor of *De Profundis*, and contributes to LASFAPA, N’APA, eAPA, Alarums & Excursions, and the Spectator Amateur Press Society. He’s also a member of the United Fanzine Organization, which focuses on self-published comics.

Having participated in the first annual Underground Press Conference in Chicago in August 1994, Row actively donates zine-, apae-, and fanzine-related materials to several collections. His mundane zines and comics are housed by DePaul University (<https://archives.depaul.edu/repositories/2/resources/9>), apae materials at the University of Iowa (<https://aspace.lib.uiowa.edu/agents/people/787>), and sf materials—to a lesser extent—at Eaton. He’s also helped broker the donation of several other large collections to those institutions.

You can learn more about Row’s recent publishing activity, including his current fanzine,

The Sff Amateur, at <https://efanzines.com/HR/index.htm>.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 13, 1959

After a short break, Alexander, Andrew Lippert, and Sandy Enriquez shared more information about the Eaton Collection, which includes about 57,000 items, 6,000 of which have been digitized. Materials include the Jay Kay Klein photograph collection; papers from Poul and Karen Anderson, Ben Bova, Terry and Carol Carr, Barbara Hambly, Nalo Hopkinson, and Rudy Rucker; and a wide range of fanzines, con programs, and other fannish materials.

The panelists shared a number of links that might be of interest, including:

- “A Piece of Science Fiction Literary History Comes to the Antiquarian Book Fair,” <https://www.kqed.org/arts/13951772/ursula-k-le-guin-leo-diane-dillon-left-hand-of-darkness>
- “Judy-Lynn del Rey: The Galaxy Gal,” <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/judy-lynn-del-rey-documentary/33582/>
- Jay Kay Klein photographs and papers on science fiction fandom, <https://calisphere.org/collections/26943/>
- *The description of a new world, called the blazing world* by Margaret Cavendish, <https://calisphere.org/item/ark:/86086/n21v5hj5>
- Jerry Pournelle papers, https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt5199s1s3/entire_text
- *Ancestral Futures: Speculative Imaginings from the Archives* journal, <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/ancestral-futures/index>
- “Fandom and Sexuality in the Archives: Collecting Slash Fan Fiction and Yaoi/Boys' Love Manga” by Sandy Enriquez and Andrew Lippert, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9qt0s96c>
- *On Slash Fanfiction and Yaoi Manga: Fandom and Sexuality in the Archives* video,

<https://youtu.be/FOeY47Wnz5Q?si=FxhUIAYgnffewzFB>

- *Comics Collecting for Social Justice in Academic Libraries* video, <https://youtu.be/jc6NHH4mP4o?si=rTSnyDcKSn0HynSW>
- *SFWA: The Legacy Kit*, <https://www.sfw.org/what-is-sfw/projects/estate/legacy-kit>
- Eaton Collection of Science Fiction and Fantasy Collection Development Strategy, <https://library.ucr.edu/libraries/special-collections-university-archives/collection-development-strategies/eaton>

I asked a question about audio holdings in the collection—inquiring about con and filk recordings—and Alexander indicated that the David Bratman Collection on *Hour 25* (https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c89311r0/entire_text) is housed by Eaton. Lippert, however, suggested that Eaton's audio holdings are relatively limited. Filk recordings are interspersed throughout the fanzine collection.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 13, 1959

The panelists also discussed a number of exhibits that have drawn on Eaton materials, including the 2019 *50 Books in 50 Years* (<https://news.ucr.edu/articles/2019/01/18/eaton-collection-science-fiction-and-fantasy-celebrates-50-years>), *The Human and the Alien: An Exploration of First Contact Stories* (<https://library.ucr.edu/exhibits/human-and-alien-exploration-first-contact-stories>), *Eaton at the Movies* (<https://library.ucr.edu/exhibits/eaton-collection-film-tv>), and a forthcoming exhibit—perhaps this year—concentrating on cyberpunk comic books and graphic novels.

Eaton also loaned materials to the recent *Cyberpunk: Envisioning Possible Futures Through Cinema* exhibit at the Academy Museum (<https://www.academymuseum.org/en/exhibitions/cyberpunk>) and *Sci-fi, Magick, Queer L.A.: Sexual Science and the Imagi-Nation* at the USC Fisher Museum of Art (<https://one.usc.edu/exhibition/sci-fi-magick-queer-la>

[sexual-science-and-imagi-nation](#)).

The next panel concentrated on Eaton scholars, and the use of the collection by researchers and educators. Panelists included Sherryl Vint, professor and director of the Speculative Fiction and Cultures of Science program at UCR, editor of *Science Fiction and Cultural Theory: A Reader*, and an editor of the journals *Science Fiction Studies* and *Science Fiction Film and Television*; Andre Carrington, an associate professor at UCR who wrote *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction* and edited the forthcoming *The Black Fantastic*; Brandy Lewis, a lecturer at California State University, Los Angeles, who explored the Fred Patten and fanzine collections while writing a dissertation about furry fandom; and Jasmine Anne Moore, a postdoctoral fellow at USC who has published in the *Routledge Handbook of Co-futurisms* and *Liquid Blacks: the Journal of Blackness and Aesthetics*.

They talked about trends in scholarship, their approaches to research, and how they use the collection as authors, researchers, and educators. At the end of the discussion, they also talked about how they balance fannish enjoyment and academic labor, a call back to a topic we briefly explored during the opening panel. Strickland and Lewis indicated that they are fan first—and academics second. Previously, other “acafans”—academic fans—such as Matt Hills and Henry Jenkins had also been invoked. And Vint warned gently against mistaking personal preferences for academically important subjects.

After a lunch break, the symposium offered a panel discussion titled “Science Fiction: The State of the Field”—focusing on the point of view of publishers and editors. The panel featured Carl Engle-Laird, senior editor at the Tor Publishing Group; Liza Groen Trombi, editor in chief of *Locus*; Dave Ring, publisher and managing editor of Neon Hemlock Press (<https://www.neonhemlock.com>); and Zhui Ning Chang, editor in chief of *khōréō* magazine (<https://www.khoreomag.com>).

They talked about what kinds of manuscripts resonate most strongly with them, work they're particularly proud of, and—in Trombi's case—the challenges representing the current state of science fiction as well as what it can encompass. They also explored the balance of traditional print publishing and the ongoing shift online. Several of the participants discussed the value of showcasing underheard voices. Neon Hemlock, for example, publishes books, anthologies, and a magazine featuring queer writers. And *Locus* has made a concerted effort to feature women and authors from other countries, as well as work in translation.

One of the more interesting portions of the discussion focused on the community aspects of publishing. Despite the challenges introduced by the global pandemic and ongoing Covid-19 concerns, and general tendencies toward social media and communicating online via *Discord* and other channels, it's no longer as easy as going to one or two cons a year. Developing a community of other writers, editors, publishers, and readers can help you hone your craft, as well as help you feel less alone. "When you plant a seed, you have no idea what it'll grow into—or when," Engle-Laird said.

Ring recommended that people get involved in a magazine. Read slush. But don't put all your eggs in one basket. "People tend to focus on just one thing," he said. "That just seems to be a recipe for disappointment."

Panelists also discussed changes in the industry. Trombi, who's worked in the field the longest, commented on the impact of the Internet, the proliferation of available options, and the mainstreaming of science fiction. It's everywhere, and we've in some ways lost the sense of where to go for what we're looking for.

Engle-Laird remarked on changes in popular genres and subgenres, including the emergence of romantasy, which has led to bringing speculative fiction to romance readers, a sizable market that is more likely to buy more expensive prestige editions. He commented that geopolitical changes could affect printing, which is relatively cost effective in China, and paper prices—the United States gets a good amount of its paper from Canada.

And Chan discussed the value of the increasing diversification of voices, the need to translate more work from other countries into English—rather than English literature into other languages—and how not all marginalized communities face the same challenges to the same extent.

The "Science Fiction and/in California" panel featured Charlie Jane Anders, Eboni J. Dunbar, Brent Lambert, and Izzy Wasserstein, all queer or trans authors who live and work in California. Only Dunbar is a native Californian, and the panelists started by commenting on how California influences their work. They described California as being conducive to making changes or taking chances, offering personal liberation and freedom, and reflecting a wide range of cultural norms as well as geographies and ecologies. Dunbar also suggested that the state offers ample opportunities for finding and developing your own communities, literary and otherwise.

Wasserstein expanded on the need for community, suggesting that it can find you if you put yourself out

there. Get involved in something. Building on comments about the magazine *Fiyah* (<https://fiyahlitmag.com>), for which Lambert and Dunbar both worked at one time, Anders shared a story about volunteering for *Anything That Moves* when she first moved to the Bay Area. Lambert mentioned the San Diego bookstore Mysterious Galaxy (<https://www.mystgalaxy.com>) and cons as good examples of places in which new friends can be met.

Panelists discussed how building community can take work, effort, and commitment; how online interactions only represent limited aspects of who and how we are; and how many people involved in sf/f might be socially awkward or anxious.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 20, 1959

Inspired by Wasserstein's remark that she's drawn to places open to the sky—and Lambert's mention of the perpetual summer of San Diego—Alexander asked how the landscape of California influences their work. Anders responded immediately, saying that California is particularly apocalyptic right now—expressing concern for people in southern California in particular. Lambert commented that the landscape in southern California can change pretty quickly—and that the geography is very diverse. "California's quite big," he said. That geographical diversity can free you as a writer to play more with space.

Wasserstein mentioned the otherworldly nature of Joshua Tree, and Dunbar offered Borrego Springs as another example of a truly wondrous place. "I don't see enough 'This is California,' in SF&F," she said. "California can be a space in which all the things are happening but someone who is there isn't necessarily affected by what's going on." Alexander remarked that Ryka Aoki's novel *Light from Uncommon Stars* represents southern California particularly well.

If you'd like to explore the writing of the authors involved in this panel, check out the Trip Galey-, C.L. McCartney-, and Robert Berg-edited anthology *I Want That Twink Obliterated!*; the Ann LeBlanc-edited anthology *Embodied Exegesis*; Wasserstein's novel *These Fragile Graces*, *This Fugitive Heart*; Dunbar's

story “A Sin for Freedom” in *Beneath Ceaseless Skies* #374 (Jan. 26, 2023); and Anders’s forthcoming novel *Lessons in Magic and Disaster*. Everybody also has a Web site, social media accounts, and newsletters or podcasts.

The day ended with a keynote talk by Steven Barnes and Tananarive Due. They discussed how they first got involved in writing (Tananarive Due wrote *Emergency!* fan fiction) and how quickly they began writing about white protagonists rather than black characters (an erasure of self learned from canon); the opportunities that writing opened up for them; why writing genre is important and matters; the mainstreaming of genre after *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*; the growing perceived threat of diverse authors; the relative impact of race in Hollywood and publishing; the Jordan Peele effect; the influence of gatekeepers; the importance of marketing; how most of their work comes from people other than straight, white men; the importance of multiple income streams—marketing, screenwriting, and writing—the importance of staying true to your values; and seeking work you love.

The Steven Barnes papers (https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8pv6tb1/entire_text) and Tananarive Due papers (https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8tm7k2r/entire_text) are both held by UCR. The two will host a free online event next week titled “How SF/Afrofuturism can save 2025!” (<https://iloveafrofuturism.com>)

Alexander was originally scheduled to deliver some closing remarks at the end of the symposium, but the online event ended abruptly at the end of the keynote. It wasn’t a bad place to stop. Originally, I only intended to participate in the panel, but given the wildfires and slightly slow day at work, I was able to participate in most of the event. I was glad to be able to do so. The day’s proceedings gave me a lot to think about—and helped distract me from the fires.

The Ignorable Theme: Cybernetic Bodies

“Do you consider yourself a cyborg? Has your body been augmented in any way?” I do not consider myself a cyborg because my body has very few modifications, and so far nothing mechanical or electronic. I’ve had minor surgeries, recently experienced my first cryotherapy (*T&T* #143-144), and have had a couple of teeth crowned.

On Monday, the crown I’d had reattached in Portugal (*T&T* #140) came loose again while eating a lunch of grain salad and fresh bread. I was less thrown this time because I’m home and can go to my usual dentist to reattach it, but while I was able to get the crown reattached the day it came loose in mid-November, I scheduled an appointment for

Thursday—Distribution Day!

The interim and procedure went okeh. I wasn’t traveling, I wasn’t in a city that’s new to me, and I didn’t have any big plans such as attending a jazz festival before the appointment. (I planned to go to a jazz performance Friday, but that’s been canceled.)

Hardly the stuff that would qualify me as a cyborg!



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 27, 1959

Comments on APA-L #3102

Matthew Mitchell’s *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #89 reported on an end-of-year bus trip to Bakersfield, where he and his family ate Christmas dinner-breakfast at Hodel’s Country Dining. That buffet sure sounds magnificent!

While your first interpretation of a “holy grail movie” is certainly valid, I used the phrase more in terms of an item that is highly sought after but very difficult to obtain—something you’d really like to see, read, hear, or have, but haven’t yet found or obtained. That might be a phrase more commonly used by collectors than in general parlance. Your second interpretation is spot on, and I’m glad you’ve already seen *Young Frankenstein* and *Jaws*.

I’ll share your feedback with cover artist Damon D. Brown, but I believe the subject of the cover to APA-L #3101 is Louis de Pointe du Lac, continuing Brown’s portrayals of characters from *Interview with the Vampire*. I didn’t take any pictures of the Memory Wall at Loscon, so I can’t confirm whether Michael Mason was included.

Yesterday, I signed up for Gallifrey One in February, and I reached out to Eylat Poliner to volunteer in hospitality again. Once the program schedule is available, I’ll be able to plan my shifts to maximize my experience of the con. I had forgotten the pizza delivery song in *House IV*. It is memorable, for sure. You can revisit the song here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDZoPxi7r64>.

Active readers might notice that Mitchell’s fanzine isn’t included in this week’s distribution. I’m sure he’ll update us once he’s back on the mend—and I

hope it's okeh to share this—but a post on the *Facebook* today, located at the Antelope Valley Hospital Emergency Room, reported the following: “I suffered some kind of neural event, probably a stroke. They’ve given me a clot buster to see if that will clear it up. Just weird, having parts of my body spinning off into its own sitcom.” Heal fully and quickly, Mr. Mitchell. We’re thinking about you!

In *Vanamonde* #1625, **John Hertz** reported meeting Lloyd Penney at the recent Loscon, indicating that participating in such events can lead to such chance encounters. I’m glad you two finally got to meet each other! Hertz’s conrep also touched on the Art Show and the third of his Classics discussions: Eric Frank Russell’s *Wasp*.

In his distribution comments, Hertz said, “I keep urging that an L contribution should show the date written and a paper-mail ... address by which the contributor can be reached. ... Also I think reprints should cite their source.” You said something similar in *Vanamonde* #1620: “I keep urging L contributors to give the date written.” I’m curious what you’re talking about and what perceived problems you’re trying to correct, if that is a goal.

I didn’t respond previously because I’m not sure why you’re addressing me. Each of my apazines includes the date of publication (after the title) and my mailing address (in each issue’s indicia). I also tend not to reprint text, and I indicate where reprinted advertisements come from, so I am unsure what sources are going uncredited. I even indicate where reprinted comic strips come from, as well as their date of original publication. Curious!

My guess is that you’re making such remarks to me instead of addressing whichever ellers might be exhibiting such behavior. That could include Derek LaPorte, Beverly Warren, or Joe Zeff, perhaps, and your feedback might better be offered more directly. As OC, as well as as an eller, I have no qualms with any of our fanzines. We have no requirements for format or content other than what’s in “Welcome to APA-L each issue.”

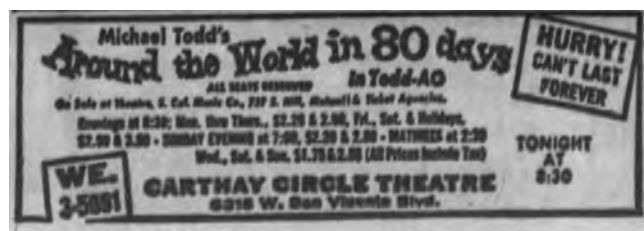
I will share your feedback with cover artist Jose Sanchez.

Joe Zeff’s *Toony Loons* #786 informed ellers that Marcia Minsky recently injured herself in a fall and went to the emergency room as well as an urgent care facility. I hope that she heals fully and quickly, and that any workers’ compensation needs are easily addressed. I’m glad that you two have each other and that your budget allows a little bit of well-earned moderate extravagance and enjoyment.

I’ll defer to John Hertz to answer your question

about hall costume awards, but I can report that he asked me to assemble such awards—sticking safety pins through a number of pieces of card stock—and that I gave out at least two myself.

I was not an official judge of such awards, but when I encountered a couple who had put clear and impressive effort into a series of excellent, paired costumes each day of the con, I asked them if they’d been given a hall costume award yet for the aggregate. They had not, I thought they should be, and so I did.



Los Angeles Times, March 6, 1959

Faculae & Filigree #39

Jan. 10, 2025

Faculae & Filigree is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to LASFAPA, 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.

Juvenalia: "The Story Without a Title (I Couldn't Think of One)"

Three boys were in Mrs. Riches's parlor. They had just been hired to find Mrs. Riches's prize poodle, Poochie. Mrs. Riches is giving the Terrific Threesome Detective Agency the whole story. "It was just horrid! During the Happy Hounds grooming show, three men ran in wearing dog costumes and grabbed Poochie! It was terrible. Terrible!"

"We know that, Mrs. Riches. Was Annie Onelsis's dog taken?" Heath asked.

"Annie Onelsis? I've never heard the name," Mrs. Riches said.

"No, no, no!" Richie said. "It's a pun. Annie Onelsis—anyone else's. Get it?" Heath, Alan, and Richie started laughing.

"Stop!" Mrs. Riches yelled. "How can you tell jokes when my Poochie's life is at stake?"

"Steak? I'd like mine well done," Alan said.

"If you tell one more joke, I'll fire you," Mrs. Riches said.

"Fire?" Richie asked. "Where? Where!"

"OK," Mrs. Riches said. "You're fired." The three boys got up and walked out the door. As soon as Mrs. Riches slammed the door shut, the boys saw a dog run around the corner.

"Guys," Heath said. "That might be Poochie! Come on!" The three boys ran after the dog. The dog was quite a runner. It ran through bushes, jumped over garbage cans, and ran around corners faster than Heath, Richie, and Alan could follow.

After 20 minutes of running, Heath was close enough to Poochie to grab her. He dove and grabbed the dog. He got up, and Alan, Richie, and Heath started to walk back to Mrs. Riches's house. When they got there, Richie rang the doorbell. Mrs. Riches answered and said, "Poochie! Where did you find her?"

Alan said, "Around."

Mrs. Riches invited the boys in again and said, "You deserve a reward. Is \$50 each enough?"

The three boys answered, "Yes." After the reward

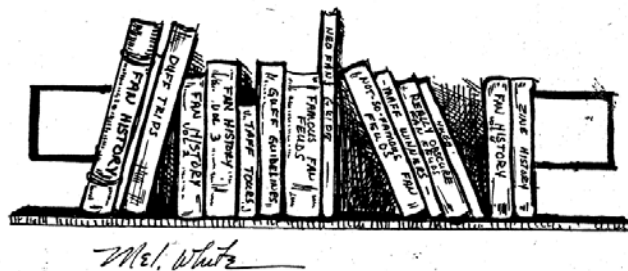
got handed out, Mrs. Riches asked, "Why did the dognappers let Poochie go?"

Heath answered. "They probably wanted a better dog." Mrs. Riches frowned and screamed, "Get out of here!"

When the boys got outside, Richie said, "Well, we each got \$50 out of that case."

The moral to this story is: When the crime isn't drastic, always be sarcastic.

Perhaps inspired by the Hardy Boys or the Three Investigators, this story was written in cursive in pencil on looseleaf notebook paper. I presume it was written for a grade school teacher. "Glad to see you make the extra effort!" was written at the top of the first page in red ink, and Alan and Richie were friends of mine in grade school. Annie Onelsis's first name was originally Amy.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Fool Moon by Jim Butcher (Roc, 2001)

I'm pretty sure I started reading the first Dresden Files novel, *Storm Front*, but I don't seem to have finished it—and this, the second novel, was more readily at hand to read shortly after finishing Brandon Sanderson's *The Lost Metal* (below). While Butcher might not have achieved as much commercial success as Sanderson, he achieved quite a bit, and I somehow equate the Dresden Files with Mistborn. I appreciate the work of Butcher more.

Regardless of whether I still need to finish *Storm Front*, *Fool Moon* is not a bad introduction to the Dresden Files—and the writing of Butcher. In the Author's Note at the end of the book, Butcher describes the foundational influence of the Lord of the Rings and Brian Daley's Han Solo novels when he was 7 years old. "I was pretty much doomed to join SF&F fandom," he writes. "My first love as a fan is swords-and-horses fantasy."

Butcher read Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Lloyd Alexander, Fritz Leiber, Roger Zelazny, Robert E. Howard, John Norman, Poul Anderson, David Eddings, Margaret Weis and Tracey Hickman, Terry Brooks, Elizabeth Moon, and Glen Cook before

proceeding to write his own fantasy novels.

