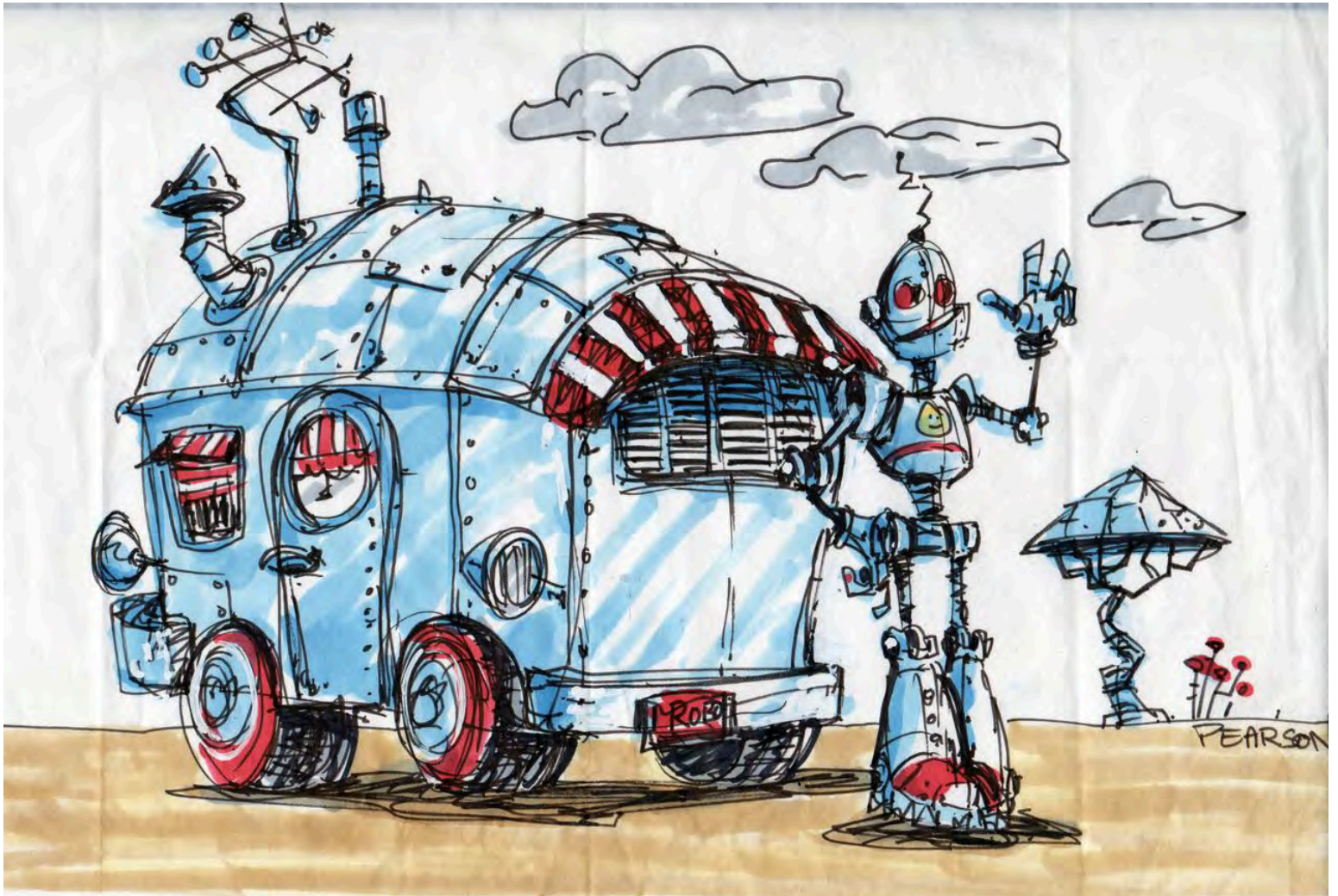


The Stf Amateur 23



The Stf Amateur 23

August 2025

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You can learn more about cover artist Joe Pearson at <http://www.epochinkanimation.com>. He drew the cover illustration “on a thin paper table napkin in a South Vegas diner.”

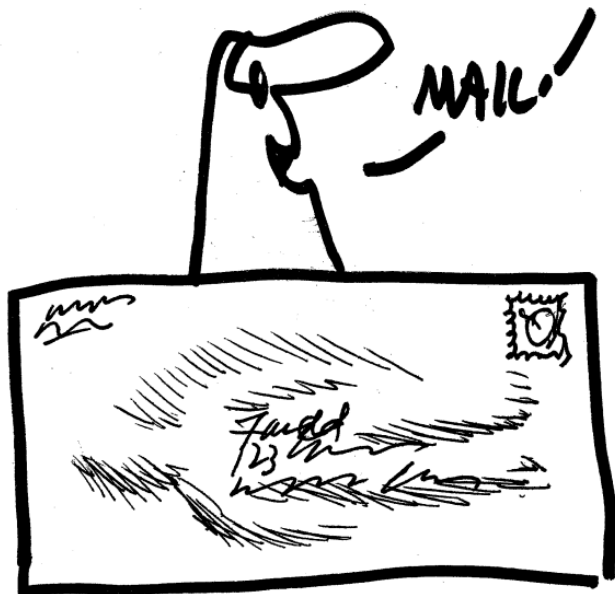
The Stf Amateur is a bundlezine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; +1 718 755-9840 mobile; +1 323 916-0367 fax. It is prepared for members of the United Fanzine Organization and select others, and is available via *eFanzines* (<https://efanzines.com>) 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 Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

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* *Emulators & Engines*

** *Engines & Emulators*



—William Rotsler

Charles Lee Jackson III

Thank you for the latest issue of *The Stf Amateur*. As I've left APA-L, it's nice to see peeks of what's been going on, as well as your assorted reviews and commentary.

But one thing particularly amused me: The newspaper squib for *The Emperor and the Golem*, since it's highly suggestive of a story in my book *The Emperor on the Trail of Doom*, namely "The Emperor in the Black Forest," in which the Emperor and his companion encounter an actual Golem unleashed by a Rabbi who's since been injured and is no longer in control of the creature. I shall have to investigate the film.

[And I shall have to investigate *The Emperor on the Trail of Doom* before watching the 1952 comedic fantasy myself! *JustWatch* indicates that it's streaming via Amazon Video and Prime Video.—HR]

William Breiding

Great cover as always. There should be a special award for consistent high quality covers!

[Thank you very much. Isn't John Muller's artwork absolutely wonderful?—HR]

I just had a few comments originating from the locs:

You made me laugh out loud when you said that you'd like to "at least break even" on printed copies. Since when did a fan publisher break even? Fan publishing, like any hobby, is a money pit. When a fan

publisher "at least breaks even," fanzine fandom calls them semi-pro. Somehow I don't think that's your object! ...

[That's a fair point. I meant that in the context of selling physical copies of the fanzine. If I'm going to print on demand to satisfy what little mail order interest *The Stf Amateur* arouses, I want to price each issue to cover the cost of printing, materials, and postage. The copies I used to print and mail for the United Fanzine Organization were exchange copies sent to receive other member materials so I didn't worry about breaking even. (Right now, I'm not holding up my end of that exchange, so I need to figure that out.) And the PDF version of my fanzines is free. Before I began publishing PDF fanzines, I worried about printing and mailing costs less. Because I offer a free option, I don't want to lose money on another option that's a hassle.—HR]

Back in the very early aughts, an ex of mine in Tucson suggested we take a road trip over to LA and check out the Getty Museum. We did so. While there, we had an entirely romantic interlude, staying in a cool vintage hotel in North Hollywood and driving around seeing the sights, as well as the museum (we both concluded that the landscaped acreage around the museum was more interesting than the museum itself). Back in the early 1990s, I had fallen in love with LA when I was seeing a woman who lived in Culver City. Ten years later in the aughts I came up with an idea to hike LA. Take a daypack with food and water and hike. At night I would stay at motels. When we got back to Tucson I got maps and started figuring out routes throughout the larger LA area to do urban hiking. It never actually happened. But it would have been a cool thing to do. At the time, I was fairly well gafiated. So it never occurred to me that I probably could have done all that urban hiking and stayed with some of the LA fans, many who were still alive then and many who are now dead, alas.

[That's a great idea. It reminds me of the inn-to-inn walking tours in England and similar experiences—only in an urban area.—HR]

Fireflies! I so miss fireflies! That may be one of things that I miss most about living in the southwest. Can you imagine if fireflies (I grew up calling them lightning bugs in West Virginia) existed in a desert landscape? That would be magic itself.

[You know, I grew up calling them lightning bugs, too. I wonder when I started calling them fireflies! While

we're on the topic, Owl City's song "Fireflies" is wonderful.—HR]

Hope all goes well in Wisconsin... ! Regards to Caitlin.

[We've extended our stay at the Infernal Wilson, our furnished apartment, to the end of August, when we'll move to a nearby Airbnb for the month of September. We're still waiting for our visa approvals.—HR]

Lloyd Penney

I am taking bits of time as they present itself to respond to *The Stf Amateur* #22. Quite warm here, so I might as well enjoy the AC, and do some catching up.

Locol... We've had to disappoint some old friends who have asked us to help them out with LAcon V, thanks to ICE. They don't seem picky as to who they kidnap off the street, and the current count of Canadians who have been kidnapped by ICE stands at 60. We have no desire to be incognito somewhere, anywhere between El Paso and El Salvador. We would really like to go to LA for another Worldcon, but we don't need ICE in our lives. We will not present ourselves as a target.

[Your concerns are valid!—HR]

Any contacts with university zine collections, I would be very happy to receive. Looks like you've given some to me in the zine itself! Many thanks. Madison? Hanging with Andy Hooper and gang? I just got another manuscript for an upcoming *Amazing Selects* novel, and I have gotten started on it. I knew of the comic book letterhack T.M. Maple, but Jim Burke? I never did meet him.

[Andy Hooper lives in Seattle but does have ties to the Madison area, it is true. I hang out with him in the Spectator Amateur Press Society, however. I've been in touch with Jae Leslie and Hank Luttrell, who recently celebrated a birthday, but I haven't hung out with any local fen yet. In mid-August, I'll go to EgoCon (<https://sites.google.com/site/egoconevent>), a one-day *Doctor Who* con, in Plover, Wis. I might meet members of the North Eastern Wisconsin Friends of the Doctor there.—HR]

The OTR website is great fun, and I wish I had more time to sample some of the radio reruns I have for anyone interested. The CBC has its own television streaming website, Gem, in case there are CBC shows you might like to see (not available to American addresses, I think). I'd like to talk to them about making many of their radio shows as available as their

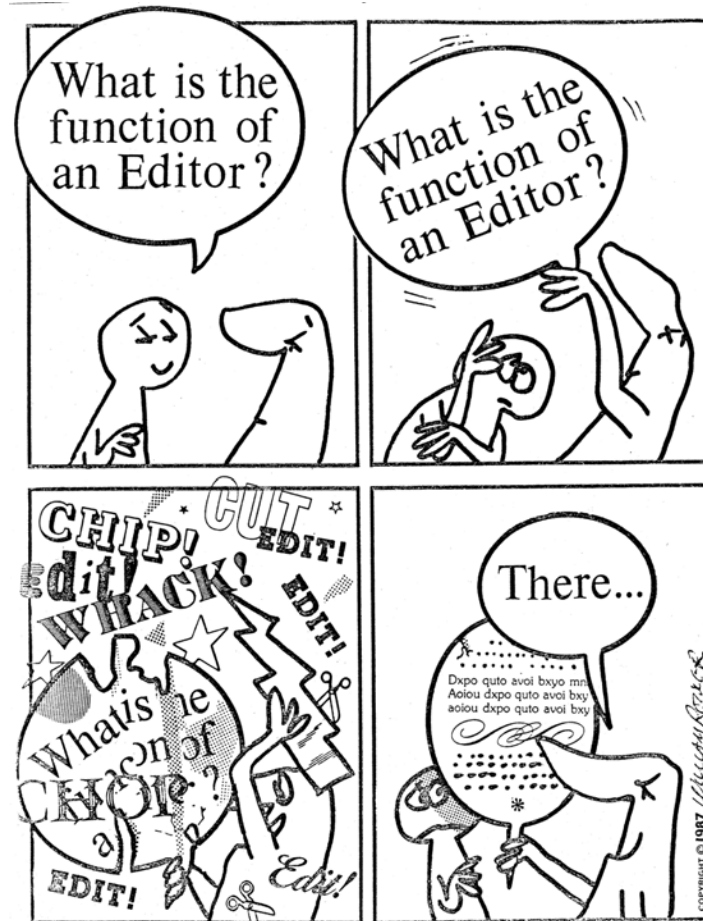
television shows. CBC has been broadcasting on radio since 1936.

[Say, have you seen *Space Command*? Ahrvid Engholm recently wrote about the 1950s Canadian TV show in *Intermission*.—HR]

I went through all of your apazines, looking for a comment hook or two. I failed miserably. It's not you, it's a tired me. Fridays are when we usually head out to do banking, shopping, and groceries, so we are usually beat when we get home. So, all I can say is I will try again with the next issue, which, I will assume, is on the verge of being released. We'll see you then!

We also heard from: Álvaro Holstein and Perry Middlemiss

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 #169

July 10, 2025

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; 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 Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Trip Report: California to Wisconsin

Our last day driving from Culver City, Calif., to Madison, Wis., was Saturday, June 7. It was a shorter driving day—almost 200 miles and just more than three hours. My wife didn't remember driving across the Mississippi River before—she's certainly flown over—so our crossing near Dubuque, Iowa, was an exciting moment. "The Mississippi!" we cried. It felt good to return to Wisconsin; the landscape and scenery of my childhood is familiar and comforting, and entering the state felt like coming home.

We saw exit signs for the House on the Rock (<https://www.thehouseontherock.com>) in Spring Green, also home to Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin (<https://www.taliesinpreservation.org>). We stopped for gas and a bio break in Mineral Point, encountering a closed Clark station before finding a Casey's on the far side of town.

There, we had a bit of excitement with Spooner, our cat. During the road trip, we'd been taking him outside with us in his travel carrier during some of our rest stops. He'd wear his harness in the carrier, and we'd affix a leash so he could get out of the carrier—if he wanted to—and walk around a little bit. Usually, he'd stand up and look around before settling back in, but sometimes he'd step out to explore a little before returning to the carrier to let us know he was done and ready to go.

When I returned from going inside the gas station, I walked over to where Caitlin was with Spooner. When he saw me, he trotted right up to me in his harness and on his leash, Caitlin following. I gave him some scratches, and then he returned to explore mode. We were over by a fenced-in enclosure, and Caitlin let him go between a gap in the fence. Basically, it was a gated fence around some kind of HVAC unit or other machinery. He'd gone inside, and we couldn't open the gate to retrieve him—it was padlocked. So we had to wait for him to return to us or try to gently guide him back to the gap in the fence. If we pulled too hard on the leash, he might slip out of his harness, so it was touch and go. Eventually, he returned closed enough

to the gap that we could reach him with our hands. We won't do that again!

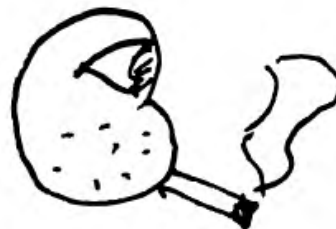
We'd arranged to check in earlier than expected, so when we arrived in Madison, we were able to go straight to the furnished apartment, check in, unload, and get settled before heading out again. To address some visa requirements, we had to get new sets of fingerprints taken for a new FBI background check and criminal record. That task took us to a UPS Store on the west side of town—in a shopping center that also included a used book store and roleplaying game shop.

I'd never been to the Frugal Muse (<https://frugal-muse.com>) before and enjoyed browsing their science fiction section. Bypassing back issues of underground comic books such as *Weirdo* and *Zap Comix* (T&T #167), I picked up several paperbacks, including novels by Lin Carter and Gordon Eklund, and a two-novel reprint of *The Spider* published by Carroll & Graf. So far, I've read half of the Spider book—one of the two novels.

We also stopped by Pegasus Games (<https://pegasusgames.com>) to make the rounds and pick up a set of polyhedral dice. (*Engines & Emulators* #1) Near the entrance, they offered a vintage copy of the *Middle- Earth Role Playing* box set produced by Iron Crown, priced at \$125, in a display case. That was neat to see.

Returning home, we ventured out again to walk the length of State Street between the University of Wisconsin–Madison and Wisconsin State Capitol. We ate dinner at 107 State (<https://107state.com>), an Italian restaurant that offers decent pasta. Walking home again, we continued unpacking and getting organized, spending our first night in the furnished apartment.

Having arrived in Madison, Wis., after a week on the road, thus ends this trip report.



—M. Elias Hiebert

A Vacation from Science Fiction

By Cy Chauvin

It's summer, and time to take a vacation from whatever it is you normally do—and perhaps even from what you normally like to read. Actually, I find that I have to take a vacation from science fiction more regularly than that, just as perhaps I have to take a vacation from reality more often than most.

Over the years, I've found that when I vacation from science fiction, I like to read books by British women. I suppose it's because they tend to write carefully observed stories about everyday life, and yet—because they are set in Britain—there is a quirky, sometimes eccentric and unusual quality to what is described and happening. Not quite my reality, perhaps. And thus are these three:

The Bookbinder by Pip Williams (2023)

The Girls of Slender Means by Muriel Spark (1963)

The Millstone by Margaret Drabble (1965)

I am attracted to books about books; I suspect a lot of readers are. If I spot “book” or “bookstore” in a title, I will look at that book first. What an incestuous cycle! Can a book be about itself? It leads you to hope for too much. My previous attempt in this genre was *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks, but I quickly determined that it was going in a painful and quite depressing direction, so I abandoned it.

Bruce Gillespie recommended *The Bookbinder* in *SF Commentary*; he is a fellow addict. *The Bookbinder* is a historical novel set in Oxford during World War I. The main character, Peggy Jones, is 19 when the novel starts and has a twin sister named Maude. Both work in the production department at the Oxford University Press, not actually binding books, but gathering and folding the paper—the signatures—that make up a book. Women did that work at OUP; there was a strict gender separation between the workers. There are a lot of details about the book production process, but it is actually a little sketchy on actual book binding. (Disappointing, but not unexpected; it would hold up the story. I've always wanted to learn to bind books, but a novel is not the proper place for that.)

Women are given more opportunity as the men at the press volunteer or are conscripted for the war. It also opens up opportunities for the lower classes. Gradually, you come to realize that that is really what the novel is about, as well as the general waste and horror of war.

Maude, Peggy's twin sister, is mentally impaired.

Rather than initiate original conversation, she repeats very apt sentences that others have spoken to her. Naturally, she has the funniest and most original lines.

The novel is very readable and enjoyable, although it's longer than it ought to be (like most best sellers today). But I can't entirely believe in this cast of characters. I mean: two young, lower-class women living alone in a canal boat on the river? A boat filled with books and discarded book sections from OUP—and women who are “poor” but don't seem to really suffer from it? Of course, they think like women do in 2023. You just have to suspend your disbelief, as though it were science fiction rather than “historical fiction.”

The Bookbinder suffers, too, from the fact that I read *The Girls of Slender Means* just before it. *The Girls of Slender Means* is set in the short time period right after World War II, between Victory in Europe Day and Victory over Japan Day. The novel focuses on a group of young women who live in a hostel (The May of Teck Club) in London. Three have lived there since shortly after World War I and are older, but most are young women just making their way in the world. It is a crazy, funny novel that also manages to be very beautiful.

England has won the war, but rationing is still in effect—and would remain so until after 1950. The women swap clothing ration coupons and even share a beautiful party dress. One woman, Joanna, teaches poise and elocution to others. Frequently, she recites poetry in perfect diction, which her students are supposed to copy:

...Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove:

“All her ideas of honour and love came from the poets,” writes the author.

Jane Wright, another woman at the hostel, has an actual job at a third-rate publisher. One of her tasks is to talk to the prospective authors and secretly find out what portions of the book they have submitted that they most love. That way, the publisher can threaten to cut that part of the book and get it at a lower price! Jane is fat and in despair about finding a boyfriend. She also secretly writes letters to famous authors in hopes of getting a reply—and sells the autographed letters to a slimy co-conspirator. She also despairs of her weight because she cannot climb through the second story bathroom window onto the roof to sunbathe. Only the most slender women in the hostel are able to do so. (In fact, the title, *The Girls of Slender Means*, doesn't only refer to the characters'

The serious part of the novel arrives when she has the baby and realizes her emotional attachment to it.

In our day, when violence, pain, and horror are so routinely used to propel a novel, this story about an unlikely mother is wonderful. I'm sure I'll read it again.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Web of the City by Harlan Ellison (Hard Case Crime, 2013)

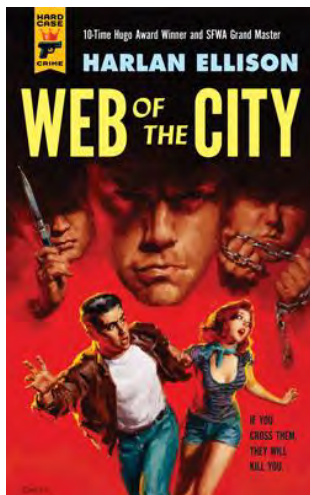
Harlan Ellison's first novel was written in 1956-1957 while the author was undergoing Ranger basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia. At night, he would sit on the toilet, prop an Olympia typewriter on a board across his knees, and write.

Lion Books bought the novel but went out of business. Pyramid Books picked up the manuscript and published it in 1958—under the title *Rumble*. Ellison's introduction to this reprint, "Unnecessary Words," challenges "the theory that no one should ever read a writer's first novel." Despite its "amateurish and inept" qualities, Ellison remained fond of the novel and supported its return to print.

The book is not science fiction, though portions of the book suggest the knife-edge sharpness and street-savvy tautness we could come to expect from the writer's crisp prose. *Web of the City* is a JD (juvenile delinquency) novel extraordinaire, a 1950s exploitation movie in print, and an indication of the gutter punk realities supporting more popular presentations such as *West Side Story*. In Ellison's first novel, the street gang members might not sing, but they certainly bleed. (In *West Side Story*, to be fair, they do both.)

A one-time gang leader, inspired by the support of a teacher, seeks to leave the gang life. Extricating himself from the gang, his friends, and his girlfriend is quite challenging. "It ain't like being a member of Kiwanis or the P.T.A.," Ellison writes. "It ain't like nothin' else in the world."

There are fisticuffs at school, soda shop and pool hall hangouts, knife fights, rumbles, illicit drugs, a rape, and the ever-present threat and reality of death. In the end, the novel becomes a bit of a mystery rather than a JD thriller. The protagonist's sister is raped and killed, and he sets out to identify her murderer in order to exact revenge. The way he goes about that, drawing on his former friendships and street smarts proves quite interesting, and the end result—which includes a collision between the upper and lower classes—offers a compelling surprise.



The novel is also a love letter to the urban areas and city settings that inform such stories:

The city lay cool and dim beneath a vaulting sky of high-scudding gray clouds. A gray shroud that covered the corpses of buildings, stiff in brick-and-steel rigor mortis, pale in their eternity of sooty death.

The heat of the afternoon had slowly passed away, the trembling waves of warmth disappearing like wraiths to be replaced by mugginess and unrest; the sweat had gone back into the pores, the cats back into the alleys, the wineheads back into the bars, the amateurs back to their pads.

It also considers how inextricably tied to our home towns, neighborhoods, and city streets we and our lives might be:

The street echoed back his hollowly beating footsteps, as he walked the pavement, seeing it all clearly, in retrospect. He had come from these streets, and he would someday go back to these streets, for he was umbilically joined to them and the rottenness they spawned. There was no escaping it, no getting away from it. But somehow there must be a way of fending it off for a short time.

It's a stark yet romanticized portrayal of inner cities and youthful abandon, but it resonates, almost offering the city itself as another character. At the end of the book, the novel's initial short story form is also reprinted. "Gutter Gang" was originally published in the September 1957 issue of *Guilty Detective Story Magazine*.

If you like Ellison, *Web of the City* is worth reading. It's better than many first novels, and I recommend it—not solely for completists.

Comments on APA-L

Barbara Gratz Harmon emailed me APA-L #3121 early this week, but just returning from a business trip to Chicago as I am, I haven't had time to read it yet—so I cannot comment. I shall do so in the future!

I did notice, however, that that distribution includes T&T #166-168, so I think we're caught up on the material I've sent our illustrious OC over the last few weeks. I look forward to receiving #3121 in the mail!

Incidentally, I emailed Harmon today to inquire whether we've been mailing Don Fitch copies of APA-L. Fitch, Ed Buchman, and Roger Hill have traditionally received mailed copies of APA-L even though they don't participate actively.

Faculae & Filigree #44

July 11, 2025

Faculae & Filigree is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; 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 Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Trip Report: Chicago

In early July, I went to Chicago for my first business trip since relocating to Madison. Leaving Monday, July 7, after Independence Day and my father's birthday—and following Caitlin's return from visiting her family in Michigan—I joined my team for a two-day work session at my employer's Chicago office. I returned Thursday, July 10.

While in Chicago, I spent most of my time in the West Loop, a former industrial zone and meatpacking district similar to that in New York City south of Chelsea. In fact, my employer's Chicago office is located in a former cold storage facility that has been renovated as office space. That history seemed appropriate because the temperature in the office was quite chilly. The neighborhood has changed quite a bit in the last decade-plus and is now home to a number of restaurants, boutique hotels, and retail shops.

In addition to my work responsibilities and tasks in Chicago, I was able to see several friends during my time in the city. Monday night, I met a couple of friends from college for a concert at Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park: Fred Wesley and the New JBs. Wesley, a trombonist, performed with James Brown. Now 82—Wesley's birthday was July 4!—he sat for most of the performance, but the music, a mix of blues, funk, and soul, was lively and rollicking. The bassist and tenor saxophonist were particularly excellent.

