

The Stf Amateur 25



RONDEAU. 2009

***The Stf Amateur* 25**
October 2025

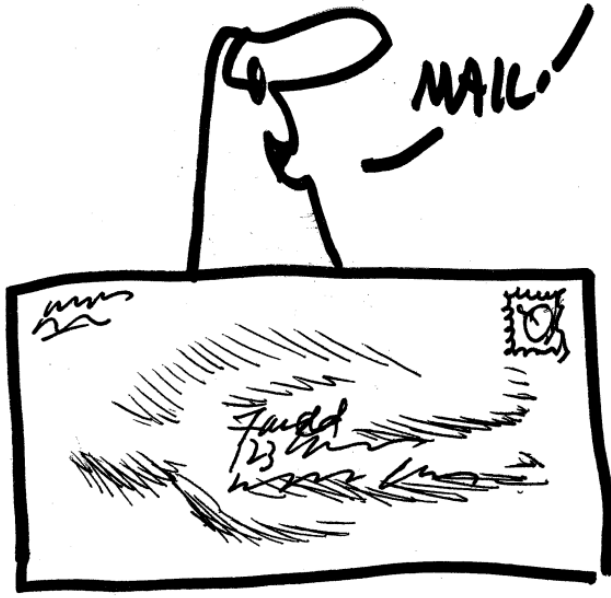
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You can learn more about cover artist Melody Rondeau at https://fanlore.org/wiki/Melody_Rondeau.

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—William Rotsler

Cy Chauvin

I enjoyed reading your and William Breiding's comments about hiking across Los Angeles. Urban hiking made me think of Smoky Barnable in [John Crowley's] *Little, Big*, who is required to hike to his wedding. I like the fact that you notice details that you miss while driving (or even biking), and it slows things down—and can turn an errand into a small adventure. (Make a mountain out of a molehill? Well...) I admit that I do find the unusual created urban trail a bit on the artificial side.

[What do you mean by “unusual created urban trail”?—HR]

I ran across an early Harlan Ellison in a quest through my boxed books: *Spider Kiss* (1961, 1975). In my dip into it, the opening seemed overwritten, or perhaps splashily written—meaning the writing called attention to itself rather than the characters, plot, or background being written about. But that was Ellison!

I took special note of your interest in books on art and architecture, and the question you were asking yourself about what you liked in books. I can recommend reading books by Witold Rybczynski, an interesting urban planning and architecture critic. I have three books by him: *City Life, Home* (“A Short History of an Idea”), and *The Most Beautiful House in the World*. They are mostly collections of short and provocative articles, filled with ideas. He has a good style. That's opposed to the large format art and graphic-filled books, which offer a different take on

the subject, more idealized and artificial, perhaps.

Most Worldcons have offered a panel or two on the city and the future, and most of the panelists are usually urban planners, teachers, and people other than science fiction writers. I just recently browsed through a book called *Future Cities: A Visual Guide* by Nick Dunn and Paul Cureton; mostly pictures. I might send you a review of it.

[I would welcome such a review! Only two issues of *The Stf Amateur* remain, so the window for submissions is closing.—HR]

[It's amazing] how little personal appeal any of those future ideas have to me. I was actually much more impressed by the ideas of William Morris, found in a biography I read recently. Take a view of the house he built in England. His views on socialism are equally interesting because his take is that work should be fulfilling and satisfying, with some measure of creativity, which is not how I perceived the take on work from other socialists (or capitalists) before.

I have to recommend an old story I've just read, “Be Merry” by Algis Budrys, in *On Our Way to the Future*, edited by Terry Carr (1970). It's the same anthology in which I found “Greenslaves” by Frank Herbert, the genesis of *The Green Brain*, which you reviewed an issue or two ago. [*The Stf Amateur* #21] It's set in a post-disaster world (one caused by a pandemic!), but it's written differently, and the character confront[s] ... a kind of selfness and evil that is exceptional. Basically, two characters, one human and another alien, take a trip to a town that seems to be surviving the post-disaster world better than what is considered “normal,” and finds their evil secret. The pandemic, by the way, is caused by a virus brought by aliens. It's still amazing how many sf stories you find predicting future pandemics; can't say we hadn't been warned. I never cared for any of the other short stories I've read by Budrys, although both *Who?* and *Rogue Moon* are remarkable novels (even if some of the characters in them are ones I'd never want to meet). “Be Merry” was originally published in *If* in 1966.