Those in turn led to sf, mystery, and contemporary fantasy—all experiments that eventually led to the Dresden Files. (Butcher has since returned to traditional fantasy with the Codex Alera series.) That long path to urban fantasy might help explain why the Dresden Files books work so well right out of the gate. The books are similar to modern thrillers, and they're very fun to read.

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PASADENA ACADEMY R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	CLENDALE R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	HUNTINGTON PK. CALIFORNIA R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	INGLEWOOD FOX R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	SANTA MONICA CRITERION R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	RECORDING FOX R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	WESTWOOD BRUN R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30
NO HOLLYWOOD EL PORTAL R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	SAN RUIZ FOX R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	HOLLYWOOD CENTURY R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	SOUTH GATE SOUTH GATE R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	EAST L.A. FLORAL R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	N. GARDEN BALDWIN PARK R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30	SAN FERNANDO LAUREL R.V. 5-2815 Th. 4-45 Sat. Sun. 12:30

MATINEE MOST THEATRES • LATE SHOWS FR. & SAT. NIGHTS

Los Angeles Times, March 6, 1959

Harry Dresden, a professional wizard in Chicago, is a compelling character. He's very much a noir gumshoe, and the structure of the novel is heavily influenced by mysteries and police procedural stories. Dresden's magic is strong, though his grasp of it sometimes falters, and his abilities occasionally have detrimental effects on nearby technology. He is not

infallible. Potential love interests include a police detective who specializes in supernatural cases and a journalist who works for a local New Age publication, *The Arcane*.

Fool Moon seems to be the werewolf novel of the series, presuming that it's a Monster of the Week gambit. (There might be more than one!) A magically aware skull named Bob describes the various forms of theriomorphs in the world of the Dresden Files—hexenwolves, werewolves, lycanthropes, and loup-garou—and Dresden sets out to figure out which beastly creature—or creatures—has been killing people in recent days.

There's a wolven lady from the Nevernever, a group of college students called the Alphas that is enamored with wolfism, a wolven motorcycle gang called the Streetwolves, a formidable crime boss, and several FBI agents who are also involved with what initially appears to be a murder spree undertaken by a theriomorph investing in a real estate deal that will establish a nature preserve in which others can live without fear of repercussion.

Part of the mystery entails figuring out the alliances between all the characters and groups, and then things get really interesting. It's a light-hearted read, occasionally relatively funny, and the supernatural and fantastic aspects aren't heavy handed or afterthoughts. Dresden is spaghetti western and Mike Hammer cool. The series was even adapted for television: *The Dresden Files*, which only lasted one season. The book series lasted longer: 17 books between 2000-2020. I might not need to read them all in a row, but I'll definitely read another.

The Lost Metal by Brandon Sanderson (Tor, 2024) I bought this 760-page mass-market paperback at the airport before flying to Portugal last fall, read about half of it while traveling, and finally pushed through to the end early this week. (It's the first book I finished in 2025.) The novel was fun and interesting, but it wasn't really that compelling or thought provoking, and having now read this and *The Bands of Mourning*, I might be done with Sanderson.

While I recognize his presence and importance in gene publishing—not many authors can support their own con (Dragonsteel)—and I know he's a Big Deal liked by many people, I don't think I fully see the appeal or understand the allure. The two Mistborn books I've read are fine. I just might not need to read more of them. And if his other writing is similar, maybe I don't need to read the Stormlight Archive, Alcatraz vs. the Evil Librarians, Skyward, or the Reckoners series. Plenty of other people have—and will. Sanderson strikes me as similar to the New York

Yankees or Los Angeles Dodgers. He'll be fine without me.

That's not at all to say that I don't find Sanderson himself interesting. I find him fascinating. A 2014 *New York Times* profile offers a useful entry point to understanding the man's productivity and success. A 2023 *Wired* feature explores the role his Mormonism plays in his work. The man has built up a sizable industry around him, and when we think about Sanderson the author, we're likely thinking about Sanderson the business (also called Dragonsteel). That's what he's become, as indicated by a 2022 *New York Times* article on the author's approach to Kickstarter. The Acknowledgments preceding this novel tip hat to some of the industrialization of his prose. So many people are involved in any Sanderson project. His—their—work pays more bills than his own.

Not only does Sanderson's Dragonsteel employ his own line editors (who "perform... the line edit work that often is shouldered by the US publisher"), he has his own lead editors, an art department led by an internal art director, an in-house editorial department staffed by people "running continuity," a fulfillment and events team, a "writing group" that likely writes more than Sanderson himself does, a network of beta readers, gamma readers, and a Magic System Continuity team. His wife serves as COO.

Sanderson might be the Ryan Seacrest of genre publishing, perhaps akin to James Patterson. He's definitely become Big Business. I'm sure Sanderson remains the primary font of style and sensibility, but Dragonsteel as an organization has likely grown to the extent that he's no longer the sole source of ideas. His books are likely written, edited, and packaged by committee—as a business activity. The "author," then, serves as CEO, as figurehead.

I also found that where *The Lost Metal* falls in the Mistborn story arc is interesting. This novel marks the end of Era Two of Mistborn, which has now been publishing for more than 16 years. Sanderson also discusses that progression in the Acknowledgments. "Sixteen years ago ... I first pitched to my wife an audacious idea I'd been developing: taking an epic fantasy world, and then expanding it through different eras into the future," he wrote. "I'd seen mashups of fantasy and science fiction before, and I'd seen epic fantasy inch toward industrial technology. But I'd never seen an author develop a world in quite this way—giving an expansive view of a planet moving into the future, using the lore of earlier book series as the foundation of religion and myth."

His "grand experiment with genre" is noteworthy and intriguing. Laudable, even. Not only has the

magic of the planet evolved through various eras, characters once considered gods are now known (by some) to be aliens, and the planet is now known (again, by some) to be one of many planets, its people one of many peoples. Some people (not many) even know you can travel between the planets. That's fascinating and pretty darn cool.

But do you have to read all of it, or do certain novels stand out as pivotal moments similar to the key issues of comic book series? (For any non-comic readers or collectors, key issues are issues in which there's a first appearance, a notable birth or death, an origin story, the introduction of a new costume, or similar event.) I'm not sure.



Los Angeles Times, March 6, 1959

The Lost Metal was a fun read. There's just a lot of it. When a book is merely fine, that can make a lot seem like even more. The book ends with multiple character-driven epilogues. (The book can't just end!) There's an "Ars Arcanum" Metals Quick Reference Chart and "Allomancy Alphabetical Reference." The Metallic Arts are explained. Each metal utilized in Allomancy is designated an icon. (Thank you, art department!) The icons are utilized at the start of every chapter; I'm sure that means something to more actively invested readers.

As it was, despite all of that, what worked best for me in *The Lost Metal* were the characters. Wax and Wayne make a compelling duo. Good cop, bad cop oversimplifies the dynamic. Their portrayal on the cover of the book makes them look much younger than I think they actually are. Wax, in particular, has been through a lot. Wayne largely offers comic relief but shows a surprising and increasing amount of heart and complexity throughout. The alien-god characters, one the former lover of one of the characters, are intriguing. And the supporting cast includes a couple of additional characters who resonated with me. I particularly enjoyed Steris and her realization that her approach to disaster preparations might be something she could—should—be proud of. Her surprise that others found it valuable and impressive was delightful.

The book is primarily a steampunk-esque thriller. A metal long thought lost is rediscovered. (That's where the title comes from.) Enemies of the state develop a nascent form of nuclear weaponry. A ship is utilized as a bomb. And there's a lot of fight scenes and magic drawing on various metals. The logic and physics of the magic system plays a major role in this—and other—books. It's practically a character on its own, the real protagonist and star of the show.

Even though I asserted that I might be done with Sanderson, I might just be getting started. I might seek out the key novels in the series to experience the most important transitions. Then again, I might not. The book was fine, and it was written by committee. Maybe I'll seek out the books Sanderson himself wrote before his writing became industrialized. I don't begrudge Sanderson his success or his fans their well-deserved pleasure, but there might be other authors—writers without corporations behind them—more deserving of my attention.

I've always been more of a Mets guy.



Los Angeles Times, March 13, 1959

Heavy Weather (cont.)

The title of Weather Report's 1977 album doesn't really come close to communicating the strain southern California has been under this week, and the combination of the Santa Ana winds, multiple wildfires, and the physical and emotional toll on area residents is extremely heavy even if someone isn't directly affected. (In fact, "Birdland" sounds downright inappropriately jaunty and cheerful as I listen to the piece now.) There's a wide range of effects, from lost homes and cultural centers and a relatively moderate number of deaths to air quality concerns and the need for so many people to plan to evacuate, should the call come.

The skies Tuesday morning were eerily beautiful, with the early fires smoke intensifying the sunrise. A friend of mine sent a couple of photographs of his view from work, indicating the change from morning

to afternoon, and I saw some of the smoke to the west driving home from the office that afternoon myself. We still gathered for our weekly movie night, though we made up the couch for him in case he decided he should spend the night. He went home.

Wednesday, I decided to work from home rather than go into work—to simplify our preparations and stick close to home and my wife. We took in a friend and her cats after they decided to leave their home in Santa Monica—more to be with others than because she had to evacuate. We've been minimizing our use of appliances, the furnace, and hot water to do our part for the energy grid, in-home air quality, and water pressure as the number of fires increases. And we made our own evacuation plans, identifying a friend well outside the Los Angeles area who's willing to put us up in a spare room. Our bug out bags are packed and in the car. We're ready to go if we need to.

Thursday morning, I had a dentist appointment to reattach a crown that had detached Monday. There was a slight brown tint to the air next to the marina, but the sky seemed less smoky than it had earlier in the week. When I arrived at the office for work after my appointment, I found only 14 cars in the parking lots, no attendants, and the front door locked. Checking my email, I learned that they'd decided to close the office, returning to mandatory work from home until further notice, which was the right choice to make, given the length of some employee commutes.

The rest of the work day was somewhat surreal and distracting, as friends and family around the world checked in on our well-being, and we balanced maintaining a high level of preparedness with some semblance of the everyday. For example, I participated in the Eaton Symposium on Wednesday (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #146); finished the January edition of *De Profundis*; and printed, collated, and mailed APA-L yesterday, though it was a slimmer distribution given the number of people in the LA area.

We continue to monitor several sources to keep on top of risk levels in the area, including <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents>; <https://lacounty.gov/emergency>, which lists evacuation and warning zones; and <https://protect.genasys.com>, which maps those zones. People also recommend the Watch Duty app (<https://www.watchduty.org>). The LASFS decided not to meet in person last night, but did meet online.

Today, things seem more safe and stable. We'd scheduled workers to clean our attic and replace our insulation, so that work is currently underway. (The machine is quite noisy!) It seemed less daunting to bear the brunt of that work today than it would have earlier in the week. And I'm relatively confident—

knock on wood—that the fires won’t reach our home.

They have reached our hearts, however. Several friends have had to evacuate. We know people who lost their homes. And a number of places we love have been destroyed by fire, including Camp Josepho, which we frequented with the Scouts; Will Rogers’s historic home (*T&T* #146); a fish shack we enjoyed in Malibu; and the Theosophical Society. (<https://tinyurl.com/Theosophy-fire>). I hope they’ve digitized much of their archives, and I checked on the relative safety of the Philosophical Research Society, another notable esoteric archive in the area. It seems safe, currently.

I hope that you and yours remain safe. If you’re in the LA area and haven’t done so yet, make a plan, pack some bags, and be prepared.

Comments on LASFAPA #575

In *It’s Still Rock and Roll to Me* #7, **Rich Lynch** mentioned his and Alva Svoboda’s enjoyment of the streaming series *Slow Horses*. My wife and I also enjoy the series—and Gary Oldman as Jackson Lamb. My wife has read all of Mick Herron’s Slough House series of novels, on which it’s based, and I recently finished *Spook Street*. Not long into the new year, I got a much-needed haircut. I showed my barber a photograph of the River Cartwright character from the show as a reference for the kind of cut I wanted.

I was heartened by your description of Fanac.org’s use of generative AI to develop issue lists from apa mailings. That seems like a very cool use of the technology. Thank you for reminding me that David Schlosser has been saving his scans in searchable mode since the late 200s. I’ve now applied optical character recognition to LASFAPA up through #195. It’s good to know those labors will end sooner than expected. Mailings #42-43 should already be searchable, but I suppose further conversion can’t hurt. We have not been correcting the scans, however, so OCR-driven errors might remain.

Your essay “We’ll Never Know for Sure” was a good read. I had been unaware that William Gibson and Joe Staton were members of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. So was Paul Doerr... one of the prime suspects for being the Zodiac Killer? He might have been on the roster, but if his fanzine wasn’t even distributed, his membership was brief indeed. The *Wikipedia* excerpt was compelling enough that I’ve ordered Jarett Kobek’s *How to Find Zodiac*. What an unlikely fan history! He even wrote to the National Fantasy Fan Federation. I hope that no serial killers—or future serial killers—rank among our current participants. Seriously. The closest I’ve come might be eating a bowl of Golden Flax Ezekiel 4:9 Sprouted Crunchy Cereal with oat milk for breakfast

this morning. The biblical reference is not a cryptic clue.



Los Angeles Times, March 13, 1959

David Schlosser’s *Fool’s Mate* #578 commented on the recent incorrect mailing number, corrected my report on the extent of his scanning, and reminded me that I should mail him the two LASFAPA mailings I’ve pulled from storage Real Soon Now. Over the holidays I was able to focus on the OCR a little bit and will continue to chip away at it.

While I’ve been invited to a couple of birthday parties and a memorial gathering, I don’t think Elayne Pelz has held any Pelz parties in recent years. People also occasionally gather to play mahjong, but fannish parties seem few and far between with the aging of organized fandom. LASFS members seem to enjoy the second-Thursday hybrid meetings at Denny’s though. Not sure if there have also been in-person aftermeetings given that people eat and drink during the meeting itself.

I also looked up Aveiro. It’s about an hour and 45 minutes away from Taíde, 52 minutes south of Porto, and two hours and 45 minutes north of Lisbon. We

likely drove past it when we drove south to Lisbon via Coimbra. (It's about 50 minutes from Coimbra.) Espinho, where we also go, is but 40 minutes away from Aveiro. Next time we go, I'll try to check it out!

Thank you for sending the Sector General books. I picked up several more at Loscon and look forward to reading them. I'd been unaware of the movie *Here*. That sounds pretty cool.

In *Labyrinthine Lines* dated December 2024, **Nick Smith** excerpted Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*. "Chemistry which no clock winds could blow upon to change one hour or one second..." Lovely. Because I missed all of the filk programming at Loscon—I somehow didn't miss a \$20 Reuben—I especially appreciated your filk-focused conrep. The story about D.C. Fontana was wonderful. I was one of the people who brought auction items for Christian B. McGuire. I'm not sure whether any was auctioned off, but between Loscon and the upcoming Worldcon, hopefully it'll be useful.

I had a bit of con crud after Loscon, but it wasn't Covid-19. It returned between the holidays, that time with a mild temperature one day, but both ran their course pretty quickly. I enjoyed your reviews of John Scalzi's *Starter Villain* (You mean, the villain isn't a cat? Oh, wait, it is?) and Steve White's *Eagle Against the Stars*—I think you even showed me your recently procured copy of the book at the con!

Your memories of the State Theater, the Academy, and other area theaters were fun to read. Both you and David Schlosser asked questions about *Gorilla Movies*. I'll have to see if I've already boxed it for donation. (Memo to myself, Smith asked whether *Man Beast* was on the list, and Schlosser inquired about *Robot Monster*.)

Alva Svoboda's *That Flagon Last Night* #261 reported that he finished listening to James Joyce's *Ulysses*! Congratulations, good sir. I, too, listen to audio dramas—more than audiobooks—while driving to and from work. That's only about 30 minutes a day when I go into the office, so something like *Ulysses* would take me quite a long time. I found your subsequent Joyce listening riveting, as well. You're on a tear.

In *The Title Goes Here* dated Dec. 13, 2024, **Janice Morningstar** mentioned a lasagna recipe. I would like that lasagna recipe. You might not have missed much skipping a hot dog at Pink's Hot Dogs. I've only had a couple, and I found the experience worthwhile—it is, after all, Pink's—but the hot dog not anything to call home about. I've also indulged in an Oki-Dog, which also seems like a better idea before you've eaten one.

I'm sorry your sightseeing day was frustrating, but your itinerary was glorious even if everything was

closed or closing. I've never been to Cole's French Dip, but I can recommend Philippe the Original, which is not far from Union Station. I like that much of your congoing was offsite. I didn't even see Elst Weinstein this year! Glad you were able to pick up some LASFAPA back issues in the Fanzine Corner. I enjoyed meeting you and Chip, and I was pleasantly surprised that the back issue boxes had been utilized. Did you go to the C&O on Washington Boulevard? It's very good. No dead dog party? For shame.

Alan Winston's *Holmes for the Holidays* informed LASFAPAns that his car was totaled in a fender bender. I'm sorry to hear that and hope that you are no worse for wear. I'm sure that made for a full December. Your mention of a sinus infection reminded me about my dental appointment late this week. While in Portugal in mid-November, a crown came detached. (T&T #140) I had it reattached that day, and it sat secure until a midday lunch in early January, when it detached again. I first got the crown three and a half years ago, and I hope I can get it to stay where it belongs for longer than a month and a half this time. Regardless, it probably did okeh for €100 dental care while traveling.

I enjoyed your review of *A Sherlock Carol* and hope that whatever breakup anniversary inspired your superstition sailed by without a hitch.



Los Angeles Times, March 13, 1959

The Brass Hat Mind #10

Jan. 10, 2025

The Brass Hat Mind is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to the Spectator Amateur Press 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.

Juvenalia: “Thanksgiving Dinner”

It was 4 o'clock, Thanksgiving day. The doorbell was ringing like crazy. All the relatives were arriving at the Franklin home. Mutt, my dog, and I were hiding in the bathroom closet hoping we'd be forgotten.

No such luck. My mother's screeching voice broke the silence of toilet paper rolls and Drano. "Frank! Fraaank! Your Uncle Ralph is here!" She must have heard the sound of vomiting I made, because soon she added, "Come out before I sell your computer!"

I was in the living room before you could say, “cat.” There was no way I wanted to have my Apple IIe with database, KoalaPad, Epson 3000 modem, Epson printer, and 1098k memory sold.

In the living room, my relatives were chatting happily. I walked in awaiting my doom. Soon, it came. My grandmother walked up and said, “Dear, do you remember that Fernicious flyeatus I brought you last year?”

“What’s that?”

“It’s a fern that eats flies, dummy! Do you still have it?”

"Oh, yeah. Why do you need it?"

"I've always wanted a watchplant." I ran upstairs and brought down a humongous fern. It was the reason I couldn't have my computer in my room. As I walked down the stairs, Mutt ran in front of me. Soon, the plant and I were tumbling down the stairs. When I collected myself, I noticed that Mutt was no longer around.

Suddenly, a large belch erupted from the fern. Grandmother ran, or rather, hobbled up. She smacked the fern smartly on the stem and Mutt flew across the room dripping with slime. He barked twice. I knew that meant, “I’ve been

slimed.”

Now, my Uncle Ralph... He spent the last 10 years in the Meadowview Rehabilitation Center. That's just a fancy way of saying nuthouse. Well, he and I have a lot of fun together. Two years ago, I programmed my computer so that it would argue with Uncle Ralph about baseball. Whenever we're in a room together and no one's talking, we make a vomiting sound. A "ralphie," as my uncle says.

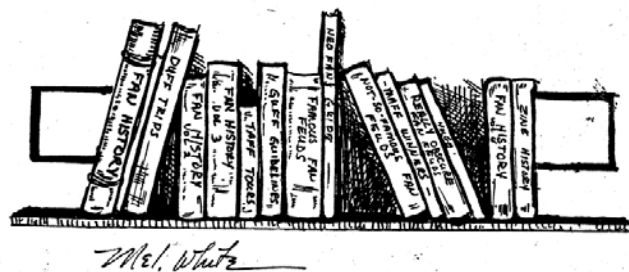
It is now 6 p.m. The family is sitting around the table waiting for the turkey. All of a sudden, a scream broke out. My father ran into the kitchen. Now we could hear my mother yelling, "I've scorched the turkey. I've scorched the turkey!"

In 10 minutes, we were eating mashed potatoes and stuffing. After we were finished, Mom set out the pumpkin pie. When Uncle Ralph got his piece, he yelled, “Me no like!”

My mother blushed and said, "At least try some." Ralph took a bite and spit it across the room. It hit my grandmother. She got up and ran, or rather, hobbled to the bathroom. My father gave Ralph an injection that subdued him.

Soon, all the relatives were gone. I remembered I had a story due on Friday. Today was Thursday! I ran upstairs and started to write.

This undated story was written in pencil on looseleaf notebook paper. The Apple IIe and KoalaPad were released in 1983, so I was at least 10 years old.