Tuesday night, I met two more friends from college for dinner. They live near the Skokie-Evanston border, north of Chicago, so I met them halfway, at a vegan restaurant called Kale My Name in the Irving Park neighborhood. During the drive to the restaurant, the Lyft passed four blocks north of where I used to live in Chicago, near Irving Park Road and Ashland Avenue in the Lake View neighborhood. After dinner, it started pouring rain—all of a sudden without any buildup—and I was glad that I had taken the hotel room umbrella with me.

Caitlin and I will meet those friends halfway again in the future, exploring points that are roughly

equidistant from Madison and Chicago. Already, we're talking about Illinois Beach State Park and the Bristol Renaissance Faire in Kenosha, Wis. I'm particularly enthusiastic about the second idea because we were unable to go to the Original Renaissance Pleasure Faire in Irwindale, Calif., while preparing to sell our house and move. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #164) The Bristol Renaissance Faire started July 5 and runs through Sept. 1, while the Renaissance Pleasure Faire ended a couple of months ago. I'm looking forward to it!

And Wednesday evening, I met fellow fan, faned, and apahack Nigel Rowe for dinner. Despite our surnames' similarity, we hadn't met previously, but we're both ANZAPA participants. We also realized that we might have both participated in the Underground Press Conference at DePaul University in 1995—30 years ago. He might be the only faned in Chicago! I enjoyed sharing time and table with Nigel and look forward to seeing him again in the future.

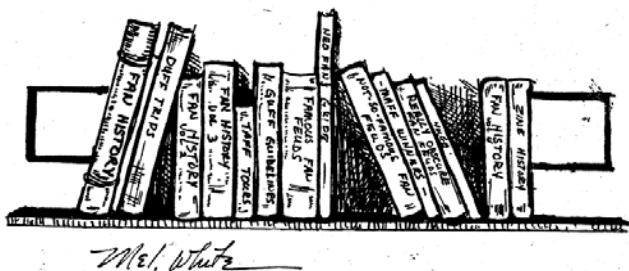


Photo courtesy of Nigel Rowe

Wednesday afternoon, before meeting up with Nigel, I also had a chance to check out a couple of bookstores. While I didn't prioritize visiting Open Books—where Nigel's wife volunteers, coincidentally—I made my way to Kavi Gupta Editions, which concentrates on art publications, and Madison Street Books, an independent general-interest bookstore. (I'd also picked up several books from the gift shop at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago the day before.)

Perhaps following Cy Chauvin's advice to take an occasional "vacation from science fiction" (*T&T* #169), I haven't been reading much science fiction or fantasy in the last few weeks, concentrating instead on books such as Olivia Laing's nonfiction *The Lonely City*—one of my first library books since moving—Fiona Anderson's *Cruising the Dead River*, which

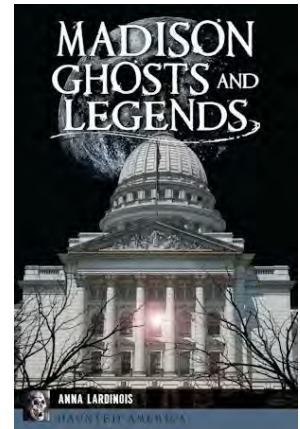
This section previously appeared in slightly different form in Wahflestomper #1.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Madison Ghosts and Legends by Anna Lardinois
(Haunted America, 2022)

Haunted America (<https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/collections/haunted-america>) is a division of the History Press (<https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/collections/the-history-press>) that concentrates on books about local and regional ghosts, hauntings, and other mysterious legends and lore. This and a similar title were among the first books I purchased since arriving in Madison— at a W



Like most books of its sort, it's equally fascinating and inspiring, while slightly disappointing and frustrating. I find such books wonderful, an intriguing combination of local history, the outre, and what might be total, utter bosh and hooey. My wife, who's also been reading the book, characterized it thusly, paraphrased. "People have experienced inexplicable events at a given location. Something happened sometime there or nearby. Are the two connected? Who knows!" Regardless, the book offers a walking tour itinerary of sorts that deserves further exploration. And any book that gets a reader out and about is a good book indeed.

In fact, the author, Lardinois, offers haunted historical walking tours—in Milwaukee—through Gothic Milwaukee. (<https://www.instagram.com/gothicmilwaukee>) Closer to our new home, Madison Ghosts (<https://usghostadventures.com/madison-ghost-tour>) offers local tours. Their base is located near our furnished apartment, in one of the sites featured in the book.

The text is organized geographically and thematically. Chapters concentrate on locations related to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, area cemeteries, local bars and taverns, the four lakes, and other nearby communities. The preface refers to other sources and scholars of interest, including Robert E. Gard, Dr. Charles E. Brown, and Beth Scott and Michael Norman’s book *Haunted Wisconsin*.

Despite the slightly breathless tone of much of the text, the book does well to identify historical events and figures worth learning more about, as well as showcasing what one might consider the highlights of Antiquarian Madison. Founded in 1836—its university founded in 1848—Madison isn't that old a

city, but there are still 19th century remnants that can be identified and explored.

Highlights include “[t]ales of the specter of a mad professor who conducted ghastly experiments in an isolated attic lab” in the university’s Science Hall, the “phantom axe man” of Noe Woods, Camp Randall Stadium’s history as the site of a Civil War prisoner of war camp, Forest Hill Cemetery’s prior use as a Native American burial ground, the abduction and death of Little Annie, Chicago mobsters’ role in Wonder Bar, the witches of Picnic Point, a college for spiritualism in nearby Whitewater, and a spiritualist camp in Wonewoc.

This is a book to highlight and hold on to. It’ll be a useful tool along with other local guidebooks, walking tours, and area hikes. It’ll also be the inspiration for several day trips.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews

The Sword and the Dragon

Courtesy of Eternal Family (*Snow Poster Township* #21), I watched *Ilya Muromets* (aka *The Sword and the Dragon*) in late June. The 1956 Soviet fantasy film directed by Aleksandr Ptushko draws on Russian oral epic poems about the knight Ilya Muromets. There are several stunning visuals throughout the movie, which largely focuses on the emergence of Muromets as a hero and the tasks he undertakes on behalf of Mother Russia.

In the very beginning of the film, set in medieval Russia, the elderly bogatyr—heroes similar to the Knights of the Round Table—Svyatogor bequeaths his magical sword to pilgrims before he dies, turning into a mountain. (Svyatogor is an immense giant, but not all bogatyr are.) The sword finds its way to Muromets, initially a passive, sedentary layabout—apparently paralyzed—who can’t be bothered to protect his village from Tugar invaders.

Once roused, however, he acquires a rapidly maturing steed, and tracks down and challenges the delightfully deformed Nightingale the Robber, who lurks in a loathsome woodland. The scene in which the Nightingale is first seen crouching on a tree branch is one to remember. (Also look for the wind-blown trees!) An advisor to the prince perceives Muromets as a threat, so he is imprisoned. While he is jailed, his son is raised by the leader of the terrorist Tugars, which reminded me of King Arthur’s son Mordred.

At the end of the movie, during a great battle against the Tugars, their tsar unleashes a fire-breathing dragon, Zmey Gorynych—which is also visually wonderful despite its somewhat clumsy practical effects. The film’s narrative combines regional folklore, heroic fantasy, and Nikita Khrushchev-era romanticization of the Soviet motherland.

Intriguing as a movie, the movie also serves an entrypoint to bylina, or Russian oral epic poems, as well as Slavic mythology. That might make for interesting reading along with the Prose Edda.

Comments on LASFAPA

I haven’t yet received LASFAPA #581, which David Schlosser mailed to my new address. Either it hasn’t arrived yet, or I’ve misplaced it, which is less likely. (We don’t have a lot in our furnished apartment, and I looked aggressively.) My apologies for excluding comments this as a result.

However, I have been able to return to applying optical character recognition to the archives in recent weeks. I am now midway through 1998 and shall continue plugging along.



Snow Poster Township #22

July 15, 2025

Snow Poster Township is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; 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 Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Con Report: POPX Madison

Was this a convention? An event? I'm not sure. I haven't ever really understood the appeal or popularity of Funko Pops, the now almost-ubiquitous pop culture collectibles inspired by Japanese and other vinyl figures such as those sold by Giant Robot. (<https://www.giantrobot.com>) Funko launched in 1998 to produce low-tech nostalgia-inspired toys. Today, Funko maintains more than 1,000 licenses, producing a wide range of figures including chase variants, retail exclusives, Mystery Minis, and multiple lines—as well as NFTs. Last year, there were more than 15,000 different Pops available. One estimate indicates that more than 150 million figures have been produced.

POPX Madison (<https://popxusa.com>), then, was a local Funko Pop show, held in late June. I went on a Saturday while my wife was out of town to one of the smaller exhibition halls next to the Alliant Energy Center to see what all the fuss was about. Imagine a convention hucksters room in which every vendor sells only Funko Pops. That's pretty much what it was.

There was a token nod to additional activities in the form of a celebrity row featuring a handful of anime, cartoon, and video game voice actors. People on hand

included Michelle Rojas (*Tokyo Ghoul* and *Assassination Classroom*), David Vincent (*Bleach* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*), Greg Dulcie (*Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* and *One Piece*), Chuck Huber (*Soul Eater* and *Ace Attorney*), and David Sobolov, whose voice work resume is extensive, including movies and television. There were no lines, and they didn't seem that busy. I wasn't enthusiastically familiar with any of their work, however, so I didn't offer any greetings of my own.




After making my way up and down the aisles and checking out celebrity row, I stopped to talk to a friendly vendor, who'd already sold enough Pops to cover the cost of his booth and hotel room. We talked a little bit about the evolution of vinyl figures over time—from small-batch art objects meant to be owned and displayed over time to mass-produced items that people sell and trade as their tastes and favorites change—how people collect and display their Pops (I was surprised that people tend to keep them in their boxes in order to resell them in the future.), and other aspects of the hobby.



Even though we now own two Pops, each resting in their box on a nightstand in the bedroom of our furnished apartment, I still don't understand the appeal. If we were living in a more long-term situation, I'd be tempted to take them out of their boxes to display them on a bookshelf. Without their packaging, they don't take up much room and might make fun decorations. In the box, they can't breathe!



Fireheart Tiger by Aliette de Bodard (Tor, 2021)



ALIETTE DE BODARD

FIREHEART
TIGER

*"A beautifully written and deeply imagined story
about reclaiming yourself." —KATE ELLIOTT*

sapphic romance aspect. While that came as a gentle surprise, the novella's status as a borderline romantasy featuring women lovers was neither intrusive nor distracting. In fact, the genders of the characters, regardless of their pronouns, almost didn't matter. That's not actually true; the story works better because of the number of women in it.

Neighboring states jockey for position in trade and military relations. A young woman returning to her mother's court isn't sure whether she caused a disastrous fire while visiting another land. Her one-time lover, a young soldier destined to be queen of her people, arrives with an envoy intending to negotiate the acquisition of arms and defensible land. There's the risk of being outed prematurely, a marriage proposal, diplomatic correspondence—and a fire elemental.

SPT 22-2

and between lovers. It's also a coming-of-age tale that focuses on the development of the protagonist's skills of persuasion and proving one's self to a demanding parent.

The fire elemental character and setting is intriguing enough that I hope there's a follow-up to this book. Parts reminded me of Robin Hobb's *Ship of Magic* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #154), particularly its focus on trade, negotiation, contracts, and the ties between families. Now that I think about it, the fire elemental also reminded me of the liveships in Hobb's novels—their naivete and relative innocence.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews

Sex Kittens Go to College

In late June on the Facebook, artist Mitch O'Connell posted "I was this many years old when I realized Vampira was in *Sex Kittens Go to College*." Though we're not the same age, I was that many years old, too! Given how little footage remains from KABC-TV's 1954 *The Vampira Show*, we're mostly left with stills featuring Vampira and *Plan 9 From Outer Space*—though rumors remain of surviving kinescopes. So a friend and I hastened to check out the campy comedy flick. After all: Vampira!

Starring Mamie Van Doren, Tuesday Weld, and

Mijanou Bardot, the movie features Maila Nurmi—credited as Vampira—in the role of Etta Toodie, an initially mousy lab assistant. Vampira's presence bookends the flick, and she doesn't get a heck of a lot of screen time even though she's credited in the opening titles.

Vampira's presence in the movie is, in fact, just a tease—similar to the rest of the movie. It struck me that this supposed sex comedy was neither erotic nor funny. Van Doren is cast as an erotic dancer-turned-professor and primarily serves as the romantic interest for a male colleague (the bad girl gone good), Bardot's performance indicates that not every member of her family—she's Brigitte Bardot's sister—can act sensually convincingly, and Weld (*The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*) delivers most promisingly, perhaps, on the title of the movie.

The object of affection for Weld's character provides much of the movie's humor. Norman Grabowski's character, Woo Woo Grabowski, is a silly, thick-headed foil to the ostensible sex kittens. He's pretty dim, and women make him swoon often. In addition to his acting career, Grabowski was also a car buff whose death earned an obituary in *Hot Rod* magazine. (<https://www.hotrod.com/news/norm-grabowski-the-entertainer>)

In addition to an increasingly bug-eyed professor—humor by way of mugging for the camera—the movie also includes a science fictional aspect. Elektro, Westinghouse's Mechanical Man from the 1939 New York World's Fair, stands in as Sam Thinko, a robot mistaken for a small-time hood by a couple of vengeful crooks newly arrived in town. In fact, it is the robot who draws the crooks' attention to the college; its horse race betting—enacted by Grabowski while sleepwalking!—is often quite successful.

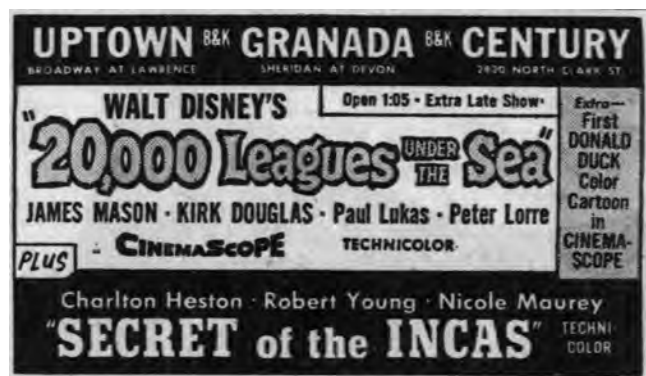
If you watch the "extended international version" of the movie on YouTube, the promise of the movie's title bears some fruit. The movie gets pretty international in the European print, which includes an often expurgated nine-minute dream sequence in which striptease dancers perform for the stoic Thinko.

Otherwise, the movie's cast is surprisingly star studded. Jackie Coogan and John Carradine perform roles, and Charles Chaplin Jr. and Harold Lloyd Jr. appear as a fire chief and policeman, respectively. Even Conway Twitty participates, cast as a musician. (Fancy that!) Van Doren performs "Sex Pots Go to College" and "Baby" in the movie, and Twitty provides "Mamie's Song."

While watching the opening titles, if you wonder why the song is called "Sex Pots Go to College," it's because the flick fell under multiple titles during production. Initially titled *Sex Pots Go to College*, it

was briefly known as *Teacher Versus Sexpot* before its final title of *Sex Kittens Go to College* (aka *The Beauty and the Robot*). “Sex Pots Go to College” scans better lyrically.

The movie would have benefited from more beauty—and more robot. Most importantly, it would have benefited from more Vampira.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1955

Comments on N'APA #276

I previously commented on Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #153 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #30 for eAPA. “In *Intermission* #153, ... Engholm contends that President Donald Trump could be a Russian asset. I think that's a reasonable suggestion. As you said, ‘if he isn't a Russian agent he surely acts like one.’ If it quacks like a duck... My apologies to the ducks. ... [T]he *Wall Street Journal* reported that the board of Tesla is seeking a CEO to replace Elon Musk; soon afterward, Tesla denied doing so.

“Most of the time, when I see food delivery robots like the one you spotted in Stockholm, it's stationary, navigating pedestrians, street corners, and traffic with difficulty. Given the option, I will never order food to be delivered by robot. I've not been impressed by their mobility and can only imagine that their delivery times are worse than human delivery. Perhaps that comparison has been done.

“I'll have to seek out KAJ's ‘Bara Bada Bastu.’ The photograph was also appealing. ... I am looking forward to the release of the new album by Propagandhi in Canada, *At Peace*. That record comes out May 2, so I don't have much longer to wait. I've only used a Nordic sauna once, either in Finland or Sweden. I remember drinking a lot with my hosts, enjoying the sauna, and then running outside into the snow. The memory could be apocryphal.

“Congratulations on selling a story to *Kvällsstunden*! I enjoyed the History Corner's ongoing consideration of sf in Czechia. I would hesitate to impose any structural restrictions when

determining the first fanzine. It's reasonable to think that early fanzines mimicked the format and content of professional magazines, though that tendency weakened over time. Fanzines, after all, are fan magazines, made by fen for fen, within the context of a fandom.

“I thought that the United Kingdom's history of football fanzines might have led to a precursor to the sf and comic book fanzines, but no. According to a brief search of the Internet, the first ‘recognizable’ football fanzine, *Foul*, wasn't published until 1972. Did any other sports foster fanzines?

“What about music, which predates print media? Again, no, what some consider the first ‘dedicated’ (whatever that means) music fanzine, *Mojo Navigator*, a contemporary of *Crawdaddy!*, was published in 1966. (Those could arguably be considered recorded music or rock 'n' roll fanzines, not music fanzines.) Even fanzines focusing on precursors to pulp fiction such as the story papers seem to come even later.

“If the first public Kinetoscope demonstration took place in 1893, were there early moving picture fanzines that predated or were contemporary with commercial movie fan magazines like those we saw in the 1950s and 1960s?

“Another intriguing question might be: What was the first fandom? *Wikipedia*—not the best source, but a starting point—indicates that the earliest fandoms might have concentrated on Jane Austen, perhaps the first such fandom subculture (<https://www.wired.com/story/the-pride-and-prejudice-of-online-fan-culture/>); Sherlock Holmes (<https://www.wired.com/2009/04/pl-brown-6/>); and even... trains. Did those fandoms produce fanzines? Holmes fen produced fanfiction as early as 1897. If such fanfiction was printed non-commercially, by fen for fen, those might qualify as fanzines unless we apply other structural requirements.

“In Bob Jennings's letter of comment, I appreciated his mention of the impact that the cancellation of the Third Class Matter postal rate had on fanzines and similar periodicals. When donating materials to university libraries and archives, I've long benefited from the less-expensive Media Mail rates, though those are more favorable when applied to larger packages rather than single pieces.

“Rich Zellich's question ‘why absolutely everyone doesn't just say “No” to everything they're illegally ordered to do,’ is one I've also asked. A colleague and I were just discussing that during lunch... The mistaken recognition of asserted authority contributes to the situation we're in here. Ooh, Garth, can I have the list of old passwords? I'd like to bulk up my local collection of eAPA distributions. Meanwhile, Ahrvid,

I shall look for affordable copies of your short story collections, including *Rumtidsenligt*.” (Thank you, Garth, for sending me that list in early June.)

Robert Jennings joined the apa, offering *The Swamp Spot Sentinel* #1. I enthusiastically welcome you as a faned extraordinaire, a member of the N3F dating back to the 1950s, and a Massachusetts bookseller! I lived in Massachusetts from 1996-2004, working in Framingham and Boston and living in Somerville and Cambridge. While I was a patron of Pandemonium Books & Games Inc. (I remain friends with the proprietor’s sister though I haven’t spoken to Tyler or Spike, who also worked there, for years) in Cambridge, I was unaware of Fabulous Fiction Bookstore in Worcester. I didn’t really explore Worcester while I lived there. Now I wish I had! Your email address now makes much more sense to me.

I am sorry to read about your increasing hearing loss. I can understand your prioritization of communicating by correspondence—and hope you’re able to continue as a faned for decades to come. Even though people wanting to talk to you on the telephone might be frustrating or irritating, it could also be a sign of their esteem for you.

It was fun to see that you were able to rework a portion of your letter of comment in *The Stf Amateur* #20 as an item for your apazine. The story of your storm door and the resulting customer service mayhem was riveting. Your review of *The Man Who Saw Seconds* by Alexander Boldizar intrigued me, especially your description of it as a story about “a man with a minor power.” So much speculative writing and media focuses on people with major—or super—powers. The idea of exploring the impact of a minor power (though able to “effectively disrupt the entire structure of the social order”) is quite compelling.

“Breaking News!” made me chuckle. If someone supposedly in charge of public health can disregard germ theory in the name of miasma theory, perhaps we’ll see steps taken toward bloodletting, trepanning, and babies sleeping on their stomachs. A list of “obsolete medical theories” online offers additional options such as animal magnetism, female hysteria, shunamitism, and tooth worms. Each of those offer rich fodder for storytelling, even today.

Somehow, that you’ve been communicating telepathically with Matildia, a banded Madagascan Buttonquail, doesn’t surprise me. I look forward to her advice column! “Dear Matildia...”

In *Archive Midwinter* dated March 9, 2025, **Jefferson P. Swycaffer** offered Garth Spencer some consolation, suggesting that older fen can continue to serve as positive role models for younger fen. “The

best way to do that is to be fannish!” Hear! Hear! I found your comments on convention codes of conduct to be reasonable and sound.

Similarly, your remark that “The concession I make is that I will endeavor to understand [sins of poisonous enormity] in the context of their own time,” resonated with me. We could even apply such an approach to convention codes of conduct (not a sin, in my opinion), the surge of far-right thinking, and bad behavior taking advantage of power dynamics. Why is something happening? What was occurring that might have led to a set of behavioral guidelines being implemented? What is making people so afraid or feel threatened? We might not always be able to successfully address or respond to what we learn, but it’s an exercise worth undertaking.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1955

Your mention of Hugh Ashton’s Sherlock Holmes pastiches reminded me of the Mycroft Holmes series written by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouse. Reportedly, Abdul-Jabbar chose to focus on Mycroft because there were already enough Sherlock pastiches. I’ve not yet read the copy of *Mycroft Holmes* that I procured upon learning about the series. In *SPT* #4, I mistakenly suggested Abdul-Jabbar wrote Moriarty novels, so this has come up in our pages before. Subsequent titles in the series include *Mycroft and Sherlock* and *Mycroft and Sherlock: The Empty Birdcage*, so Sherlock—and the Sherlock pastiche—was never that far away.

I’m glad you participated in a protest earlier this year, and that you found the experience lovely, cheerful, and good. In mid-July during my evening walk home from work, I passed a group at a well-trafficked intersection protesting—I believe—the current situation in Israel and Palestine. The next morning, I found a cryptic sheet of paper on the sidewalk. I do not know whether the two are connected.

B— J. G— is an act[...] and Mossad Agent.
He joined the Bloods in 2014-2015.
He joined Mossad in 2015.
Worked with Hells Angels and Italians.
CT/VA/Israel.
Theft/Human Trafficking/Murder.
3 Body Doubles.

I haven't been able to identify who those talking points might be about, and I obscured the name on the piece of paper in order to not commit libel (in a fanzine!), but I'm fascinated by the makings of a story here. (The fellow might have a three-body problem.) A 2024 *Washington Post* article (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/09/12/iran-criminal-gangs-target-dissidents>) suggests that the notes might be related to Iran's use of criminal gangs to target critics.

Mark Nelson's *Brandy Hall* #12 considered the impact that J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series had on his reading and other fannish activities. Nelson terms the series a novel, and it turns out that that is indeed the case! I've long considered *Lord of the Rings* a series comprising three novels: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. Apparently, Tolkien intended the three resulting books to be published in a single volume; a two-volume set would have also included *The Silmarillion*. However, for economic reasons, the novel was published in three volumes in 1954-1955, with *The Silmarillion* finally published after the author's death. So, what do you consider the *Lord of the Rings*: a series or a novel? I'm sure Tolkien scholars—and purists—have a strong point of view.



Chicago Tribune, March 4, 1955

Despite your not watching the broadcast reading on *Jackanory* and your sister not reading the books—or *The Hobbit*, for that matter—I'm glad your mother eventually introduced you to the *Lord of the Rings* and that Tolkien's writing resonated so strongly with you. I haven't been able to find online video of the original *Jackanory* episodes yet, but in 2020, the staff of St. Joseph's College in the United Kingdom produced its own *Jackanory* series as part of a literacy program. The first episode featured *The Hobbit*. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTxHZajUqOO>)

Your identification of the event as a watershed moment is apt. I, too, followed such a path: comic books to science fiction and fantasy to roleplaying games to punk rock (hanging out with more people introduced me to more music) to zines to amateur press associations to sf fanzines to sf fandom. Now that I'm back in Wisconsin, the state in which I grew up, I wish I'd known more about fandom when I was younger. There was once a strong, active fandom in Madison, and even today there are at least two active *Doctor Who* clubs in Wisconsin—but my transportation as a youth was limited. Regardless of the path we followed as individuals, I think you have your sister to thank for your presence in N'APA today.

I enjoyed learning about the Lyons Electronic Office computer produced by J. Lyons and Co., a tea company, in the early 1950s. I also enjoyed learning that “needs must”—which I thought in response to the company developing technology to solve its business problems—is a shortening of the proverb, “needs must when the devil drives.” In 1897, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a paper that addressed the evils of tea-drinking. Therefore, tea is a tool of the devil.

Similar less devilish thinking could apply to the idea of Japanese children holding up magazine photographs to a camera in order to purchase cigarettes. Needs must. Or, to invoke William Gibson, the street finds its own uses for things. Hmm, there might be a possible story idea in Duke Ellington becoming an sf fan and faned—instead of a jazz musician.