[I've read shockingly little Budrys, perhaps none. I should turn to his writing at some point! “Be Merry,” *Who?*, and *Rogue Moon* might be good places to start.—HR]

George Phillies

I read and enjoyed your latest zine collation.

Best of luck with your move to Portugal. You might well be aware that fan and author Sarah Hoyt is

... from Portugal. She might have interesting information.

[I was unfamiliar with Hoyt. Almost a decade ago, she was interviewed in the *Portuguese American Journal*! (<https://portuguese-american-journal.com/sarah-a-hoyt-saudade-for-portugal-and-the-me-i-never-was-interview>)—HR]

You mentioned *The Midwich Cuckoos*. I have the vague impression that there is actually a third film someplace. Also, there is a UK television show that passed through one season and seems to be in a state of suspension. There is also an incomplete Wyndham manuscript, a sequel. I think the working title is *Midwich Main*.

We also heard from: Charles Lee Jackson II, Bob Jennings, Marcin Klak, Perry Middlemiss, Ken Rudolph, and R-Laurraine Tutihasi

What is the

Wahfle

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Telegraphs & Tar Pits #177

Sept. 4, 2025

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine 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 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.

Introducing: The Infernal Wilson II

Labor Day weekend, my wife and I packed up our belongings at the Infernal Wilson in Madison to move almost exactly one mile to an Airbnb that's also located on East Wilson Street. I think that's pretty neat. While our short-term homes aren't slant shacks per se, I can continue naming our domiciles. East Wilson Street doesn't continue uninterrupted between the two locations but is punctuated by a stretch of the Capital City Trail. In fact, I walk along the bicycle trail on my way to work every weekday.

Now, instead of a 14-minute walk to work from the Infernal Wilson, I'm now a 16-minute walk to work from the Infernal Wilson II—from the opposite direction. The office of my employer is located almost equidistant between the two locations. Our new digs are located near the Madison Skatepark at the end of McPike Park, almost in line with the Willy Street Co-Op—East, while our former home was near the former site of O'Cayz Corral, which was destroyed by fire in 2001. There's now a small patch of grass there.

Friday evening after work, Caitlin and I walked around the First Settlement neighborhood, using a walking tour guidebook published by the Madison Landmarks Commission and Capitol Neighborhoods in 1988. (<https://tinyurl.com/FirstSettlementTour>) It's an area worth exploring, and one house currently for sale—outside of our price range—was built around the Civil War and occupied by a couple of notable people. At the end of the walk, we ate at Jalisco Cocina Mexicana, once the site of 20th Century Books. (*T&T* #176) We enjoyed our dinner, as well as picturing what the space might have been like as a bookstore. I didn't initially think I'd ever been there, but I remember walking to the far side of the capitol square in search of a bookstore as a teenager, so I might have at least sought it out previously.

We spent some of the day Saturday packing in order to take a carload of suitcases and tote bags to my sister's place in Fitchburg so we had less to move in the car on Sunday. We'd sent boxes ahead and accumulated some foodstuffs, so we now had more

than a single carload of belongings.

Sunday morning, we finished preparing for our move, taking advantage of morning coffee on the rooftop deck with a view of Lake Monona one last time. I'd arranged with our rental in the old saddlery (*T&T* #167) to check out at 1 p.m. instead of 11 a.m. to decrease the time we had to be in between places; we couldn't check into our new digs until 3 p.m.

I parked the car on the street alongside the building to make loading easier. What we didn't realize, however, was that not only could we check out at 1 p.m., but our key cards would stop working at 1 p.m. That came as a bit of a surprise and seemed more pertinent. Luckily, I was in the apartment with the cat when that occurred. Caitlin was outside and couldn't get back into the building or apartment. We were able to communicate through the open window; she'd left her mobile phone on the couch. So I moved the rest of our stuff—including the cat in its carrier—into the hallway before doing a final scan for items left behind. I inhaled deeply and let the apartment door close, locking us out of our home for the last three months.



—Teddy Harvia

With our remaining belongings in the hallway—not too much at that point; I'd already loaded much of the car and put the bicycles on the back of the vehicle—I could let Caitlin in at the side door, and we could move our stuff from the hallway to the side entrance. Once our things were staged there, we moved them outside of the building. Again, we made sure we weren't leaving anything by the door before taking a deep breath and letting it close, locking us out of the building.