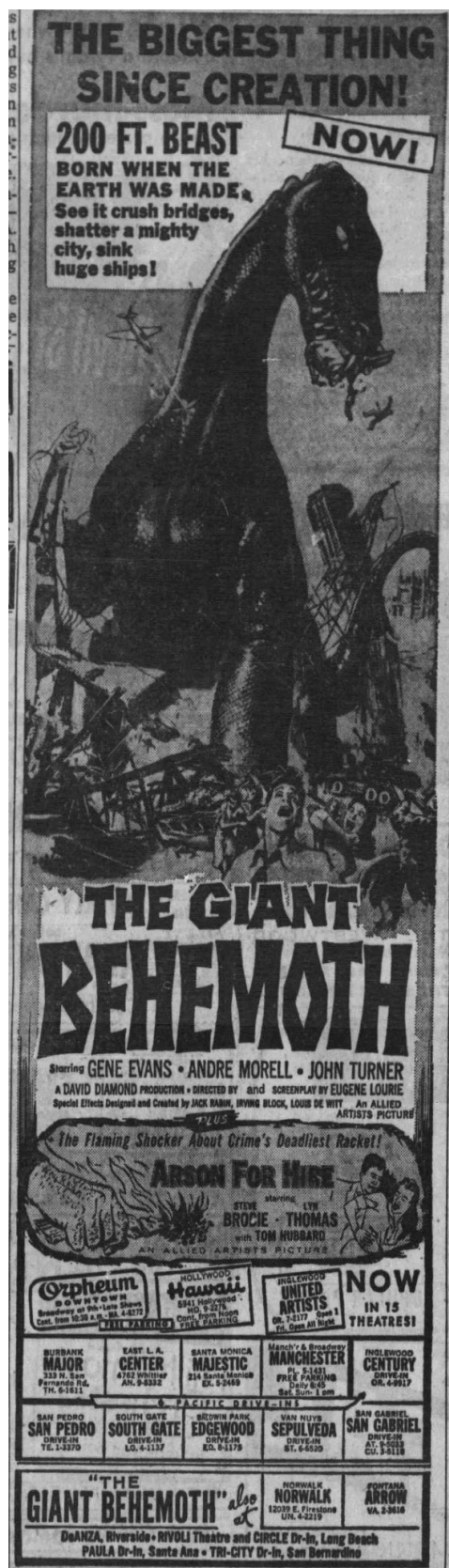


From the Reading Pile: Tables of Contents

What follows are the most recent tables of contents from a handful of recent semiprozines and prozines that I've received. If I've read any of the stories or articles, I'll share brief commentary.

I highly recommend Weightless Books (<https://weightlessbooks.com>) as a good source

for such periodicals. Most are available as PDFs and in multiple ebook formats.



Los Angeles Times, March 13, 1959

***Beneath Ceaseless Skies* #422** (Dec. 26, 2024)

<https://www.beneath-ceaseless-skies.com>

“Furious Communion” by R.K. Duncan

“The Beloved Sisters of the Sun-Bleached Hills” by Shoshana Groom: Told in letters between two close friends, sisters, or perhaps cousins, this story concentrates on the King of Kings’ selection of a bride, their beheadings when they are found morally wanting, and what kinds of women—and sometimes teenage girls—attracts his interests. In the end, the story is more about male domination of women, what women do to be considered beautiful, the fickle preferences of the powerful, and the need for revolution. The changing tone of the letters as the correspondence progresses reminded me slightly of the wartime noir film *Address Unknown*.

***Beneath Ceaseless Skies* #423** (Jan. 9, 2025)

“Our Echoes Drifting Through the Marsh” by Marie Croke

“Half Drowned” by S.L. Harris

***Clarkesworld* #220** (January 2025)

<https://clarkesworldmagazine.com>

Fiction

“When There Are Two of You: A Documentary” by Zun Yu Tan: This short story considers the potential impact of digital clones, or Sentience embodied by an android. Told from the point of view of the first such android, a part-time customer service agent, news broadcasts, corporate statements, and online discussion forum posts, the piece explores how our cybernetic counterparts might differ from their original forms—physically, mentally, and emotionally.

“Child of the Mountain” by Gunnar De Winter

“Never Eaten Vegetables” by H.H. Pak

“The Temporary Murder of Thomas Monroe” by Tia Tashiro

“Beyond Everything” by Wang Yanzhong

“Autonomy” by Meg Elison: A short story gently borrowing from Stephen King’s *Christine*, this piece considers the risks and benefits of using self-driving and autonomous vehicles, especially if they could be instructed to pursue an aggressive form of self-defense.

Nonfiction

“Do Termites Celebrate Holidays?” by Priya

Sridhar

“Finishing the Read: A Conversation with Diana M. Pho” by Arley Sorg

“Humbled By Love: A Conversation with LaShawn M. Wanak” by Arley Sorg

“Editor’s Desk: 2024 in Review” by Neil Clarke: The editor takes a look at the prozine’s annual output, not yet analyzing submission statistics. He suggests that the measures they’ve undertaken to manage AI submissions are working well. He looks toward various awards programs and the annual reader’s poll.

The Dark #116 (January 2025)

<https://www.thedarkmagazine.com>

“Four Questions with Something Like God” by Carlie St. George

“In the Blue Room” by Orrin Grey

“Lost You Again” by Ian Rogers

“Coffin Dancing” by Chris Kuriata

Forever Magazine #120 (January 2025)

<https://forever-magazine.com>

“Introduction” by Neil Clarke

“Covenant” by Elizabeth Bear: Originally appearing in the August 2016 issue of *Asimov’s Science Fiction*, the story depicts what might happen to a convicted criminal whose penance—or sentence—included gender-reassignment surgery. If crimes occur because someone’s experienced neural damage, what if you can repair that damage? Who do they become?

“Optimist Cleaver’s Last Transmission” by J.C. Hsyu

“The Birds and the Bees and the Gasoline Trees” by John Barnes: Originally published in the 2010 Jonathan Strahan-edited anthology *Engineering Infinity*, this piece takes an absolutely wonderful approach to transpermia. Not only are the “gasoline trees” of the title—organic rockets!—fascinating, the portrayal of the humaniform character and her relationships with the others points toward additional storytelling possibilities. A very good story with rich details and ideas.

“Ambiguity Machines: An Examination” by Vandana Singh

Kaleidotrope (Winter 2025)

<https://kaleidotrope.net>

“The Diamond Mountain” by Helen De Cruz:

This short story explores the loss and disorientation one can experience in a new home—and the choice one can make to embrace it as their own. The fantastic elements are few and small, but the emotional response elicited by the piece is impressive. “[I]f you don’t like it, you can always go back to how you felt before.”



Los Angeles Times, March 13, 1959

“Once, Now, Always” by Ire Coburn

“Hidden Meaning” by Lindsey Duncan

“Teeth” by Kemi Ashing-Giwa

“Out of the High Bright” by Amy Griswold
 “Wingspan” by Laney Gaughan
 “Song and Silence” by Megan Branning: This piece is told using the first-person point of view of the source of a siren song that lures ships and other vehicles to their destruction and doom. The singer does everything it can to avoid such deadly attraction, going to great lengths—and distances. In the end, it’s not far enough.
 “Birds, Vibrant and Wild” by Owen McManus
 “Lettuce and Sand” by Devan Barlow: A cybernetic Medusa apparently imprisoned in a tower encounters a would-be rescuer. The hero is unable to make an adequate case for what he perceives as freedom.



Los Angeles Times, March 20, 1959

“Set Alight” by Toby MacNutt
 “The Sanity Thief” by S. Cameron David
 “(Redacted)” by Tara Calaby
 “Between the Waters of Phlegethon & Molloy” by Marisca Pichette: The use of gender-neutral pronouns in this poem works quite well.
 “Continuity Errors of Time Get Swept Away” by Vincent Miskell: This poem suggests that modern-day technologies might not make as much of an impression on the world—in the grand scheme of things—as we might expect.
 “Nothing churns history... ”
 “Beer on the Sun” by Robert Borski: A quotation from *Mystery Science Theater 3000* inspired this poem. The result indicates that what might have been a throwaway line served as an adequate writing prompt.
 “We’d Stitch the Sky, We’d Snatch the Sea” by Akis Linardos
 “where no one can hear your scream” by Josh Pearce
 “Chicken Little Respectfully Demands an Apology From the Powers That Be” by Gretchen Tessmer
 “Don’t follow the lights” by Brian Hugenbruch: Combining two brief poems with a paragraph of flash fiction, the author evokes a mood with no little verbosity.

Lightspeed #176 (January 2025)
<https://www.lightspeedmagazine.com>
 “Editorial: January 2025”

Science Fiction

“Tell Them a Story to Teach Them Kindness” by B. Pladek: A very timely story that considers the risks and benefits of generative AI-written texts, banned books and censorship, trigger warnings, one’s public self, and restricting the materials made available to students. Told in the form of a series of messages sent between an educator who wants to challenge his students and a person he thinks is a writer of AI prompts, the piece also involves a school administrator. What begins as literary exploration becomes a form of unintentional betrayal and rejection.
 “The Exquisite Pull of Relentless Desire” by Will McMahon
 “Dyson Spheres of the Vaba Cluster” by Filip Hajdar Drnovšek Zorko: A thought-provoking story that details a handful of Dyson spheres, hypothetical megastructures that surround a star to capture its energy. Each sphere leads to the next, and in the end, the reader might be more familiar with them than initially expected. Very well written, the story includes sentences such as “You never know what living aliens might be up to,” “[H]is quarters did not echo with a song he’d never heard,” and “It does not take a majority to make the wrong decision.”
 “After the God Has Moved On” by Kate Elliott: With fewer than 800 words, this short story might be exploring what is lost after one who’s been possessed by a higher power is no longer possessed. An intriguing concept!

Fantasy

“A Heap of Petrified Gods” by Adelehin Ijasan
 “Bone and Marrow, Woven into Song” by Neon Yang
 “I Eat the Sky for Us” by Vijayalaxmi Samal: This energetically impressive story focuses on what’s gained and lost when a member of one’s family is the one who can save the world. If your parent is a superhero, what kind of relationship can you expect? How much self is lost in selflessness?
 “Chickenfoot Soup” by Marika Bailey

Nonfiction

“Book Review: *Bestiary of Blood—Modern Fables and Dark Tales* edited by Jamal Hodge” by Arley Sorg

“Book Review: *Hammajang Luck* by Makano Yamamoto” by Melissa A Watkins

“Book Review: *The Bones Beneath My Skin* by TJ Klune” by Chris Kluwe

Author Spotlights

B. Pladek

Neon Yang

Filip Hajdar Drnovšek Zorko

Marika Bailey

Nightmare #148 (January 2025)

<https://www.nightmare-magazine.com>

“Editorial: January 2025”

Fiction

“The Morning Room” by Katharine Tyndall

“They Bought a House” by Osahon Ize-Iyamu:

This darkly evocative story considers the codependent relationship between the haunted and their hauntings, and what might occur when the haunted move into a home of their own. We might miss our previous homes more than we realize. They might draw us back.

“Karabasan” by Leyla Hamed

Poetry

“Annihilation of Red” by Anuel Rodriguez

Nonfiction

“The H Word: Fashion and the Final Girl” by Jamie Zaccaria

“Interview: Toby Poser” by Lisa Morton

Author Spotlights

Katharine Tyndall

Leyla Hamed

Comments on SAPS #309

In *Spectator* #149, the official organ for SAPS mailing #309 in October 2024, our now-former official editor Burnett Toskey announced his successor, Andrew Hooper. As I said in an email last fall, Mr. Toskey, thank you for your decades of service and fanac—and for welcoming me as a newcomer to the group. I hope that you’re able to continue participating as a contributor despite any

printing issues or other challenges. Mr. Hooper, I appreciate you stepping up to take the helm of SAPS. Thank you for helping to keep the home fires burning. (But not literally—see below.)

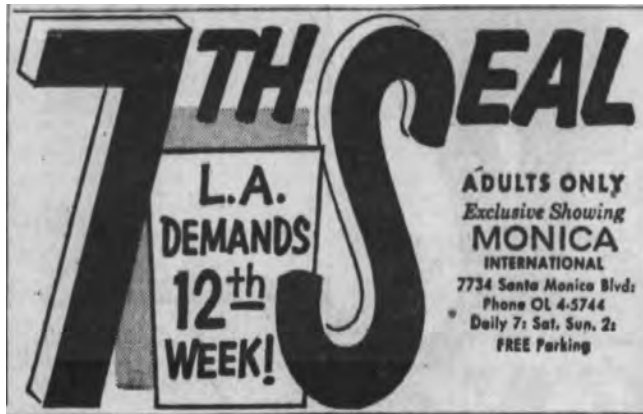


Los Angeles Times, March 20, 1959

Given that the numbering of our OO and apa are not the same, I’m curious: What was the OO called other than *Spectator*? Or have we just not maintained continuous numbering for the OO? I appreciate the new OE’s offer to print participant submissions and emailed Hooper to establish an individual fund on which my resulting costs could be drawn. I’ve been somewhat consistently challenged by mailing my contributions before the deadline—but I don’t seem to have similar problems emailing before deadlines. The availability of printing services could ease some of that pressure.

Burnett R. Toskey’s *Gyllene* #12 suggested that my postcard submission to the previous mailing required some technical consideration. My wife and I flew from Los Angeles to Chicago on July 6, 2024, later taking the bus to Wisconsin. We returned home on July 13. I knew I wouldn’t be able to write, print, or mail anything during the in-between days—we were visiting friends and family while traveling—so I had to mail something (anything!) before we departed. While

I realized that it was a crap shoot whether the same content, but handwritten, would “count” as a submitted page, I wanted to have at least something in the mailing. I am glad you didn’t apply any credit for the printed portion of the cards, and I appreciate you recognizing the effort, at least.



Los Angeles Times, March 20, 1959

When I was younger, I used to get frustrated reading mystery novels—particularly those by Agatha Christie—because I wasn’t always able to deduce who the perpetrator was. I considered that a personal failing and a sign that I wasn’t smart enough to read the book. Now I don’t care so much. The pleasure of reading mysteries—for me—is less about knowing whodunit before the solution is resolved and more about the path getting there. Actually, it’s even more about the tenor, tone, and feelings that mysteries give me. Are they adequately mysterious? I might have opinions about whether I think the solution seems appropriate given information offered in the book, but I don’t keep score (or judge myself) like I did when I was a boy. I’ve not read much Ellery Queen but recently located some while sorting through boxes at home, so I can prioritize reading at least one.

In order to prepare for when Caitlin and I stop working and move to Portugal—that’s looking increasingly likely, probably within the next couple of years—we’ve been going through books and other possessions to downsize moderately before we relocate. I’ll still take a bunch of books, comics, DVDs, and records with us in order to have English-language materials on hand. In any event, so far those efforts have been

fruitful. In the last couple of weeks, we weeded out almost 30 small moving boxes—roughly Bankers Box size—of books to donate to the Last Bookstore. And I’ve started reading through my accumulated comics to sell them back to my favorite local comic book shop. Over the holidays, I read about a short box and a half of comics, sold back one box, and have prepared another that I’ll see if I can sell this weekend. I wrote about some of the more science fictional comics in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #26 for eAPA.

Like you, I don’t really type properly. I use my two index fingers primarily, sometimes the middle finger on my right hand and ring finger on my left hand: hardly formal hand placement. Regardless, I type pretty quickly and have also never seen any advantage to learning how to type properly. The outcome of the recent presidential election is now known, and we’re T-minus 10 days away from the inauguration as I write this. I, too, think Hillary Clinton would have served well as president. I think Kamala Harris lost the election because people aren’t yet ready for a woman president, focused on single-issue politics, and misplaced their trust and belief in another candidate. I remain hopeful that things don’t get as bad as they could—and that we rise up to express concern about and fight more serious issues that arise—but I don’t have high hopes for the incoming administration. I think we’ll be worse off in four years, not better off. Our position in the world is sure to suffer. I just hope our experiment in democracy can survive it and we don’t install a more long-running state of criminal gift.

Your commentary on the Stillaguamish River and fishing reminded me of one of my favorite aphorisms: There’s a reason it’s called fishing and not catching fish. (Just like you don’t have to buy anything while shopping.) I haven’t gone fishing for a while, but I own a couple of fishing rods, a tackle box, lures, and other tackle. Most recently—which is not that recently—I went fishing at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, where they maintain a stocked pond. I didn’t catch anything, but I enjoyed sitting on the water for a period of time. Among the books we’ve donated recently were sets from the North

American Fishing Club and North-American Hunting Club. Despite growing up in Wisconsin, where classmates would often skip school to hunt for deer, I've actually never gone hunting. There was a point in time at which I at least wanted to learn about it. That you were able to feed yourself for a week by fishing during college is pretty cool.

I enjoyed your book reviews. The Ellery Queen "Challenge to the Reader" interlude intrigues me, as does Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Asmodeus at Large*, Queen's *The Chinese Orange Mystery*, John Uri Lloyd's *Etidorhpa*, Richard S. Shaver's *I Remember Lemuria*, and Abraham Merritt's *Seven Footprints to Satan*. A neat mix of mysteries, classics, and occult esoterica.

In *Henchman* #21, **Andrew Hooper** wished President Jimmy Carter, who subsequently died Dec. 29, 2024, a happy birthday. Elinor Busby, once co-editor of *Cry of the Nameless*, is thankfully still alive. He also spent some time reminiscing about events that occurred in 1974, including the introduction of *Dungeons & Dragons*, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. I grew up in southern Wisconsin, 45 minutes away from Lake Geneva, and started playing *D&D* in 1983 when I was 10. I still play roleplaying games, and I offered some thoughts on the 2024 edition of the game in *Emulators & Engines* #17 for *Alarums & Excursions*. When I was younger, I was aware of Pegasus Games in Madison, and I now often visit Noble Knight Games when I visit my parents in Fitchburg. Most of my early *D&D* materials were bought at the Waldenbooks in Janesville, or at KB Toys when they had some squirreled away.

What was the homegrown version of *D&D* called? Students at CalTech also created their own RPG: *Warlock*. Some critics have called it a "rather boring variant," but members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society recall it fondly. That you got to visit Gary Gygax's home is pretty amazing. I remember going to Badger Boys State or something similar with a relative of Dave Arneson (I think; the boy's name was Will), and an ex-girlfriend's older sister worked at TSR in the 1990s. One of the few regrets I have in life is that I didn't make more effort to go to Gen Con while I was growing up. I remember seeing the

event schedule in *Dragon* magazine and dismissing the opportunity because I didn't think I was good enough to play *D&D* competitively. Had I only known!



Los Angeles Times, March 20, 1959

Thank you, too, for recognizing that my postcard was still an ish of this illustrious apazine. While I was aware of cardzines—primarily from the collection of Marty Cantor, most of those I've seen sent while traveling—I was really just trying to satisfy minac. Your mention of the "more traditional diary-format" reminded me of Harry Andruschak's contributions to APA-L and LASFAPA, which occasionally utilized that approach. It's an idea I've considered myself and might at some point apply.

I've obtained a copy of Leigh Edmonds's book and look forward to reading it. While the 2025 baseball season is scheduled to start March 18, spring training begins Feb. 20, so we don't have

that long to wait. (It was strange to read about the end of the season in January, but so it goes!) Your mention of the sound design of the *Doctor Who* movies reminds me of listening to the Big Finish full cast audio drama *Cold Fusion*, which I've been indulging in while driving to and from work. There's just something about even the theme music that seizes my attention—I get a little excited.

Your comment to Burnett Toskey about the imaginary Corflu made me chuckle. After returning from Portugal this fall, I participated in Loscon, where I ran the Fanzine Corner. I escaped contracting Covid-19, but I did pick up some cold-like thing that lingered longer than expected. I seem to have emerged to the other side. Regardless, I would venture a guess that actually being there was more fun than dialing in via Zoom. I know I would have preferred being there.

Gordon Eklund's *Be Bop* #131 reported on the decline and demise of his 17-year-old cat Carlotta Valdez. I condole with you. Our cat Spooner is now 9 or 10, so we're mindful of what might be his halfway point. Reading *Not My Small Diary* #18 recently, which features minicomics about pets, I learned that some cats can live to be as old as 19 or 19 ½, but that seems to be the exception rather than the rule. I'm sure she knew you loved her very much.

It sounds like you and Elsie, your newly adopted cat, have taken to each other well. I hope she's continued to become more comfortable in your home. Your mention of *Tarzan and His Mate* and *Jungle Girl* reminded me of another "female Tarzan" I recently came across. I should've made a note of it when I first saw the advertisement in a newspaper from the 1950s—I think it was from outside the United States—but it was merely an adventure movie, so I didn't include it in a fanzine. If it comes to me, I'll try to remember to mention it in the future.

And in *Lucubrations* #150, **Rocky Willson** discussed his and Maggie's decision to stop working. That's about where Caitlin and I are: The years we'll gain by stopping earlier than expected are the years we might benefit the most. I'm curious how the Mensa-type thing was. Did its pluses outweigh the minuses? My wife and I often agree to the out you suggest: You can

decide to leave at any time.

I remember *Dragon's Lair*, though I don't think I ever played it. If I did, it was just a few times. Apparently, former Disney animator Don Bluth provided the animation. *Space Ace's* animation was produced by the same team. Your description of the escape my cardzine made from your mailing made me chuckle. I'm impressed that you were able to find it—and I apologize for any undue strain I caused your knees and hip.