In *Intermission* #154, **Ahrvid Engholm** mentioned a handful of what he considers reliable news sources on YouTube: UATV (<https://www.youtube.com/@UATVEnglish>), TVP World (<https://www.youtube.com/@TVPWorld>), Anna from Ukraine (<https://www.youtube.com/@AnnafromUkraine>), Denys Davidov (<https://www.youtube.com/@DenysDavydov>), Combat Veteran Reacts (<https://www.youtube.com/@CombatVeteranReacts>), Jake Broe (<https://www.youtube.com/@JakeBroe>), and Professor Gerdes Explains (<https://www.youtube.com/@ProfessorGerdes>).

UATV (<https://uatv.ua/en>) is a service of the international Ukrainian television channel Freedom, which concentrates on Ukraine, Eastern Europe, Russia, and other parts of the world. TVP World (<https://tvpworld.com>) is a service of Telewizja Polska S.A., the oldest and largest Polish TV network. The others seem to be independent video bloggers and YouTubers who represent a range of credentials or expertise. While I recognize and understand the value of local sources, even if individuals, I'm curious how

to best approach identifying whether such YouTubers are reporting truthfully and accurately—or merely commenting on or sharing opinions about news reported elsewhere. Video isn't the most efficient way for me to learn—I'd rather read—but I'll spend some time with the channels you recommended to see what I think as a former journalist.

Thank you for your report on the Stockholm Independent Film Festival. (<https://zita.se/stockholm-independent-film-festival>) Of the movies discussed, I was particularly intrigued by *En alien i Noras sovrum*, *Härmapan*, *Ibland är du ett sånt jävla ägg*, *Maria*, *Tryck på knappen*, *Dunklet*, *Mammon*, *Skivhandlaren*, and *Tristess*. Plenty of fantastika amongst the wide range of options! I'll have to look for online trailers, videos, and other ways to watch portions of some of these works.

Anders Nilsson's *Ben Hogan Rider igen* sounds fascinating. I'll have to look into whether scholars in the United States have applied a similar approach to the writing of Zane Grey, Louis L'Amour, and other western authors. A chronological and geographic breakdown of L'Amour's work, for example, would be particularly interesting. Thank you very much for this piece. Slightly reworked, it feels like something that Larque Press might publish in its *The Digest Enthusiast*. (<https://larquepress.com/the-digest-enthusiast>) Or Cimarron Street Books in its *Bare Bones* magazine. (<https://cimarronstreetbooks.bigcartel.com/category/bare-bones>) It's times like this when I wish that everything I own wasn't packed to ship overseas. I know just where my copies of those two periodicals were stacked—before they were boxed up for shipping.

The History Corner this reminded me of an anti-nuclear activist newspaper I picked up at the local food co-op: *Nukewatch Quarterly* (<https://nukewatchinfo.org>), published in Luck, Wis. Luck is a village with a population of just more than 1,000 located near the western edge of Wisconsin near Minneapolis. Nukewatch might also be associated with the Anathoth Community Farm, a Catholic Worker farm.

The Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control (<https://www.wisconsinproject.org>) based in Washington, DC, focuses on research and advocacy to end the proliferation and use of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The project was originally founded in Madison in 1986. Another organization, League Against Nuclear Dangers Records, operated in Stevens Point between 1973 and 1983. That group was formed to fight the construction of a nuclear power plant in Rudolph. The Paris Township Preservation Committee combated another proposed plant near that township in the mid-1970s.

The Plowshares movement inspired by Dorothy Day developed an activist group (or action) called the Silo Pruning Hooks that has at times included activists from Minnesota and Wisconsin.

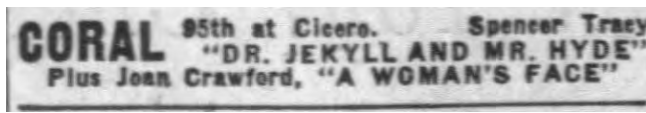


Chicago Tribune, March 11, 1955

Such activism seems still warranted. Earlier this month, the Wisconsin state Assembly approved a set of bills Tuesday that could expand nuclear power in the state. (<https://energy.wisc.edu/news/legislation-expand-wisconsins-nuclear-power-heads-gov-tony-overs-desk>)

I was newly intrigued by Pascal Thomas's mention of Hélène Cruciani and her fanzines. While looking for them, I came across a reference to a 2023 article in *Galaxies* (<https://galaxiessf.com>) titled "The Growing Interest of Academics in Science Fiction Theatre." NooSfere (<https://www.noosfere.org>) seems to be a wonderful resource concentrating on French sf. I've been receiving the French-Canadian periodical *Solaris* (<https://www.revue-solaris.com>)—it's time to renew!—but haven't spent much time with sf from France. *Galaxies* might be a good place to begin. I also need to learn more about sf theater.

Reading Marty Cantor's letter of comment from late 2021 or early 2022 in response to *Intermission* #116 tugged at my heartstrings. You must have come across it recently in your email. He was a good man, and a good fan.



Chicago Tribune, March 11, 1955

I read and enjoyed **George Phillies's** *Ye Murthered Master Mage* #276, but no further comment presented itself. In *Brownian Motion* #13, **Garth Spencer** proposed an encyclopedia list of life skills after commenting on the need for convention codes of conduct. "How to access health care" could also include how to advocate for yourself and others when seeking healthcare. Access might not be sufficient for successful delivery of appropriate care. "How to apologize" might be one of the more important skills. "How to listen" might be the most important. Otherwise, I appreciated the mix of social skills and tactical or tactile skills. One could perhaps group the list by head, hands, and heart.

I'd never realized—or considered—that the Sad Puppies controversy might have primarily involved... neos. Is that true? If so, the idea made me chuckle and shake my head. Also, shudder to think that newcomers could barge their way in and raise such a ruckus publicly.

In *R.A.I.L.* #6, **Adrian Kresnak** discussed the term "etherdiscipline." The word and idea is new to me and merits further exploration and thought! Your walkie-talkie or citizens band radio example was featured in a movie I recently saw. Passengers on two different

helicopters had to teach an elderly professor CB etiquette. He wasn't the most willing pupil. I think the film was *Them!* from 1954. I appreciated your mention of *Baffling* magazine. (<https://www.bafflingmag.com>) I've yet to check out that periodical.

Kevin Trainor Jr.'s *Esmeralda County Line* #10 reported on much of his reading done during a slow tax season. I was especially interested in John C. Wright's Star Quest series. The titles alone seem chock full of good ol' sensawunda: *Space Pirates of Andromeda*, *Secret Agents of the Galaxy*, *Catburglar of the Constellations*, and *Outlaw of the Outer Stars*.

In Christopher Paolini's sf novel *Fractal Noise*, one of the characters reads a fictional book series featuring Captain Ace Savage. Written by the fictional Horus Murgatroyd III during the late 21st and early 22nd centuries, the series includes the book *Captain Ace Savage and the Fiendish Plot of Queen Dragica*. Reportedly, Paolini has written the first chapter of that fictional novel—and "[m]ight actually finish it off one of these days. ... Fiction within fiction." I hereby propose the following additional possible titles for future Captain Ace Savage books:

1. *Captain Ace Savage and the Retreat of Anatolia*
2. *Captain Ace Savage: Creation 2619*
3. *Captain Ace Savage and the Death of Arcadia*
4. *Captain Ace Savage and the Eclipse of Solaris*
5. *Captain Ace Savage: Atlantis Ticking*

In the spirit of full disclosure, I didn't make those up. I used Reedsy's Sci-fi Book Title Generator. (<https://blog.reedsy.com/book-title-generator/science-fiction>) It's not generative AI, but given the 2022 controversy surrounding the initial cover reveal for Paolini's novel—Tor used a stock image that might have incorporated AI-generated artwork—it felt appropriate not to burn my own candles.

Son of Silvercon III (<https://sonofsilvercon.wordpress.com>) is this weekend! I just signed up as a supporting member. I hope everything goes smoothly and that it's a lot of fun. Be sure to tell us all about it in the issue after this forthcoming mailing, I suppose.

In **Samuel Lubell's** *Samizdat* #31, he discussed a Reduction In Force that took effect in the Department of Health of Human Services. I'm sorry that you were negatively affected by the layoffs. It might be somewhat comforting to know that you were not alone—and that it had nothing to do with your job performance—but it must still be very challenging. I hope your search for work ends successfully.

Your Author Spotlight focusing on Lois McMaster Bujold was welcome. I enjoyed reading *The Warrior's*

Apprentice early last year. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #107) While I've seen back issues of *Rod Serling's The Twilight Zone Magazine*, I've not explored it in a meaningful way. A periodical to return to!

In your piece, "Is College Worth It?" it took some time for you to mention the "intangible benefits of college resulting from greater exposure to advanced academics and culture." That last paragraph is the most important paragraph.

And I appreciated your themed trio of book reviews, "The Growing Economic Disparities in America." I'll have to return to the titles discussed but resonated with the occasional desire to read several books on the same or adjacent topics. Approaching an issue from several directions can often be fascinating and productive.

Your update on Project Video will add to my list of things to watch. Last night, my wife and I watched two 2024 episodes of *Doctor Who*: "The Devil's Chord" and "Boom." I'd previously seen the former episode while my wife was out of town, but after "Boom"'s dire urgency, we returned to "The Devil's Chord" to lighten the evening's viewing experience. We recently returned to subscribing to Disney+, and I've enjoyed having renewed access to the wealth of *Doctor Who*, Marvel, and Star Wars options. While she was in Michigan, I returned to watching the old Netflix Marvel programs, starting with the 2015 *Daredevil* series. Once I stop working—our liminal state continues to expand and extend—I might be more structured in my approach to such projects.



Chicago Tribune, March 18, 1955

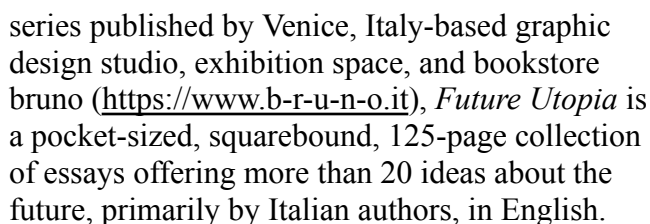
July 15, 2025

An Update on My Whereabouts

Rather than recount those adventures here, I encourage you to read *The Stf Amateur* #20-22, specifically the “Natter: Preparing to Move” and “Trip Report: California to Wisconsin” items—if you’re interested. (<https://tinyurl.com/TheStfAmateur>)



While in Chicago for work recently (*Faculae & Filigree* #44), I visited Kavi Gupta Editions, a small art book store incorporated into a gallery. This little volume hid nestled among its selections. The second volume in the Carte Blanche



“[T]he digital era calls for its own archaeology in order not to disappear, and demands that the material produced become history through dutiful cataloguing,” she writes. “There are three clear paths towards [the future]: the first tends to take stock of the self-willed avant-garde movements; the second proposes methods to intercept the future; the third hazards a guess and hypothesizes future trends.”

In recent weeks, I've been interested in exploring the role of art as a reflection of the world that is, a projection of the world that could be, and a rejection of the world that should not be. (I've also been interested in art movements generally—and manifestos.) Science fiction's speculative aspects, its utopian and dystopian tendencies, and even horror's centering of societal fears and cultural anxieties might reside strongly adjacent to the more progressive aspects of art and architecture. Though published a decade ago, this book continues to offer food for thought.

The endnotes to Marini's piece mention the Metabolists, an architectural movement in post-war Japan that focused on biomimetic design, or the fusion of architectural megastructures and organic biological growth. Mauro Berta explicitly cites Antonio Sant'Elia's "Manifesto of Futurist Architecture" and Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonia. Alberto Bertagna discusses Bruce Conner's 1958 film *A Movie*: "The waves triggered by the nuclear fall-out [of

the explosion at Bikini Atoll] become harmless waves for surfers.” That sentence alone evokes the cover art for Sacred Reich’s 1988 thrash metal EP *Surf Nicaragua*, as well as the character Colonel Kilgore in *Apocalypse Now*. (Bertagna also suggests that “the future does not depend on where we are now,” which is counterintuitively thought provoking.)



—Carrie McNinch

Several contributors, including Renato Bocchi, Valeria Burgio, and Rosario Pavia, make the case for explicitly utopian visions. One of Burgio’s statements resonated with me especially: “The aim is going back to the time when technology was full of potential and trying out those alternative methods that have never been taken.” The Internet and social media, for example, had—and still have—so much potential. Must we use it primarily (and merely) for shopping and propaganda?

Giovanni Carli suggests that architecture is especially well situated to help build a positive future. “The design project, etymologically, is none other than a postponed vision,” he writes. “[I]t is therefore almost symbiotic the bond between Future, Architecture and Power for the structuring of a common palimpsest.” Carli contends that power need not solely be an instrument of control but can serve as the expression of an opportunity to do more.

The power of architecture is to transmit new information, and to gather the old ones; to

communicate new needs, and to satisfy the old ones; to underline new contradictions, and to solve the old ones.

(Later in the anthology, Andrea Gritti also addresses the role of power: “[P]ower does not commission utopias.”)

Philosopher and educator Pietro Del Soldà’s short essay, “For a Not Schedulable Life,” was oddly prescient at the time of publication. “The global digital revolution has overwhelmed State and Utopia: no more long term planning,” he writes. “[T]he danger of a future that decreases reality rather than increase[s] it, is getting deeper and deeper since it is hidden behind the tale of a global participation in technological innovation... .” His piece made me think about the impact of disinformation, misinformation, and generative artificial intelligence. Del Soldà continues:

Smart cities (full of unemployed people) look like *topoi autopoi*, places with no place, last lands, copies of a global *finis terrae*, where Google cars run with zero impact, with no shops but crossed by drones that deliver on-line shopping flying over all the other fetishes of the future... .

Emanuele Garbin contends that as the rate of change increases, it becomes ever more challenging to predict or plan for the future. Dario Gentili goes even further, almost positing a coterminous superposition containing multiple possible futures. That leads to Giulia Menzietti’s essay, which addresses the likelihood of such a superpositional collapse. “[T]he imaginative thrust towards future scenarios has been replaced by the need to describe and elaborate the present, to immerge oneself in the immediate: ‘presentism’ ... is the distinguishing feature of the contemporary,” the architect and educator writes. “[P]resentism’ fears oblivion and the obsessive need to preserve is accompanied by an attempt to reproduce the present as if it has already passed.”

Those are just some of the highlights throughout the text. Most of the essays are quite short—four to six pages—but the anthology contains so many evocative suggestions, proposals, ideas, and references that the book’s potential ripple effects in terms of inspiring additional exploration is quite large.

Not all of the writing is totally clean or clear; I suspect hasty translations and writing in a secondary language. I also would have welcomed more citations, references, and sources in a book that seems somewhat academic or theoretical. But if the brief essays in *Future Utopia* are intended as thought pieces, provocations, and manifestos in miniature, Marini's anthology succeeds.

I'm not quite sure why I don't pay more attention to architecture and design writing as a complement to sf. China Miéville's *The City & The City* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #127) and N.K. Jemisin's *The City We Became* (*Faculae & Filigree* #25) overlay urban planning of a sort and sf in recent years. Bruce Sterling's advocacy for design fiction also deserves further consideration and implementation.

Of the professions, architects and designers—not only scientists and technologists—might already be living in the future(s), if not plotting our collective course in those directions.

***This World Is Not Yours* by Kemi Ashing-Giwa** (Tor Nightfire, 2024)

This might be the first book I've read published by Tor's Nightfire imprint, which specializes in horror fiction with sf and fantastic elements. (I've got to say: I like the combination!) The cli-fi novella is a good introduction to the imprint, as well as the writing of Kemi Ashing-Giwa, who wrote the book—

originally a short story but not published as such—during the pandemic. Ashing-Giwa is a self-described “scientist-in-training;” she studied integrative biology and astrophysics at Harvard, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Stanford's Earth and Planetary Sciences department.

The protagonist of the novella serves on the crew of a ship undertaking the colonization of New Belaforme. The planet is home to the Gray, a polycule that serves as a planetary self-cleaning

mechanism, seeking out invasive organisms in order to consume them. (The manner in which it does so is somewhat horrific.) Tensions develop among the primary triad of the book—the protagonist, a childhood friend, and another colleague—as well as between their crew and a rival colony, also competing to benefit financially from the planet's resources.

At first, the human colonists—and their activities on the planet—aren't interpreted by the Gray as an invasive species, or as threats. Over the course of the book, however, that changes. With chapters numbered in reverse order, counting down to the end of the text, the progress and rhythm of the book is steadily—and increasingly—intense. The book serves as an intriguing read adjacent to Frank Herbert's *The Green Brain* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #165); the polycule is much less intentionally benevolent than Herbert's composite insectoid intelligence. The Gray does not want to collaborate or co-exist with the colonists of New Belaforme.

While explicitly an example of cli-fi fiction, the book is also strongly anticolonial in its tenor and tone. We could apply the novella's ideas—and perhaps lessons—to our role and impact on our own world. Are we inhabitants of the planet Earth, or colonists? With so much science fiction studies concentrating on the Anthropocene—or Capitalocene—in recent years, might humanity be an invasive species? That's not a new idea.

From the Reading Pile: Comic Book and Minicomics Reviews

***Jenny Dunnigan: Paladin* #2** (Screaming Monkey, May 2024)

The second issue of John Yeo Jr.'s ongoing black-and-white series continues the tale of a newly minted supernatural hero in rural Louisiana. Found naked on a highway by an HVAC technician, Dunnigan seeks the assistance of her friend Nikki, who worries about her influence on her boyfriend and her 8- or 9-year-old daughter. Instead, Nikki should be concerned about her boyfriend, Lloyd.

The mysterious figure from #1 (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #158) returns to punish his daughter, threatening her son and pet, for allowing Dunnigan to “survive... the culling.” While

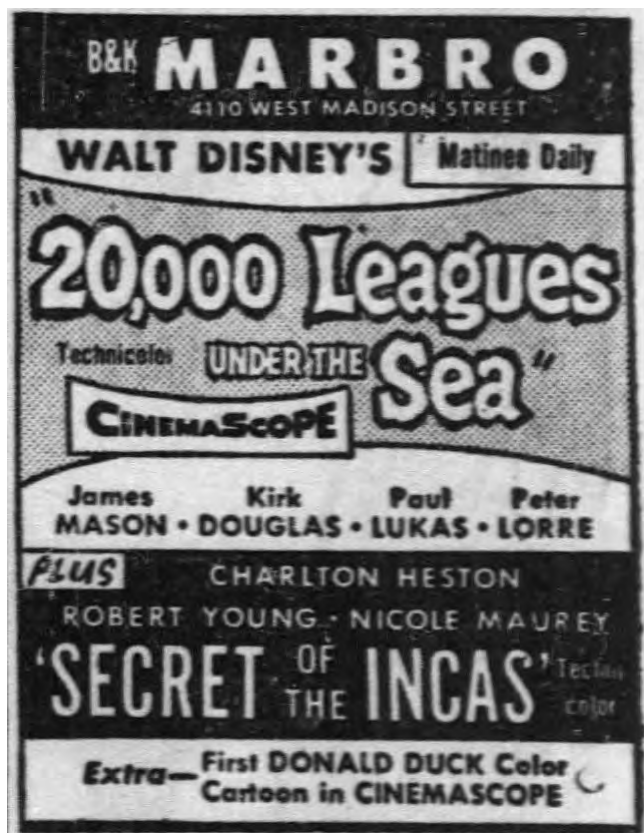


Dunnigan still lives, more than a dozen others “who could have accepted the power of the frenzy” were killed.

Perhaps most enjoyable, however, was the portion of the story in which the toughs who tried to kill Dunnigan before she became the Paladin interact with local law enforcement and struggle to stay out of trouble.

Yeo offers a one-page editorial addressing the delay between issues (#1 was published in January 2024), indicating that his comic book store in northwest Indiana moved into a larger space that can now accommodate more public game events. A third issue has since been published, and the store’s Web site indicates that this is a four-issue miniseries. There’s a lot to accomplish in the next two issues!

Available for \$4.99 from Screaming Monkey Comics, 11 Ridge Road, Munster, IN 46321; <https://www.screamingmonkeycomics.com>; screamerboy23@hotmail.com.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1955

The Journey of a Decoding Dyslexic (Doc Hoff Comics)

As Matthew Hoffman’s first self-published comic

book, this 32-page black-and-white digest contains the “story of a kid who couldn’t read, but is now called ‘doctor’ because he fell in love with comics.” It is an excellent introduction to the creator’s approach to comics.

Presented as part of a panel discussion at Comic Fest Waco (<https://www.instagram.com/comicfestwaco>) earlier this year, the digest energetically depicts the challenges of dyslexia in largely wordless panels, explains the learning disability, and identifies alternative forms of literacy—including comic strips such as *Gasoline Alley*, which served as the creator’s entry point to reading. “Comics were the great equalizer,” Hoffman writes. “Everyone is decoding pictures and words.”

During high school, the cartoonist immersed himself in theater, which also provided a portal to appreciating literature and the rewards of accomplishment. After his dyslexia diagnosis, Hoffman was able to adjust his approach to education, going to college and eventually earning a doctorate degree. A love of comics—including minicomics, the undergrounds, *Mad* magazine, and Jeff Nicholson’s *Ultra Klutz*—as a medium and form of literature is strongly evident throughout Hoffman’s encouraging and inspiring story.

In addition to the main piece, Hoffman shares an appreciation of the amateur comic art of his grandfather, who introduced him to *Gasoline Alley*, *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith*, and other comic strips. Several “bonus comics” are also included, mostly concentrating on the mental meanderings of an insomniac—which resonates with *Silent Man*, below.

Inquire via Doc Hoff, <https://www.dochoffcomics.com>, dochoffcomics@gmail.com.

Sammy the Shut-In (Doc Hoff Comics)

A 16-page black-and-white digest, this comic is labeled as a “Bad B-Movie Comic Production,” as well as the origin story of the titular character. It’s an example of what creator Matthew “Doc” Hoffman terms a “two-track” comic, combining Greek mythology with the “story of a recluse living in a 1970s slum.”

Hoffman sets his adaptation of mythological texts from Homer, Hesiod, and others in a

decrepit tenement, casting mythological figures as the roughly but ably drawn characters of the comic: Sammy represents Kratos, Sticks as Styx, Paulie as Pallas, and Zeke as Zeus.

After a page of opening text, the story unfolds. Sammy is the son of Sticks, an aging call girl of sorts who entertains the tenement's "maintenance guy," Paulie, in lieu of paying rent. The emotionally intense and visually explicit piece explores dysfunctional families, domestic abuse, and the potential economic allure of crime.

The artwork is occasionally excellent. The multi-panel violent thought balloon on p. 8 is especially innovative in its design. The impressionistic flashback-driven narrative detailing the departure (well, death) of Paulie on p. 10 works very well. And Sammy's multi-panel stroll through the city—perhaps inspired by Bil Keane's Dotted Line—on p. 12 is exceptionally artistic in its framing.

The publisher might be relatively new to comics (long an artist, he just recently began to focus on developing his craft), but his experience as a student in Tom Hart's Sequential Artists Workshop (<https://www.sequentialartistsworkshop.org>) and now the United Fanzine Organization (<https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com>) indicates a lot of potential and promise. I look forward to seeing more!

Inquire via Doc Hoff, <https://www.dochoffcomics.com>, dochoffcomics@gmail.com.

Silent Man (Doc Hoff Comics)

This eight-page black-and-white minicomic offers an artistic interpretation—or portrayal—of the lyrics to Simon & Garfunkel's song "The Sound of Silence." Combining cartoon art with the well-known lyrics, the minicomic offers an interesting perspective.

Rather than a consideration of communication breakdown and societal alienation inspired by insomnia or late-night isolation—"Hello, darkness," "while I was sleeping," and "restless dreams"—creator Matthew Hoffman's comic art tells the tale of a man (in fact the character Sammy featured in the comic reviewed above) who wakes at 9:30 p.m., walks to work, and begins his day as a cleaning person or janitor while other area residents are sleeping.

Inquire via Doc Hoff, <https://www.dochoffcomics.com>, dochoffcomics@gmail.com.



Chicago Tribune, March 25, 1955

***Solve* #12 (*The Shell of the Self of the Senses* #112, May 2025)**

This issue of Ron Rege Jr.'s monthly minicomic continues his storyline "The Ballad of the Discombobulated Ventriloquist," which pairs new comic art with older musical recordings. The soundtrack for this 24-page black-and-white digest is the fifth track of Discombobulated Ventriloquist's recording 1986-1996, "Glipzide," (<https://discovent.bandcamp.com>) which was recorded in 1995.

The comic includes multiple pieces. Shorter items bookending a longer work address the instruments utilized in the accompanying soundtrack, listening to a cassette of *The Lone Ranger* with a friend in the mid-1980s, early modes of tape manipulation, finding effects pedals and four-track recordings in the garbage, and the basics of four-track recording.

The main piece—20 of the 24 pages—focuses on "our gnostic Sophia," who challenges a monotheistic god attempting to persuade his followers that he's the "true and only," "the greatest." Rege's detailed, fine cartoony line and cleanly active inking depicts the forceful power

of wisdom and self-awareness or -realization.

That moment segues into a thought-provoking consideration of whether a cartoonist—or any artist—can successfully pursue their art in the midst of ongoing, intense strife and crises in the world. Rege’s now externalized internal dialogue asks the following questions: “Are you making work about something beside genocide? Why? How dare you? What’s wrong with you?” Those are fair questions.

For example: Is reading science fiction paperbacks and self-published comic books, and watching movies—and writing about them—appropriate behavior as the world burns? Does publishing fanzines accomplish more than continue to feed and foster extractive capitalism in the Anthropocene? I like to think so. Self-publishing and do-it-yourself media of all kinds is inherently political. Participating in apae—and fandom—can at its best model and practice open discussion within a community. It certainly helps me cope with all the changes going on, uncertainty, and instability in my life.