Of course, had we been locked out at any point, the cleaning staff probably would have let us into the building and apartment, so it might not have been as dramatic as it felt. Regardless, it felt dramatic and makes for a somewhat interesting story. (I hope!)

We finished loading the car. It was good we'd taken a carload to my sister's the previous day. Having just over an hour and a half before we could check in to the next place, we decided not to go to Fitchburg to hang out at my parents. We considered going to the park near the Airbnb, McPike Park, but I realized that with the office between the two locations, we could park the car in the garage there and hang out at work. All the modern comforts and conveniences were available: restrooms, water, coffee, snacks, and temperature control. So we went to the office and hung out with the cat for a while.

Checking in at the Airbnb once 3 p.m. arrived was easy and seamless. There's on-site parking, and we unloaded the car. The Infernal Wilson II is a little bit bigger than the Infernal Wilson but might not be as nice. That said, it has three things going for it. One, we can now eat sitting at an island in the kitchen rather than perched at television trays. Two, our previous home in Madison didn't have a screen in its single window, which could be opened only by a crack, so we didn't really have fresh air—just air conditioning and a ceiling fan—for the last three months. The new place has a screen door in the back and screened window in front, which provides a wonderful cross breeze. It's glorious.

The third thing is even more important. Spooner, our cat, no longer feels like we're keeping him cooped up in a single room, restricting him from the rest of the house (e.g. the building, its hallways, elevator, lobby, and basement). Since we moved in, he hasn't been sitting at the door, staring longingly at the doorknob, and yowling to be let out. That is much more relaxing—and worth its weight in gold. Spooner seems much calmer and more comfortable, and took to the Infernal Wilson II immediately.

We can also hear the bark of trucks from the nearby skatepark and see the trains go by on the tracks between East Wilson Street and McPike Park. We've already explored the perimeter of several abandoned buildings remaining along the once more active railway. (<https://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/projects/mcpike-park-expansion>)

Monday morning, Labor Day, we arranged with my parents to pick up the belongings we stowed at my sister's after dinner that evening rather than during the day. That freed us up to explore Williamson Street, aka Willy Street, seeking out morning coffee and pastries. Not many places were open given the

holiday, but we availed ourselves of vegan lattes and breakfast pastries at Mother Fool's Coffeehouse.

(<https://motherfools.com>) The barista was wearing a *Mystery Science Theater 3000* apron, which was cool. Mother Fool's also hosts the Mad City Story Slam, which occasionally draws local fan Jeanne Gomoll, co-creator of the fanzine *Janus* and WisCon. I believe she's also active in the Turbo-Charged Party Animal APA. There's an event there Friday night; perhaps I'll meet her then!

It was good to relax for much of Monday. We've reached out to the Airbnb and will likely extend our stay until the end of October. We'll like it there just fine.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson II: Movie Reviews

Aniara

A couple of weeks ago, a friend and I watched this 2018 Swedish-Danish film adaptation of Harry

Martinson's 1956 Swedish epic poem. (The poem was previously adapted as a TV movie—an avant-garde atonal opera—in 1960.) When I reached out to a Swedish friend to inquire whether he's seen the 2018 film, he replied, "Nope. It's more famous as a poem." I've started reading a translation by Stephen Klass & Leif Sjöberg, and the original text is absolutely wonderful. So is the movie.

After Earth becomes uninhabitable, humanity migrates en masse to Mars. One commuter spacecraft—boarded using a space ladder—becomes damaged when avoiding some debris, veering off course. Its crew is unable to correct that, so the passengers and crew have to become acclimated to their new home as it continues to drift through space.

The main character of the movie is a woman who works as a Mimarobe, a sort of yoga instructor or therapist who oversees the Mima, an artificial intelligence that taps into passengers' memories and emotions to create a calming, immersive virtual reality experience. As the mental health of the passengers declines, more and more of them turning to the device to escape the reality of their situation, the Mima also becomes damaged, eventually breaking, becoming useless as a mental health aid.

Many passengers commit suicide, cults form, the main character becomes a parent and invents a replacement for the Mima, and other events occur as the ship continues to drift through space. *Aniara* is perhaps one of the longest movies I've ever watched. Its narrative unfolds over almost 6 million years, which was a bit breathtaking.

While the unintended generation ship elements—the journey was supposed to take only a few months, if I remember correctly—are excellent, the exploration of the personal relationships onboard, the range of acceptance among the passengers and crew, the activities undertaken by passengers to lessen the drudgery of their existence, and the spiritual solutions sought are also quite interesting. *Aniara* is an excellent movie, and I look forward to reading the rest of the book-length poem.