Los Angeles Is Burning

With several apae deadlines in a handful of days, I've already written about the heavy weather and wildfires in southern California in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #146 and *Faculae & Filigree* #39, which will be collected in *The Stf Amateur* #17 in February. Long story short: It's surreal and emotionally trying, but we're safe, have a plan, and the bug out bags are in the car. Be prepared is the watchword of the day.



Los Angeles Times, March 20, 1959



Snow Poster Township #19

Jan. 13, 2025

Snow Poster Township is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. Banner artwork by Henry Chamberlain. *Snow Poster Township* is prepared for contributors to N'APA, members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, 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: Book Reviews

Supermind by A.E. van Vogt (DAW, 1977)

I haven't read a ton of A.E. van Vogt, but I've read *Destination: Universe!* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #33), *Mission: Interplanetary* (*The N3F Review of Books*, May 2022)—a retitling of *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*—*Slan*, and *The Silkie*. That's enough to suggest that I should generally understand where the writer is coming from by now. While I enjoyed those books by van Vogt—*The Silkie* in particular—*Supermind* is the first I've read that indicates just how stilted and awkward his writing can be.

Supermind is kind of a mess. It's a fix-up, combining "Asylum" (*Astounding Science Fiction*, May 1942), "The Proxy Intelligence" (*Worlds of If*, October 1968), and "Research Alpha" (co-written by

James H. Schmitz, *Worlds of If*, July 1965). While there are consistent elements in the three stories—the space vampire Dreeghs, who can drain living beings of their inherent electricity, energy, or life force, as well as blood; Galactic Observers who monitor the readiness of spacefaring worlds to encounter life from other planets; and somewhat organized efforts to accelerate the development of human cognition—those concepts aren't strong enough to connect the three pieces consistently or convincingly.

The author fetishizes IQ and places various groups in an explicit hierarchy based on their IQ. The Kluggs, for example, are "galactic morons." Other IQ-based castes include the Lennel, Medder, Hulak, and Great Galactics—with IQs ranging from 200 to 1200. Each section of the fix-up is delineated with interstitial text such as "First stage I.Q. 10,000 rehabilitation completed. Begin second stage."

If read as short stories, each might work well on its own. But read as a novel—not as a brief collection of short stories—*Supermind* just doesn't hang together. Let's focus on the component parts as short stories.

The first section focuses on the arrival of the Dreeghs on Earth, their vampiric abilities, and their efforts to enlist the assistance of a prominent journalist in order to determine whether the planet is overseen by a Galactic Observer—which seems to be the only element that might hinder their efforts. This portion of the fix-up works pretty well, and had the other stories continued to focus on the conflict with the Dreeghs, *Supermind* might have worked better as a novel. It would have focused on space vampires rather than the accelerated improvement of IQ.

That theory is borne out in the second section, which shares some characters with the first—Steve Hanardy, Professor Ungarn, and his daughter—and largely continues the narrative. The idea of a base hidden in an asteroid is interesting though it seems to get little attention as an environment or setting.

So it might be the third section that makes the overarching whole uneven and inconsistent. No characters are shared with the earlier portions of the fix-up—until the epilogue, which might have been written for the purposes of the novel—and the section concentrates on a scientist who developed a serum that accelerates evolution.

By itself, the section works very well. The different responses of the test subjects to the Point Omega Stimulation is intriguing, and Barbara Ellington—who responds better than the other subject—ends up being a very compelling character. But the connections between this piece and the others—for example, between Research Alpha and the Galactics—are weak and unconvincing. The book no longer works well as a

whole.

I generally appreciate fix-ups and consider them an effective way to combine short stories into compelling longer-form works. That requires that the component parts work well together. In this case, the results aren't as strong as other examples I've read, which suggests that fix-ups can pose risks as well as benefits. You can't necessarily fix-up any old set of stories.

With *Supermind*, I think the perceived failure of the fix-up results from what van Vogt chose to focus on. Had the focus remained on the Dreeghs and the other warring groups, instead of on "Intelligence Quotient Ten Thousand!" in the language of the text on the cover, the book might have worked better. Space vampires might have been enough.



Los Angeles Times, March 20, 1959

A Serious Disappointment

Following Tortoise Media's six-episode podcast series exploring reports of the abusive behavior of Neil Gaiman, *Master: the allegations against Neil Gaiman* (<https://www.tortoisemedia.com/listen/master-the-allegations-against-neil-gaiman>), *New York* magazine just published a feature digging deeper into the allegations. Lila Shapiro's article, "There Is No Safeword," (<https://www.vulture.com/article/neil-gaiman-allegations-controversy-amanda-palmer-sandman-madoc.html>) is an alarming piece that suggests that Gaiman seriously abused his power and influence as a successful writer and prominent cultural figure.

Shapiro's article also considers the possible effects and influence Gaiman's upbringing in a family of high-ranking British Scientologists might have had on his sense of privilege, respect, accountability, and morality. And it represents a serious misunderstanding and misapplication of the sexual practice BDSM (of which I am not a practitioner, so my knowledge is that of a layman), which amplifies the resulting manipulation and abuse.

It is a seriously disappointing situation. It's not new news; the Tortoise podcast was already pretty persuasive. But it is appalling that yet another person—a man—in a position of power and influence chose to abuse that status. It's even more disappointing that the alleged perpetrator did so within

speculative fiction—if not the fannish community. (Even if the reported victims weren't necessarily fans of his writing, they were fans of the work of his wife, Amanda Palmer.) Like Joss Whedon (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #4), Gaiman seems to have worn the mantle of feminism, diversity, and openness—while abusing people attracted to him as a public figure, if not to his creative works.

That the abuse seems to have been hidden and ignored for so long suggests that additional power and influence was applied by Gaiman, Palmer (who at least seems aware of such potential abuse in the article)—and perhaps the Church of Scientology, though Gaiman denies a strong connection with the church. It's going to be difficult to remain an active fan or supporter of Gaiman.

In recent months, I've been enjoying *The Sandman* audio drama (*T&T* #130), as well as rereading the comic book series on which it's based (*SPT* #18), and I've watched the first few episodes of the streaming series. His comics work remains strong, and I've enjoyed—but not lionized—his fiction. But how do I feel about continuing to explore—and enjoy—it?

A 2017 Claire Dederer essay in *The Paris Review*, "What Do We Do with the Art of Monstrous Men?" considers that very question. That piece led to a book, *Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma*, which I started to read in mid-January. Judith Shulevitz reviewed Dederer's book in *The Atlantic* (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2023/05/separate-art-from-artist-cancel-culture-monsters-book/673497>), contending that—based on the review's online headline and subhead—"It's Okay to Like Good Art by Bad People," and "Art transcends the artist."

Is it?

Does it?

Right now, I'm not so sure.

Comments on N'APA #273

I commented on Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #147 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #25 for eAPA: "In *Intermission* #147, Ahrvid Engholm used the phrase 'kiosk paperbacks' in the fourth line of text. You have me hooked, good sir. 'The History Corner will cover some skiffy or fannish connected cheap kiosk paperbacks. I'm interested in "cheap" literature and hackwriting, as I secretly believe it has some value (hush, don't tell!) lost for those who believe in stiff academic studies. Books should be engaging, colourful, stimulating... not boring and pretentious. Reading should be gosh and wow, not posh and yow.' All sentiments I support and encourage enthusiastically, though I'm not sure what the final 'yow' is other than a search for a rhyme. If reading

can be wow, why not yow? Bring on the yow.

“I haven’t yet found a full copy of *Authentic Science Fiction Monthly* #33 (May 1953), but Jack Ramstrom is named on the cover, which is available at <https://tinyurl.com/Ramstrom-cover>. I look forward to reading Frank Gruber’s *The Pulp Jungle*. A member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, David McDaniel, wrote a handful of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* tie-in novels. They contain many fannish references, which have been documented at <https://conchord.org/xeno/mcdaniel>.

“Ulf Westblom and John Ågren’s *Du ska dö* sounds delightful. I like your use of the phrase ‘newsstand literature.’ Nowadays, I consider such books ‘grocery store literature’ and frequently assess what books are sold at grocery stores. I enjoyed Sven Christer Swahn’s 1975 newspaper article, especially the idea of sf as immigrant literature. But do tell me more about this *Veckans Äventyr*. Is it really just Swedish-translation Superman? Anders N. Nilsson’s 2015 article ‘1940-talets Jules Verne-Magasinet / Veckans Äventyr som västerntidning’ suggests it offered more.

“Although the Swedish short story magazine Jules Verne-Magasinet / Veckans Äventyr from the 1940s is best known for its SF content, the magazine contained many other types of texts,’ Nilsson writes. ‘Not least many western short stories from American pulp magazines, which was not yet so common at this time.’ Ah, it’s the Jules Verne magazine—which strayed from sf? Another fine form of kiosk literature!

“I also enjoyed the articles from *Life* and the *Washington Post*. Gosh and wow—and perhaps yow—is right! Neat to see the letters of comments, as well. Thank you for publishing the mail you receive!”

George Phillies’s *Ye Murthered Master Mage* #273 indicated that “Shepdon First” in N’APA #272—which I’ve yet to read because I had to skip the last mailing because of other commitments—is a fan fiction sequel to John Wyndham’s *The Midwich Cuckoos*. I also look forward to reading Mark Nelson’s “How I became a fan of science-fiction” from *Brandy Hall* #8—#272 sure looks like an awesome mailing!

In *Archive Midwinter* dated Nov. 2, 2024, **Jefferson P. Swycaffer** remarked that the 2024 N3F Short Story Contest was canceled because of a dearth of submissions. That surprised me. I’d thought submissions were on an upward trend; did we promote it differently this year somehow? We might consider partnering with Jean-Paul L. Garnier to explore whether winners of the contest could be featured as readings for his *Simultaneous Times* podcast.

I was unaware that Joe Haldeman’s *Forever War* series was a response to Robert A. Heinlein’s *Starship*

Troopers, much less David Gerrold’s *War Against the Chtorr* series. I’ll have to approach them in that light! It’s also neat to learn that your *Not in Our Stars* was a response to Keith Laumer’s *The Glory Game*. (I don’t seem to own either... yet.) Methinks there might be an article idea in documenting such pairings. There might also be an article idea in *Punches Thrown*. For example, *File 770* #163 reports that:

[I]n the 1950s a prozine published a bigoted letter by a Louisiana fan that pushed [Leland] Sapiro’s buttons. Sapiro, who then lived in Los Angeles, took a plane to New Orleans and a taxi to the fan’s house. When the fan answered the door, Sapiro punched him in the face, returned to his taxi, and flew back to LA.



Los Angeles Times, March 27, 1959

Your comment to Garth Spencer that “conventional libraries are vulnerable to fire” reminded me of the Theosophical Society, which lost its facilities and archives in the recent fires in southern California. (My family and home are currently safe. We have an evacuation plan and have packed bug out bags.) One can only hope that they’d been digitizing—or had digitized—their archives. The Philosophical Research Society is also located in the Los Angeles area but wasn’t similarly threatened or destroyed. That, combined with the Eaton Symposium earlier this month (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #146) inspired me to reach out to John L. Coker III and Jon D. Swartz about plans for the First Fandom Foundation archives—and Phillies and Swartz to explore options for whatever N3F archives and collections members might hold.

Microfiche fen? That’s intriguing. Robert Lichtman’s *Trap Door* #5 says, “at least one Australian fan published several issues in microfiche format.” That reportage occurred in 1985, so the timeline lines up.

Ahrvid Engholm’s *Intermission* #148 opened with the statement, “The first social media was the e-mail

lists, starting already in the 1970s on ARPAnet... ” I’d adjust that to say “first fannish online social media” because letters of comment in prozines and fanzines themselves are arguably social media, though offline, and predated such mailing lists—and there are examples of mundane social media (amateur press associations and correspondence networks) predating fannish examples. But that’s just me splitting hairs.

What a wonderful idea for the SF-Bokhandeln to sell shares in order to raise funds for new store locations! As we prepared our bug out bags for the potential need to evacuate during the wildfires in southern California, I came across a share that my father had purchased in the Koshkonong Mounds Country Club in Wisconsin—in 1967. It’s been decades since I’ve been to the semi-private golf club, I don’t golf, and I have no idea how many outstanding shares there are, but I own one. I’d rather own a share in the SF-Bokhandeln!



Los Angeles Times, March 27, 1959

Browsing their online stock, I’m wondering who the most notable Swedish speculative fiction authors are these days, and your reportage on Skriva’s 25th Fantastiknovelltävlingen gives us a place to start! I’ll have to further explore the works of Ellinor Romin, Lizette Lindskog, Erika Johansson, and the others. Kudos to you for suggesting, “if you’re looking for short stories [for] your top-notch publication and are interested in any of the contest stories, drop a line and I’ll put you in touch with the authors.” American prozines should pay attention—Lloyd Penney at *Amazing Stories* and Jean-Paul L. Garnier at *Galaxy* and *Worlds of If*, for example. But, heck, I’ll nibble. Let’s experiment and translate Ellinor Romin’s “The Way of the Serpent” for my fanzine—if she’s amenable. I’m sure it’s too-small beer, but it’s been a while since I’ve published short fiction. (This also reminds me to return to developing a list of relevant contests and awards.)

It doesn’t surprise me that you ran something

called SF BBS for a time. My first experiences online were via bulletin board systems, and I fondly remember reading *Boardwatch* in the mid-1990s. (My first job after college was at *Online Access* magazine. By then, attention had shifted to the commercial online services such as AOL, CompuServe, Prodigy, and the like.)

Say, didn’t you also write about SF-Lovers in *Intermission* #149? Such a bounty of information in the History Corner! I had forgotten that rec.arts.sf-lovers was also on Usenet. It doesn’t appear to be active on Narkive, though rec.arts.sf.written is. That J.G. Ballard dabbled in computer-generated poetry also doesn’t surprise me. Will wonders never cease? “Then Spake Llewellyn, the dinosaur God...” Glorious.

Space Cowboy Books’ recent *Wave IX* (<https://tinyurl.com/WaveIX>) might be of interest to you lot. In the “tribute to the fictitious magazine *Wave IX* from J.G. Ballard’s 1961 short story ‘Studio 5, The Stars,’” contributors satirize and explore machine-generated works. Charles Platt ranks among the participating authors. (I was invited to submit something but didn’t have anything appropriate on hand and missed the deadline. Woe is me, for sure.)

The Hobbex catalog reminded me of those once issued by the Johnson Smith Company, which was active between about 1914 and 2019. (It was much less electronics oriented.) As a child, I ordered many whoopee cushions, joy buzzers, and X-ray glasses, among other items such as fake dog poop and vomit, plastic ants, and the like.

Fred Lerner recently explored airship stories in a fanzine? Was that in *Lofgeornost* for FAPA? Must... read...! I have emailed the man. Oof: Perhaps you published that article, and he was commenting on it. On which issue of *Intermission* was Lerner commenting?

In *Brandy Hall* #9, **Mark Nelson**—say, Mark, what do you know about the Australian fan who published microfiche fanzines?—continued his consideration of his fannish experience with sf media, moving from television to cinema. I don’t know that I’ve ever seen *Silent Running*—on the list you go!—but seeing *Damnation Alley* as a child fascinated me. I remember being fascinated by the post-apocalyptic setting, the jury-rigged vehicles, George Peppard, and the voracious cockroaches. Those terrified me. I own but have not yet read Roger Zelazny’s novel, so I can’t comment on how they compare, but the movie was formative for me, too. I highly recommend seeing *2001: A Space Odyssey* on the big screen. It’s glorious.

Samuel Lubell’s *Samizdat* #28 responded to

Ahrvid Engholm's comments about con codes of conduct—which Mark Nelson also responded to in *Brandy Hall*. “The rules develop because someone at a con did something that made the rule necessary,” he wrote. As someone who occasionally volunteers at cons but isn't quite yet a con runner, I've overheard some of the discussions that occur behind the scenes when an unfortunate event occurs.

People can be messy, fen can be messy, and groups of either can be even more so. If we're concerned about declining participation counts in cons and fandom more generally, it makes sense to me to do our best to create safe and fun spaces for everyone. Most con-related rules are made so con committees can appropriately and adequately address unfortunate situations when they occur. Otherwise, the organizers have no standing when they ask someone to leave or change their behavior—behavior that's made other people uncomfortable to such an extent that action is required. As you say, “No one told me I couldn't do X,” is a too-common response.

The challenge that arises in my perspective is that most con runners and other volunteers aren't necessarily prepared to handle such situations gracefully. Most of us aren't facilitators or mediators, so some awkwardness in turn might occur when concerns are raised or con guidelines enforced.

Your comments that “a lot of sf is in dialogue with other authors,” “A person reads a story, says that isn't what would happen, and then writes their own version,” and “This is most clear with a lot of stories in response to Ursula LeGuin's ‘The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas,’” resonated with Jefferson P. Swycaffer's remarks on stories written in response to other stories (see above). What stories in particular respond to “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”? More grist for the mill!

I have not read Robert Putnam's *The Upswing*. On the list it goes! I enjoyed your profile of Tim Powers. His *Stolen Skies* rests several feet away from me, and it's been catching my eye in recent days. *The Anubis Gates* is a wonderful book. Your piece on libraries and book banning is cause for concern. As are the data on reading habits. Recent articles—including <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2024/11/the-elite-college-students-who-cant-read-books/679945>—suggest that many high school students haven't read a single book to completion before they go to college. That flabbergasts me; I read 100 books last year.

Garth Spencer's *Brownian Motion* #11 offers a visual for his efforts “Learning to Adult.” I am a staunch supporter of your efforts in Heathening. As a Heath myself, I can tell you the view from here is pretty grand. (I know that's not what you mean, and

I've set aside some Asatru materials you might find interesting. I'll mail them to you Real Soon Now!)

“The Jade Ring” is developing nicely. James Bond and the transporter room of the *Enterprise*? Nice. Fan fiction definitely doesn't fall under fair use. (That's why the N3F historically avoided the stuff, a stance that seems to be changing.) Your story seems to straddle fan fiction and faan fiction to good effect. Have you started using the Fabula Storytelling Cards yet? What's your experience been like so far?

Please offer my apologies to Ernest Wolfgang Friedrich Siegfried Klaus Inger Stroheim Ruprecht Hentzau Schelswig-Holstein Trishtrash-am-Wiesen von Ulm. I didn't intend to neglect a portion of his name.

And in *Renovation and Innovation Letter* #3, **Adrian Kresnak** announced the then-forthcoming defense of his master's degree thesis. When did that happen? How did it go? Such big news. I'm rooting for you. I read and enjoyed your review of 32% (<https://www.etsy.com/listing/896458907/32-a-solo-rpg-game-a6-zine>). I just followed OleandrsStudio on the Insta. Neat to see you recently read *Capfan* #1 (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #99), as well! (Rob Imes and I are both members of the United Fanzine Organization.) Chee, you also reviewed *Tetragrammaton Fragments* #274. (*The Brass Hat Mind* #7) Did you learn about those items from me—or other sources? If the former, cool beans. If the latter, even cooler!



Los Angeles Times, April 17, 1959

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #147

Jan. 15, 2025

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Last Week's Senryu

The world is on fire
I hope you and yours are safe
If you need help, ask

I've reported lightly on our experiences during the recent fires in *T&T* #146 and *Faculae & Filigree* #39. I now primarily use the Watch Duty app to monitor fire progress, evacuation zones, and wind direction. It was eerily sunny and clear early this week, contrary to the ever-present low level of awareness and preparedness that's become common in the area.

Our friend and her cats remain with us, likely through Wednesday, when we might have a better sense of whether the Santa Ana winds will resume in force. There are now additional fires, introducing red flag areas in Orange County toward San Diego, as well as east into the desert toward Joshua Tree. LA to Long Beach to the Pomona Fairplex seems to be in the clear currently, though we're not out of this yet. All of southern California can't possibly burn. Can it?

Tuesday, I learned that a former co-worker from my *Fast Company* days lost his home of 23 years in Pacific Palisades. I know others who already know people who've lost their homes, but now I know someone directly. That makes it feel just a little different.

Conrep in Absentia

Anime Los Angeles (<https://animelosangeles.org>) occurred late last week and weekend, during the wildfires in southern California. Just to indicate how even long-time fen can always be neos, this was the first time I associated area fen's use of the term "ALA" for Anime LA. Since moving here, whenever I heard local con runners talk about shifting their attention to ALA, I always thought that they somehow had a connection to the American Library Association and also volunteered to run regional conferences for librarians. That actually made sense to me, though I never probed on the assumption. I laughed out loud this weekend when I realized that ALA was Anime

LA. That makes even more sense!

In any event, while I hadn't made plans to participate in Anime LA, I seriously considered doing so at least last Saturday. I checked out registration costs and everything. Because of the ongoing fires in the area—and the con's presence in Long Beach—I decided not to go. It just felt too far away from home, my spouse, and cat, should the situation worsen. It turns out that I was not alone. The organizers of Anime LA announced last weekend that they plan to automatically rollover any unused badge to the next con. (<https://animelosangeles.org/news/rollovers-for-attendees-affected-by-the-california-wildfires>) And online photographs and videos from the event occasionally indicated a relatively sparse turnout if background crowds were any indication. That said, the recap video—<https://tinyurl.com/AnimeLA-20-recap>—suggests turnout was quite healthy!