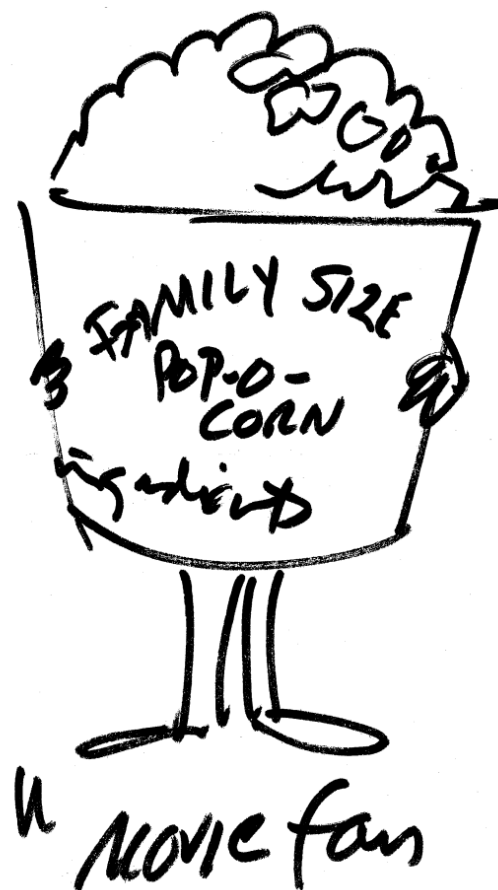
Though the Gaza genocide seems to be the world event catalyzing Rege’s self-inquiry, other current events could inspire similar discussion. Sophia suggests that a truly intelligent humanity wouldn’t consider itself superior to the natural world. Rege continues to advocate for a deeper exploration of a “vast ocean of wisdom,” taking much better care of each other: “There can’t be any ‘smart’ people—or worthwhile forms of law, art, science or medicine (etc.) in a society that allows anyone to struggle to obtain the basic things they need to survive... .”

In a self-published comic, Rege—via the gnostic Sophia—contends that “the repercussions of what is happening now will lead to the inevitable collapse of this civilisation.” That is heady, critical thinking, in the deceptively simple comics form.

Available by subscription via <https://www.patreon.com/ronregejr> and <http://ronrege.blogspot.com>.

In addition to the above comics, in early June, I also received a couple of poetry zinelets that, while they fall short of concrete or visual poetry, incorporate graphic design elements in their

presentation. In two eight-page minizines, Silvia Townsend Warner considers the occasional, imposing beauty of small things; and Patricia Dunker captures a single, sudden moment utilizing several senses. Both items can perhaps be obtained from John Dishwasher, Six Fires Press, 966 Santa Victoria St., Hemet, CA 92543.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews *Argoman the Fantastic Superman*

After reading Ron Rege Jr.’s *Solve* #12 above and considering appropriate creative responses to genocide and world crises, it seems a bit silly to write about this 1967 English-language Italian superhero/Eurospy film directed by Sergio Grieco. But if Julio Cortazar can write about *Fantomas* after a tribunal in Brussels (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #121), perhaps it’s not entirely out of line. (I know: I’m no Cortazar.)

Seemingly inspired by the cartoony camp of the 1966 *Batman* television show, this movie combines elements of Italian crime cinema—not quite incorporating aspects of giallo—James

Bond knockoffs such as *Agent 077: Mission Bloody Mary* and *008: Operation Exterminate*, and the rich tradition of millionaire playboy crimefighters such as Batman, the Green Hornet, the Spider, Doc Savage, and similar heroes. (It also owes a debt to *Danger: Diabolik*, based on the Italian comic book.)

The movie concentrates on Argoman's efforts to thwart the criminal activities of Jenabell, Queen of the World. A telekinetic who can hold his breath under water for 33 minutes and nine seconds, Argoman poses as Sir Reginald Hoover, a wealthy dilettante and aggressive womanizer, when he's not fighting crime in a garishly colorful costume. When he is fighting crime, his powers seem to last only a limited amount of time; he must wait for his powers to return.

In addition to the *Batman* and James Bond parallels, the movie includes several science fictional elements. Hoover uses his telekinesis to bring a hovercraft to shore in order to bed its pilot—the Queen of the World in disguise. A large gem, the Muradoff A IV, can reflect any type of light and destroy molecular cohesion. Hoover utilizes a Geiger counter ring to locate people who have smoked radioactive cigarettes. And Jenabell clones politicians, embodying them in androids.

It's a vapid flick, though visually stimulating. References to *Argoman the Fantastic Superman* appear in books such as Thom Shubilla's *James Bond and the Sixties Spy Craze*, Roberto Curti's *Diabolika: Supercriminals, Superheroes and the Comic Book Universe in Italian Cinema* (a truly promising volume!), and Howard Hughes's *Cinema Italiano: The Complete Guide from Classics to Cult* (which is also intriguing), but there doesn't seem to be much criticism or scholarship of import beyond articles and items in magazines such as *Obskurøst* and *Starburst*.

In response to my posting the movie poster on the Instagram, a friend recommended several Filipino Batman-inspired movies, including *James Batman*—in which Batman and James Bond team up!—*Batman Fights Dracula*, and *Alyas Batman en Robin*, a musical. Those, too, seem like worthy diversions.



Chicago Tribune, March 25, 1955

Comments on SAPS #311

I found the news that long-standing SAPS participant Wally Weber died early this year sorrowful. I didn't know him, but I felt his ongoing presence in SAPS strongly, even when reprints of his fanzines weren't included in the bundle. Your love for him is evident. Inspired by the *Cry of the Nameless* letterhack card—at the time not knowing Weber had edited *Cry*—I inconsistently offered a *T&T* letterhack card for people who wrote locs to my APA-L apazine *Telegraphs & Tar Pits*. That eventually became the *Stf Amateur* letterhack card. I haven't mailed all of the cards yet—they've been packed up for our forthcoming move—but the first 10 *T&T* letterhack card recipients include:

1. Joe Pearson
2. Rev. Ivan Stang
3. Garth Spencer
4. John Thiel
5. William Breiding
6. Paul Di Filippo
7. Perry Middlemiss
8. Bruce Gillespie
9. Adrian Kresnak

I condole with Weber's family, friends, and fellow fen. His absence is already felt.



Chicago Tribune, April 8, 1955

On the cover of *Marana* #2, **Burnett Toskey** featured a photograph of an actress whose name I don't remember—but whom I most definitely recognize. She was on *Dark Shadows* and likely appeared in a *Dark Shadows*-related movie. I think this is the first actress I've been able to place immediately, so I'm feeling a little chuffed despite my incomplete knowledge. Referring to the World Wide Web, I believe it's Kathryn Leigh Scott, who played Maggie Evans and other roles on the program. The movie, then—if “starred” is the operative term—might be *House of Dark*

Shadows.

I enjoyed your discussion of exoplanets, colonization, and Don Wilcox's short story “The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years” (*Amazing Stories*, October 1940). I look forward to reading that piece. Your mention of your novel *Dedi and the Gargoyle* reminded me that you sent me *M'Gantar* a couple of years ago. That shall quickly follow the Wilcox.

As always, I enjoyed and appreciated your book reviews, largely detective fiction this outing. While traveling to Chicago recently (see above), I reread Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. A friend jokingly summarized the book thusly: I saw—hospitals. Regardless, it was a good read, 30 years after my first reading. I found the prose beautiful, and though I appreciated Rilke's meditations on aging and death meaningful, I didn't find it as starkly existential as similar writing. Moreso, I found Rilke's commentary on the meaning and value women place on love thought provoking.

Leigh Edmonds's *Honestly* dated March 28, 2025, remarked on his impressions of the current presidency and political landscape in the United States. It is certainly oppressive, narcissistic, intolerant, and right wing. It is also intentional, though even as an American, I'm not sure that it's entirely well-organized, structured, or consistent. I can understand your discomfort and disinterest in traveling to the States. These are uncomfortable, concerning times. Under this administration, we are being led by people who are fueled by fear and hatred, not by love and public service.

I look forward to reading about your recent travels to France and the United Kingdom. Perhaps you've already written about them in *Ornithopter*—indeed you have, in *Ornithopter Mk.Vc!* Calloo. I also need to prioritize reading the *Australian Journal of Fannish Research*. (The project I'm planning for 2026 should help me better focus on the others' fanac rather than the ever-more-thinly spread apahacking I've been pursuing for the last few years.)

Your mention of the local scale modelling club made me think about my father's model railroading circle of friends. A long-time HO scale modeller, he was active in the National

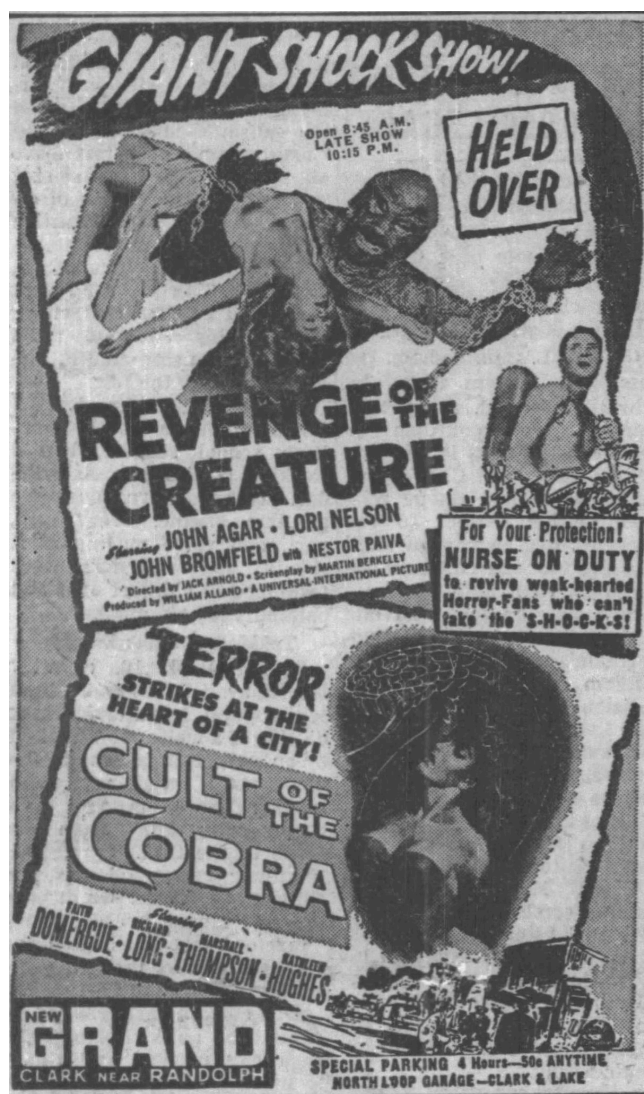
Model Railroad Association, edited a newsletter for a time (if I remember correctly), contributed articles and photographs to various periodicals, and participated in a couple of local groups that created modular layouts. In recent years, he's been selling his accumulated items through a local model shop.

In mid-July, several couples from that circle of friends gathered for a nearby play, the American Player Theatre's staging of Noel Coward's 1925 *Fallen Angels*, a wickedly funny—and sexy—comedy of manners. My wife and I joined the group for a picnic dinner before the performance. One of the men who's been active in the group for decades isn't even a model railroader. My wife found that confusing; I think she thought the group is more organized or formal than it is. "How are you here if you're not a model railroader?" she asked. "I just asked if I could join the group," he replied. Even if our friends come through shared activities, not all of our friends do—or must. It made me think about *Fancyclopedia III*'s entry for "fake fan": "A fake fan is one who doesn't read or feel any particular attraction to science fiction or fan affairs, but who does enjoy the company of fans and fandom's social order and whose company is enjoyed by fans." Are those fake fen, or... friends?

In *Be Bop* #133, **Gordon Eklund** informed fellow apans that his 80th birthday is coming up at the end of the month. Here, then, is an early happy birthday greeting! The deadline for this mailing is only nine days before the special day, and so I shout and cheer: Hurrah for Gordon Eklund! Shortly after our arrival in Madison, I bought a book you wrote at the Frugal Muse (<https://frugalmuse.com>), a used bookstore. That book? *Devil World*. I shall prioritize reading it after the Wilcox story, Toskey's novel, and Edmonds's new journal. I have my marching orders, and my work cut out for me.

While in Kansas City—Kan. and Mo.—I needed a hat because of some heavy rain. I went to a local sportswear shop and procured a Kansas City Royals cap. But so far I've been unsuccessful in following any baseball this season. Now that I'm in Wisconsin, the local team is the Milwaukee Brewers, my childhood favorite, but I haven't even been keeping up with the

sports in the newspaper. While in Chicago, while discussing the appeal of underdogs with Nigel Rowe, he told me I'd have to root for the White Sox now instead of the Cubs, which has been my traditional Chicago team.



Chicago Tribune, April 15, 1955

This weekend, I was momentarily distracted by professional wrestling, which has a fannish overlap in folks such as Christopher J. Garcia and the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society's Chris Marble. I sent Garcia my old materials from the Imaginary Wrestling Association (<https://www.playiwa.com>) shortly before we moved out of our house in the Los Angeles area. The IWA is a pro wrestling-inspired play-by-mail game—which reminds me that I'm behind on Heroic Fantasy (<http://www.rickloomispbm.com/heroic.html>) and Xott. So much to do, so little time!



Chicago Tribune, April 22, 1955

In addition to the national pro wrestling options such as the WWE (<https://www.wwe.com>), National Wrestling Alliance (<https://www.nationalwrestlingalliance.com>), TNA (<https://tnawrestling.com>), and the Japanese Wrestle Universe (<https://www.wrestle-universe.com/en>), there seems to be a rich regional wrestling presence in Wisconsin. (You can see what's going on near you courtesy of WrestleMap (<https://www.wrestlemap.com>)).

Milwaukee serves as host to Insane Championship Wrestling (<https://www.facebook.com/icwmilwaukee>) and Brew City Wrestling (<https://www.brewcitywrestling.com>). Oshkosh is home to ACW Wisconsin (<https://acwwisconsin.com>). And Appleton and Green Bay seem to be where Now That's Wrestling (<https://nowthatswrestling.com>) is active. I don't know how long this rekindled infatuation with wrestling will last, but when I was younger, magazines such as *Championship Wrestling*, *Pro Wrestling*

Illustrated, and *Ringside Wrestling* felt very much like music fanzines. To further the fannish connection, Starlog Publishing (aka Starlog Press) published at least several wrestling periodicals: *Ringside Wrestling*, *Superstar Wrestlers*, and *Wrestling Scene*. The publisher, of course, also published magazines such as *Starlog*, *Future Life*, *Comics Scene*, *Cinemagic*, and *Fangoria*.

Thank you for explaining the numbering of *The Spectator*, SAPS' official organ. Arcane details like that help make apae the special beasts they are. If you laughed so hard at *A Shot in the Dark* that you frightened your cat, that is a movie worth watching.

There's likely a market for or archival interest in rejection letters to notable authors. You, sir, are a notable author. Your discussion of initials in credit lines made me chuckle. Heath Row was an excellent byline when I worked as a journalist. On official documents, I've taken to using my full name: Ewing Heath Row. I could see myself writing something as E.H. Row, but I cannot imagine using E. Heath Row. As you said, it is to snicker. Bjo Trimble's *Star Trek Concordance* is indeed a wonderful book.

Kelly Oates's *Oates* #1 took one bold, brave step through a door into a pocket universe. Which—or whose—party were you attending that you encountered a documentation of Robert Lichtman's fanac among issues of *Cosmopolitan* and *Real Simple*? I'm so glad you found your way to SAPS. If you'd like to learn more about other currently active apae, *Blue Moon Special* (<https://tinyurl.com/bluemoonspecial2024>) might prove interesting. If the stars align, an updated edition will come out later this year. Your use of the I Ching to assess whether you should become a faned is inspiring. I agree with it, the tarot, and you that publishing *Oates* is a good idea. Welcome!

Some of the language you use while writing about the fish and jellyfish of Ontario make me think you were visiting there—rather than that you live there. If you do live in Canada, there are several active Canadian fen and faneds whom you might find interesting, including Garth Spencer (<https://efanzines.com/RSNG>), R. Graeme Cameron (https://fancyclopedia.org/R_GraemeCameron), and Lloyd Penney (<https://>

fancyclopedia.org/Lloyd_Penney), who lives in Toronto. If you were just visiting, never mind.

Thank you for bringing a measure of science to the fandom of science fiction. It's not uncommon to submit a fanzine to an apa with mailing comments while distributing the same fanzine sans such comments more generally. Henry Grynnsen's *Wild Ideas* (<https://efanzines.com/WildIdeas>) is a good example. You won't see any comments in the editions posted to eFanzines, but when included in the pages of eAPA, you will. Again, welcome.

In *Dot-Fanzine: Semicolon* (#Semicolon?), **John D. Berry** reminded me that Corflu 42 occurred in... April. Did I not dial in to any of the online sessions? Even as a supporting member, no, I did not. How come? I quite like Corflu! Oh, yes, we were preparing to sell our house, and I was busy with Other Things. Harrumph.

I enjoyed reading about your history project focusing on the Association Typographique Internationale. I'm glad that the GoFundMe campaign was successful enough to proceed with the project.

Your recollections of your first experience with animal death reminded me of my own. I wrote about them in a letter of comment to Dale Speirs regarding his fanzine *Opuntia* in February 2024, but I don't think he ever published it, so I include those memories here:

As a child, my family had several rabbits as pets over time. Our first pet rabbit, Bugs Bunny, we received from a friend of my mother's whose rabbit had a sizable litter. Bugs lost one of his siblings when it hopped or fell into her swimming pool. A lop rabbit, Bugs had the most beautiful ears. One winter—we kept him in a hutch in our garage in the depth of winter, outside in a raised hutch by the woodpile otherwise—my mom returned home and came upstairs to ask my sister and I whether one of us had cut Bugs's ears off with scissors. We had not, and we were appalled by the idea. We later speculated that his ears had frozen in his water bowl, and once they had been, well, removed—the remaining edge was quite straight and surprisingly clean of injury—he'd eaten them. We loved him all the same, and I remember playing with him in a pen in the yard during

warmer weather. That rabbit could jump! He loved the grass. Later, we found Bugs dead in the garage. Apparently, someone had let themselves in and killed him with a hammer, which was missing. My parents spoke to the parents of a boy in the neighborhood who they thought might have done such a thing. He later moved away to a boys home of some sort. [That was my first experience with animal death.—HR]



Chicago Tribune, May 6, 1955

I forget how we obtained our second pet rabbit, which was named Eddie Rabbit. At first, we thought Eddie was male, but we later realized she was female, so Edie might have been more appropriate. Regardless, Eddie was a very petite Dutch rabbit and took a particular liking to me. While Bugs once bit the end of my finger when I was particularly curious about his cage, Eddie was gentleness itself. Later in life, she developed an internal infirmity of some sort we weren't able to recognize or diagnose before her death. She died looking from her cage in the garage toward the garage door, where we'd exit to feed and water her or change the old newspaper-lined cookie sheets kept under the cage to catch her droppings and urine. It was

as though she was waiting for us to come relieve her pain.



Chicago Tribune, May 6, 1955

Our third rabbit, Barney Google, we met while he hopped around the neighborhood in a yard across the dead end on which we lived. A neighbor called us to see whether we still had our old cage and rabbit accouterments, and my parents carried the cage over to the neighbor's yard, where Barney sat patiently. He hopped right into the cage! That made us think that he must have been someone's pet, so we informed the appropriate local agencies and placed a classified advertisement in the local newspaper, but no one claimed him as an escapee. After a while, we considered him our own. He, too, was a good rabbit, though with a smaller personality than Eddie or Bugs.

Owning and caring for rabbits was a good experience as a child and teenager. I'd go to the local feed store often with my dad to buy bags of rabbit feed, salt licks, and other necessary equipment. When the weather was warm, we'd keep them in an elevated hutch my dad constructed by the woodpile and mulch pile. Occasionally, we'd shovel the poodits (droppings) that fell below the cage into the mulch pile to use as fertilizer in the garden when we maintained one. When the weather was cold, we'd keep the rabbits outside until it got especially cold. Then we'd bring them into the garage where it was warmer. I still have dreams about going outside to feed and water the rabbits during winter. Sometimes I dream about having forgotten to do so. The walk to the cage and woodpile is particularly long in those dreams.

Your comments about my reporting the tables of contents of prozines are sound—and were well taken. They weren't even magazines I was reading, necessarily, merely receiving. (Although in some cases, I had read several stories in a given issue. In those instances, I commented on them, but that might have gotten lost in the general listicle nature of those items.) Initially, I began the practice of including them in my various fanzines occasionally as a way to document which prozines were publishing what—or whom—so I was at least looking at them when they arrived. Regardless, I've since fallen out of the habit. Like you, I didn't see the point.

My wife and I bought our house in Portugal two Octobers ago. We first visited the country in mid-2023, so it was a pretty short on-ramp. It's less a long-standing plan than one inspired by the current state of the United States. In fact, our serious thinking was prompted by the Dobbs decision in mid-2022. We knew several people and couples who'd relocated to Portugal or were planning to—and we started talking to them about their experiences before we first visited the country.

Since Dobbs, we've spent 106 days in Portugal, usually staying there for a month at a time. We were drawn to the north, and inland. We fly into Porto, and east of Braga, there's the city of Póvoa de Lanhoso. Its population is about 22,000. We're just outside Póvoa de Lanhoso in the village of Taíde. It's largely rural, though there are bus stops along the street on which we live. We've explored other parts of Portugal, including Coimbra, Lisbon, Guimaraes, and other locales, and I look forward to exploring the rest of the country.

I don't yet speak or read Portuguese, though I will study to do so more assertively once we're able to spend more time there. It's a challenging language, more challenging than Brazilian Portuguese, which is more widely spoken. My wife has been more diligent in her language studies while in the United States, and most of the time people we meet are impressed that she's learning the language, as well as by her pronunciation. That often leads to some confusion because people then assume she's more fluent

than she currently is. My wife also speaks French, which has been helpful with neighbors who worked in France before returning to Portugal in retirement.

At this point, I can't wait to move there. Selling our house in the Los Angeles area, we lived in an Airbnb for the month of May until escrow closed, moving to Wisconsin in early June. We'll live in our furnished apartment at least until the end of August. We're waiting for our visas to be approved, my relocation to my employer's Madison office was approved early this month (my official start date is roughly two months after we moved here), and I've also applied for a Voluntary Exit Program given my tenure. I'll find out whether I've been accepted for that in mid-August, and my expected end date—ever optimistic—is in mid-October. Once our visa is approved, we'll have 100 days in which to immigrate, so I might ride out on Work from Anywhere and vacation time. We're experiencing an extended liminal phase, which is slightly unsettling and liberating, and we're enjoying living closer to my parents and sister—and continuing to look forward to our life ahead in Portugal. Some days, I feel like I'm already there.

While you became acquainted with great books by reading *Classics Illustrated*, I became familiar with movies by reading *Mad* magazine. To this day, I often catch myself thinking I've seen a movie or TV show, when I've only read the *Mad* parody.

Rocky Willson's *Lucubrations* #152 mentioned Jeff Goldblum. At first, I thought I was confusing him with someone else, but I was confusing him with... Jeff Goldblum. Somehow, I think he'd be pleased. In the context of disambiguating Glitter Gulch and a Glitter Gulch review, you mentioned "substitute lap dancers." I imagine them to be the backup professionals brought in when a lap dancer gets a head cold or charley horse. A backside understudy, if you will. Ergo, the League of Substitute Lap Dancers, should they unionize.

Your description of the foibles of collecting comic books is one of the funniest things I've read in a long time. When you put it like that... ouch. Continuing my remarks to John D. Berry

above, I'd like to respond to your question, "[W]hat inspires you about Portugal?"

I think about our forthcoming move to Portugal along several parallel tracks. First, there is the political and European Union access track. When we started researching the prospect of relocating, Portugal offered the shortest on-ramp to EU citizenship: five years instead of the apparent standard of 10. Now that they're considering changing to a 10-year citizenship horizon, that might no longer be the case, but we want to live in Portugal, not just use it as an entry point to the EU—even if Portuguese citizenship will enable us to more freely explore the rest of the EU.



Chicago Tribune, May 27, 1955

More importantly, given the country's relatively recent experience with a fascist dictatorship—the Carnation Revolution occurred in 1974—the country's constitution is more modern than many. We're inspired by its concentration on the rule of law, fundamental rights and freedoms, social justice and equality aspects (for example, same-sex marriage is protected), and cultural and environmental protections. Rights for women are particularly important to us. Even though Portugal, similar to the rest of the world, experiences its own far-right elements (Chega, primarily), the memory of fascism held by its population is relatively recent

and strong. Hopefully, the country is less likely to return to such a restrictive regime so soon after the end of Estado Novo.

Secondly, we're drawn to the lower cost of living. At 52, I'm a little young to stop working—professionally, in terms of vocational labor—but we think that if we lower our cost of living enough, we can effectively secure a decade of active creativity—avocational labor—that we might not be able to pursue in the United States. For example, in addition to generally lower prices (in part due to lower incomes), healthcare costs are substantially lower. Beyond the state health insurance available to all residents, not just citizens, private health insurance is quite affordable. The benchmark I remember is that health insurance in the United States might cost about \$1,500/month per person; in Portugal, private health insurance costs about \$1,000/year per person. Not having mortgage payments or the need to pay American health insurance rates enables us to stop working. That will allow us to be more active physically and creatively now rather than waiting until we're in our 60s or approaching 70. At least, we think we can make the budgetary mathematics work.