Los Angeles Times, April 10, 1959

Even though I didn't participate in Anime LA, the con was in my thoughts—and offered some structure to my weekend. Using the Guidebook mobile app—which is similar to Sched—I planned my Anime LA schedule for the day, had I been at the con. Those selections included:

The Music of Robotech (11 a.m.): The soundtrack of Robotech was essential in binding together the disparate elements of the series through themes and songs that continue to be remembered. A look back with the composers, producers, and vocal talent whose work endures to this day.

Kaiju Yokai—The Folkloric Roots of Japan's Giant Monsters (1:45 p.m.): Japan's giant monsters have invaded modern entertainment. But are they

yokai? Folklorist Zack Davisson examines the roots of these titanic creatures from the ocean-going bake kujira to the earthshaking catfish that is pinned under the islands of Japan, and talks about why he included kaiju in his latest book *The Ultimate Guide to Japanese Yokai*.

The Robotech Master—Carl Macek’s Legacy (3 p.m.): Robotech would not have been possible without the leadership and vision of Carl Macek, who saw the potential popularity of anime in America long before most anyone else. He preserved the essence of anime in adapting Robotech, then broke new ground as the co-founder of Streamline Pictures, one of the first direct distributors of anime in the United States. Through it all, he championed the artform and was its most vigorous defender.



Los Angeles Times, April 24, 1959

Better a Pig Than a Fascist—Politics of War in the Films of Hayao Miyazaki (3:15 p.m.): Hayao Miyazaki as a filmmaker is known worldwide for his films, with their stunning animation and unforgettable characters. An often overlooked aspect of Miyazaki’s work is how fiercely political and anti-war his films are. Take a look at the way war has shaped his life and his works throughout his illustrious career from his first film with Studio Ghibli, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*, to his potential final film, *The Boy and the Heron*.

A Brief History of the Edo Period (4:15 p.m.): The Edo Period—a term you have probably heard for years, but what is it really? What does it really mean? Why does it matter? In truth, without the Edo period we probably wouldn’t be here. The “uniqueness” of Japan, the aspects that bring us together to celebrate Japanese culture, all have their roots in the Edo period. Come join translator and author Zack Davisson to learn about this fascinating time in world history, as well as the true stories behind geisha, samurai, ninja, and... soy sauce.

I took note that there was a programming track dedicated to animated music videos, anime music videos, or AMVs. Saturday’s schedule included time slots focusing on comedy AMVs, as well as an AMV

tribute to shows aired during Adult Swim’s Toonami block. Anime programming that day was scheduled from 5-10 p.m., though the program schedule wasn’t detailed. While there were no indie video screenings Saturday, other such programming that weekend included episode 1-2 of *Ave Mujica—The Die Is Cast*, which is currently available on Crunchyroll; and episode 1 of *Lazarus*. (<https://lazarus.aniplex.co.jp>)

Of special interest to me was Anime LA’s Manga Lounge (<https://animelosangeles.org/project/manga-lounge>), a lending library dedicated to manga. Were I to volunteer at Anime LA, the Manga Lounge might be where I’d start. In between programs of interest, one could easily hang out in the Manga Lounge, browse the Dealers Hall (<https://animelosangeles.org/exhibitors/dealers-hall>), and check out the many, many cosplay gatherings scheduled throughout the con.

In addition to figuring out what I’d do and where I’d go had I gone to Anime LA, I also focused on anime- and manga-related experiences while at home last weekend. I watched the 1988 anime *Akira* on video tape while folding laundry Saturday, and I read the first two volumes of Kodansha’s six-book series of Katsuhiro Otomo’s original *Akira* manga.

Perhaps one of the better known sf manga and anime, the cyberpunk, post-apocalyptic *Akira* first appeared in 120 biweekly chapters in the seinen manga *Young Magazine* between Dec. 20, 1982, and June 25, 1990. Seinen manga are oriented toward young adult men.

I’d seen *Akira* several times before, but I’d never read the manga. An awesome anime, the manga is even better, and the longer form allows elements that are included in the anime as window dressing or detail to be more fully explored and fleshed out. Otomo’s artwork is absolutely wonderful. Watching *Akira* again, I was struck by how little I remembered from previous viewings. Even if one might think they know what *Akira* is about, it warrants watching again. And now that I’ve read the first two manga volumes, I need to read the remaining books in the series. *Akira* the manga has supplanted *Akira* the anime in my estimation.

If you’re not overly familiar with anime and are interested in sf entry points to the media, *ScreenRant* recommends the following among its “10 Best Science Fiction Anime of All Time, Ranked” (<https://screenrant.com/best-science-fiction-anime-ranked>):

- *Akira* (1988)—I chose well, apparently!
- *Code Geass* (2006, 25 episodes [season 1])
- *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (1986)

- *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* (1988, 110 episodes)
- *Macross: Do You Remember Love* (1984)
- *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995, 26 episodes)
- *Psycho-Pass* (2012, 22 episodes)
- *Steins;Gate* (2011, 24 episodes)

Personally, I started with *Beast King GoLion* in its domestic form as *Voltron: Defender of the Universe*; *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman*, which aired here as *Battle of the Planets*; *Robotech*; *Captain Harlock*; *Cowboy Bebop*; *Akira*; and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995). My son got us into *Mobile Suit Gundam* when he was younger, and that's relatively fun, too. You can't go wrong with *Astro Boy*, and more recently, *Space Brothers* looks interesting.

I've never gone to Anime LA, but I was there in spirit this year—even during the fires. Registration isn't open yet for 2025, but I've joined the Discord server and am very likely to participate in the con next year.

Do you watch anime or read manga? If so, what do you recommend?



From the Reading File: Book Reviews

Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma by Claire Dederer (Knopf, 2023)

In light of the ongoing reportage about Neil Gaiman (*Snow Poster Township* #19) early this week, I read this book in its entirety Monday. Expanding a 2017 essay in *The Paris Review*, "What Do We Do with the Art of Monstrous Men?," the book considers the impact that misbehavior can have on the enjoyment of art. While I'm not sure it completely or convincingly answers the question posed, it goes far to help people determine how they might respond to such events and experiences individually.

Beginning with the premise that a calculator might be needed—how do we balance the greatness of a creator's work with the terribleness of a crime or series of crimes?—the book primarily concentrates on the impact on enjoyment of the art itself. "The awful thing disrupts the great work; we can't watch or listen to or read the great work without remembering the awful thing," Dederer writes. "The real question is

this: can I love the art but hate the artist?"

Considering a number of contemporary examples—Woody Allen, Bill Cosby, and Michael Jackson among them—as well as older instances—Roman Polanski, Virginia Woolf, and Richard Wagner—the author explores various aspects of the experience. Areas of inquiry include the resulting stain on the works of art, which might disrupt our ability to engage with a work on its own terms; the increasing amount and influence of a creator's biography on our understanding of art; parasocial relationships with celebrities; the elevated authority of critics; the role genius—and the performance of masculinity—plays in our understanding of art and how artists might behave; how we reconcile the past ("I am a citizen of the Present, where we know better."); separating horrific artwork from tendencies or proclivities of the artist (Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, for example); efforts to silence whistleblowers; and personal questions and concerns that might arise (the author is, after all, a memoirist).

One of the most useful sections of the book drew on Dederer's personal experiences with alcoholism, recovery, and parenting. "[P]eople [are] better than the worst thing they've ever done," she writes. "[M]onsters are just people." Instead of putting the responsibility on each of us as individuals to continue "consuming" or boycotting an artist's work—a capitalist ploy—Dederer suggests we turn our attention to the structures of power that benefit from their popularity or success—and might therefore shield or protect them when misbehavior (to put it lightly) occurs. "[C]elebrities are not agents of morality; they're reproducible images" or creators of reproducible works that can be bought and sold.

What we recently experienced is a situation in which an artist's biography collided with ours in a way that inspired moral feelings. Given our perceived but nonexistent reciprocal relationship with the creator—we think we know who they are; they likely have no idea who we are—we feel betrayed. It can be challenging and disappointing to feel like you can't enjoy a work or series of works the way you once did before the artist's biography asserted itself. That can lead to a sense of loss—or of shame, if one is still able to enjoy the art.

That will play out differently for each of us. Dederer's book helped me think through how I feel about this abuse and betrayal—and what I might do in response. I don't think I'll stop experiencing the writing of authors such as Gaiman, David Eddings, Marion Zimmer Bradley, or even Piers Anthony. (Harlan Ellison doesn't belong in this group, I'd

argue.) I might seek them out less actively. I might try to buy such works used as a form of soft boycott. I'll definitely read their work through a different lens, perhaps more attuned to signs and signifiers of their misdeeds that didn't seem so obvious before. And I'll also keep in mind that not every creator who makes shocking or horrific art is at heart a shocking or horrific person.

It's been interesting to see how this is being handled in online discussion and social media—especially in the Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy and Science Fiction Book Discussion group and individual posts by comics and sf professionals on the *Facebook*. Yes, due process of law is important. It seems more myopic to assume the reports aren't true than to assume they are true. Too many women comics creators have posted along the lines of, "We do our best to warn newcomers about who they need to be careful of," and "Oh, we can talk about this now?" for me to disregard the reports.

Gaiman is better than the worst thing he's ever done. People experienced serious harm and trauma. He should own up to his behavior, make appropriate amends if possible, and fly right. Yet his work—past and future—might be indelibly stained by his actions.

All of that saddens me.

The Ignorable Theme: Fannish Presents

"Did you get any fannish holiday presents? If so, what?" While I bought presents for family members this year, I did not receive many. My wife and I didn't even exchange gifts. I bought my sister a gift card for a local movie theater. I bought my parents a gift card for a local bookstore, Mystery to Me (<https://www.mysterytomebooks.com>). I bought both of them and a friend the pocket-sized roleplaying game *Tinny Dungeons*. (<https://studio2publishing.com/products/tinny-dungeons>) And my wife and I bought our son a mobile kitchen counter, insulated pants, and tickets to a performance in Tokyo.

I did buy some potential stocking stuffers that I didn't end up using because of Christmas travel, so I'll set those aside for next year or a future holiday. Those included the Macmillan Collector's Library (<https://www.panmacmillan.com/mcl>) editions—very tidy objects—of the Jean Menzies-edited *Dragons, Wyverns and Serpents: Myths and Legends* and the Farah Mendlesohn-edited *Classic Fantasy Stories*, as well as *The Penguin Book of Dragons*. Other titles in the series appear delightful; there's even an sf anthology. When I checked out, the clerk quipped, "I detect a theme!"

Comments on APA-L #3103

In *Vanamonde* #1626, John Hertz continued his reportage on the recent Loscon, offering a number of snapshots and glimpses of various aspects of the con. The impressionistic nature of this issue delighted me. I will share your feedback with cover artist Mark Bondurant. The stationery my wife was interested in at the time was letter-writing paper, especially with matching envelopes. Occasionally, stationery includes cotton, and might be watermarked, even if it's a standard 20-pound weight.



Los Angeles Times, April 24, 1959

Emulators & Engines #21

Jan. 20, 2025

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Game Report: Kerzmielzorg

I apparently don't check in on *Discord* often enough to use it as a game session planning or scheduling tool. When I plugged into the Kerzmielzorg server to see whether we'd play Dec. 29-30, 2024, group consensus at the time suggested we'd reconvene in the new year—so I told people I looked forward to resuming in 2025. I didn't know until the following weekend—when I checked in again to see whether we'd be playing—that my post had motivated the group, which decided to share time and table that weekend even though they hadn't planned to previously.

That was largely okeh because 1-6 p.m. would have felt like a large portion of that specific Sunday, just after my wife returned from Christmas week in Michigan, but I was a little irritated all the same. Despite looking forward to joining the group again Jan. 12, we decided to forgo the session because of the fires in the Los Angeles area (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #146 and *Faculae & Filigree* #39) and one participants' proximity to the evacuation zones. Understandably, she didn't want to be across town if the situation worsened in her neighborhood. (More on the fires below.)

Karen McMullan posted an adventure summary of the Dec. 29, 2024, session—and perhaps others—in which I did not participate.

“Following the execution of Harcourt Exer (Darling Dandies) by Rosario Dawson (Minstrel Players), Frogtown and neighboring districts erupted into riots. Fires, looting, chaos.

“We began in media res, at the top of the Erlich Tower, where we fought and killed Sewer Rat gang members. They were searching the tower for the Darling Dandy's crown fragment. We found it! Then fought a horde of Sewer Rats in the street. Terrifying. One of the rats got away, so the Sewer Rats know we've been in the tower.

“Sewer Rat corpses have evidence of an aberrant creature's bite on the backs of their necks. Farsheed contracted lycanthropy. He was not thrilled and

regretted anew his decision to accompany the crew back to Kerzmielzorg. He disagreed that being a wererat would be ‘pretty cool,’ and we got Amazor to cast Remove Curse on him.

“We learned of an auction at Lovely L'Vlalure's estate. One of the lots up for auction: Philippa, a Darling Dandy who we had a good wine-fueled rapport with. We decided to crash the auction, because of course we did.



Los Angeles Times, April 17, 1959

“Varh visited L'Vlalure herself, offering security, and got an invitation to schmooze at the event. We ultimately sidestepped the 200gp *per person* entry fee by having an invisible Screwtape fly around the magic detector at the entrance with us all inside the Portable Hole.

“Farsheed waited outside ready with a distraction if we sent up a signal.

“It was a really fancy shindig. Every item up for auction was pictured in a mirror whose border was unique and matched a door elsewhere in the manse. Varh worked the room and made a case for his bodyguard services to the Tank, an aberrant entity from the Below who attended the party in a *tank*. Malvaisi (drow) were there. Foxglove, presumably. Nether mentioned, but not seen. Nobles. Everyone who's everyone.

“Bulettes interrupted the auction just as we solved a riddle and freed Philippa from her mirror trap, and we fled, as is our wont, under the cover of chaos. Probably earning L'Vlalure's enmity.

“Wami and Inkspot had Important Other Business to attend to, so it was just Varh, Murnald, and (MVP) Farsheed who started at the bastion. One of Varh's

retainers lost his spectacles (again) and we all blame Screwtape. Some visitors wanted to use the storehouse to the tune of 300 gold.

“Scorching Ray (one of Murnald’s many relatives) showed up with an obviously sketchy deed and map to an island in Azuria, and berths for us on the *Occidental*—a flying ship—that flew us over the Iron River and into and among the floating islands. All we had to do was ‘stick a flag in it and it was ours.’ Only Scorching Ray thought that was a real thing. Harpies attacked the boat, singing Siren Songs.



Los Angeles Times, April 24, 1959

“Crew members overwhelmed by the song leapt from the ship into the mists to get closer to the singing. They didn’t. Or they did, but only very briefly. Murnald was entranced and likely to follow suit, but Farsheed cast Entangling Roots on the prow of the ship and Murnald failed that save, too. Varh was a beast, literally and figuratively, gritting a couple times and between the three, they cut the harpies down, but not before one of them could speak into what I have termed a ‘spell phone’ saying ‘They’re here.’ We don’t know who the harpy was reporting to. On reflection, possibly Jensen, who sold the map to Scorching Ray?

“Farsheed nearly dropped in the fighting and now hates ships nearly as badly as he hates Kerzmielzorg.

“Amid all the fracas, the ship ran up on a number of islands, damaging it terribly, despite its curb feelers. They helped with some repairs, befriending the ship’s captain, and returned to the city.

“Phillippa is staying with us and is quite obviously trying to find the Darling Dandy’s shard, but is hanging out with us under the guise of gratitude and safety. Scorching Ray described the guy who gave him the bogus map, and Phillippa seems to think it might be Olaf Jensen who works on projects in the Scar.

“The next morning, Inkspot and Screwtape were nowhere to be found and a ceramic cherub flew into Varh’s garden, delivered a ransom demand, then exploded. The demand: recover the shard belonging to Minstrel Players and trade it for your friend.

“Varh, Murnald, and Farsheed rummaged through Inkspot’s room (sorry man) to find clues, then talked to his bastion retainers and set out trying to retrace his steps.

“They ended up at the archive where the archivists were locking up, headed to a big circus show put on by the clown faction of the Minstrel Players. It was at this point that we remembered the schism in the Players. The mutinous clowns had taken the Players’ shard. All other leads having gone dry, we hoped to find some info or maybe even Inkspot at the circus.

“It was a big affair. Sideshow attractions, midway games, funhouse, fat lady (who we thankfully never saw; she sounded pretty scary), big top.

“Farsheed won a Fine Lady’s Hanky worth 25 gp knocking down dragon pins. Varh won a potion of superior healing at the Contest of Strength. Near that game was a woman strung up and mutilated, squashed flat, every bone in her body broken, a thimble on her hand.

“Grim stuff.

“We got some food, rather delicious ‘fresh baby,’ which we were assured was not. Baby. It was fresh.

“We were definitely trying our absolute hardest to find Inkspot.

“We headed into the sideshow tents (definitely thought Inkspot might be press ganged into here, but also like ‘how the hell would *anyone* hang onto Inkspot, he’s the most elusive person ever’—we might have said ‘cagey bastard’). There were living and dead specimens and we were able to free a two-inch-tall man called Tatum and a talking gopher, which Varh named Topher. We were not able to rescue the snaketaur.

“After that, the show in the big top was going to start. Murnald noticed that the Heart of the World was glowing ominously. Maybe it would erupt soon? That wouldn’t be good.

“Tatum mourned his friend, the Seamstress, who

we deduced was the flattened thimble lady at the midway. The ringmaster gave the Seamstress to the fat lady. Which wasn't good for the seamstress. Apparently she'd stolen something from the ringmaster she was going to use to buy the freedom of those enslaved in the circus. They didn't want to negotiate. We deduced it was the crown piece, searched her ransacked wagon and determined that she might have hidden it in a repair she'd made to the big top.

“The big top show began! It was pretty impressive. A cannon launched performers onto a tightrope. A bear rolled around the ring on a ball. Stray juggling pins bashed in the skulls of attendees. Very *Bloodsport*.

“We spotted where we thought the last repair was and cast Spider Climb on Varh, who scaled the tent. He was seen. Murnald tried to distract the clowns who spotted him and stopped one, but the other slipped under the tent and warned the ringmaster.

“Meanwhile, Terrapocalypse shows up.

“Flying over and breathing fire on everything.

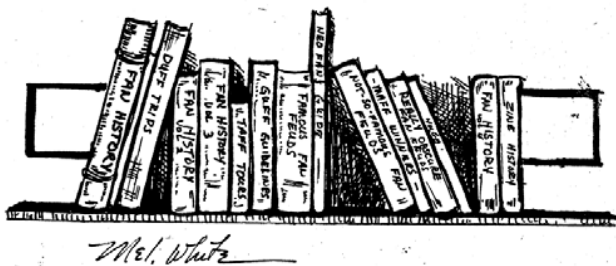
“Varh cut the fragment out of the tent and as is often the case with our ‘jobs,’ it ended in utter chaos and a flight for our lives. We did slip into the *burning* sideshow tent to almost not free the snaketaur again but managed to free her this time.

“When we arrived back at the bastion, sooty, bloodied, and exhausted, who was there blissfully unawares, but Inkspot.

“So. Now we have two fragments and a bastion to build. We need money in vast quantities.

“Murnald wants to go after Jensen. Who. Huh. Now that I’m reflecting on his appearance—blond, blue-eyed and Very Human, and with Terrapocalypse showing up... I wonder if that was Azrak-Yahif the Blue or an agent of the same.

“At the auction (or in a tavern) I recall some rumors or fear mongering about Terrapocalypse stirring and him not liking folks mucking about in the Scar? Does anyone else recall that? Anyway. Apparently that’s true and maybe his Blue Rival wants something there.”



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Dice Men: The Origin Story of Games Workshop by Ian Livingstone with Steve Jackson (Unbound, 2022)

Given that this was written by the founders of Games Workshop and creators of the Founding Fantasy gamebook series, the point of view of this book is largely celebratory and positive—as much a corporate history as a personal history—but offers a unique perspective on the early days of the hobby and industry. It also sheds light on the early days of roleplaying game fandom and auxiliary activities.

Friends since school age, the two progressed from board games to *Diplomacy*, which led to play-by-mail games and fanzines such as Don Turnbull's *Albion*. Jackson started the Keele University Games Society, the first such group in England. Discovering a game called *The Warlord* further energized the duo. Moving to London, they started a business—a game store—drawing on their knowledge of the industry developed in part by reviewing games for *Games & Puzzles* magazine.

I won't recap the linear history completely, but the book touches on the store's early newsletters—basically fanzines—securing the rights to distribute (and then publish under license) *Dungeons & Dragons* and writing *Dicing with Dragons* (*Theoretically: Game #2*), one of the earliest books about such games. The book details early cons such as Games Day and Dragonmeet, a trip to the United States, the launch of *White Dwarf* and Citadel Miniatures, the emergence of *Warhammer*, other games the company licensed, losing the TSR license, early experimentation with video games, and the Puffin Book Club's role in the origin of the Fighting Fantasy gamebook series.

The book is partly a corporate history, examining various office and shop locations, warehousing and miniature production facilities over the years, key staff members—and occasional disagreements and drama among the employees. Despite the book’s predominantly bright tone, the authors do touch on some challenging people and experiences, as well as disagreements. Building on the company’s experiments in vertical integration—distribution, licensing, publishing, retail, miniatures, periodicals, and so forth—the book leads up to Bryan Ansell taking charge of the company. That accelerated Games Workshop’s move away from non-*Warhammer* or homegrown games. (And precipitated the book’s somewhat sudden end.)