Chicago Tribune, June 3, 1955

Thirdly, the country is fascinating. Once a colonial world power (Portugal handed Macau, its last colony, over to China in 1999), Portugal has a history of innovation and exploration. Even reading science fiction, I encounter references to Portuguese soldiers and the Portuguese navy. Now the country is in a fascinating position. Arguably superseded by its most successful colony, Brazil, remaining on the edge of the Iberian peninsula no longer embroiled in conflict with Spain, its history and culture are rich and its

people wonderful.

Despite the country's small population—11 million to Brazil's 211 million and Spain's 48 million—Portugal's creative communities focusing on art, cinema, literature, and music continue to be richly productive, even if the economics of the industries supporting them are smaller. The scenes I've plugged into—small press publishing, science fiction fandom, comic books, and roleplaying games—are very energetic and interesting, though small. And the people involved in those activities are open and welcoming. That said, there is some division between the north and south of the country. Lisbon is often viewed as the cultural and economic center of Portugal, but the rest of the country also offers meaningful creativity and wonder. We love the landscape of the north.

We're also interested in Portugal's post-Roman history. Roman infrastructure still survives, be it no-longer-used pavement, partial bridge construction (the bridges still in active use), aqueducts, and other structures. Since the end of Estado Novo, archaeology has also increased and improved as a science. Active digs in the country explore the remains of Roman bath houses, homes, and amphitheatres.

Along those lines, finally, the arc of history in Portugal is longer than it is here. I've lived in some of the oldest cities in America: Boston (founded in 1630) and New York City (1624). I've lived in some of the newest cities in America: Los Angeles (1781 or 1850, depending on how you look at it) and Culver City (1917). One hike we go on in Póvoa de Lanhoso (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #111) takes us past the ruins of castor mills that date back to 1758—they remained in use until 1972—along a section of Via Romana XVII to a 500-year-old oak tree (the oldest on the Iberian peninsula) and a Neolithic burial mound dating back to the 5th or 4th millennium BC. I find that absolutely glorious.

In *Henchman* #23, **Andrew Hooper** commented on the Roger Zelazny collection *The Magic*, which sounds wonderful even if its inclusion of short novels makes it a lengthier read than expected. That it was edited by Samuel R. Delaney is an added bonus, regardless of his spoilers—and the almost overwhelming aspect of

reading so much Zelazny in sequence. I appreciated your statement that “Fandom immediately fell in love with Zelazny, because he made them feel smart.” Also: “[O]ne’s habits, good and bad, tend to be revealed through repetition.”

Ooh! Zelazny was an active member of the Baltimore Science Fiction Society. I’m sure Sam Lubell already knows that, but I’ll tell him all the same. (Lubell, told!) I am so glad that Zelazny “appeared with a big bag of art tucked under each arm.” I’ve read *Nine Princes in Amber* and *Doorways in the Sand* (*The N3F Review of Books*, July 2021) but remember little. The movie *Damnation Alley* affected me strongly as a child, but I’ve never read the novel. I shall have to prioritize reading Zelazny—after I make good on my other commitments above.

When Marty Cantor died, his fanzine collection was organized, boxed, and donated to the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy at the University of California, Riverside. Nick Smith and I took care of that business, loading a rental van and driving to the university. I document that project in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #74-77, which are available in the August and September 2023 issues of *The Sff Amateur* (<https://tinyurl.com/thestfamateur>) if you’d like to learn more.

Unfortunately, I won’t be participating in Worldcon next month. Given our liminal state and all the parallel processing, I need to focus on what’s already in play rather than travel to Seattle. Your encouragement, however, inspired me to look into my World Science Fiction Society Membership, which was somehow Nomination Only—so I have now chipped in to be able to download the Hugo voting packet. Thank you very much for the reminder.

Given the work that Jerry Kaufman and Suzle Tompkins are putting into the fanzine lounge, I shall be there in spirit, if not in my earthly form. Last I checked on WOOF, it didn’t look like OE details or a submission deadline was available yet, but I’ll check on that again in order to be able to participate. I do like WOOF.

Your discussion of *Star Trek* contemporaries was not inaccurate, but I’d argue that all of the TV shows you mention are well worth watching,

even if they’re not as good as *Star Trek*.

And **Steve Swartz’s** *Echoes in the Niche* dated April 2025 introduced yet another new contributor to the apa! Two new participants in one mailing? Be still my beating heart. Welcome, welcome, welcome! Hail fellow well met. Your remarks about participating in the Cult in the 1980s interested me, as does your time in the Washington Science Fiction Association. Despite the WSFA’s remaining active to this day, it was inexplicably absent from the list of science clubs that I sent *De Profundis* to on behalf of the LASFS when I edited that newsletter. How the heck did that happen? I shall have to alert the current editor of *De Prof* so he can amend that.

Say, is your *My Mother the Car* fan fiction still available? Asking for a friend. Some day I, too, hope to participate in the Turbo-Charged Party Animal APA. I attended my first WisCon (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #165) this year, despite being born and raised in Wisconsin. (I became involved in fandom after I left my childhood home to pursue education and employment.) As a recent returnee, I’d welcome your stories about Madison fandom. I’ve already plugged into the Madstf group on the Facebook but haven’t yet spent time with Hank Luttrell or Jae Leslie, with whom I’ve been in touch. I look forward to meeting Jeanne Gomoll and others.

Your time at Microsoft sounds interesting. Did you encounter or work with John D. Berry during your time there? (I imagine you’re well acquainted.) Being laid off can be challenging. I’m sorry the job you returned to in 2021 didn’t fit your capabilities. That must have been a frustrating time. Despite the difficult transition, it sounds like you’ve found stronger footing. Eugene, Ore., sounds beautiful. Why do you dislike Canadian geese? And you’ve returned to school! What a promising next act.

I enjoyed your brief discussion of sex, drugs, rock ’n’ roll, politics, and religion, especially the comparison to baseball. I also appreciated your consideration of AI. Looking forward to future *Echoes in the Niche*.

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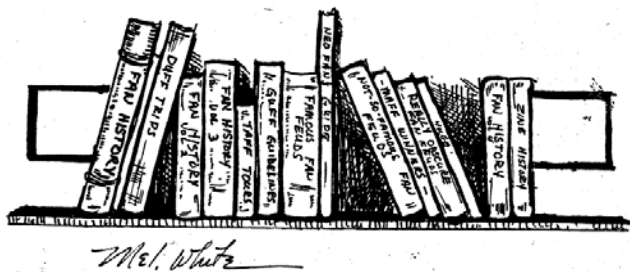
On Our Patron Saints

In late June, I started preparing the biographical sketches I've written about the patron saints of the LASFS for a forthcoming hagiography for use during meetings and potential distribution. Doing so, it became apparent that a handful of saints had somehow bypassed my attention. (Sneaky saints!) In the forthcoming weeks, I'll profile the remaining saints in order to complete the draft.

James DeTar is a more recent patron saint of the LASFS. A frequent participant in online meetings, he often remarks on books, movies, and television shows that he's recently experienced. He'll also occasionally bid to name the Menace of the LASFS and share news items, largely focusing on business and technology.

Such news items are appropriate. A former reporter for *Investor's Business Daily*, DeTar now works as a copy editor for that newspaper and Web site. Previously a reporter and editor for the now-defunct *Electronic News*, which concentrated on the semiconductor industry, he's also contributed to *Forbes*.

An active reader, DeTar occasionally comments on Goodreads, the Oxford University Press blog, and other sites online. He's also self-published a novel, a World War I-era family saga titled *Reunion Day*. (<https://www.amazon.com/Reunion-Day-James-DeTar/dp/0595163629>)



From the Reading File: Book Reviews

Fractal Noise by Christopher Paolini (Tor, 2024)

I was surprised by this book in two ways. Firstly, my

recent buying of science fiction books as presents for my father—an Expanse boxed set by James S.A. Corey and two New Space Opera anthologies edited by Gardner Dozois and Jonathan Strahan—has inspired him to start buying sf books for himself. That's a new development. (He usually reads mysteries, espionage, and thrillers.) This is the first sf book my dad has given me to read after he's read it.

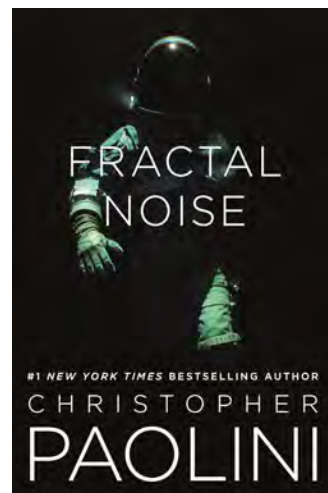
Secondly, the author's name was awfully familiar to me, and I was perplexed that this Christopher Paolini is the same Christopher Paolini who wrote the young adult fantasy series the Inheritance Cycle, which includes *Eragon*. When my son was younger, he absolutely devoured that series, even doing a book report project focusing on the third novel,

Brisinger. The output was a book report in the form of a cereal box, complete with box art, a puzzle on the back panel, and a list of ingredients. My son broke down the characters' presence in the novel by percentages, if I remember correctly.

This is the second novel Paolini has written in his Fractalverse series, and as a prequel, it's a good place to start. I had some doubts about the book given the author's background in YA fantasy, but my concerns were wholly unfounded. *Fractal Noise* is awesome. Set in the year 2234, the book focuses on the experiences of the crew of the *Adamura* after finding an anomaly on the surface of the uninhabited Talos VII. The anomaly is a circular pit delving into the planet. The pit's diameter is 50 kilometers, and there's very little variation in its construction; it cannot be a natural formation.

Similar to Kemi Ashing-Giwa's *This World Is Not Yours* (*The Brass Hat Mind* #12), the novel's chapter titles help propel the narrative. In this case, instead of counting down rather than up, as in Ashing-Giwa's novella, chapters are named after the concentrically circular zones the landing party must travel through in order to reach the pit.

I won't give too much away about what the anomaly is or what happens, but the anomaly produces a rhythmic sound that also helps propel the narrative. As the book proceeds, the sound increases in volume, represented by a change in font size. The landing party experiences technological difficulties, injury,



emotional disturbances, and interpersonal conflicts, making it increasingly less likely that they'll reach their goal.

Based on how good *Fractal Noise* is, I'll seek to read its precursor (but effective sequel) *To Sleep in a Sea of Stars*. Two other aspects of the book are also worth remarking on. In the book, a fictional book series is mentioned: Captain Ace Savage. (*Snow Poster Township* #22) A book read by one of the characters is titled *Captain Ace Savage and the Fiendish Plot of Queen Dragica*. Paolini has reportedly written the first chapter of the book within the book, so we might be able to read the whole work some day.

In addition, a Web site promotion at the end of the novel indicates that actress Jennifer Hale has recorded Fractalverse songs. That's a reference to filk, though not explicitly, and music plays a small role in the novel in the form of spacer chants, or meditative phrases used by deep space travelers to calm themselves or pass time. Songs such as "Sea of Stars," "Chiara's Folly," and "To Hell and Back—Gregorovich" (<https://fractalverse.net/works/music-to-sleep>) were inspired by *To Sleep in a Sea of Stars* rather than this prequel, but I find the idea of book-inspired music, endorsed and promoted by an author, to be intriguing. The closest example I can think of is the Chick Corea Elektric Band's 2004 album, *To the Stars*, which was inspired by L. Ron Hubbard's 1954 novel.

Fractal Noise resonates with several of my favorite aspects of sf: first contact; alien lifeforms; large-scale construction, infrastructure, or ruins; and a long arc of history. The ship mind—an onboard artificial intelligence of sorts built from a human's disembodied brain—estimates that the pit is at least 16,000 years old. Parts of the book reminded me of Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama*, which is a favorite.

When my father thought that I'd like this book, he was wrong. I loved it.

"[T]he stories in this year's *Best American [Science Fiction and Fantasy]* volume focus more on characters implicated in unjust systems rather than on rebels or victims. I found myself wondering if this represented a defiance of discourse on writer's social media: in recent years, YA Twitter spawned viral assertions calling into question the morality of writers who wrote morally dubious characters. As Oren Ashkenazi asserted, 'Without any additional context, a protagonist's actions receive authorial endorsement by default.'"—"Science Fiction, Fantasy, and the End of Earnestness," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Jan. 18, 2025



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews

James Batman

Inspired by a conversation with a friend about *Argoman the Fantastic Superman* (*The Brass Hat Mind* #12) and similar movies, another friend and I watched this 1966 black-and-white Filipino spoof of James Bond and Batman: *James Batman*. The flick features two Filipino comedians, Dolphy as Batman and James Bond (a somewhat awkward dual role) and Boy Alano as Robin. Dolphy, who died in 2012, is reportedly considered the country's King of Comedy. In 1965-1966 alone, he made at least 15 spy film parodies.

There's a lot going on in the movie—and sometimes, nothing at all. That makes the movie a bit of a durational exercise. If there's not a fight scene underway, it can be a bit of a slog. Regardless, when there is something happening—either a fight scene or other involvement of the movie's many villains—*James Batman* is a confusing delight for the eyes.

Villains include Drago, who's partially masked, similar to Doctor Doom—my friend said he looks like Sun Ra—Black Rose, a Catwoman stand-in my friend dubbed Ghoulie Newmar; the Penguin (much taller, slimmer, and scruffier); and another character who seems to have been inspired by Frank Gorshin's turn as the Riddler. We called him the Giggler.

The movie's storyline is simple. A mysterious, evil organization, CLAW, gives world leaders five days to submit to its rule, or they'll "destroy all life in the free world." Rather than work together, Batman and James Bond compete to fight crime, jousting, playing pranks, and otherwise interfering with each other's efforts. Bond fancies himself a ladies' man but becomes ticklish when women canoodle.

There are a couple of science fictional elements in the film. In the movie's version of the Batcave, a hand emerges from some sort of technological device to offer Batman and Robin food. They snack actively before first emerging to challenge the villains. And a large mechanical hand fires some kind of beam from its fingertips, obliterating foes. Similar special effects come into play when Drago gestures menacingly.

While the fight scenes are relatively well, if sloppily, choreographed (sans *Batman's* exclamatory onomatopoeia), the performances generally tend toward the comedic: straightforward silliness and mugging. The movie occasionally becomes confusing, primarily because of Dolphy's dual role and Batman's civilian alter ego wearing clothes not unlike that of the Bond character. In one scene, Bond evades attackers by hiding under a palm tree branch—James Frond? We actually thought it was Batman's alter ego because *Batman*-like music was playing during the scene. The movie also utilizes the TV show's distinctive spin frames to transition between scenes.

Not much has been written about the movie—or similar Filipino parodies. *James Batman* rates only a passing mention in the Foreword to the Michele Brittany-edited *James Bond and Popular Culture*—similar to Thom Shubilla's fleeting reference in *Primetime 1966-1967*—and slightly more contextual consideration in the Roberta Pearson-, William Uricchio-, and Will Brooker-edited *Many More Lives of the Batman*. Iain Robert Smith's *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema* proves even more promising, and the Kate Egan- and Sarah Thomas-edited *Cult Film Stardom* might also merit exploration. References are also available in periodicals such as *Video Watchdog*, *Cult Movies*, and *Psychotronic Video*, primarily in advertisements.

The movie is a pleasant oddity, an intriguing example of transnational parody or knockoff, and a rare example of metamedia crossover.



Chicago Tribune, March 4, 1955

Comments on APA-L #3121

There were some formatting errors in the soft copy of the distribution that our estimable OC emailed me. For example, the cover illustration, welcome material, and TOC—all photographs—were cut in half vertically. Participants' fanzines were also misformatted. As Barbara Gratz Harmon continues to troubleshoot her technological setup, I'm sure we'll eventually return to more consistent PDF distributions—though the most focus should perhaps be placed on the physical editions. The hard copies I've received in the mail—two so far, from before I moved to Wisconsin—have seemed fine. Regardless, I'll do my best to comment.

In *Toony Loons* #798, Joe Zeff described recent difficulties obtaining a new mobile phone case, as well as successful progress made toward acquiring new diabetic socks. Your comments about the accuracy of weather apps resonated with me. My mother and father have a digital weather station in their sunroom that often indicates the possibility of rain or thunderstorms when neither is likely. My wife and I use different weather apps (I'm a WeatherBug man), and the forecast often varies. With Madison's recent rain, there's occasionally predictions for rain—ranging from a 5 percent likelihood to a 50 percent likelihood—that don't result in rain. It feels like a finely detailed degree of accuracy present when accuracy is generally questionable. Regardless, with

brief heavy rain and a tornado watch midweek, I brought my umbrella to work. Chances of 65 percent and upward usually bring rain—unless the weather changes over the course of the day, which it often does in the Midwest. (Incidentally, the quality of light in the office changed dramatically as the sky thickened, and it rained as I wrote this!)



Chicago Tribune, April 22, 1955

PCMag published an article about the best weather apps in mid-2024 (<https://www.pcmag.com/picks/best-weather-apps>) that recommends the following:

- AccuWeather
- The Weather Channel
- Weather Underground
- What the Forecast
- Yahoo Weather
- Carrot Weather
- WeatherBug
- FlowX
- MyRadar Weather Radar
- NOAA Live Weather Radar

Some are free, and some are paid. The last two on that list are noted as the best weather apps for local forecasts, so it might be time for me to switch to the NOAA app—especially with the recent budget cuts for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Weather Service. (<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-lasting-threat-of-trumps-cuts-to-noaa-and-nws-on-american-communities>) Local forecasts are what I care about most. As things are, when weather apps disagree, I try to avoid discussing the relative merits of those apps involved. Part of me misses the days in which we'd check the weather in the newspaper or on the evening TV news and leave it at that.

I went to school with a fellow named Tall Ryegrass. Not really, but that's one of my favorite "jokes." (I use the term advisedly.) With your recent healthcare appointments, I'm glad you were able to identify the cause of the pain in your side. I've never had a kidney stone. Is 8mm large? A quick Web search suggests that kidney stones 6-7mm or larger are considered large and might cause pain. I used insect repellent for the first time in years the other night while attending a play. (*The Brass Hat Mind* #12) The mosquitos of the Midwest haven't bothered us too much yet, and it's wonderful to see fireflies again.

Since my last report, we've contacted the jeweler in New York City who made my wedding ring. She indicates that she can recreate the ring, and we recently had my ring finger sized at Goodman's Jewelers on State Street. They are Madison's longest standing full-service jewelry store and have been in the same location since 1933.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1646 remarked on the Feast of Weeks. Your short poem was wonderful. I'm glad that you were able to help recognize the 88th anniversary of Langer's Delicatessen-Restaurant near MacArthur Park. Since my return to Wisconsin, I've been trying to not enjoy Reuben sandwiches as frequently as I'd like to. When I was younger, they were one of my favorite meals, and I still appreciate them enthusiastically. So far, I've had excellent Reubens at the Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co. in Fitchburg and Come Back In near our furnished apartment.

It's been a while since I've read Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*. If I've seen the *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* movie, it was long enough ago that I should return to it—as well as the novel. More recently, I've enjoyed the character Captain Nemo in the comic book *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #107, Matthew Mitchell reported on the removal and return

of his heart monitor. Your description made it sound like a black box flight recorder for bodies! May the interpretation of the gathered data bode well. Since our move, we're currently in between primary care physicians and other health practitioners, but we've obtained our dental and medical records for our forthcoming caregivers. Midweek, Caitlin was researching local dentists; I need to look into whether any changes need to be made to our health insurance or if I need to wait until my official start date in the Madison office. (I started working out of that location June 9, and my official start date now that the relocation has been approved is July 28.)

I went to Chicago last week for a business trip (*Faculae & Filigree* #44), and my week so far upon returning has been relatively quiet, as well. It almost makes me wonder what's going on. What does Quentin do while working at Shell and Chevron gas stations? I've never worked at a gas station but remember the days of full service. I imagine he works behind the counter, so it's primarily a retail job. I believe I owe you an email response about online convention calendars. Email reply sent!

Your review of Dale Sherman's *The Worst We Can Find* was wonderful. Faunch, as they say. When we were selling our house, the staged home was definitely more tastefully decorated than when we lived there. But it also looked like no one could possibly live there. *House Beautiful* to the extreme, lots of beige, books turned on the shelf so their spines didn't show, and objets d'art that would be a challenge to dust.

Barbara Gratz Harmon's *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #82 updated ellers on her ongoing technological challenges—and promising solutions. May the trail become ever easier. And **Nola Frame-Gray's** bacover made me grin. Your cartoons are always welcome. They're better than any commercial greeting card, though I occasionally buy such cards myself!



Chicago Tribune, May 27, 1955

Emulators & Engines #24

July 21, 2025

Emulators & Engines is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to *Alarums & Excursions* and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

An Appreciation of Roleplaying Games, Alarums & Excursions, and Lee Gold

Having first encountered *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Dragon* magazine as a preteen in 1983—and growing up less than 40 miles away from TSR’s birthplace in Lake Geneva, Wis.—roleplaying games have long been a part of my life. My friends and I enjoyed playing *D&D* at each other’s homes and during church youth group lock-ins (fueled by Mountain Dew and Jolt cola), but I was slow to pick up *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* because it was the province of older scouts in our Boy Scout troop. Older scouts played *AD&D*. Younger scouts played *D&D*. Or so I believed.

When I first became interested in playing *D&D*, I didn’t really know where to start. Because the Frank Mentzer-edited red box was labeled Basic Rules Set 1, when I added the game to my Christmas list, I was very specific. I wanted the Basic Rules Set 1, not Basic Rules Set 2. Definitely not Basic Rules Set 3. I wanted to start with what, for me, was the beginning. (I’ve since learned that there are other, even earlier, games to play!)

Most of the roleplaying game material I was able to afford as a preteen and teenager, I bought at a Waldenbooks at the mall in Janesville, Wis. Sometimes, KB Toys would also stock game items, and I picked up a copy of the 1977 *Dungeons & Dragons Basic Set* complete with cutout cardstock chits at that mall’s location. (Or, I found it at the Nasco company store in my hometown, but that seems slightly apocryphal.) I devoured Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman’s *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* and subsequent tie-in fiction. Those books, like so many science fiction and fantasy novels, were also purchased at Waldenbooks.

I remember deciding not to participate in—or apply for—Gen Con in the late-1980s because, as a child, I wasn’t sure my friends and I were playing *D&D* “correctly.” I couldn’t imagine playing “competitively,” and I was worried I’d be embarrassed. If I’d only known! Regardless, I perused and scrutinized the Gen Con promotional material,

schedule, and registration information published in *Dragon* magazine and highlighted game sessions I wanted to participate in were I brave enough to go. (That regret—I should have gone!—is one reason why I started taking my son to RPG cons while he was still in grade school.)

The older sister of a friend from school was hired as an editor for TSR, and she’d occasionally give me tie-in novels and issues of the relaunched *Amazing Stories* that she picked up at work. As a participant in Badger Boys State, I might have met a relative of Dave Arneson. (I remember that the fleeting friend’s name was Will; we didn’t keep in touch after the youth leadership event, and I haven’t been able to track him down since then.)

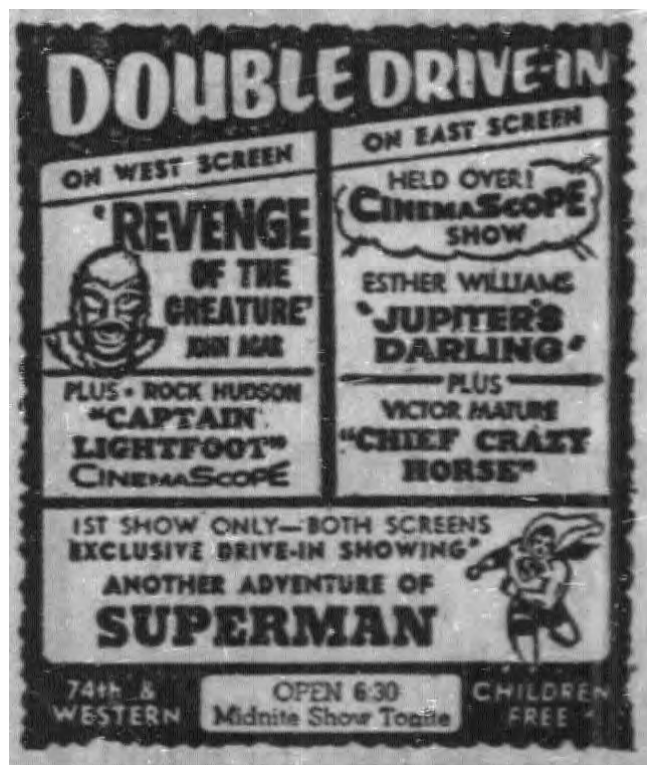


Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1955

By the time I went to college in the mid-1990s, the second edition of *AD&D* had come out, but with my student budget, I couldn’t afford the rule books. Perhaps more importantly, even though I joined a group for a few game sessions held in a study room at the university library, I didn’t really connect with any of the other players, and I fell out of the habit and practice of playing. They weren’t necessarily people I wanted to hang out with generally at the time. (I’m sure they were fine people, and I’m grateful they let me join them, even if briefly.) I didn’t want to spend my time sequestered in that study room—if I wasn’t studying—and I turned my attention to student journalism and college radio.

It wasn’t until I was an adult and my son was in grade school that I—we—found my way back to *D&D*. By then, the fourth edition of *D&D* had been released, and that served as a notable milestone in our gaming. Just like my son’s becoming a Cub Scout pulled me back into Scouting, hiking, camping, and backpacking, a home campaign with my then 7-year-old son, Los Angeles-area conventions at which we’d both play at tables with other adults, and public play through the *D&D* Adventurers League pulled me back into roleplaying games with a vengeance.

An interest in science fiction fandom, fanzines, amateur press associations, small press publishing, and history brought *Alarums & Excursions*—and Lee Gold—to my attention. I believe my first submission to A&E was *The Game Closet* #1 in December 2008, before we moved to the Los Angeles area. My son was then 4, so I might have been taking small steps to return to roleplaying games before we started our home campaign. Since then, I haven't always been a participant in A&E, but I've been a recipient, a supporter, a fan, and for the most part, a friend.