Dice Men is a compelling history of the games industry, fandom, and one company in particular. Games Workshop is not the company it once was. *White Dwarf* isn't the magazine it once was. But their

impact and influence is uncontested and incontrovertible—as is the importance of the contributions of Livingstone and Jackson.

Perhaps my favorite aspect of the book is its inclusion of a wide range of ephemera: newsletter and catalog reproductions, T-shirts and buttons, hand-drawn maps from roleplaying game sessions and the planning for *Fighting Fantasy*, and numerous candid photographs of people and places that played a role in the history of Games Workshop.

Despite the book's corporate focus, it ends up being much more than the history of a single company. If you're interested in the roleplaying games industry in England, its fandom, and its relationship with that in the United States, *Dice Men* is a very interesting read.



Los Angeles Times, April 24, 1959

From the Reading Pile: Comic Book Reviews *Adventurers* #0-1 (Adventure, 1986)

Written by Scott Behnke and drawn by Kent Burles (#0) and Peter Hsu (#1), this mid-1980s black-and-white independent comic book—Adventure Publications was based in Fairfax, Va.—isn't a media tie-in but might still be of interest to roleplaying gamers. It might also offer some ideas for your game sessions!

In #0, Tarrus One-Eyed, lord of Liam, seeks the keys of Telku to unlock the Gate of Chaos. (There's a campaign idea right there!) The second key is located in the ruins of Tecumeth, once home to necromancers. Now inhabited by the Groggs, led by Delgar the Beast.

Tarrus's soldiers defeated, a party of adventurers is assembled to venture forth: the warrior Tirian, the archer Shadolok, Sultar the rogue, the sorcerer Erikor, Bladehelm the dwarf, an assassin employed by Tarrus, and the mysterious Coron. The series' origin story also includes a two-page map of the world of Anoria, a brief history, a profile of Tarrus, and letters of comment.

The actual first issue of the series—#0 was published subsequently—#1 jumps right in as the party enters the ruins of Tecumeth. The party possesses a cryptic scroll that describes the key's location, and once inside, the group must determine where it is.

While Burles's artwork in #0 is excellent—his portrayal of structures, ruins, and the two-page spread depicting a battle with the Groggs on pp. 8-9 are particularly wonderful—Hsu's artwork is even moreso. The panels detailing Tecumeth are astounding: statues and structures, a long-range view of the complex, a giant serpent, and corridors. Both issue's black-and-white artwork is heavily penciled, suggestive of watercolors in their shading. Hsu's use of perspective and knowledge of anatomy are impressive.

The issue ends with additional details about the creation of the comic book's characters and a back-up story titled "Elf Warrior"—which reminded me of *Weirdworld: Warriors of the Shadow Realm*. Behnke put a lot of effort into the worldbuilding and characterization for this comic series, and I'd read subsequent issues without hesitation. It looks as though the series, also published by Aircel, ran 10 issues. I'll have to keep my eyes peeled. This might be one of the best fantasy series I've seen emerge from the 1980s independent boom.

From the Reading Pile: Judges Guild Magazines

Pegasus was the Judges Guild magazine, published between 1981-1983. I recently read two issues, #3-4, the earliest physical issues in my collection, both published in 1981. As a house organ—like *Dragon* and *White Dwarf*—the magazine is a good survey of Judges Guild activities at the time, as well as a snapshot of the hobby more broadly.

The 96-page third issue includes an interview with Judges Guild employee Dave Sering, who describes how he got involved in gaming and with the company, his job, and the role of roleplaying games; Clayton J. Miner's column "A Stroll Through the Marketplace" explores recent products from a number of publishers; there's a con calendar; reviews consider games in greater detail; and advertisements throughout

showcase other available resources.

But the bulk of the material is gaming aids, all of which you can still use today, perhaps with gentle adaptation. Jennell Jaquays, then known as Paul Jaquays, offers an expansion of *Deathdrake Temple*, "Duck Tower." Tom Jones's "Physical Descriptions" tables are still extremely useful. The issue also offers new monsters, the Sea Mage class and relevant spells, a piece on catapult warfare, and a City State campaign installment, "Isle of the Blest." Additional content includes combat revisions for *Traveller*, encounter tables for wilderness roads—still very useful!—trade charts for merchants, and another short adventure.

The fourth issue, also 96 pages, includes much of the same front and back matter, as well as a number of more specialized features. Perry T. Cooper offers "A Realistic System for Handling Missile Weapon Combat;" Paul Andrew Denisowski considers more aggressive spells for clerics; and Joseph R. Ravitts discusses monotheism in fantasy games, referring to examples from fantasy fiction. The main supplement is a City State campaign installment, "Isle of Tirnanog;" and additional material touches on hit locations (a notable resource), the combat effects of injury and blindness, a *Tunnels & Trolls* scenario, and a code players and GMs could use to more efficiently share PC and NPC stats. Similar to #3, short fiction is showcased, and Aaron Arocho's comic feature "Questing" is impressive.

It intrigues me that so many RPG magazines over the years have largely been house organs: *Dragon* and *Dungeon*, *White Dwarf*, *Adventurers Club* (Hero), *Challenge* (GDW), *The Rifter* (Palladium), *Pyramid*, and *Roleplayer* (both Steve Jackson Games). *Pegasus*, though a house organ for Judges Guild, strikes me as somewhat different. Even though it promotes and focuses on materials published by the company, because Judges Guild offers gaming aids for a wide variety of games—occasionally publishing system-agnostic materials—*Pegasus* feels more broadly applicable. It's also delightfully homegrown, featuring a pleasantly do-it-yourself design and production elements. *Pegasus* is as much a fanzine as it is a prozine.

The Ignorable Theme: Combat Requirements

"What do we want from a fight in a roleplaying game?" This is an interesting question, because my answer introduces what might be an unresolvable tension. As I've said previously, I tend to think that combat takes too long and plays too much of a role in roleplaying games. I'd like it to proceed more quickly, be less granular, and take up less space. I'd also like the earning of experience points and character

advancement to rely less on combat and the number of creatures killed, which seems to be the primary way we determine whether a PC has grown in skill, capability, and effectiveness.

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Los Angeles Times, April 24, 1959

At the same time, if there is combat—which will occur—I’d like it to be dramatic in at least two ways. I want a sense of risk and danger, a sense of challenge and the looming presence of death and failure. Players have to feel like there’s skin in the game, that what they do matters. I’d also like opportunities for PCs to do really cool things, act heroically, and engage in activities, moves, or tactics that surprise and delight—creating moments to remember and share stories about, even if only shortly after the session ends. Those moments can contribute to the sense of wonder offered by the games we play.

I’m not sure I can accomplish both, though. Making combat more efficient might detract from the risk and tension combat can provide. If it’s resolved quickly, there’s less opportunity for the raising of stakes, the turning of tides, and similar experiences. The abstraction of combat (*E&E* #12) can similarly smooth the edges of combat over much. With abstraction, detail is lost, which could result in fewer dramatic, heroic moments, the stuff of stories.

So I’m looking forward to what other contributors have to offer on this topic. Additional desires or requirements for combat might suggest potential solutions to this tension—or at least other areas on which to focus. Right now, it feels pretty binary.



Los Angeles Times, May 1, 1959

Comments on Alarums & Excursions #590

In *Tantivy* dated Dec. 4, 2024, **Lee Gold** remarked on Los Angeles’ dry season. That contributed to the wildfires we’ve experienced over the last couple of weeks. It’s been a bizarre period of time. We took in a friend—and her cats—who evacuated and hosted them for about a week. We made an evacuation plan and packed bug out bags. And the office in which I work closed, so I worked from home—distracted by the not always low-level background awareness and tension brought about by such preparation.

While LA remains ringed by red flag zones, the west side feels relatively safe as fire containment percentages increase. The Santa Ana winds died down, which aided firefighting efforts, and red flag zones seem to have moved north into the valley. Our

friend has returned home with her cats and we’ve begun to unpack our bug out bags, but we remain aware. We can return to work in the office Wednesday, but things hardly feel like they’re back to normal.

So many homes have been destroyed, even if the death toll is relatively low. While we know people who lost their homes, we’re primarily affected by the background tension of preparedness and sorrow about cultural resources that were lost. The fires claimed Will Rogers’s historic home and assorted buildings, the Theosophical Society and its archives, and the archives of composer Arnold Schoenberg.

Meanwhile, life goes on. Late last week, we hired workers to clean our attic and replace the insulation. And this week, we’re upgrading our furnace to accommodate air conditioning, which we haven’t had since we moved here in 2011. Luckily, both projects occurred when we weren’t so affected by the fires, and we wanted to take advantage of favorable quotes before prices increased once rebuilding began. I’ll have to check out *Danger Man* on Retro Television if we get that.

Pedro Panhoca da Silva’s *Back to Brazilian Gamebooks* Part VI was fun to read. If offered “in free translation,” does that mean it’s in English? I’ll have to look into that. I’m intrigued by the eco-literary aspect of the book. That makes me wonder whether other aspects of genre fiction might make their way into roleplaying games. This gamebook seems inspired by cli-fi writing. And I recently saw a post on social media about guidelines for romantic relationships in *Dungeons & Dragons*. That could be a sign that romantasy is making its way to gaming tables, or that we’ll see a resurgence of more prurient materials such as *The 5E Guide to Sex*, with which I was unfamiliar; *Book of Unlawful Carnal Knowledge*; *The Complete Guide to Unlawful Carnal Knowledge*; and others. Personally, I don’t need or want romance or sex in my roleplaying games, and as a DM, I wouldn’t encourage or allow sex. To each their own.

In *Mermecolion at a Picnic* #460, **Spike Y Jones** jokes “My name is on so many lists...” My wife and I were just talking about this. In addition to donating to a large number of liberal and environmental causes over the years—including the ACLU—I’ve also subscribed to practically every anarchist, communist, and socialist periodical I could identify. Come to think of it, I’ve also subscribed to conservative magazines. I’ve also given money to libertarian organizations and ordered materials from adjacent groups, such as the Ayn Rand Institute. And I’ve supported the Democratic party and candidates, so I can probably be pegged as center to pretty far left despite my apparent curiosity about the right. I think what I care about

politically is freedom balanced with care and respect for citizens. I think we can achieve both—but perhaps not with unbridled capitalism.

Jerry Stratton, I appreciated your movie recommendations in *The Biblyon Free Press* dated January 2025. As always “Carpe Librum” sang to me—H.G. Wells and Edgar Rice Burroughs!—and I thoroughly enjoyed your commentary on *Omni*. I love it when writers such as Robert A. Heinlein and Theodore Sturgeon show up in slicks.

In *Traveller Play-By-Email*, **Jim Vassilakos** remarked on the DM of the Kerzmielzorg campaign. John is indeed a very good DM. What I enjoy about his game mastership is that he really prepares for sessions—and his campaigns are always homegrown, not drawing on published materials—that he sticks to the rules as written rather than house ruling anything and everything, and that he’s highly inspired by the darkness and grime of *Warhammer*. Occasionally, his window dressing can be a little brutal and outre, but it makes for inspired roleplaying. I’m not sure I’ll continue publishing game reports if I wasn’t able to participate in the session, but doing so has helped me keep up to date since our time in Portugal.

As mentioned in **Doc Cross**’s *Oops, Wrong Planet!: The Geek Kaiju Edition*, I’ll have to check out your 366 Days theme for *Doclopedia*. Your description of it as a blog seems appropriate—you’d certainly know what you’re talking about—but describing posts as entries makes me think about wikis. That led me to imagine Alarums & Excursions as a wiki, which is kind of mindblowing. This is, after all, One Big Fanzine.

In *This Isn’t the Zine You’re Looking For* #399, **Lisa Padol** asked a valid question about Wami in Kerzmielzorg. Yeah, *none* of it is a good fit for him. What happened was that, originally, the campaign was going to be all heists, with an all-rogue party. Then we decided that was too many rogues, and not everyone made one (we might have one)... but the heist theme remained. I randomly selected my race and class, so I ended up with an aasimar. It seems to make sense that someone who’s planetouched celestially might seek out the worst their world has to offer as a way to better understand the state of things, but that results in a pretty serious Overton window. What is good and evil generally might not align with what is good and evil locally, so there’s a lot of shades of gray he has to deal with. If it even be gray.

Being good in Kerzmielzorg is a challenge, so Wami’s taken to striving to be the best he can be in a bad situation. That doesn’t mean he’s good all the time, so at some point, I might consider how corruption rules or a change in alignment might come

into play. He’s chaotic good, so he can handle the chaos—he even enjoys it—but how long will he be able to be good among so much evil? Will he reconcile himself to not being able to fix the city? I thank you and John Redden for reminding me that there are so many games other than *D&D*—and games other than fantasy roleplaying games. I’m in a rut!

Dylan Capel’s *The Silent Temple* #39 reported on recent experiences with *The War of Rohirrim*, *Mork Borg*-related games, and artwork from Fighting Fantasy. All sound enjoyable indeed. I appreciated the connection between *Magic Realms* and *Dice Men*. (see above) I’m sorry to hear that you were laid off and hope that the holidays with your family were meaningful and comforting.



Los Angeles Times, May 1, 1959

While reading **Mark Nemeth**’s *The Seedling* #44, I realized I’ve been glossing over everyone’s discussion of the Book of Job. I’ll have to revisit that commentary! I also read and appreciated your book reviews, which I seem to be drawn to generally.

And in **Joshua Kronengold**’s *Random Access* #303—I made it through the mailing! Glad I didn’t stop commenting a page ago. In recent issues, I feel like I’ve only been commenting on one-third to one-half of folks’ fanzines.—he commented on isekai games, which will lead me to checking out Roger Zelazny’s *Changeling* and *Madwand*. The latter was reviewed in *Ares Magazine* #13. Interestingly, *Ares* was also a house organ—for SPI and, later, TSR (which I hadn’t been aware of!).

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #148

Jan. 23, 2025

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; 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

David Lynch weather:
Beautiful, golden sunshine,
blue skies all the way.

Rest in peace, Mr. Lynch. You and your art will be missed.

COVER STORY

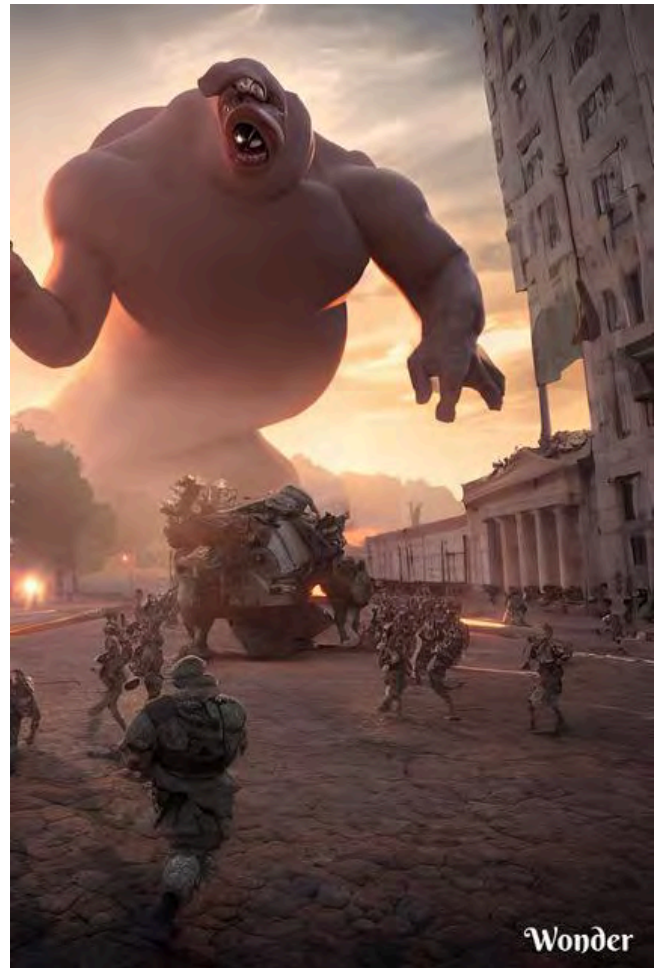
Big, Bad Baby

I was just finishing a nutrient bulb in the squad's rec room when the sirens began to blare and the colored warning lights started to pulse redly above the doors and in the center of the ceiling. It'd been a quiet day on base, devoted to routine chores and maintenance. Smitty and Kyle had gotten into an argument about the best way to stow one's trunk under the bunks after their midday sparring match, and I'd spent a pleasant half hour paging through my most recent stamp album. That brief moment of calm was as rare as the 1846 10-cent black St. Louis Bear I'd recently procured with my accumulated hazard pay. I'd found comfort in the distressed lettering on the gray lilac woven paper: "United we stand. Divided we fall." The accompanying text—"Salus populi suprema lex esto."—offered a meditative mantra. Let the welfare of the people be the supreme law. Right on.

Rising from my chair quickly and pushing away from the pockmarked utility table, I disposed of the empty, flaccid, rubbery bulb to don my padded, armored defensive garb with practiced calm, lowering the visor of my helmet with a sturdy click and claiming a firearm from the rack. Our CO had unlocked and unlatched it upon hearing the first klaxon. Smacking the grainy aftertaste from my lips, I fell into step with my fellow troops, down the hall and outside, dividing our ranks into two groups as footfall echoed in the spartan corridors.

Outside, it was David Lynch weather: beautiful blue skies and golden sunshine all along the way, the daylight heading toward golden hour but not yet muted as the day browned. We could see other

battalions pouring from their barracks, similarly armed, and exterior sirens were sounding, breaking the easy peace of the outdoor day. We rounded the corner of a building and peered down the road toward the base's gate. The sound of small arms fire barked like angry dogs in the middle distance, and a couple of wide-tired unitanks rumbled forward, offering a low, deep-throated growl.



—Rev. Ivan Stang

Rising above the wall surrounding our compound was one of the largest Booji Boys I'd ever seen, thick armed and barrel chested, its bioengineered fleshy body pink like Pepto-Bismol. Fancifully named after some long-forgotten corp-state mascot, the gorge-rising form always reminded me of fat babies or a hairless Shar-Pei, the size of an apartment building. Sometimes, you could almost swear you smelled baby oil on the hot breeze of its wake. At least that's what we told greenhorns. Lamia-like, its torso rose with disturbing grace, tree trunk-thick arms waving, fat fingers splayed, its unnatural flesh rippling and undulating as it rose ever higher. Its wide girth eclipsed the sun as it slithered, lumbering, almost

flowing toward the base and through the protective wall as weapon fire barked more aggressively, almost frantically, like a frightened Chihuahua. The wall, only recently repaired, crumbled like sodden, swollen granola.

The fleshy folds where its head should be shifted and swayed, flapping lazily. Suddenly, its body fell forward, along the length of its toothpaste-like snaky length, palms slapping at a unitank that burned rubber in an attempt to reverse direction. The unitank's single cannon puffed its discontent, percussive force propelling the unitank back, back. The B-Boy's chest rippled as larger-caliber projectiles slammed into it, creating a momentary concave crater, dimpling, but failing to penetrate the beast's thick, pliable hide. Its body slammed into the already distressed pavement, making meaty cracks and more crumbling rubble for us to clear away later—if we survived the incursion.

The unitank almost lost balance, teetering as it pivoted on its single, wide tire, buzzing and smoking as it skidded and skedaddled out of the Booji Boy's ham-handed reach. Squealing in frustration, an ear-popping whine bordering on a wheezing, full-throated roar, the creature pushed upward in a back-breaking Salamba Bhujangasana pose. The flesh where its head should be parted, folds slowly flapping open, peeling back, and we could see the matte-black surface of its face before a wide, hazy beam fired, slowly strafing the pavement in front of it and then across, obliterating the front ranks of a troop that had crouched in a line along the well-worn curbing of the entry road. Bodies flew, broken, to fall limply, shattered, several bus lengths away. Some flattened against the wall of the building behind them with a sickeningly wet crunch, sliding slowly downward to fold over where the building's base met pavement.

Smitty ran forward as soon as the beam died, its dusty amplified light muted, fading like the skies behind the bulky beast. "No!" our CO shouted just before Smitty slapped something flat against the matte black of the creature's exposed robotic face. His body convulsed, palm affixed to the shining smooth surface, his body dancing with electricity, skin and battle garb smoking before both burst into flames. His hair stood on end, crisping, inside his sweaty helmet. We watched, helpless, for three beats—1, 2, 3—as his slender legs kicked spasmodically, feet off the ground. Then a percussive whomp emanated outward, lifting all of us from our feet along with rubble and dust, knocking us into the air and onto our backs, breathless. I could hear—and feel—a rib snap.

When I was finally able to rise to unsteady, shaky feet, my visor cracked by the force of the backlash, I and my comrades could see that the Booji Boy lay

lifeless, its coiled tubular body outstretched like an overly large, sunburned beached whale, pulsing, fleshy face folds charred and splayed raggedly outward, its exposed inner mechanics shattered, smoking. Thin, wispy strands of vapor smelled acrid on the unsettled evening air. My nostrils flared, my eyes burning. Kyle bent forward, his hand to his chin just before retching.