Chicago Tribune, April 29, 1955

Over the last 17 years, I've contributed multiple issues of several fanzines to A&E. Titles have included *The Game Closet* (19 issues, 2008-2015), *Theoretically: Game* (two issues, 2022), and more recently, this fanzine (24 issues, 2023-now). I've participated in a few game sessions at Gold's home. I've spent time with her and Barry through the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (<http://lasfs.org>). She participated in APA-L during my time as Official Collator. I included Los Angeles Filkers Anonymous filk sings in *De Profundis* event listings while I edited the LASFS newsletter. And I've donated boxes upon boxes of A&E back issues—from my collection and the collections of other participants—to the University of Iowa. That library houses the Heath Row Amateur Press Association Collection (<https://aspace.lib.uiowa.edu/repositories/2/resources/361>), which includes

many issues of A&E.

While living in the Los Angeles area, I lived close enough to Gold that instead of mailing me issues, she'd place them underneath her doormat for me to pick up. Every month or two, I'd stop by her home to retrieve my mailing. Sometimes I'd run into Barry in the driveway, and we'd talk a while.

When Gold stopped publishing A&E earlier this year, it was the only RPG-related apa I'd participated in, though I've also read *The Wild Hunt*, *Interregnum*, and *Lords of Chaos*. I've become acquainted with many people through the pages of A&E, developed several friendships, and broadened my roleplaying horizons. Every issue, I learned about a new game or gaming system that I wanted to explore and learn more about. I might have even become a better roleplayer and game master (not just a dungeon master) because of my participation.

Though I started with—and continue to focus on—fantasy RPGs such as *D&D*, any roleplaying game is worth playing at least once. My roleplaying game library or collection, which has grown substantially since my son and I started playing 4E, ranges widely, concentrating primarily on older roleplaying games, options that were contemporary with the early days of *D&D*; the Old School Renaissance; and independent games. Most of my recent gaming is solo play, often using materials from multiple games in a given game or game session. And I'm a firm believer that game prep is game play!

I sometimes think that every game is merely a small part of a larger whole: One Big Game. Every session is part of One Big Campaign. Every table is a representation of One Big Table. Every character is a single dice roll away from another, regardless of which game they were created for. (A witty wag might suggest that I should use GURPS for that. I'd suggest *Rifts* or *Torg*.)

While serving as the Official Collator for APA-L, another amateur press association that dates back to 1964—for a directory of active apae, refer to *Blue Moon Special* (<https://tinyurl.com/bluemoonspecial2024>)!—I learned that A&E had in fact spun out of APA-L. (APA-L remains loosely affiliated with the LASFS.) After the advent of *Dungeons & Dragons*, roleplaying game-related discussion in APA-L became so active that other participants who were less inclined to huck polyhedral dice encouraged early enthusiasts to take their conversation elsewhere. Thus was born A&E. I've always associated A&E with the LASFS and Los Angeles, and its relationship with APA-L intrigued me.

As a fan, writer, editor, and researcher interested in mundane zines, science fiction, sf fandom, fanzines,

comic books, and roleplaying games, I consider A&E directly related to all of those things, not just roleplaying games or amateur press associations. In the pages of A&E, participants are one small step away from other aspects of fandom, and roleplaying games—perhaps more so than video games—easily fall under the umbrella of One Big Fandom. (No matter what APA-L participants might have said or felt in 1974-1975.)

Gold is a sterling example of a fan—and pro—who understands that implicitly. She is the lifeblood of A&E, serving for 50 years as its host as well as a contributor. She's a game designer (*GURPS Japan*, *Pirates*, *Vikings*, *Land of the Rising Sun*, *Lands of Adventure*). She's a game master. She's an author (the Bloodslut trilogy and the more recent Valhalla series). She's a member of the LASFS. She's a filker. Until recently, she also published *Xenofilkia*, a filk-related fanzine. She remains active in Los Angeles Filkers Anonymous, hosting and participating in online filk sings. She was inducted into the Filk Hall of Fame in 1997. She was awarded a Hall of Fame plaque from the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design. And as a lifelong Los Angeles resident, she welcomed this newcomer to the Los Angeles area into her apa, her home, and her circle of friends. Gold might disagree with this, but not only is she a Big Name Fan, she's a Big Deal. In the best possible sense.

As the founder and Official Editor of A&E, Gold has served as an extraordinary host. (Her management of A&E has helped me learn how to be a better OE and OC of other apae myself.) Whether a gathering of people occurs because of filk music, roleplaying games, or another aspect of fandom, Gold has spent much of her life creating spaces in which she and other people can talk or write about activities and topics they love. She creates spaces in which people can do Very Neat Things. Throughout the history of A&E, she attracted a group of some of the most clever, critical, humorous, interesting, and thoughtful people who enjoyed playing, creating, thinking about, writing about, and discussing roleplaying games and adjacent topics. The impact of that decades-long conversation will continue well past the end of A&E.

Already, there are two successors to A&E. George Phillies's *A Gentle Stroll* launched in June and has already published two issues. Similarly, Jim Vassilakos's *Ever & Anon*—or *E&A*, A&E in reverse—began in July. Its second issue will be distributed soon. At the end of A&E, the conversation within its pages was still extremely active and lively. It is only fitting that the adventure continues.

Gold and A&E were also great motivators. Both encouraged me to think about roleplaying games in

new ways, to experiment with games I might not have sought out otherwise, and—especially in her home games—to step outside my comfort zone as a roleplayer. (I was surprised by the lack of character sheets and the rare use of dice, though they were available nearby.) And the apa's monthly deadlines were also highly motivating. Every month, I wanted to have something to say. I wanted to Be There. So I dove into roleplaying games in one way or another in order to share my experiences and ideas.

I will miss A&E, but I don't need to miss Gold—she's still around—and I don't need to miss the joys of roleplaying games. Already, in the pages of *E&A*, it feels like home. I cannot wait to see what Gold does next.

So, three cheers for Lee Gold:

Hip hip hooray!

Hip hip hooray!

Hip hip hooray!

Sound the alarum. An excursion is afoot!



Chicago Tribune, April 29, 1955

Engines & Emulators #2

July 21, 2025

Engines & Emulators is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to Ever & Anon and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Event Report: Free RPG Day

The deadline for last month's mailing was also Free RPG Day! (<https://freerpgday.com>) So I ventured out to Gamer's Library (<https://www.facebook.com/GamersLibraryMadison>) on State Street to check out the shop—and see whether they were participating in the recognition of the day.

Gamer's Library is a relatively decent-sized shop, split down the middle to offer a spacious retail area, as well as tables for game play. Concentrating primarily on board games and collectible card games, they're also an independent Warhammer retailer and dedicate several shelves to roleplaying games.

Even though most of their roleplaying game stock focuses on *Dungeons & Dragons*, other games are also on hand, and they offer a few intriguing independent games. I was drawn to *Goblin Quest* (see below) and the Powered by the Apocalypse game *Rhapsody of Blood*, both of which I thought would be fun solo.

Around the corner from the register, the store offered Free RPG Day materials along the display cases on the table side of the store. I didn't see that immediately upon entering. I picked up an issue of *White Dwarf* (see below) and two other items, so I was able to select two Free RPG Day options.

Having checked out what participating publishers were offering online before leaving the Infernal Wilson, our furnished apartment, I picked up the *Wires in the Woods* Solo Quickstart and *Level 1: The Free RPG Day Indie RPG Anthology* Vol. 6. None of the games in that volume are designed for solo play, but any game can be played solo, and I was inspired by its wide range of content.

The staff was friendly and helpful, and one shared a story about how, as a preteen or teenager, he broke the glass of another store's display case while rolling a particularly large, heavy die. A cautionary tale, to be sure.

Given the availability of tables, the store also hosts an active schedule of public play, including *D&D* Adventurers League, *Pokemon*, *Magic: The Gathering*, and *Warhammer 40,000*. Even though

we're only staying at the Infernal Wilson for another month or so, if I tire of solo play, I know where to go: my closest local game store, Gamer's Library—on Sunday morning.

Store Report: I'm Board! Games & Family Fun

After a screening of *Them!* in conjunction with a book release event in late June, I stopped by the Sun Prairie location of I'm Board! Games & Family Fun. (<https://imboardgames.com>) I'd been to their campus location on Monroe Street in Madison previously but hadn't checked out any of their other locations yet.

The Sun Prairie store offered more roleplaying game stock than Gamer's Library, above. Organized into sections labeled Classic Systems, Fifth Edition Supplements and Compatible Settings, Independent Publishers, Licensed Properties, Pathfinder/Starfinder, Starter Sets, and other categories, I'm Board! offers a little bit of almost everything for practically everyone.



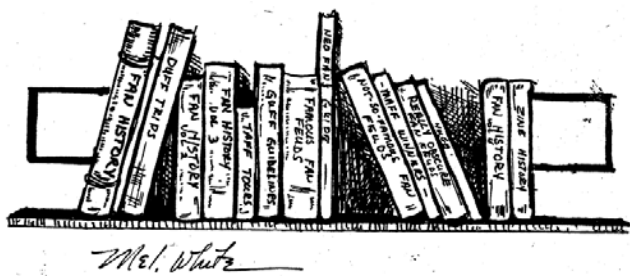
I was especially attracted to the *Pathfinder* Pocket Edition volumes published by Paizo Inc., but I don't really need any more *Pathfinder* materials. (I should use what I already have, once it's not all packed up any more.) Regardless, the Pocket Editions are absolutely adorable and very handy, reminding me of the fourth edition *Dungeons & Dragons* Essentials volumes and *Mutants & Masterminds: Pocket Player's Guide*. Faunch!

The store also stocks *Call of Cthulhu*, *Dragonbane*, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, *Star Wars* Roleplaying, *Blades in the Dark*, *Kids on Bikes*, and *Numenera*—even the *Pendragon* Starter Set. The stock on the shelves indicates that there are plenty of options beyond *D&D*.

In addition to another recent issue of *White Dwarf* (see below), I picked up two of Scott Almes's *Simply*

Solo games (<https://buttonshygames.com/collections/simply-solo-games>), *Unsurmountable* (see below) and *The Royal Limited*. I also snagged a seafaring-related storytelling game titled *Oh Captain, My Captain!* The card-based quick-play roleplaying game looks promising for solo play.

Even though there are more local options located closer to me, it's good to know that this store exists in Sun Prairie. The location offers public play for *Star Wars: Shatterpoint*, *Heroscape*, *Magic: The Gathering*, *D&D*, *Disney Lorcana*, *Pokemon*, *Battletech*, and *Warhammer*, as well as board game prototype testing events.



From the Reading Pile: Magazine Reviews *White Dwarf* #512-513 (May-June 2025)

It's been a while since I've read a recent issue of *White Dwarf*, but having recently packed up my assorted *Warhammer*, *Warhammer 40,000*, and *Middle-Earth Strategy Battle Game* miniatures in padded carrying cases to ship overseas—and seeing that recent issues are serializing a “Trials of Albarak” story reminiscent of *Gotrek and Felix*—I wanted to check in on the state of the periodical.

After Games Workshop's frustrating experimentation with slimmer weekly issues of *White Dwarf* and the thicker monthly *Warhammer Visions* periodical in 2014-2016, I'm glad they've since returned to one, monthly magazine. *White Dwarf* has largely served as a house organ and magalog—magazine catalog, natch—since issue #140 or #152 in the early 1990s. If you play the various *Warhammer* games, that can be useful and fun. Even if you don't, the magazine remains adjacent to roleplaying games and is absolutely beautiful to this day. It's worth picking up for the artwork and photography alone.

The quality of the miniatures painting featured in *White Dwarf* is astounding—rich fodder for campaign and game session ideas, as well as character and creature design—and the magazine occasionally focuses on *Warhammer*-related tie-in novels and audio recordings, roleplaying games, and other ways to experience the fantasy and sf settings. With Cubicle 7's release of *Warhammer: The Old World*

Roleplaying Game early next year, it might be a good opportunity and time to reengage.

These two issues focus on *Warhammer 40,000* and the “Season of Chaos,” concentrating respectively on the Nurgle and Khorne factions or armies. The Planet *Warhammer* section in the front of the book features letters of comment and photographs of players, as well as reader-painted miniatures. White Dwarf Bunker at the back of the book reports on the global *Warhammer* club, offering profiles of local clubs and even more reader-painted minis. Every month, the Bunker offers various assignments that readers can choose to pursue, providing useful motivation in the hobby, if such encouragement and guidance are desired.

The Hobby Hangout painting tips remind me slightly of model railroading, more than similar content has in the past. In fact, the piece about painting rust and grime in #512 resonates strongly with the weathering of HO scale equipment and structures. And additional material focuses on game-adjacent offerings. The Worlds of *Warhammer* piece in #513 refers to the recent tie-in novel *Blacktalon: First Mark* by Andy Clark, and #512 includes an interview with the screenwriters of the animated *The War of the Rohirrim*.

White Dwarf is an interesting balance of crunch (mini statistics and gameplay reports) and fluff (lore and artwork), hobbyist how-to tips and tricks, and other content. Regardless of how you engage with miniature wargaming as represented by Games Workshop's activity, there's an entry point in the magazine.

For me, the entry point was the serialized fiction in these two issues. James Brogden's “The Trials of Albarak” is a five-part serial, with issues of *White Dwarf* including a self-contained portion of the story in the Black Library section of the magazine. The framing device for the stories is a lore-speaker of the Frostfang clan telling tales of Albarak to its beardless. Given the self-contained nature of each portion, you don't really need to purchase all five issues to enjoy it—it's not really a serial—but it's a good excuse for me to buy *White Dwarf* again for a while.

The story so far is fun, perhaps published to lead up to the forthcoming release of Games Workshop's *Order Battletome: Kharadron Overlords* volume, which will inspire even more content related to the duardin (what dwarfs are called in the Age of Sigmar). Personally, I'm more intrigued by *Warhammer: The Old World*, which Games Workshop released in early 2024 to revisit its classic *Warhammer Fantasy Battles* miniature wargame. The Age of Sigmar hasn't really piqued my interest.

In any event, it's always fun to return to *White Dwarf*, even if you don't play *Warhammer* or *Warhammer 40,000*. After reading *Dice Men: The Origin Story of Games Workshop* by Ian Livingstone with Steve Jackson (*Emulators & Engines* #21), I'm glad I did.

Solo Game Report: *Goblin Quest*

While at Gamer's Library (see above), I was drawn to Grant Howitt's *Goblin Quest* (<https://gshowitt.itch.io/goblin-quest>) largely because of its appealing book packaging and colorfully playful artwork by Jon Morris. After reading a couple of issues of *White Dwarf*, it was the perfect roleplaying game to explore in a solo session. Reminiscent of the *Pathfinder* module *We Be Goblins!* and games such as *Monsters! Monsters!* in which players roleplay the creatures that inhabit fantasy roleplaying game settings, *Goblin Quest* is a very fun—and funny—game. It would be much more fun playing with a group of other people, even without a gamesmaster (what Howitt calls the game master), but even solo, it resulted in some delightfully simple silliness.

Instead of creating characters, players create clutches of goblins, each representing five distinct goblins. Death comes quickly in *Goblin Quest*. You select an expertise, a quirk, and an ancestral heirloom, as well as a good luck charm that's utilized to reroll unfavorable outcomes. The character sheet features all five goblins, which you name, and Howitt encourages you to draw the members of your clutch. So I did:



When playing with a group, each player identifies the quest its goblin wants to embark upon. Those quests are then combined into one big, confusing quest. Playing solo, I selected a quest for each member of the clutch before combining them. A couple of my options were deprioritized in order to make the resulting quest work better as a unified, though messy, singular goal.

Bingo Red Eye had found a dilapidated boat in the Great Battle Camp's Junk Pile. He wants to sail across Slime Lake to see what's on the other side even though he can walk there. (You can actually see across Slime Lake.)

Kutt of the Mudborn Avengers—which might be a better clutch name than *Destined for Greatness*, which I chose hastily, misspelling it in Goblinese—has been reading a ratty paperback of Rainer Maria Rilke and wants some answers: Who made All This? Why? He'd like to find them and rub their face in it.

And Finger the Keg Killer is really hungry for a chicken dinner. The goblin-beautiful Hatey Bloodpaw has agreed to cook one for him, as long as he provides the chicken and lets her eat half—the bottom half. If they sail far enough in Bingo Red Eye's ramshackle dinghy, maybe they'll reach Cowsmash the Butcher. He usually has chickens.

Combining those quests, I ended up with the following quest: Sail to find the Chicken Who Made All This. Players brainstorm what equipment and materials you might need to accomplish the quest. My list included items such as the boat, a map of Slime Lake and navigation tools, chicken bait (seed or worms), a chicken trap (a basket or sack, perhaps), a chicken dictionary to enable and foster communication, Kutt's dog-eared and well-worn paperback book, and a not-too-dirty washcloth.

You then break the quest into three more manageable tasks, each of which has three stages. You identify whether a misfortune befalls you at any step along the way, and you assign a difficulty rating to each stage based on the number of players and the existence of a misfortune. For solo play, I used the number of goblins rather than the number of players. All of my misfortunes, randomly selected, occurred during Stage 3 of each task.

Task #1: Prepare to Hunt Chickens

Stage 1: Enter Cowsmash the Butcher's (4)

Stage 2: Procure chicken-related tools and materials (4)

Stage 3: Learn as much as we can from the chickens to prepare for the Chicken Who Made All This (Misfortune: Orcs and bugbears—Some bugbears decide to play goblin football)—5

Task #2: Float the Boat

Stage 1: Enter the Junk Pile without being seen (5)

Stage 2: Find the boat again (5)

Stage 3: Take the boat to Slime Lake (Misfortune: Orcs and bugbears—A bugbear makes you a deal that you foolishly accept)—6

Task #3: Chicken Catch-a-Story

Stage 1: Find the Chicken Who Made All This (6)

Stage 2: Establish without a doubt that we have the Right Chicken (6)

Stage 3: Capture the Chicken (Misfortune: Goblins and hobgoblins—A hobgoblin cart full of paperwork and supplies smashes into the goblins)—7

I had to look up the game online to learn how difficulty ratings work—thankfully, there was a discussion on Reddit. Difficulty ratings are not target numbers or modifiers for use when undertaking actions or while engaged in combat. They're countdown dice, and each successful action lowers the rating by one. At 0, you've successfully accomplished the stage in question.

When goblins undertake tasks, players make a modified d6 roll against a simple oracle-like table that determines the degree of success or failure. The actions you undertake at each stage—and whether your goblins succeed or fail—offer additional opportunities for silly storytelling and subsequent hilarity. For solo play, I might lower the base difficulty rating from 5 to 3 to decrease the number of actions needed. Regardless, even though I haven't yet undertaken the quest—I've only created it—*Goblin Quest* is great fun.

Not a bad way to spend a Sunday afternoon. The misfortune for Stage 3 of Task #1 reminded me of Games Workshop's game *Blood Bowl*, which introduced another interesting option for game play. That stage itself could be played through as a simplified, modified solo game of *Blood Bowl*.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1955

Game Report: *Unsurmountable*

Scott Almes's Simply Solo games (<https://buttonshygames.com/collections/simply-solo-games>) published by Button Shy are extremely compact, portable card games packaged in their own pocket-sized carrying case. *Unsurmountable* is designed for one player of at least 8 years old and can be played in about 15 minutes.

The game's small deck includes 17 Mountain cards and one Rescue Helicopter card, all featuring artwork by Christy Johnson. Your goal as the player—or mountain climber—is to arrange the Mountain cards from your Base Camp (effectively your hand) so there's a continuous route up the mountain, each level getting progressively smaller from a base of four cards to the one-card peak. You can only play cards in a specific location of your base camp, but you can discard other cards to activate their abilities. As your base camp empties, you adjust and refill its cards.

If you're able to build a complete mountain with a continuous path from bottom to top, your mountain climber succeeds. If you run out of cards before you finish building the mountain, however, you lose. The rules offer additional levels of difficulty to keep the game fresh and new over time.

I've only played *Unsurmountable* once since buying it at I'm Board! (see above), but it was fun—and I'm likely to play it again. Given the game's small size and portability, it's a great game to carry with you. The only thing you really need to find in order to play wherever you are is a flat surface large enough for your mountain. At the Infernal Wilson, I found that a folding television tray table offers adequate room.

Comments on Ever & Anon #1

In *A Rhodomontadulous Promenade* #1, **George Phillies** shared information about his background playing wargames, computer games, and roleplaying games. I was unaware that you'd gone to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or that you'd founded the MIT Strategic Games Society (<https://www.mit.edu/~sgs>), which continues to this day. Kudos! When I lived and worked in the Boston area, I participated in activities organized by the MIT Electronic Research Society and attended MIT Anime Club screenings—but didn't get involved in the Strategic Games Society or Science Fiction Society.

Thank you for sharing the opening to the unfinished novel *Small Giant Class Liberation Army* and the reprint of the opening to *No Tears for a Princess*. I think that it's only fitting that the closure of *Alarums & Excursions* resulted in the creation of two roleplaying game-related apae. *Alarums & Excursions* peacefully co-existed with *The Wild Hunt*,

Interregnum, The Lords of Chaos, and even APA-DUD/Pandemonium over the years. Given how active A&E was at the end, there's likely enough energy and interest for at least two roleplaying game apae even today. I wish you the best of luck with A Gentle Stroll.

Attronarch's *Overlord's Annals* Vol. 4 #5 continued publishing session reports from the Conquering the Barbarian Altanis *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign. I especially enjoyed kickmaniac's illustrations.

In *Bumbling Through Dungeons* #1, **Mark A. Wilson** informed fellow apans about his preparation for the Origins Game Fair. (<https://www.originsgamefair.com>) I've never been to Gen Con (*Emulators & Engines* #24) or Origins. I hope that your time with playtesters and other designers was fun and fruitful, even if you weren't able to schedule any pitch sessions with publishers. That you'll have seven games ready for pitch sessions next year is impressive and inspiring!

Your remarks about not contributing to Lisa Padol's one-shot tribute to Lee Gold resonated with me. In writing my contribution, *Emulators & Engines* #24, continuing my numbering from A&E, I realized that what I was writing was an appreciation of roleplaying games and A&E—as well as of our former OE. Gold looms large in my understanding of roleplaying games.

I was intrigued by your statement that “D&D's odd half-edition is seemingly not selling too well...” I haven't seen any reporting on its sales, but having recently been tempted by the *Pathfinder* Pocket Editions (see above), I'm curious whether a \$50 splatbook or ongoing online subscription is an appropriate entry point for new or casual players these days. A more affordable combined handbook for game masters and an even more affordable, concise player's guide might prove more appealing, especially during a global economic downturn, even if we're not yet in a recession.

Your future hex crawl adventure and nautical campaign inspired by *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* sound promising. I look forward to your report from Origins!

Patrick Riley's *Quasipseudoludognostication* #1 offered a reintroduction of sorts, which was helpful even for me. I am sorry to hear about your layoff earlier this year. I'm not sure you're indulging your ego; it sounds like your layoff was a mistake made by your former employer. They lost a strong talent. The fact that you found a new job at higher pay so quickly is a testament to your expertise and skills. Hopefully, your new boss is less of an <expletive deleted>. Your

experience with LinkedIn perplexed me.

Thank you for your conrep on Kublacon. I especially enjoyed your writeup of the *Kids on Bikes* session. I recently encountered a novel titled *Meddling Kids* by Edgar Cantero that seems to be a sendup of *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* by way of H.P. Lovecraft or Stephen King—kind of a gently parodic version of *It*. Your comments about published scenarios for *Trail of Cthulhu* and *Shadowdark* intrigued me. Do you generally dislike published scenarios, or just at cons?

That you published your final comments for A&E in E&A was wonderfully appropriate. I appreciate the sense of continuity and consistency this new apa offers, even though it's already its own distinct entity.



Chicago Tribune, April 29, 1955

In *Twisting the Rope* #1, **Myles Corcoran** described a common experience among apans. “I found myself falling behind with the reading and finding each deadline more anxiety-inducing than a spur to my imagination,” he wrote. I've felt that multiple times over my time participating in apae. In the late 2000s, it led to burnout and a period of gafiation. Now I try to find a Middle Way that enables me to satisfy minac requirements, if any, while still focusing on finding the fun—that spur to the imagination. If fanac becomes a hassle, we're doing it wrong.

I appreciated your description of moving from complicated rules systems to rules-light games over the last 25 years. That might be a common trajectory for long-time players and game masters. I was amused by the mention of a risk-averse player who makes

characters who avoid combat. Sometimes, we make characters who aren't like us at all—and do things we might not. Sometimes, we recreate ourselves.

It's awesome that you and your co-workers organized a boardgaming club. Where I work, there are occasionally roleplaying game groups and sessions—I ran *Pathfinder* for a short time. There's also a fantasy book discussion group. While I applaud and encourage such activities, as I get older and further along in my career, I find myself wanting to spend less time at work rather than more, even if pursuing activities I otherwise enjoy outside the workplace. The details about your *Mausritter* game reminded me of my solo play of *Brambletrek*. (*Engines & Emulators* #1) I should return to that! Hopefully, E&A will spur your imagination. I enjoyed your fanzine and look forward to more.



Chicago Tribune, June 3, 1955

Mitch Hyde's *Dreadsword* #1 was right up my alley. Thank you for focusing on *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, eschewing generative artificial intelligence, and bringing a bit of Old School Renaissance flair. Your illustrations are glorious. I got a kick out of you not using the psionics subsystem. When I started playing *AD&D*, there were way too many paladins and characters with psionics within my group of friends. "The wilds must be littered with

ruins of dead empires, and overflowing with lost treasures," you wrote. I do believe I'd enjoy sitting at your table.