Already, several reclamation crews were approaching the steaming pink corpse of the monstrous enemy, cleavers and shears at the ready to carve out choice cuts. A few of the soldiers cheered. One broke into a hearty song. "Pink Pony Club! West Bollywood!" We'd eat well for weeks to come, if not months. The boxy chest freezers would soon no longer be empty, rimed with stale frost.

I grinned, my appetite already growing, saliva tantalized. Those nutrient bulbs were old news. Just like Smitty, who'd also feed us, though not as many, or for as long. I'll miss him. I laughed in relief, face to the evening breeze. Then I coughed hot sour vomit onto the toes of my dusty leather combat boots.

The above short story was inspired by Rev. Ivan Stang's cover artwork for APA-L #3104. I don't know anything about the military, so apologies in advance for any inaccuracies or incongruities. I blame only myself.

SHORT FICTION

Your Partner Is Already Asleep

By Edgar Stephen Curo (© 2025)

Your partner is already asleep in bed. You close the window shades and turn out the ceiling light. The room is completely dark except for the light of your phone screen, which you're using as a flashlight.

You were about to join your partner in bed, but halfway across the room, you remember you forgot to set your alarm.

You turn the phone's screen back to face you.

You set the alarm, and since you're looking at the screen again already, you stand in the darkness, scrolling Facebook one more time before going to bed for real.

You see a good meme and share a related meme in the comments thread. You scroll some more, hide a few advertisements, and snooze a perpetually dramatic friend who, as usual, is upset about something, but only vague-booked about it. Yada, yada, yada...

A Facebook "friend" whom you don't really know has posted "If you're in greater Boston, please keep an eye out for this person. I don't know them myself, but they are a friend of friends. They've been missing for

3 days, and their loved ones are concerned!”

This plea is followed by an Instagram link, but it isn't loading properly.

You check the clock on your phone and realize you've been standing in the dark scrolling for almost an hour.

OK... you're going to bed for real now. You dim your phone screen (so as not to wake your sleeping partner) and shine the screen toward the bed. You have almost no night vision from all the scrolling.

You carefully lift back the blankets and you're about to climb into bed when you realize your partner's not there.

Confused, you turn the screen brightness back up again.

The blankets seem different than you remembered them.

You're feeling dizzy now.

Still using your phone screen as a flashlight, you reach to turn the ceiling light on again but can't find the lightswitch.

Nothing in the room looks familiar.

The floor is bare dirt.

Where you thought the window was, there's only a strangely angled stone wall. The air is stale and dusty.

You glance at your phone screen again.

The Instagram link with the missing-person poster has finished loading, and it's your own face.

The author, Edgar Stephen Curo, is also the curator of the Empire SNAFU Restoration Project. (<https://www.facebook.com/EMPIRESNAFU>) He lived in the Boston area.

Photographically Novel

Over the holidays, I spent some time downloading my remaining online photos from Snapfish and Flickr in order to move them all to Google Photos so they were all in one place. It was a wonderful experience, though a lengthy and manual process, and I enjoyed reliving many memories and thinking about many people. It also pulled me toward the photo albums and physical prints I've accumulated over the years. All of that gave me the opportunity to think about how my relationship with photography has changed over the years.

All of this was catalyzed by Snapfish emailing me to announce that unless I bought something soon, they'd automatically delete my account and all its photos. I realized I hadn't used Snapfish in ages, so I accepted that as an invitation to download my photos—and delete my account myself.

Snapfish launched in April 2000, and it was my earliest experience with digital photography. As a

member, you received flexible plastic mailing sleeves in which you'd place rolls of spent film to mail in for processing. As a user of the service, I appreciated receiving prints—and a CD of the digital images—in the mail in return, and it was an interesting hybrid approach: physical prints along with digital images.

As digital photography progressed—at least online—Snapfish also hosted the resulting images on the Web for members. Once I'd downloaded my photos that were available through the site, covering 2003-2005, I also found a number of CDs that I'd held on to, as well, dated 2005-2006. (They were on a spool with other CDs, labeled “Software.”) Not all of those photos were online, so I took the opportunity to upload them to Google Photos along with those I'd downloaded. (As I wrote this, I requested the deletion of my Snapfish account. I subsequently received a confirmation email, so confirmed, and can reportedly no longer log in; Snapfish will delete my data within 30 days.)

When Flickr launched in February 2004, I began using it more actively, eventually instead of Snapfish. By the time I fully migrated, digital photography was more au courant, and I'd changed from using a traditional camera to, at first, a Danger Hiptop (now the T-Mobile Sidekick, Mobiflip, or Sharp Jump) that I'd purchased after hosting Cory Doctorow in the Boston area—later moving to a digital camera and mobile phones.

I used Flickr actively between 2005-2018, uploading 12,055 photos. Social media was just emerging in the early days of my Flickr usage, and I initially used Flickr as a form of social media—uploading photos compulsively, sharing albums and photos with friends, and otherwise engaging with other photographically inclined friends and acquaintances. Flickr became my de facto online photo album of choice.

That slowed—and stopped—with the tighter integration of Android smartphones and Google Photos, and most of my photography these days is done with my phone, which means the images end up in Google Photos. While I own a digital SLR camera, I don't use it as often, and you can upload photos via the Web site, so it's roughly the same as using Flickr when not using your phone, only in the same place where my mobile photos reside.

I'd requested to download all my Flickr photos in mid-2022 but hadn't done anything with the resulting zip files—again, more than 12,000 pictures—so that was the lion's share of my holiday photo processing. Uploading that many photos took quite a bit of time. For some reason, deleting my Flickr account was more emotional for me. I'd used it longer, and so much of

my life was represented and reflected there— even if I'd moved the photos to Google Photos. The main motivation to delete my account is that Flickr Pro costs about \$75/year. Canceling Flickr Pro is an option, but free accounts are limited to 1,000 uploads and a maximum of 50 non-public photos. So I might as well delete the account. (As I wrote this, I did so.)

Google Photos launched in mid-2015, so it's the youngest of the services. I appreciate its integration with my Android phone, and I also like the ability to identify people in my photos, which is then also applied to other photos featuring those people. But what I like most is Google's automatically generated and recommend photo albums available at the top of the Web site and mobile app.

Today, I am referred to albums featuring my wife, the theme "Silent Reflection," a trip to Portugal two years ago, photos of Los Angeles four years ago, "fun moments" with my son 18 years ago—he turns 21 at the end of the month—and additional recommended opportunities to revisit photos and relive experiences and memories. It's like a portable time machine, or a memory prompt.

Much like physical prints and photo albums. As things stand, my life has been documented photographically in print—albums and prints—up to about 2003, and online afterward. In Google Photos, my pictures date back to 2002. While Snapfish's CD images included digital date stamps, the downloaded images did not, so I've had to arrange them in online albums titled the date the roll was developed.

The number of photos taken—and available— increase and accelerate with the move to digital photography and smartphone cameras. But the memories and emotions they elicit occur at the same speed and time: now.

The Ignorable Theme: New Year's Resolutions

"Do you have any New Year's resolutions? Any plans, hopes, or dreams for 2025? What are they?" My mother asked me the first question when we spoke on New Year's Day. I have no resolutions for the new year, so my answer isn't very interesting.

I do have plans, hopes, and dreams for the year ahead, however. With the recent wildfires in southern California and the inauguration earlier this week, they're largely focused on family, friends, and home. I'll be pacing myself this year, and already, it's been challenging to balance work and life, anger and calm, alertness and peace.

In the spirit of deleting my Snapfish and Flickr accounts, I'll likely change my relationship with social media pretty substantially. In order to limit my information intake—and opportunities for anger,

sorrow, and concern—I've deleted Facebook and X from my mobile and plan to check in on Facebook once a day online for messages rather than to scroll through the feed. I kept Instagram because we sometimes message with my son there, and we'll see whether I keep Bluesky and Mastodon on my phone. I'm not sure I want to spend time scrolling on Bluesky, either. (I already don't use Mastodon much.)

This isn't so formal as to be a resolution, but I'll focus on writing more less often rather than less more often. I'll likely concentrate on fanzines, letters of comment, and other correspondence. And I've already limited my news intake to the daily newspaper—the *Los Angeles Times*—in the morning, or throughout the day if I don't finish reading it before work.

The next four years will be a marathon, even if they already feel like a sprint. It'll be important to keep calm, pace one's self, think things through, dedicate energy and effort where it'll have the most impact, and otherwise concentrate on the long term.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

Inland Empire

In memory of David Lynch, my wife and I watched his 2006 movie *Inland Empire* last weekend. While a “surrealist experimental psychological thriller film” according to *Wikipedia*, I’d suggest that it’s also a fantasy. There are certainly fantastic elements.

With a three-hour runtime, it’s a long film, and it’s an exercise in stamina, a durational movie, almost in the sense of durational music. Shot using digital video, it’s visually interesting, though digital artifacts were occasionally apparent while streaming it at home.

I won’t go into the plot too much, but the gist of the movie is that the cast of a film project—at one level, it’s a movie about making a movie—is endangered because the production is a remake of a movie that wasn’t finished the first time a cast and crew tried to film it. Apparently, there’s something in the screenplay itself that led to the death of the previous production’s two leads. That’s an intriguing fantastic element: a malevolent force present in a text. A virus in the script.

Laura Dern plays what might, in the end, be four characters, even if they’re not clearly delineated. She plays an actor cast in the movie, portrays that actor’s character in the movie, in some scenes seems to embody a Polish wife and mother, and also portrays a street-walking prostitute who’s in an abusive relationship. The membranes between those characters and the worlds they inhabit is semipermeable, and it’s not always clear how or why the change in perspective occurs. In one situation, Dern’s actor character experiences the intersection of actor and character, confusing the film world with the real world, later asserting the real world in the film world.

There are also a number of scenes featuring characters wearing rabbit masks, filmed as though they’re in a television situation comedy complete with laugh track. One of the rabbit characters seems to intersect with another character in the prostitute sequence. Those sections reminded me of *Eraserhead*.

While occasionally confusing and not entirely sensible, *Inland Empire* is an intriguing movie that’s worth muddling through.



Los Angeles Times, May 8, 1959

Comments on APA-L #3104

I have been remiss in remarking on Brad W. Foster’s new 2025 banner for **John Hertz’s** *Vanamonde*. Every year, Foster provides a new banner image for Hertz’s fanzine, and this year’s is quite pleasing in its sweep. I shall enjoy seeing that over the year to come!

Hertz opened the fanzine with a five-line poem. He followed with an exploration of several area courthouses, addressing the architecture of justice poetically. I will share your feedback with cover artist Damon D. Brown. I can understand not wanting to use Instagram.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #90, **Matthew Mitchell** updated ellers on his recent health event. I read your description of how it unfolded with empathy and care. I’m glad the bus driver knows you well. I’m sure she offered appreciated assistance. It might have saved some time if you’d had a previous issue of your fanzine in your backpack, an issue in which you’d already documented what you usually carry. That’s a joke, but just imagine.

It sounds like an alarming experience, but that you were cared for well. I hope your vision continues to improve. What did you watch on TV other than VH1? I still occasionally watch cable TV, usually DVR’d, and generally don’t fast forward through the commercials because the user interface doesn’t facilitate doing so easily. I’m curious about your experience with these “channels” you mentioned.

By now, you’ve likely had your two follow-up appointments. You sent a contribution for this week’s distribution, and I look forward to further updates. I’m thinking about you in my neck of the woods and am glad your sons are there to help you as needed. I will share your feedback with cover artist Tiffanie Gray.

Indeed, Leonard Nimoy does appear in *The Brain Eaters*! Another reason to watch the thing. I mean, are they brains that eat, or do they eat brains? Inquiring minds want to know. I enjoyed your commentary on Michael Troncoso and tape trading. While I occasionally procured video tapes from such traders, I didn’t have a lot to offer in exchange, so it was usually done sending blanks and copying costs. When I first got into anime, I fell in with some fansubbers—people who subtitle anime themselves before commercially available translations are available—and obtained some interesting anime that way.

There was a time in which I’d occasionally search eBay for variants of “fansub” and “video tapes sold as blanks” to see what popped up. I still have some old *Doctor Who* and Frank Zappa recordings that were sold as blanks. That’s a practice also applied to audio recordings. It doesn’t totally circumvent copyright

concerns, but if a listing's description is detailed, it can be helpful. After all, you can buy them as blanks, but you can still watch them.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White. Carabiners are almost always useful, and are rarely heavy. I've only ever owned one ungainly carabiner. It's a standard size but is thicker and made of a heavier metal—might actually be appropriate for rock climbing, while most readily available carabiners aren't. It's one of the carabiners currently affixed to our sun shade.

We're doing well despite the ongoing fires—and the new Hughes Fire. Los Angeles remains ringed by red flag zones, east toward Joshua Tree and south to the Mexican border. Fire containment percentages are better than they were, but it doesn't feel like we're out of it yet, even if we returned to the office midweek.

I almost forgot to comment on **Joe Zeff's** *Toony Loons* #787! He, too, updated us on recent healthcare experiences. While I have a dental appointment tomorrow morning—a routine cleaning—most of what we've focused on in recent days is home repair. Late last week we hired workers to clean the attic and install new insulation. Early this week, others installed a new furnace that also provides air conditioning—which we haven't had since moving in 13 years ago.

There was initially some difficulty getting the heat to work—the AC worked well, too well!—but we got that sorted. They haven't yet been able to install a programmable thermostat, which we'd prefer, and we'll likely have to resolve that they installed a unit that uses a coolant that's being outmoded, rather than the coolant that will be used going forward. Other home improvements are likely to follow over the course of the year.

This afternoon, we took the car in for some light repair. A cover on the undercarriage had come loose and has been increasingly dragging. This afternoon when I went to drive in to the office, the dragging was quite audible, so I turned around and came right home. Time to fix the thing.

I've taken to looking at the weather in Colorado when perusing the daily newspaper—and weather elsewhere. The east coast and midwest have been quite cold in recent days, and I enjoyed reading about your "several snow falls." I'm glad you were able to navigate the slippery walk safely.

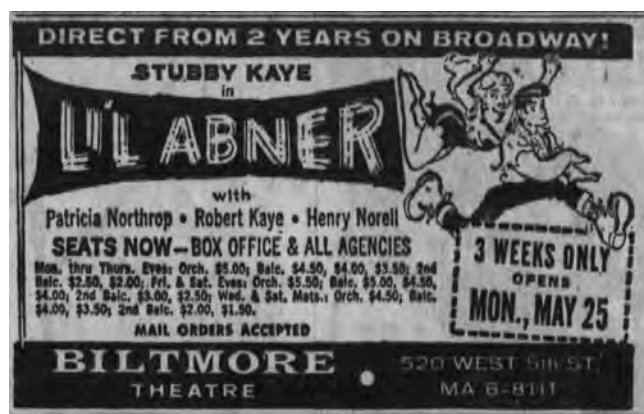
Next week sounds busy! If anyone ever wants APA-L back issues to take to a local con, feel free to let me know. I might be able to mail you some beforehand if you'd like more than your personal back issues. I look forward to a COSine con report. Connie Willis will be there! The con offers supporting memberships, so I threw in.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White. Participation has been a little light so far this year, but it's understandable with the holidays and wildfires in the area. I expect things will pick up as the situation improves.

Your comment about the photographs of Will Rogers's bookshelves is fair! Titles of fannish interest include Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan the Untamed* and *Tarzan of the Apes*; about 20 books by L. Frank Baum, most of them Oz books; and Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. As I zoom in on the PDF and squint myself, Andrew Lang's *The Green Fairy Book* also stands out.

The fate of Rogers's home and library inspired some discussion among ERB fen in the *Facebook's* ERBzine group. Apparently, Burroughs personally gave Rogers first edition hard covers of the first 10 Tarzan books. Only two were visible in the photographs my wife took last fall, but reports (<https://www.parks.ca.gov/NewsRelease/1346>) suggest that staff were able to remove some artifacts before the house burned down.

By your estimation, I do believe you qualify as a cyborg! My continued hopes for easy resolution of Marcia Minsky's workers compensation and bogus writeups.



Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1959

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #149

Jan. 30, 2025

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Last Week's Senryu

If back to normal
feels like I'm feeling these days,
I don't like normal.

Well, at least it rained!

COVER STORY

Genevieve by the Sea

Genevieve had had enough of the sweaty crush of the dancing throng tonight at the La Monica ballroom, located at the end of the Santa Monica Amusement Pier. Hand in hand with her paramour du jour, Ron, she'd walked the pier's worn-timbered length earlier that evening, past the Whirlwind Dipper and Looft Hippodrome toward the Monica's impressive Spanish and French Renaissance-style structure, the ballroom's many towers reaching for the sunset skies above the Pacific Ocean.

She hadn't eaten dinner before meeting Ron, thinking that he'd treat them to a meal—maybe oysters, sand dab at the very least—but he hadn't introduced the idea. She didn't either, though she took note of his negligence. Instead, she waited patiently for him to pay their entry fee—it was the least he could do—then let herself get swept up in the surge of the thousands of gathered dancers. The late-winter evening was cool, misty near the shore, and her body shivered, white dress extremely flattering and bare alabaster shoulders just shy of cold. It was warmer inside, the air humid from the exhalation of active dancers.

The young couple, only several dates into their relationship, walked around the edge of the submarine garden interior assessing the crowd and looking for friends and acquaintances before making their way to the maple wood dance floor. Patsy was nowhere to be seen. Bouncing in her shoes, Genevieve squealed as she caught sight of the band on the far side. "It's Johnny Vana!" she said, eyes bright up to Ron's perplexed face. "That's the Big Band Alumni—and they just started playing a Billy May tune!" With her

back and bare shoulder blades to the crowded dance floor, she pulled her date forward with both hands, pale shapely arms outstretched. Ron followed willingly. She was already dancing.

The first dance of the evening was "Long Tall Mama." Genevieve knew all the numbers; well-read issues of *Song Hits* littered the floor of her bedroom at home. She knew the latest steps. And she knew just the right way to swing her hips, legs, and upper body to keep Ron's attention and interest—and draw that of other nearby dancers. Song after song, Genevieve kindly declined several offers from other young men to cut in. After all, Ron had paid their way in—and the man could dance. She had to give him that. He might be a cheapskate, but the guy sure had two feet! After an hour of steady, lively dancing, she was bushed.



—Al Sirois

Deciding not to go only to the powder room, which was sure to be just as crowded as the dance floor, Genevieve left Ron, walking toward the entrance to step outside. Her arms crossed over her chest under a striated smooth stone pendant as she returned to the cool misty ocean air of night. The sun was long set by now, the sky purple dark, a few stars visible, and she could hear the sound of the surf on sand.

She walked back down the pier, finding the stairs leading to the beach. From inside the ballroom, she could still hear the sounds of Johnny Vana and the Big Band Alumni, grinning and humming to herself as she

removed her shoes. Genevieve walked in the sand toward the ocean, toes flexing as she listened to the surf and the sound of the dance band. Soon, she found just the right place to sit for a brief rest. Ron would miss her soon. She tilted her head to the side, listening, and nodded to herself before lowering to the sand, feeling it with her palm for dampness before making herself comfortable.

With her back toward the city inland, Genevieve closed her eyes, reclining slightly, shoulders back with her palms on the sand. She extended her legs, feeling the evening cool along her bare legs all the way down to her feet. Shifting slightly in the sand, she listened to the music drifting from the ballroom, the 17-piece band distant and ethereal. And she listened to the soft murmuring of the surf lapping up against the shore.

She'd found just the right spot. Between the ocean and city. Between the sound of surf and dance music. Her eyes closed and body slowly swaying, Genevieve listened. She listened to the surf, and she listened to the song. Her heart soared.

No one could see Genevieve where she sat in the darkness on the beach. With her eyes closed, she could see neither the lights of the city nor the amusement pier, the expanse of sand, the ocean, or the stars.

As she listened, grains of sand vibrated softly as though attuning to her. Nearby, a pebble softly shivered. Then, a grainy mist of sand rose slowly. Soon, all along the beach and shore, sand, pebbles, and stones rose slowly into the air.

The rising mist of sand spread and stretched, elongating like the smear of the Milky Way. Stones of various sizes rose, hovering, moving into position as Genevieve's shoulders swayed gently with the sound of surf and distant song.

Slowly, with Genevieve seated in the center like a sun, the stones began to move. Nine rocks of varying sizes began to rotate slowly. Then they began to revolve, following their own lazy elliptical paths.

They moved around her, orbiting. She continued to sit, listening, dreaming.

When the song ended, Genevieve opened her eyes. The sand and stones had already settled on the beach. It was time to return to the ballroom, and to Ron.

Surely, he'd be looking for her. Maybe they could get a Hot Dog on a Stick.

The above short story was inspired by Al Sirois's cover artwork for APA-L #3105.

The Ignorable Theme: The End of the World

"How do you think the world will end? How soon is that likely to occur?" The answer to this question depends on how you define the "world."

If we mean the universe, there are several theories. Most likely, the universe will continue to expand, asymptotically approaching (nearing but not reaching) a temperature of absolute zero. The universe would eventually reach a state of maximum entropy in which everything is evenly distributed, there are no energy gradients, and nothing can interact. Similarly, the universe could continue to expand, but not fast enough to pull galaxies apart. They'd remain held together by gravity, but they'd spread out, eventually disintegrating into unbound elementary particles.