In *De Ludis Elficis Fictis* dated June 2025, **Paul Holman** expressed appreciation of Lee Gold and A&E. "Even when I did not contribute, I valued and enjoyed reading A&E," he wrote. Hear! Hear! While I would have welcomed more in-depth reportage on your travels in Japan, I hope your travels and return home were safe and easy. Your discussion of introducing new rules made me think about the differences between the 2014 and 2024 fifth editions of *Dungeons & Dragons*. "With new or alternative versions of rules, we have hit the problem of people remembering the wrong version of the rules," you wrote. Even during the Kerzmielzorg campaign before I left the Los Angeles area, we'd often catch ourselves disambiguating between the two; we'd intended to play the 2024 version but kept returning to the 2014 version.

Gabriel Roark's *Bugbears & Ballyhoo* #40 described the progression from A&E to E&A as though a character had experienced level loss or life drain. Well done, good sir. I am glad that your interest in *Arduin*, participation in an Internet forum dedicated to Original D&D, and correspondence with Lee Gold led to your presence here. I am glad that you continue to concentrate on "old-school RPGs," and I look forward to future issues of *B&B*!

In the first issue of *The Phoenix Nest*, **Michael Cule** mentioned the British apa Trollcrusher, James Branch Cabell, and David Langford by the end of the first column—providing multiple areas of potential inquiry. Of Langford, I already know. I enjoyed reading about your experiences at Eastercon. How was Stabcon and Convulsion?

Mark Nemeth's *The Seedling* #48 discussed one of the benefits of retirement: playing more games! "If I could just get all my friends to retire too, we could play in the daytime," he wrote. That's one of the reasons I'm looking forward to the end of my vocational labors. I've been slightly envious of a friend who retired a year or so ago—the DM of the Kerzmielzorg campaign in which I participated—who's able to run and play in online games during the day, albeit primarily with people in Europe.

I wish I'd remembered that you lived in Albuquerque! We spent a night there during our drive from California to Wisconsin (*Faculae & Filigree* #43), and I shared time and table with a friend made through science fiction fandom and fanzines at Los Cuates on Lomas Boulevard. Next time I visit your city, I'll reach out to you, as well. However, I'm not sure I agree with you that you have "somewhat

retrograde taste in roleplaying games.” Your taste in roleplaying games is just fine, and I’m glad you’re here.

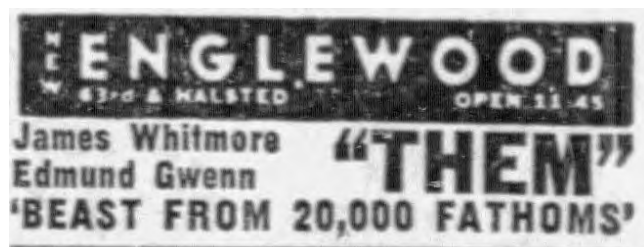
In your session reports, I enjoyed the illustrations created with Reve, as well as your observations and commentary. Thank you for the book reviews, even if you included them to “fill the remaining space.” I was most intrigued by Kim Stanley Robinson’s *2312* and Roger Zelazny’s *Jack of Shadows*, even though I really enjoyed your exploration of the critical response to Lauren Haddad’s *Fireweed*.

In **Patrick Zoch**’s *The Dragon’s Beard* #86, he offered an appreciation of Lee Gold. I agree with your description of her as “gracious, no-nonsense, and welcoming.” Your piece, “Zoch’s Big Traits for NPCs,” is a doozy of an article—and the kind of material I think was published more regularly in A&E during its earliest days. I shall have to set that aside to use for NPCs and PCs alike in my solo game sessions.

Brian Christopher Misiaszek’s *Age of Menace* #238 detailed his exposure to and esteem for A&E, as well as Lee Gold. I have enjoyed reading about how all of us first encountered the apa and its OE. Congratulations on your final days at Hamilton Health Sciences Centre and the graduation of your daughter. I enjoyed reading the biographical sketches you wrote for the Havana Horror game. Grounding roleplaying game scenarios in real-world history offers an excellent opportunity for research.

Your article “Fighting Fascism in the Hero Pulps” is an even better example of that, even if it’s not connected to a game currently underway. What an impressive piece of writing! The research must have been a lot of fun. I would welcome more writing—from any of us—along these lines.

And in *Traveller Play-By-Email*, **Jim Vassilakos** and **Timothy Collinson** offered the 46th chapter detailing their Plankwell Campaign. Thank you for undertaking E&A, Jim. Given how many former contributors to A&E are already here, I expect we’ll have much of the remainder of the group participating soon.



Chicago Tribune, June 10, 1955

July 24, 2025

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On Our Patron Saints

(In which I continue writing biographical sketches of the remaining patron saints of the LASFS whom I neglected to profile while working through the list in previous issues of this apazine)

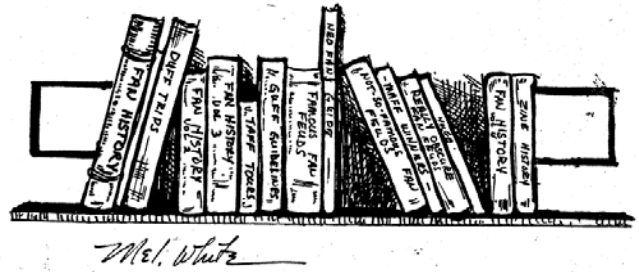
Ed Green joined the LASFS in February 1971, was photographed at the 1972 L.A.con I, and was listed in the January-June 1973 *Directory to Los Angeles Fandom*. He and his high school friends introduced Alva Svoboda to fandom. Green later served as president and a member of the board of directors for the LASFS for multiple years in the early 1990s to the mid-2000s. He also served on the board of directors for the Southern California Institute for Fan Interests Inc. An active card player, he played Oh Hell quite vigorously. Green received the Evans-Freehafer Award for service to the LASFS in 1995.

An active con runner, he volunteered for Worldcons (including Denvention 3 and Nippon 2007) and regional cons such as Westercon 57 and Westercon 61. Green chaired Loscon 24 and Loscon 31, and co-chaired La-La's Eleven, a 2003 relaxacon. His name appears in the minutes for the World Science Fiction Society business meeting held at L.A.con IV in 2006. Green appeared on *Mike Hodel's Hour 25* radio program as a guest for a couple of episodes in 2004 to discuss Loscon. He was also a member of the National Fantasy Fan Federation and a supporter of the Roswell in 2002 hoax bid.

Participating in APA-L, Green's apazine was titled *Knight of the Pens*. He also contributed to APA-H, CAPA-Alpha, Marty Cantor's fanzine *No Award*, and other fanzines including *Rotating Moderator*, *Poorly Conceived Awkward Silence*, *The Drink Tank*, and *File 770*. Green, an Air Force veteran, served with the National Guard during the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. He was Tuckerized by David Gerrold in the short story "Entanglements," which was published in the May/June 2015 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*.

Working as an actor, Green appeared in music

videos for the Passenger song “27,” Mark Ronson’s “Uptown Funk,” New Found Glory’s “Ready and Willing,” and Billy Boy on Poison’s “On My Way.” Green has also appeared in commercials and videos for AT&T, Livescribe, Rebate Key, Rich Dad Interactive, and Carmind. He appeared in an American Repertory Theatre Institute Alumni Association parody trailer for *Spielberg: Jurassic—A Director Prepares... to Kill*, as well as in movies such as *Air Collision*, *Savageland*, and Don Glut’s independent anthology film *Tales of Frankenstein*. You can see additional acting credits on IMDb. (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2907003>)

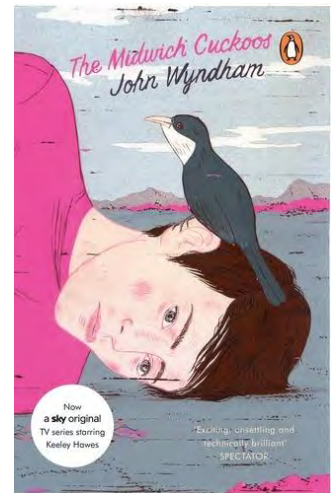


From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

The Midwich Cuckoos by John Wyndham (Penguin, 2008)

While writing mailing comments for ANZAPA earlier this month, it struck me that I've read very little of the work of John Wyndham. In fact, all I'd previously read of his writing was the 1937 short story "The Perfect Creature," which was included in the 1953 anthology *Shadow of Tomorrow*, edited by Frederik Pohl. (*T&T* #52)

Having read Ira Levin's novel *The Stepford Wives* and Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (T&T #113)—and confusing Wyndham with John Christopher (whom I confuse with Christopher Priest)—it was high time I read more Wyndham. I must untangle this knot! *The Midwich Cuckoos*, originally published in 1957, is a very good, though subtle and quiet novel. Comparisons to the Levin and Finney works above seem sound, though I disagree with Damon Knight's review of the book (included in his 1967 collection *In Search of Wonder*), which described the novel as “deadly serious, and ... deadly



dull... ”

The Midwich Cuckoos is a story of alien invasion—though admittedly lacking the sturm und drang of many such tales—xenogenesis, and telepathy. It also posits composite or collective life forms, in this case one collective male humanoid and one collective female humanoid—rather than distinct individuals. And Wyndham’s description of the impact of group learning—what one humanoid learns being known by the others—is quite interesting.

I especially enjoyed the novel’s narration, which was told from the perspective of a character who wasn’t always in Midwich. The reader therefore experiences the story intermittently as it unfolds, sometimes with a gap several years long in between. The alien-sired children develop more quickly than their human counterparts, which contributes to the story’s drama and tension. The initial scenes in which healthcare professionals, law enforcement, and the military attempt to determine—and understand—what was happening in the village are also quite suspenseful. Canaries are utilized.

The control the children are able to exert on others reminded me slightly of an episode of *The Twilight Zone*, “It’s a Good Life,” as well as the Purple Man (see below), a Marvel comic book supervillain. And I appreciated Wyndham’s consideration of how the parents of such children might feel. The range of emotions experienced by the mothers (occasionally young women who were virgins, contributing to one especially effective portion of the book) was intriguing. Some women felt motherly toward the children. Others did not. How the mothers’ spouses—definitely not the fathers of the children—felt was quite different, and the use of the word “cuckoos” in the title becomes important.

Now that I’ve read this novel by Wyndham, I’m keen to read others, including *The Day of the Triffids* and *The Chrysalids*. I also need to return to movie adaptations such as *Village of the Damned* (1960 and 1995) and *Children of the Damned*. Next up in the ball of twine: John Christopher’s *The Tripods* trilogy. While I haven’t read the books, *Boys’ Life*’s graphic adaptation published in 1981-1986 was one of my earliest introductions to science fiction. That I didn’t seek out the novels at that young age confounds me.

In the Spectator Amateur Press Society, Burnett Toskey mentioned Don Wilcox’s short story “The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years” (*Amazing Stories*, October 1940). So I sought it out. The 23-page story featuring artwork by Julian S. Krupa is an early and excellent example of the generation ship story. In fact, the ISFDB lists only two earlier such stories. Murray

Leinster’s “Proxima Centauri” (*Astounding Stories*, March 1935) is the earliest—and warranted inclusion in the New England Science Fiction Association’s Core Reading List of Fantasy and Science Fiction.

Set in the year 2066, the story details the travels of the *Flashaway*. A Keeper of the Traditions is assigned to wake from life suspension every century in order to keep the crew and passengers grounded in human history and culture. An unplanned—and unexpected—population explosion makes that task challenging, and the Keeper must contend with limited resources, familial feuding, and the besmirchment of his own reputation and role as new generations proceed.

It’s a good yarn, and the ending comes as a pleasant surprise. “The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years” offers a nice counterpoint to Brian Aldiss’s *Non-Stop* (T&T #34)—or vice versa.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Vampire Circus

This 1972 film is one of the later releases from Hammer Film Productions. 1972-1974 would remain relatively active years for the studio, resulting in five to seven movies a year, declining over time. Hammer's final two movies were released in 1976 and 1979. After *Hammer House of Horror*, which aired on television for one season in 1980, the studio went on hiatus until its eventual return to the big screen in 2008.

Based on the production quality and storyline of *Vampire Circus*, a movie viewer might not recognize or realize that Hammer was approaching its end of days. It is a very good movie that maintains the visual and emotional atmosphere of the studio's work in the 1950s and 1960s. While the movie glams up its vampires and lycanthropes a little bit—there's an erotic undertone to much of the proceedings—it doesn't become silly or cartoony. *Vampire Circus* is no self-parody, despite a somewhat unfortunate title.

As the movie opens, residents of the Serbian village of Stetl rise up to overthrow a vampiric count who's been preying on their women and children. On the brink of death, overcome by its vassals, the vampire curses the village, indicating that everyone will die.

Fifteen years later, the village is dealing with the horrific impact of a plague—considered by some to be the curse of the deposed count, while others deem vampires the stuff of myth and legend—and is quarantined from neighboring communities by armed roadblocks. One of the town fathers evades the roadblocks to procure some much-needed medicine. And a traveling circus, described as “gypsies,” arrives.

The children are enthralled. The young women are enamored. And children begin to disappear again. The circus aspect leads to some absolutely wonderful imagery. Skip Martin, appearing courtesy of the real-world Billy Smart's Circus, portrays Michael, a delightfully malevolent though diminutive presence. Anthony Higgins, credited as Anthony Corlan, offers a sultry performance as a lycanthropic black panther. The scenes in which the panther leaps, landing as Higgins's character Emil, are quite effective.

A pair of sibling vampires, the children of the Gypsy Woman leading the troupe, are also delightful. Online reportage suggests that the actors portraying those characters—Milovan Vesnitch and Serena, the Webers—also might have worked as acrobats in Billy Smart's Circus. The scenes in which they toss and tumble through the air, periodically seen in bat form,

are quite nice.

Serena also appears as an “erotic tiger-woman dancer,” although a still published *Scarlet Street* #6 (1992) doesn't look much like the female sibling character. And David Prowse—later of Darth Vader fame—appears throughout as the mute Strongman.

Vampire Circus' tenor and tone is more than adequately gothic, and there are several startling moments. When the daughter of the schoolteacher—whose wife fell prey to the vampire in the opening scenes—encounters several corpses of villagers mauled by a werecreature (the panther?) in the forest, the fleeting visuals offer substantial shock value.

If this is the kind of movie Hammer was releasing just a few years before the studio's closure, I can only imagine what might have followed if such fare had remained popular enough to be economically viable at the time. Though late Hammer, *Vampire Circus* is an excellent flick.



Chicago Tribune, March 4, 1955

Comments on APA-L #3122

The photograph I contributed for the cover was taken at Clines Corners Travel Center & Truck Stop in New Mexico during our drive from California to Wisconsin.

In *Vanamonde* #1645, John Hertz recognized Memorial Day. I'd been unaware that Filipinos landed on what would become California during the late 16th century. My copy of this was missing the second page, so I can only comment on the first.

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* (unnumbered in my email distribution) reported that Derek LaPorte declined to run as registrar for the LASFS again—and that Mitchell himself was elected to serve as scribe. Despite your not living in the Los Angeles area, given your frequent participation in online meetings and your editing of *De Profundis*, serving as scribe does make a lot of sense. I found that serving as scribe makes editing *De Prof* easier—because you write the Menace. There's no hassle chasing down the Menace, just the minutes from board meetings.

I can empathize with your confusing the Angel from *Curse of the Aztec Mummy* with El Santo. I was sure he was a luchador, but that was not the case. We only stopped at a couple of Love's during our road trip. I wish I'd known to look for already-peeled clementines.

Even though I recently returned to watching the Netflix Daredevil program, I'd previously watched quite a bit of *Marvel's Jessica Jones*. Krysten Ritter is cute as a button, and David Tennant's portrayal of the villainous Purple Man (Zebediah Killgrave) is one of the more disturbing characters I've ever seen on television. *WandaVision* was wanda-rful.

In *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #82, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** continued to document her technical difficulties. I do hope that things become easier for you as OC soon. Have you seen *Superman* with your grandson yet? The general opinion of the movie seems to be quite favorable. Even my wife wants to see the new *Superman*, and that's unlike her. She tends not to enjoy superhero movies.



Chicago Tribune, April 29, 1955

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #172

July 31, 2025

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On the Worldcon Order of Faneditors

If you'd like to contribute to WOOF, the annual Worldcon apa (<https://efanzines.com/WOOF>), our own John Hertz informed me that Tom Whitmore will serve as the Official Editor this year. There will be a drop box in the Fanzine Lounge for on-site contributions during the con. If you go, plan to submit 25 copies of your fanzine.

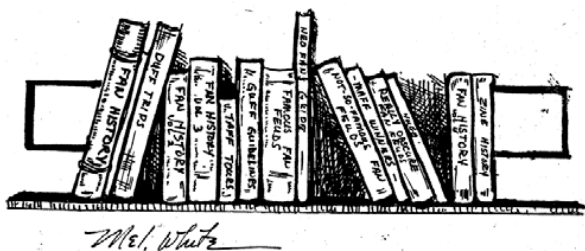
You can also submit a fanzine for inclusion from afar. On the Facebook, Jerry Kaufman says that people can send him a PDF or other electronic file of their contribution—or mail physical copies well in advance—and he'll make sure it gets to Whitmore.

Collation will likely occur Saturday afternoon. If you're not going to Worldcon, plan to send Kaufman your contribution, if emailing it, by the end of Friday, Aug. 15 in order to allow for plenty of breathing room. That's the deadline I'll be aiming for.

On Our Patron Saints

(In which I continue writing biographical sketches of the remaining patron saints of the LASFS whom I neglected to profile while working through the list in previous issues of this apazine)

Elizabeth Marble, a resident of Pomona, Calif., is married to Chris Marble, an active club and con fan. They recently celebrated their 38th anniversary, and her birthday occurs in October. During the pandemic, she attended CoNZeland, the virtual Worldcon. Based on her likes on the Facebook, she is an avid appreciator of tea. It is obvious that Chris loves her and enjoys her companionship very much, and she has many friends among the LASFS membership.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Resistance by Samit Basu (Titan, 2014)

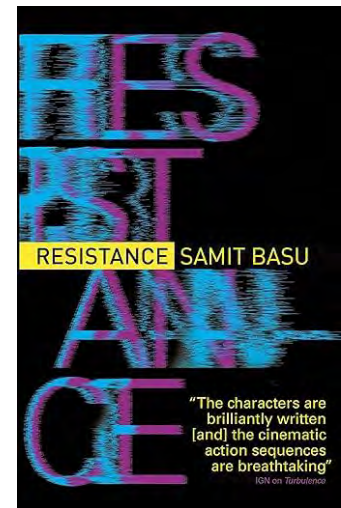
This superhero-oriented novel is a sequel to the 2010 book *Turbulence* and takes place just more than a decade after earthlings first develop superpowers. Its author, Samit Basu, is reportedly one of India's most prolific writers, the author of multiple novels—including a trilogy and young adult fiction—as well as comic books and film projects. This year, he is serving as the lead instructor for the Clarion West novel-writing workshop.

There's a lot going on in this novel. Humanity is experiencing the growing pains brought on by the unexpected development of superpowers among some of the Earth's population. That aspect and the potential for resulting chaos reminded me slightly of Jim Valentino's comic book series *Normalman*. The novel isn't as crazy as that comic, but some of the heroes reminded me of the Legion of Superfluous Heroes. At the very least, the superpower-driven potential for chaos reminded me of the planet Levram.

In some ways, the development of superpowers has changed the world for the better. On the other hand, superbeings are constantly fighting, posing a threat to cities and civilians. The supervillain Kaiju King creates giant monsters, sending them to destroy Tokyo—lending a Godzilla- or Monsterverse-aspect to the book. There's a team of heroes who don large, mechanized battle suits that can combine to form a larger mecha, shades of *Battletech*, *Pacific Rim* and *Voltron*.

There's a godlike child who reminded me of Ganesh, only with the head of a horse. There's a non-superpowered industrialist who's jockeying for power in a world full of supers. And someone is killing supers. That is the crux of the story. The mecha team and another superhero team, UNIT, encounter each other, either fighting or working together to solve the mystery and end the killings.

Between the two teams alone, there were enough characters that it was occasionally difficult to determine who they were or how they were aligned. One character, Tia, had multiple embodiments, each with their own personality—kind of like Marvel



Comics' Stepford Cuckoos.

In addition to being a somewhat wild ride, the book also addresses philosophical questions about power and responsibility, and challenges cut-and-dried notions of good and evil.

Resistance was a fun read, even though it's not something I'd usually seek out. While I strongly appreciate comic books and heroic pulp fiction, I'm not sure I need my superheroes in prose form. To scratch such an itch, I'd rather read one of the Marvel novels from the 1970s, Byron Preiss's *Weird Heroes* anthology series, or the *Wild Cards* shared universe series. (Generally, I'd rather read a non-supers fantasy or sf novel.) Regardless, I'm glad I pulled this novel from the shelf at the public library somewhat randomly because it introduced me to Basu's writing. It might warrant further exploration.

Maybe not this series, however.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Casa Susanna

Almost two years after I mentioned it in *T&T* #79, Caitlin and I finally got around to watching the PBS *American Experience* documentary *Casa Susanna*. (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/casa-susanna>) Now featured in an exhibit at The Met Fifth Avenue in New York City, *Casa Susanna* was a resort operated by Susanna Valenti and her wife, Marie Tornell, in the Catskill Mountains in the 1960s. Serving as a vacation home for a chosen family of crossdressers, the resort even attracted sf publishing luminary Donald Wollheim (<https://tinyurl.com/Casa-SusannaNYT>), who wrote a book titled *A Year Among The Girls* using the pen name Darrell G. Raynor. Wollheim's daughter Betsy, currently president, co-publisher, and co-editor-in-chief of DAW Books—and wife of Peter Stampfel—is featured prominently throughout.

Even though Betsy discusses her father's crossdressing publicly for the first time, his role in science fiction isn't addressed in much depth. When talking about how demanding and critical Wollheim was as a parent—and how happy he was while dressing as a woman—she alludes to his occasional cruelty to DAW authors. (A 2021 *Locus* interview, "Betsy Wollheim: Alpha Daughter," and a more recent conversation with Darrell Schweitzer published in *Black Gate* make for interesting parallel reading.)

Beyond the adjacency to sf, *Casa Susanna* is a loving portrait of a safe space for people who just wanted to live the lives they desired and imagined. They were men who loved dressing as women. Some were gay. Many, including Wollheim, were apparently straight—and married. A few later sought gender reassignment surgery, serving as transgender pioneers.

There are strong parallels between the crossdressing community and fandom. Community groups met in homes in New York City; there was an uptown group and a downtown group. Crossdressing and sf fandom inspired the publication of grassroots periodicals—might *Transvestia* be a fanzine? And both provide room for utopian thinking and worldbuilding at a personal and community level. The USC Fisher Museum of Art exhibit *Sci-fi, Magick, Queer L.A.: Sexual Science and the Imagi-Nation* (<https://one.usc.edu/exhibition/sci-fi-magick-queer-la-sexual-science-and-imagi-nation>) included multiple items that suggested such a connection. (*T&T* #146)

Fen of fantastika might watch *Casa Susanna* because of the Wollheim connection. That's what drew me to the film. But its message of individual creative

expression, the importance of bodily autonomy, forming communities as a chosen or found family, and the intent to create a somewhat utopian alternative society will resonate strongly well beyond that initial inspiration.

Who do you want to be? What kind of world do you want to live in? Maybe we can create that reality, together.

Comments on APA-L #3123

It's not common that APA-L features a cover that's accompanied by news or other text on the inside front cover. I got a kick out of the new approach! I have yet to watch *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*. The closest I've come recently is reading the first four issues of Gold Key's late-1960s *Star Trek* comic book series.

In *Vanamonde* #1647, **John Hertz** updated ellers on the Classics of Science Fiction discussions scheduled for Westercon/BayCon earlier this month. Despite the challenge making sure the discussions were on the program—and lining them up well in advance of the con—I'm glad that things came together... almost.

Why were two of the three discussions canceled? Were they canceled before the con—or during? While I haven't read any of the three books, I have read works by two of the authors. I noticed that the publication dates of the three selections are spaced roughly a decade apart. That's an aspect I haven't recognized before; it might not always be the case, but I like the opportunity it offers to consider classics written over time—at the same con.

I was unaware of the Casa de Fruta in Hollister, Calif.—as well as the Northern California Renaissance Faire. (<https://norcalrenfaire.com>) In Wisconsin, we have the Bristol Renaissance Faire (<https://renfair.com/bristol>), which seems to be run by the same company that operates the Original Renaissance Pleasure Faire in southern California. Discussions about meeting friends from Chicago there in late August are underway. Kenosha, where it's held, is about two hours away from Madison.

The Bristol Renaissance Faire was founded as King Richard's Faire in 1972 by Richard and Bonnie Shapiro. They sold the fair to Renaissance Entertainment Corp. in 1988. That company also bought the southern California fair in 1993, and both fairs now seem to be owned by Renaissance Entertainment Productions.

Thank you for bringing Walter Karig's novel *Zotz!* to my attention. I have procured a copy and shall endeavor to read it. My use of the phrase "heir apparent" to describe the roleplaying game apa A Gentle Walk—titled A Gentle Stroll for its second

issue—might have been premature as well as inaccurate. The demise of *Alarums & Excursions* has also led to the launch of *Ever & Anon* (*T&T* #167), which has attracted many former A&E contributors—including myself. Meanwhile, Lisa Padol informs me that the deadline for her one-shot tribute to A&E is actually Aug. 31, no the date previously mentioned.

Public and private space exploration are certainly both valuable. I'm still more interested in public efforts. Hopefully, private efforts encourage, inform, and inspire public activity rather than replace it.



Chicago Tribune, April 29, 1955

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #109 reported on the installation of new carpeting at his workplace. I'm glad you were able to ensure the security of the office files so neither you nor your boss needed to be on site while the work was being done. Before we sold our house in Culver City, we installed new carpet in the finished portion of the garage—the former home of my personal library—and its addition, my game room and home office. That smell sure is something else, huh? We only slept on the new carpeting a few nights, but it wasn't too unpleasant.

Personally, I think a Herbie-shaped popcorn container would have been cool. Turns out, the robot's even in the movie! (I haven't seen *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* or *Superman* yet; I have seen Roger Corman's 1994 *The Fantastic Four*.) Not bad for a character initially designed for the cartoon, *The New Fantastic Four*, before its inclusion in the comic book series. I recently read *Fantastic Four* #1-7.

And in *Reflections in a Fish Bowl* #83, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** informed apans that her computer is finally working properly. Callooh! Callay! I hope that your use of Adobe Acrobat's PDF tools eases the electronic collation of APA-L. (I even hear we might have a new participant waiting in the wings!) I'm glad

you and your grandson saw *Superman* together. Belated birthday wishes to the youngster.

I look forward to the updated PDF versions of APA-L #3118-3122. Our online archives are a bit spotty since the transition. The photograph I contributed for the cover of APA-L #3122 was actually taken at Clines Corners Travel Center & Truck Stop in New Mexico during our drive from California to Wisconsin. (T&T #171) I did take pictures while visiting the National Museum of Toys and Miniatures (T&T #168), but they ended up in my fanzine, not on our cover.

The Alien fortune-telling machine is probably similar to the Zoltar Speaks (<https://zoltar.org>) machine featured in the movie *Big* and located—last time I visited—at Playland Arcade on the Santa Monica Pier. I didn't put a dollar into the Alien machine in New Mexico, but if you go to the pier and confer with Zoltar, the experience is probably similar.

I enjoyed your memories of Tombstone, Ariz. Some day I'll return to Dodge City, Kan. I need to return to reading Tom Clavin's *Dodge City: Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and the Wickedest Town in the American West*. (T&T #167) Since obtaining our library cards, my wife and I have been frequenting the libraries in Fitchburg and Madison, and I've been reading on my Kindle and Kobo e-readers less. We went to the library early this week so I could pick up an interlibrary loan that had arrived. Later that evening, I finished reading William R. Drennan's *Death in a Prairie House: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Murders*, my previous interlibrary loan, and started reading Roger Zelazny's *Roadmarks*. The central branch of the Madison Public Library offers a display of new science fiction and fantasy as well as a dedicated section.



Thank you for indicating that the *Guns smoke* radio program preceded the television show. The radio show was broadcast on CBS radio from 1952 to 1961, and the TV show aired from 1955 to 1975. *Dragnet*, *The Green Hornet*, *The Lone Ranger*, and other series followed a similar trajectory from radio to TV. Wikipedia offers extensive lists of radio programs adapted into TV shows and TV series based on radio series. (I'm not sure what the difference is, but I'll fund out!)

Your mention of book binding resonated with me. After getting my hair cut by a friend midweek, I saw a building with signage indicating that it had been the Grimm Book Bindery. The small Georgian Revival-styled shop was built in 1926 for Madison's only dedicated book-binding business; the structure now houses efficiency (or studio) apartments. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986, and the business relocated to Monona. (<https://www.grimmbindery.com>) I find the phrase "Grimm Book Bindery" to be wonderfully evocative, and the history of the company is quite interesting.

Indeed, per our email exchanges and the APA-L Participants Roster I've provided, Don Fitch receives APA-L by mail weekly, while Ed Buchman and Roger Hill receive Priority Mail flat rate envelopes whenever they fill up. John Hertz recently inquired whether I've offered you technical assistance in addition to the other transition assistance I've been providing. If you ever have any questions about serving as OC—printing, scanning, mailing... anything—please feel free to ask. (Ideally, if you collate APA-L via PDF before printing, you wouldn't then need to scan the resulting distributions, but as OC you'll find what works best for you.)

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #32

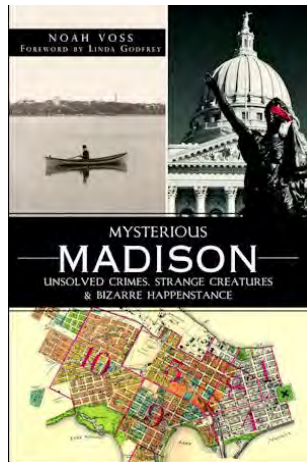
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From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Mysterious Madison by Noah Voss (History Press, 2011)

Shortly after arriving in Madison, I bought this intriguing volume along with *Madison Ghosts and Legends* by Anna Lardinois. (*Faculae & Filigree* #44) It's a little more wide ranging than Lardinois's book—focusing as it does on “unsolved crimes, strange creatures, and bizarre happenstance”—and it's not as well written. In fact, it's kind of a mess.



Author Voss operates several Web sites, including *UFO Wisconsin* (<http://ufowisconsin.com>) and *The W-Files* (<http://w-files.com>), and wrote the 2008 *UFO Wisconsin: A Progress Report*. Dividing the city of Madison into sections—central, western, northern, eastern, and southern—he touches on a number of mysterious experiences and occurrences, occasionally wandering off on tangential topics at some length. So the book is a bit of a hodgepodge.

The “Central Madison” chapter explores the area closest to the Infernal Wilson, our furnished apartment. Mysterious creatures have been seen in Lake Monona and Lake Mendota, and Voss mentions the Mediums' Protective Association, a sort of “spook union.” In addition to those topics, UFO sightings and local crimes are also covered.

Voss writes about local reaction to the 1938 *Mercury Theatre on the Air* radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*—which was very interesting, even if response was minimal—the spiritual influence of the region's early mound builders, the Lake View Tuberculosis Sanatorium, and other subjects.

Even though I found the book to be a bit of a jumble, it still serves its purpose, offering multiple

street addresses that I highlighted for later reference—and future visits while walking around our new city—and suggesting other resources and texts that might also be worth exploring.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

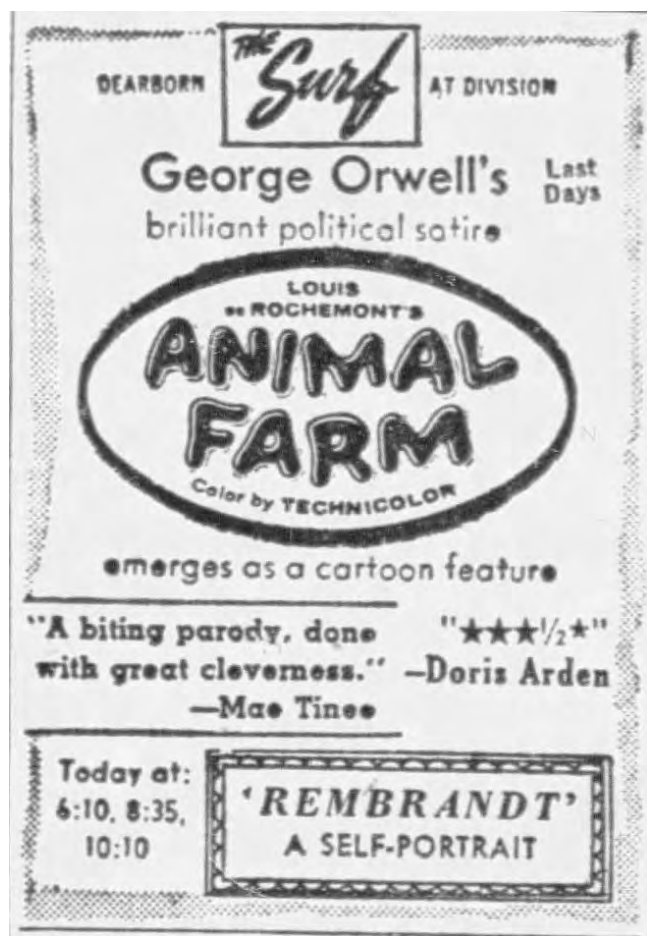
The Psychic

In late July, a friend and I watched this 1977 movie directed by Lucio Fulci. It wasn't available on any streaming services we both have access to, so we watched the 2023 *Creature Features* (<https://creaturefeatures.tv>) screening of the flick on YouTube. (https://youtu.be/hnGW_MJhtm4)

The modern *Creature Features* seems to be a reboot of the San Francisco Bay Area horror host series featuring Bob Wilkins and John Stanley in the 1970s and 1980s. Now hosted by Vincent Van Dahl, a '90s heavy metal musician played by Jeff Bodean; the series also features the characters Tangella and

Livingston. In its ninth season, the series, set in a mansion in Bodega Bay, Calif., offers almost 450 episodes—and its own subscription streaming app that includes classic episodes featuring the original host, Wilkins. (Needless to say, I've subscribed to watch all the Wilkins I can.)

So our screening included YouTube's customary ads as well as interstitial bits featuring the host and co-hosts, viewer mail, and an interview with Kurt "Crowbar" Kangas about the artists gang Artista (<https://artistagang.com>) and the 1960s more generally. It's a highly produced program and is very much in the vein of other modern horror host programs such as *Svengoolie*.



Chicago Tribune, June 10, 1955

On to the movie! *The Psychic*, originally titled *Sette note in nero* or *Seven Notes in Black*, is a wonderfully slow, tense supernatural drama in which a woman experiences visions of another woman's murder. Initially interpreted as visions of a killing that occurred in the past, it eventually becomes clear that she might be experiencing premonitions of events yet to occur. That proves worrisome.

The visions, impressionistic as they are, lead her to

dig into the wall of a vacant mansion owned by her husband, where a skeleton is found. Her husband is a suspect in the murder, and the movie is a two-fold mystery: Who was the original victim and killer, and who is currently in danger—and from whom?

In addition to the protagonist, performed by Jennifer O'Neill, characters also include her husband Francesco; a researcher of psychic phenomena, whom I thought was the protagonist's therapist; and another suspect. The characters utilize a magazine cover, its issue number and photograph of a horse, the date of the introduction of yellow taxis, an incriminating letter, and other clues to determine whether Francesco could have killed his ex-girlfriend.

While slightly formulaic—the movie owes more to giallo than Fulci's more horror-oriented work—the mystery unfolds nicely, and there's a pleasing red herring that works surprisingly well. There's also a lot of red, yellow, and other color in the film, perhaps its most fetishistic giallo element. And there's a solid nod toward Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado." Very enjoyable even if it's not *Zombie* or *The Beyond*.

Comments on eAPA #255

I enjoyed the Esperanto translation at the end of the Evolving eAPA Guidelines, as well as the subsequent full-text translation.

In *In the Meantime* #12, **William McCabe** detailed a challenging month on the healthcare front. I'm sorry to hear that your energy levels are low, digestion is off—and that you fell. The ongoing refuse collection strike also seems terribly frustrating. Heatwaves and garbage don't usually mix well.

Your reference to Beatrix Potter interested me. It's been a while since I've read any of her work—though I loved it as a child and have returned to it at least once as an adult. The V&A museum in the United Kingdom houses a sizable Potter collection (<https://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/beatrix-potter>), and I was unaware that she maintained a secret diary that required decoding by an engineer and enthusiast, Leslie Linder. I'll have to learn more about that.

It's also been a while since I've thought about Eugène Ionesco's play *Rhinoceros*. I've read it but not seen it and shall have to return to the play. Regardless of whether you consider the play avant-garde drama, surreal, or Theatre of the Absurd, I remember it being quite fantastic. I'll have to return to it, as well. What comic book or strip was your last page reproduced from?

Henry Grynnssten's *Wild Ideas* #61 addressed slavery and the ethical issues raised by robots, androids, or computers achieving human-like consciousness. I'll have to check out Neil R. Jones's

1930 short story “The Death’s Head Meteor.” It was published in the January 1930 issue of *Air Wonder Stories*. Your exchange with Ahrvid Engholm about GIGO (Garbage In, Garbage Out) resonated with me. If generative artificial intelligence tools merely summarize information available to them—unable to discern which is more accurate or credible—if misinformation, disinformation, and idle speculation is involved, such summaries might not at all be accurate or credible.

I imagine that the subsequent exchange with Engholm served as partial inspiration for your essay this. You raise thought-provoking questions! I was also interested in the discussion of mass extinctions, and whether they must occur quickly, suddenly, or at the same time to qualify. The difference seems academic. Even if quite slow, one could certainly end up looking back and saying, “Huh. Well, I guess it was a mass extinction after all.”

Imagine my surprise to learn that the Greeks invented the aeolipile more than 1,700 years before the British constructed the steam engines that powered the Industrial Revolution. How was that technology lost and neglected for such a long period of time? Fascinating. Your reference to the Antikythera Mechanism resonated with me. The Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece returned to investigating the Antikythera shipwreck this year, leading to new discoveries. (<https://archaeology.org/news/2025/07/11/new-discoveries-from-famed-antikythera-shipwreck>) Meanwhile, Argentinian scientists developed a computer simulation to study how the Antikythera Mechanism might have worked. Results suggest that it didn’t work very well for very long. (<https://tinyurl.com/Antikythera-model>)

Slavery (ECU #8) might date back to ancient Sumer in Mesopotamia, 6000-2000 BC, so it’s been around a while. It continues to this day, with countries such as India, China, Pakistan, North Korea, and Eritrea still allowing millions of people to be enslaved. The International Labour Organization estimates that more than 40 million people around the world are slaves of some kind, be they in forced labor, forced sexual exploitation, or forced marriages. Some might suggest that prison labor is a form of modern slavery.

As we turn our attention to developments in AI and robotics—before we even end human slavery—early indicators do suggest the potential for technological slavery. With the existence of highly realistic robots such as those produced by Realbotix (<https://www.realbotix.com>), luxury sex dolls (<https://www.realdoll.com>), and AI-equipped customizable sex dolls (<https://www.siliconwives.com/products/emma-sex-robot>), it seems clear that we might need to face the

ethical aspects of robotic love slaves sooner than we might expect.

But do we need to wait for AI to achieve consciousness or near-consciousness for that to be a concern? Already, people are marrying body pillows (<https://www.glamour.com/story/feeling-lonely-you-could-alway>), falling in love with AI chat bots (<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jul/12/i-felt-pure-unconditional-love-the-people-who-marry-their-ai-chatbots>), and experiencing difficulties working with AI therapy chatbots (<https://hai.stanford.edu/news/exploring-the-dangers-of-ai-in-mental-health-care>). There might be enough psychological impact on human mental health and relations already to warrant considering ethical issues before consciousness is achieved. (Even if we don’t think it will be.)



Chicago Tribune, June 10, 1955

Sf works such as Isaac Asimov’s *I, Robot* and Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* have addressed the potential dangers and concerns of conscious robots. The movie *Mickey 17* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #157) makes me wonder whether similar ethical issues exist for clones. (Even in terms of animal rights, does a cloned sheep deserve the same treatment as a sheep?) Both areas of inquiry rely on either the emergence of machine

consciousness—which you’ve addressed in other essays—or the understanding that clones are copies, not the originals, and can therefore be treated differently than the original.

Countries that already forbid human slavery might immediately forbid machine slavery. But even that isn’t entirely clear or certain. Walk Free’s Global Slavery Index indicates that there are 1.1 million people living in modern slavery in the United States. That’s the purported “land of the free.”

Regardless of whether we treat robots, artificial intelligence, or clones differently than we treat people, I suspect that how we allow people to be treated strongly indicates how we’ll allow robots, AIs, and clones to be treated. Humans don’t yet treat humans all that well, so future scenarios seem dark for non-humans.



Chicago Tribune, June 10, 1955

Your essay also reminded me of your previous writing about consciousness. If consciousness is what makes us human, if robots and AI become conscious, what does it mean to be human? We might treat robots and AI poorly just to differentiate ourselves as humans; their consciousness might be seen as a threat. That’s not too far off from how “masters” distinguish themselves from slaves or rationalize slavery. That’s somewhat arbitrary, entirely subjective, and firmly rooted in power.

I might have to return to *Wild Ideas* #11, #30, #33, #40, and #49. The intertextual nature of your essays and the topics you explore makes *Wild Ideas* a big, beautiful circle.

In *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #235, **Garth Spencer** reported recent technical difficulties. I’m sorry to hear about your data loss while transferring documents to thumb drives. As much as I love thumb drives for their portability, you might find that external hard drives—or the cloud—might work better for long-term storage. Already, I have too many external hard drives. Steve Fahnstalk’s remark that “[c]omputer spirits do what they want” might be correct.

I quite like your idea of “a continent-wide network of anti-fascist resistance groups.” I’ll have to check out “On Resistance” in *The Obdurate Eye* #53 to learn more about the program for domestic American resistance that you mentioned. Say, you translated your fanzine into Esperanto, too! eAPA is at least partially now officially bilingual.

And **Ahrvid Engholm**’s *Intermission* #156 was distributed as a postmailing a week after Garth Spencer sent eAPA. An apa purist might decline to comment on such a postmailing, but not me! Your fanzines are always worth reading. Thank you for sending it to the group, as well, Ahrvid. Those pesky email addresses can be tricky!

In the opening editorial, there’s already a lot to like in this: Michelism, an unknown 17th Century sf author, sf authors who died on the *Titanic*, and Canada’s *Space Command*. I shall read with eager attention.

Your discussion of drone warfare in the Russo-Ukrainian War reminded me of Henry Grynnsen’s fanzine above. If sex and war continue to drive technological development, perhaps military technology will also achieve consciousness. I’d imagine that proponents of war would discourage the likelihood of such consciousness—after all, even in the human military, we might be concerned with military consciousness; there’s a Military Decision-Making Process, but there’s also a chain of command, a command hierarchy, and expectations of soldier rule-following. We hardly want our drones to become conscientious objectors now, do we? (Henry, have you written about conscience as it relates to consciousness?)

I was surprised when President Trump ordered strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/live/cn7ze4vmk2pt>) I was even more surprised when such military action didn’t continue. My expectation had been that the strikes indicated that Trump was entering a military conflict to take advantage of a rally-’round-the-flag effect with which war might improve the standing of elected officials. I’m relieved that such actions haven’t continued—though other activities in the United States remain

concerning.

I appreciated your mention of Donald A. Wollheim and Kenneth Bulmer, of whom I've read little. About five years ago, I read *Transit to Scorpio*, written by Bulmer as Alan Burt Akers. I remember enjoying it and mentioned the novel in a review of another book in *Tightbeam* #310. You might be interested in the documentary *Casa Susanna* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #172), which features Betsy Wollheim and explores Donald A. Wollheim's crossdressing, as well as Darrell Schweitzer's interview with Betsy Wollheim in *Black Gate*, which discusses the end of DAW's publication of John Norman's Gor series.

While I'm not sure that codes of conduct or paying attention to the diversity of sf and fantasy authors is the same as Michelism, I do find the Great Exclusion Act fascinating. The lawsuit and resulting settlement related to Worldcon 76 might come closer to the topics that generally concern you. Regardless, fandom usually reacts negatively to exclusion efforts (even in the case of Walter Breen), and the people who weren't allowed to enter the first Worldcon are likely considered more favorably than the people who excluded them.

I'll also have to learn more about Chan Davis. But one shouldn't consider socialist or communist sympathies, or antifascism and antiracism (or anti-sexism and anti-homophobia) activism as anti-sf or -fandom unless you consider such -isms and -ias important aspects of sf and fandom. I think it's worth discouraging fascism, racism, sexism, and homophobia.

Speaking of anti-sexism (or pro-feminism), thank you for highlighting Margaret Cavendish and *The Blazing World*. I'm currently reading Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*, another feminist utopian novel, and finding it utterly delightful. I shall have to turn to Cavendish at some point. I shall also have to learn more about John Jacob Astor, Jacques Futrelle, Francis Davis Millet, and W.T. Stead, who died on the *Titanic*. Thank you for including links to their writing.

I also enjoyed your coverage of early sf television, including the BBC production of *R.U.R.*; *Captain Video and His Video Rangers* (which I featured in an online screening for the N3F Tape and Video Bureaus in early 2024 and mentioned in a couple of "Rabid Ears: Ravings of a TV Fiend" columns writing as Cathode Ray, as well as in *The Brass Hat Mind* #6); *Space Patrol*; *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*; and the Canadian program *Space Command*, which was new to me. It's a shame that only one episode survives; I'll be sure to check it out.

Your discussion of the Worldcon Seattle 2025 committee's use of AI to screen potential program

participants for controversy I feel somewhat sympathetic toward. "Science fiction literature must exercise intellectual freedom, freedom of speech, tolerance to all kinds of different opinions, openness, free debate...": I agree with you. "You take the debate, you discuss topics and respect the rights of others to their own opinions.": I agree. "Our genre ... needs a wideness of concepts, flexibility of thinking, challenging ideas, thoughts that itch and irritate, that dives into the uncomfortable.": I agree. "Sf relies on 'micro ag[g]ressions...': I disagree strongly.

According to Derald Wing Sue's *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, microaggressions are "commonplace verbal, behavioral or environmental slights, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward members of marginalized groups." Sf does not and should not rely on hostility toward marginalized groups. Perhaps it should do the opposite.



Chicago Tribune, June 24, 1955

Excluding someone from a con's program is different from excluding someone from a con. The program committee has every right to include whomever they want on the program—in the interest of attracting and serving the interests of con participants. Regardless, screening potential program participants for controversy using AI technology that is still flawed and inaccurate—perhaps summarizing misinformation, disinformation, and idle speculation as mentioned above—could lead to the exclusion or disparagement of people who haven't actually done anything.

It could also lead to extremely anodyne programming, which might not further the cause of sf

or fandom. If we aim for the deliberately inoffensive as a matter of course, things get awfully uninteresting pretty quickly. That's not to say that we should overindex on or encourage the intentionally offensive, however. There's got to be a Middle Way.

I don't think homophobia, transphobia, racism, harassment, sexual misconduct, sexism, and fraud have been "invented." They unfortunately exist and are worth fighting, not supporting. But I agree with you that we shouldn't apply such terms to "things you dislike"—if unwarranted—as a way to stifle expression or discussion. I also don't think we should encourage hostile expressions of such things.

Similarly, while I appreciated your report on the Eurocon, Archipelacon 2 (<https://archipelacon.org>), I found your distaste for the rainbow badge mystifying. Hardly a symbol for a "controversial ideology," the rainbow symbolizes LGBTQ+ pride and inclusivity, yes, as well as hope, peace, and a connection between the earthly and divine realms. Rainbows are also just wonderful. They're beautiful.

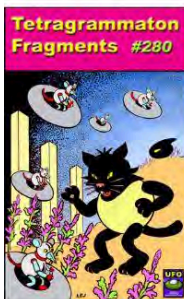
For all your writing about the importance of including and allowing all belief systems, to then not also include the LGBTQ+ community—to not support their individual rights and beliefs—seems odd to me. Earlier in the fanzine, you quote Evelyn Beatrice Hall's writing about Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." So, wear the badge? They're commonly used at cons.



Chicago Tribune, June 24, 1955

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) Check out the Official UFO Website at <https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com> and the United Fanzine Organization Facebook group at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tfrags>



TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS! (THE UFO NEWSLETTER) (\$4.00 for non-members, or a 6-issue subscription for \$24 from Steve Keeter, 10118 Mason Dixon Circle, Orlando, FL 32821. Or, PayPal to: stevekeeter@gmail.com) The Official Newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization features articles, artwork, and more from co-op members. Many of the greats of small press have been, and are, involved in this influential group.



CAPFAN #2 (\$3.50 postpaid in the USA from Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195 or via Paypal to robimes@yahoo.com) Captain America comics of the 1980s are examined. Ceylon Anderson reviews Cap #284 and Mark Domeier reminisces about reading the series through the years. Rob Imes compares the long runs of Mark Gruenwald and Ed Brubaker. There's also a defense of the 1980s spin-off series Team America. Plus a letters page. 32-page B&W digest size fanzine.



IMPROBABLE GIRL & THE WONDER KITTY #14 (\$10 USA or \$15 Canada PayPal to jecarrales@yahoo.com, or email marisolinskikitty@gmail.com, or contact Joe Ely Carrales III via FB Messenger) Alex Moore's dramatic front cover of Mari and Niko gives a startling glimpse of the action to come! The main story is Joe Carrales' "Journey To The Master of the World, Part 2" – a 23-page epic in which The Improbable Girl and Wonder Kitty endure an attack from a super submarine and a power-hungry madman! Brian Amstadter is on board as well, with the comedic "Captain Coffee Cup." And check out Mark Wyrosdick's stylish artwork in a compelling backup strip "Madame Justice in a Man Called Spade." The New People's Journal also appears, and a profound illustration honors our dear, departed friend Larned Justin.



THE MIGHTY ENERGYGIRL #38 (\$7.99 US or \$9.99 Canada from Ken Bailey, 2232 N 30th St., Sheboygan, WI 53083 or via PayPal to Ken @ cartoonistman32@gmail.com) The mighty artist/writer/publisher Ken Bailey pulls out the stops in this latest issue (#38!) of THE MIGHTY ENERGYGIRL, in which the great super heroine competes against her former protegee, heretofore known as "Newbie"! Even in dreams, Energygirl cannot escape the challenge of this larger and more muscular superheroine! As the Federal Department of Super Heroics (FDSH) intervenes, Energy Girl is stripped of her official heroic capacities... but we can darn sure tell she's not going to take this lying down!



TRAPPED BY CORPORATE ZOMBIES #1 (Available on Matt "Doc Hoff" Hoffman's website for \$9.00 plus shipping, at this link: www.dochoffcomics.com) The amazingly talented Doc Hoff offers a weird, creepy, and satirical look at modern toxic life... in a "Bad B-Movie Comic" featuring corporate zombies! In a post-apocalyptic world, humans are collected for breeding purposes by the living dead. Somehow, Matt Hoffman makes this extremely humorous, and even a bit poignant. Not like anything else you'll read this month!