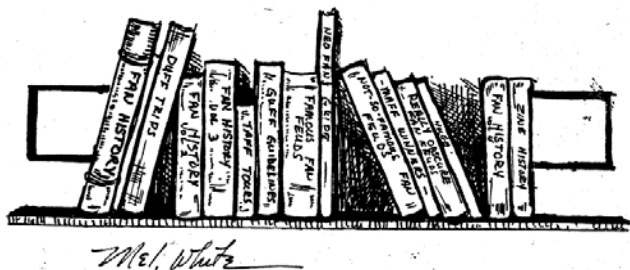
Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1959

In another scenario, the average density of the universe might be enough that its expansion eventually stops—and the universe begins to contract. It could do so until it collapses into a dimensionless singularity. I'm intrigued by that theory, a nice bookend to the Big Bang. And finally, the same thing could happen, but instead of ending with a dimensionless singularity, the collapse of the universe could create another universe, via another Big Bang. In any event, each of these theories are unlikely to occur any time soon—for billions or trillions of years.

If we mean our solar system, the world will end when our sun reaches the end of its life cycle. At that time, it will expand into a red giant star and engulf the Earth. That's also not likely to occur any time soon,

And if we just mean our planet, well, that could happen sooner. Traditionally, we've had the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock as a gauge to how close we are to global catastrophe caused by man-made technologies. Updated annually, the Doomsday Clock, a composite signal, indicates we're 90 seconds from midnight. (<https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/2024-statement>) That's the closest to disaster we've ever been, and the current threats facing us include nuclear risk, climate change, biological threats, and disruptive technologies.

The next four years could be very important in terms of addressing climate change. That seems to be the biggest risk facing us right now.



Before the Coffee Gets Cold by Toshikazu Kawaguchi
(Hanover Square, 2020)

Science fiction on the bestseller list? I was curious. The story behind *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* is interesting. Initially a stage play, the novel was published in Japan in 2015, first translated into English in the United Kingdom in 2019. There are now multiple books in the series, including *Before Your Memory Fades*, *Tales from the Cafe*, *Before We Say Goodbye*, and *Before We Forget Kindness*.

four vignettes, perhaps interconnected short stories, detailing the customers of a back-alley cafe in Tokyo, Funiculi Funicula. The gist of the book is that if you sit in a specific seat in the cafe—when it's not occupied by its usual inhabitant—you can travel into the past to see someone else who's visited the cafe.

A somewhat breezy read, the book is enjoyable. Its characters are compelling, and the repeated elements suggest that the series was worth pursuing. In this first volume, chapter headings include “The Lovers,” “Husband and Wife,” “The Sisters,” and “Mother and Child.” A couple of the chapters interconnect, which provides at least one meaningful callback, but a notable risk expressed earlier in the book doesn’t necessarily resolve by the book’s end. Perhaps it will in a subsequent book.

***The Fangirl's Guide to the Galaxy: A Handbook for Girl Geeks* by Sam Maggs (Quirk, 2015)**

The book focuses on its subject in the context of being a geek. Even though that term is now commonly used in relation to fandom, I consider the two slightly different. (I, for example, consider myself a fan and geeky, but not necessarily a geek. All the same, “geek” has more positive connotations to the related term “nerd.”) Regardless, the use of the term wasn’t too off putting or distracting. The book also considers fandom broadly—including literary sources, as well as television shows, movies, anime, manga, and video games. Science fiction and fantasy both come into play; horror does less so.

T&T 149-3

which young women (people, really) can get involved, Maggs provides a glossary of fan-speak, terms that will be recognizable by younger fen, but perhaps not the slang older fen are used to: “feels,” “glomp,” “OTP,” and “shipping,” for example. The author also offers advice on how to get friends involved in your enthusiasms.

Attention is given to where to find fellow fen: movies, maker spaces, game days, trivia nights, Renaissance fairs, and the like. For those longer-time fen who might still be looking for folks to hang out with, it’s a valuable reminder. We’re everywhere. You just need to be open and friendly. Maggs discusses fandom online—and basic netiquette and handling trolls—as well as writing fanfiction.

After exploring the basics of attending cons (the book lists Anime LA and Indiecade in the Los Angeles area) in some detail, the book also addresses cosplay. The small-sized tome ends with a section on “geek girl feminism,” which is welcome and important. Throughout are page-long Q&A pieces featuring a number of notable women engaged in fandom-related activities and media.

This is a very good book. You might not need it yourself, but if you know young women whom you think would enjoy such things, *The Fangirl’s Guide to the Galaxy* would make an excellent gift. Tools like this might also be useful as older fen strive to involve more younger fen—and people engaged in other fandoms—in our activities.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

My Old Ass

This 2024 coming-of-age comedy drama film is also a subtle fantasy. An 18-year-old Canadian woman preparing to leave her family and home—and the life of a cranberry farmer—encounters her 39-year-old self. Initially meeting on Maude Island while high on mushrooms, the two are able to send each other text messages and talk on the phone, as well as encounter each other again several times.

That leads to the young woman’s older self giving her some advice that proves challenging to heed, and the movie is largely about developing emotional maturity, living life fully, love, and loss. There are also small suggestions that the future—though the older woman is satisfied with her life—isn’t that bright a future. The older character comments on certain animal life being more rare and restrictions on how many children a family can have.

In one scene, while on the phone, the sound of a siren is heard, and the older self says, “Basement! Now!” The full picture of the future is never painted, but the cli-fi aspects of the film are noteworthy, though it primarily focuses on their interactions and the changes made in the young woman’s family life.

The film also addresses the distancing from family that can occur in young adulthood, and how important it is to maintain those relationships and focus on those you love. And it’s a loving portrayal of youthful sexuality. *My Old Ass* is a wonderful movie, and I was totally unaware of it until two different friends recommended it. I heartily recommend the movie and think it should be more widely known than it is.

Thematically, it resonates somewhat with *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* (see above). Both consider communication from the future to the past and what we might say to someone we no longer have in our lives. In the film’s case, that person is our self. What advice would you give your younger self? What would you tell them to avoid or embrace?

Those are thought-provoking questions.

Comments on APA-L #3105

In *Vanamonde* #1628, **John Hertz** recognized Martin Luther King Jr. Day, discussing the civil rights movement leader, nonviolent protest, racial segregation, and the hard-won gains. I will share your feedback with cover artist Tiffanie Gray.

Recent discussion of Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Percival Everett’s *James* reminded me of Greg Matthews’s *The Further Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Crown, 1988), which came out when I was a teenager. It’s been almost 40 years since I read it. Did any of you read that, too?

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #91 touched on recovering from his stroke. You returned to work quite quickly! I hope your medical appointments continue to go well and that your recovery proceeds accordingly. While I've never watched *Law & Order*, I do enjoy *Columbo*. A friend recently expressed surprise that I've never seen *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*—the movies or the series—so I might need to amend that soon.

I debated including the advertisement for *Auntie Mame*. While the movie itself isn't speculative, that ad sure was. I'm glad you got a kick out of it, too.

Nola Frame-Gray has again requested to not receive APA-L because it's difficult to read, but I particularly enjoyed this distribution's bacover. (Not just because she referenced me alongside David Heath, though I did appreciate that.) What struck me most strongly was the interplay between the portrayal of the artist aggressively moving toward the flames, and the playful willowy shape of the fire. The simply rendered energy and motion, as well as the pleasant rendering of thin-licking flame provided an awesome counterbalance to the denser left side of the cartoon.

I don't think the fires we recently experienced were that friendly, but I liked the piece tremendously. I look forward to future bacovers!

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Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1959

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #27

Feb. 2, 2025

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State of the Disunion

This has been a challenging month—and the last two weeks have been even more challenging. Not only did we have widespread wildfires in southern California (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #146 and *Faculae & Filigree* #39)—the two closest fires are now 100 percent contained—the United States also held an inauguration for President Donald Trump, who began his second term. His administration has hit the ground running!

In the first week alone, Trump issued executive orders declaring a national energy emergency; encouraging energy exploration and production on federal lands and waters; withdrawing from the Paris climate accord; prioritizing utilization of Alaska's natural gas reserves; seeking to identify loyalists (as well as critics and skeptics) among federal employees; removing civil service protections from such employees; revoking the security details of intelligence officials who participated in investigations of Trump's past actions; eliminating federal diversity, equity and inclusion programs; mandating that only male and female be recognized as genders; seeking to rename the Gulf of Mexico and Mount Denali; pausing foreign aid to allies; withdrawing from the World Health Organization; and... and... and...

You can see a full list of the orders at <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/28/nx-s1-5276293/trump-executive-orders>. As of Jan. 30, he'd signed almost 70 executive orders, many of them addressing the federal government, immigration—seeking to end birthright citizenship and institute mass deportations—national security, climate and energy, the economy, foreign policy, education, and health. CNN has also been tracking the orders. (<https://www.cnn.com/politics/tracking-trump-executive-orders-actions-dg/index.html>) Despite claiming not to have read Project 2025, most of the executive orders align with its goals, and one of its co-authors was recorded indicating that his group had authored hundreds of executive orders. (<https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/15/politics/russ-vought-project-2025-trump-secret-recording-invs/index.html>)

Hearings are underway for many of Trump's cabinet nominees, many of whom are inexperienced in or outwardly hostile toward the agencies they've been nominated to lead. In the last few days, we've experienced at least two plane disasters. Investigations have yet to identify their causes, but the crashes occurred shortly after Trump fired the heads of the Transportation Security Administration and disbanded the Aviation Security Advisory Committee. Air traffic control workers might have been understaffed or technology might have failed; Trump initially blamed the disasters on the race and gender of the pilots, as well as DEI programs.



Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1959

Apparently, Trump also ordered airstrikes against ISIS forces in Somalia, targeting specific terrorists. Even though reportage suggests civilians weren't harmed, he also intends to close the Pentagon office focused on curbing civilian deaths during wartime.

But the big news over the weekend was that Elon Musk—who isn't even an elected official—and a handful of young employees (their status is actually unclear) gained access to sensitive Treasury data such as Social Security and Medicare customer payment systems. Musk's supporters are described by *Wired* as "trusted sidekicks to random college students and former Musk company interns." I've read that they only have read-only access, but it doesn't seem that they have appropriate security access levels for such sensitive data and information.

Security chiefs in the U.S. Agency for International Development were placed on leave after they refused to turn over classified material in restricted areas to Musk and his team—because they lacked security

clearance. Some commentators are describing what's going on as a coup. It kind of looks and feels like one. At the least, the data breach is alarming, especially if sensitive personal data ends up in the hands of businesses in which Musk is involved. (Or Russia.)

In Los Angeles, a large deportation protest blocked highways and city streets, and protesters also gathered in Indiana to protest the deportations and Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids. Protests in Berlin against the far-right party in Germany were even larger: 160,000 people.



Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1959

I try not to discuss politics in my fanzines, but this is top of mind for me this weekend, and depending on the media utilized by Americans, people might not even know all of this is happening. (If you live outside the United States, you might be better informed, to be honest.) *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*—two of our best newspapers—occasionally engage in unfortunate bothsidesing and false balance (the *Post* is, after all, owned by Jeff Bezos), Paul Krugman recently left the *Times* because of increasingly aggressive editing of his writing, the *Los*

Angeles Times was accused of altering a columnist's opinion piece to change his meaning, and if you watch Fox News, it's unlikely you'll learn the full scope of what's going on—even after it's too late.

In fact, the administration is taking strict control of official information. One agency has moved to only release information via X—which introduces an awkward dependency on (and requirement to engage with) a commercial entity—and the Pentagon recently replaced NBC, the *New York Times*, *Politico*, and National Public Radio with media outlets more friendly to Trump: OANN, the *New York Post*, the *HuffPost*, and Breitbart News. We cannot rely on them for fact-based reportage.

Also: Tariffs, which will negatively affect the United States and directly affect citizens as imported products become more expensive—and materials needed for domestically produced products also become more expensive. Canadian sports fans are booing “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Liquor store owners are removing American products from their shelves. Steel orders are being declined.

That's a lot all at once. It's uncomfortable and concerning—alarming—and even if many of the actions taken will be challenged legally, so much of it seems so blatantly illegal that I wonder why more hasn't already happened in response. So my wife and I focus on friends and family (I just called my parents), call and write our elected officials daily, donate money to pro-democracy organizations, and otherwise do what we can. I've even subscribed to *The Globe and Mail*, a Canadian newspaper, to ensure I retain access to factual news sources as the United States' journalistic landscape changes.

Most of what's going on seems in line with information offered in Nancy MacLean's *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* (Viking, 2017), which I recently read. If the history is accurate, libertarian billionaires have been working secretly to detach American capitalism from government intervention—and the majority rule of democracy—for decades. What I might have considered a conspiracy theory in the past eerily lines up with ongoing events.

I hope they don't succeed.

So this weekend has been a little overwhelming. Just like it felt weird to continue working during the wildfires, it feels weird to try to continue a “normal” life as all of this is happening. (For example, I travel for work midweek and hope my planes don't also crash.) Regardless, my wife and I went to a performance of the Benny Brydern Ensemble and the

Idiomatiques—largely Django Reinhardt-style “gypsy jazz”—at Boulevard Music last night. We went for a walk this morning. I bought donuts for breakfast. We read the newspapers, did laundry, and went to the grocery store. I watched *Goliath and the Dragon*. I cataloged records in the living room, canceled my subscription to Amazon Music Unlimited, and am now hacking out a fanzine.

These days, it feels like there’s more important things demanding my attention. Who knows what will happen before our next distribution? It felt important to share this perspective as the only American participant in eAPA.

Comments on eAPA #249

I thoroughly enjoyed Hugh A.D. Spencer’s cover to this distribution. In recent issues of *Telegraphs & Tar Pits*, I’ve been writing short “cover story” fiction inspired by APA-L covers. Because I requested an extension from Garth Spencer for my contribution today, I won’t take time to write a story in response to this cover image—but it certainly deserves one.

In *In the Meantime* Part 7, **William McCabe** detailed a leak at home that activated his smoke alarm, prompting the arrival of an electrician. Careline sounds like an interesting service, even if your smoke alarm seems to be going off when it’s not going off. “[S]omehow the ‘Careline’ system was receiving signals from a smoke detector that could not detect smoke and was not connected to any power supply,” you wrote. Ghost in the machine, indeed! I’m glad you arrived home before the firemen busted down your front door to find no alarm going off. Like the cover, there’s got to be a short story in this experience, too. Almost a disembodied electronic gaslighting.

Your remark, “When I was a lot younger, I was told that science fiction was just a matter of recycling a lot of old stories ‘in space,’” intrigued me. That might make for another interesting writing prompt or inspiration. Take a random short story, perhaps a relatively well-known one, and retool it so it takes place in space. Robert Silverberg’s *Downward to the Earth* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #142) might be an excellent example of this, locating Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* on an alien planet. As I continue to experiment with my short fiction—so far, nothing longer than 1,000 words in the interest of time—this might be interesting.

Similarly, your commentary on the widespread use of common tropes in sf media, but perhaps not literary work intrigues me. On the Web site *TV Tropes*, “science fiction” is itself a trope. (<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/ScienceFiction>) That entry also lists common subgenres, which brings to mind

my past work detailing the branches of science fiction. (ECU #1) That might be worth returning to!

Your speculation on the election of Trump resonated with my writing above. In social media, there’s often mention of people being surprised a leopard ate their face. Without going into a full exploration of why otherwise good people might have voted for Trump, I think several things came into play. People fell prey to misinformation and disinformation online. People disregarded legitimate news sources, focusing instead on questionable sources. People fell prey to untruthful political advertising, which is held to a lesser standard than general advertising. People thought that the alarmism of others was an overstatement. People thought that Trump would do things we probably shouldn’t expect him to do, and that he wouldn’t do things we should have expected him to do.

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Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1959

While I don’t entirely agree with your statement, “There seems to be a basic part of the character of the

majority to be uneducated and say all kinds of stuff without thinking,” I do think there have been conscious efforts to undermine public education, faith in the mainstream media, respect in expertise and skill, and the development of critical thinking abilities and empathy that led many voters to vote contrary to the best interests of themselves, their families, and their communities. Divisive single-issue politics also came into play.

I also think that the far right has—over decades—become extremely savvy in the use of information, media, and publishing. More than the left and more liberal forces have. For example, if you look at political books published in the United States, most are written by far-right authors. Several educational institutions and think tanks have concentrated on developing ideological operatives who then go on to work elsewhere. (MacLean’s book above touches on aspects of both of these paragraphs.)

Thank you for mentioning *The Hobbit*. Not only have I returned to watching *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* in recent weeks, I’ve been rereading J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, usually a chapter a night before going to sleep. With everything going on, I’ve found that reading comforting. I’ve read the book before, and I’m sure I’ll read it again and again.



Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1959

Given the state of my mind this weekend, I might not be prepared to read **Henry Grynnsen**’s *Wild Ideas* #55 with adequate concentration, but let’s see. My suspicions were correct. I am interested in “how human society could possibly develop in the distant future,” but I fear I’m too focused on the current swath of catastrophes—and potential catastrophes. I shall return to this issue!

In *Intermission* #150—congratulations on reaching the milestone!—**Ahrvid Engholm** offered his annual Christmas fiction, a short story featuring a thinly veiled Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump. I shall have to return to this piece in the future, too. Actually, that you used ChatGPT to write it diminishes my interest somewhat. So much to read, so little time! But we’ll see. I could probably use a little disrespectful levity.

I appreciated your memorial for Joachim Larsson,

as well as the information about his brother Stieg. The booklet *In Case of Crisis or War* resonated with me. I’ll be sure to read the English edition. It might be applicable here! In recent days, I’ve also acquired a useful pamphlet titled *Don’t Just Do Nothing to Counter Fascism*. (<https://itsgoingdown.org/dont-just-do-nothing-20-things-you-can-do-to-counter-fascism>) That “[a] copy [of *In Case of Crisis or War*] has been distributed to every household” did my heart good. In 2021, Trump signed an executive order to investigate the actions of Antifa activists, stop “members” from entering the United States, and consider classifying it as a terrorist organization.

Weird thing is, antifa isn’t an organization. It’s solely anti-fascist sentiment. Some people occasionally confuse black bloc anarchist activism—which is admittedly violent and confrontational—with antifa activism, but I hope that opposition to fascism doesn’t become illegal.

History Corner remains a delight. I enjoyed your coverage of time capsules, which I also find interesting, and I was interested in the efforts to remove a statue of H.G. Wells. Even though I disagree with the doublespeak appropriation of “woke” as a term (Being aware of social and political issues affecting people of all sorts is a good thing!), I did chuckle at the gentle irony that this is occurring in Woking. A critical reading of Wells’s writing is well worth pursuing.

And **Garth Spencer**’s *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #229 updated eAPAns on the cessation of the Canadian Unity Fan Fund. Some of this issue reminded me of *The Obdurate Eye* #47, to which I’ve already responded with a letter of comment. Your remarks to Henry Grynnsen about caffeine intake remind me that I’ve not been very good about limiting my coffee drinking. If anything, I’ve been drinking more over the last month.

“[C]ountries get the governments they deserve.” Ouch. As your neighbor to the south, I apologize for our recent tariff activity. Your country’s response is entirely reasonable and appreciated. We’ll see whether focusing on imports from red states—rather than the country as a whole—makes a difference. I do think that economic impact at the citizen level and negative impact on business will help increase awareness to some extent. If the billionaire class, our new oligarchs, realize that their business activities are suffering, perhaps they’ll adjust their behavior. They might be trying to detach capitalism from governmental intervention domestically, but if that doesn’t occur globally, it might not accomplish what they’d like.

Your mention of *Coast to Coast AM* as similar to Fox News intrigued me. I’m aware of the radio

program's focus on kook science but wasn't aware it was politically aligned with the right—though I probably could have assumed that. Next weekend in Los Angeles, the Conscious Life Expo (<https://consciouslifeexpo.com>) will occur. It's not an sf con, per se, but I'll be attending, largely to explore their sessions on UFOs and UAPs, alien life forms, and other kook science adjacent to our genres. It's like *Fate*, *Fortean Times*, and *Sedona Journal of Emergence* took over a hotel.

"Disinformation rules us, I guess," you wrote. As much fun as I expect the Expo to be, I do worry that many of the participants might think that it's all true. Stuff can be fun to think and speculate about—remote viewing, for example—but some of what's on the schedule strikes me as hooley. Hooley can also be fun, if one recognizes it as hooley.

The following weekend is Gallifrey One, the local *Doctor Who* convention. I'll participate in and volunteer for that, as well. That, at least, is safely and entirely recognized as entertaining fiction.



Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1959

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, PayPal to: stevekeeter@gmail.com) The Official Newsletter of the United Fan-

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This humorous sf adventure comic by the talented John Muller gives us the tale of a strange rabbit-like alien creature pursued by a heavily armed warrior woman. And just when she thinks she has the beast trapped ... well, you'll have to read it to find out! Featuring John's always excellent artwork and storytelling.



THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY! #12 (\$10 PayPal to jecarrales@yahoo.com , or email marisolinskikitty@gmail.com, or contact Joe Ely Carrales III via FB Messenger) Niko and Mari become involved in a breathtaking political adventure

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