Comments on APA-L #3125

I enjoyed the cover image commemorating the recent Worldcon held in Seattle.

In *Vanamonde* #1649, **John Hertz** announced meeting in the lobby to hold SF Classics discussions at Worldcon. Right on! I look forward to reading the books by Edmond Hamilton, Robert A. Heinlein, and Keith Laumer even though I didn't participate in the con. "Assume less," is generally good advice. As is, "Read more."

Jeremy Yong's *Procrastinate Everything* #1 also

appeared in my mailing of APA-L #3126, so I've commented on it previously in *T&T* #175. I remain glad you're here, and I look forward to #2!

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #111, **Matthew Mitchell** shared a couple of stories about potential clients who sought multiple consultations instead of retaining his employer as an attorney of record. I appreciated your mention of regional convenience stores. I've been seeing quite a bit of discussion about Buc-ee's (<https://buc-ees.com>) in recent months, even seeing at least one person wearing a Buc-ee's T-shirt on State Street. In Wisconsin, Kwik Trip (<https://kwiktrip.com>) is all the rage. Founded in 1965 in Eau Claire, Wis., it's now based in La Crosse. Kwik Trips are located in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, while Kwik Stars can be found in Illinois, Iowa, and South Dakota. Their donuts, Glazers, are surprisingly good.

Indeed, my recent *Fantastic Four* reading has focused on the original series, not one of the more recent, renumbered series. I'm very much a Marvel legacy numbering kind of guy.

And **Barbara Gratz Harmon's** *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #85 reported overcoming her challenges printing APA-L. Good news, indeed! I'm glad your daughter's recent health concerns were less serious than originally estimated. Family logistics can be challenging, and her family's relocation sounds promising. Your recent reading of Clifford Simak in *Galaxy* is right up my alley.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 22, 1954


Sept. 10, 2025

Dead Line by Don Pendleton (Gold Eagle, 1989)

22 95 (R) 11/10 (S) 10/10 (S) 9/10 (S) 8/10 (S) 7/10 (S) 6/10 (S) 5/10 (S) 4/10 (S) 3/10 (S) 2/10 (S) 1/10 (S)

"Very, very action oriented."
—New York Times

DON PENDLETON'S #130
THE EXECUTIONER
FEATURING MACK BOLAN



DEAD LINE

Echoes of an ancient war call Bolan home

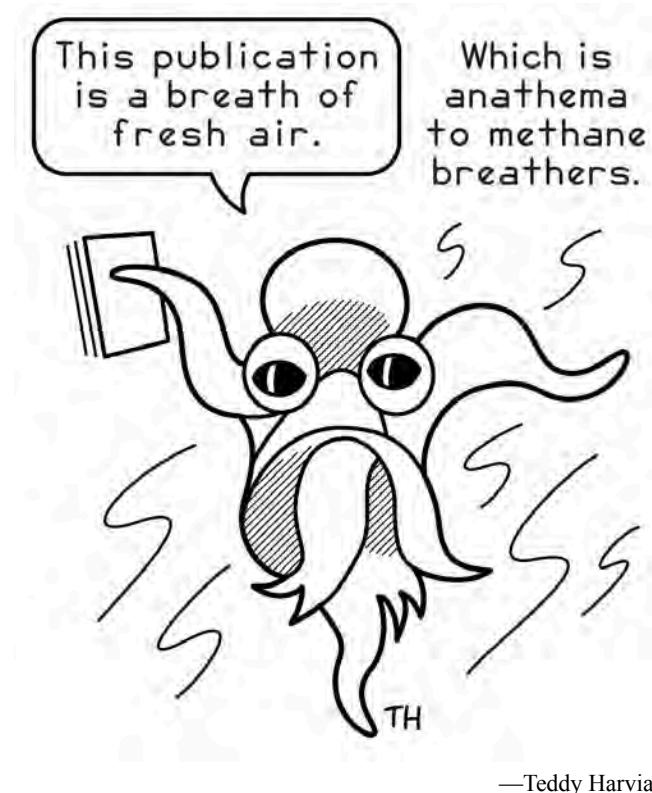
which is pretty darn good.)

This entry in the series is much like the others. With Mack Bolan books, you can generally rely on the satisfaction of the reading experience you expect. Bolan is a veteran who went up against the Mafia, later working with the federal government as a mercenary. He's very much in the vein of Remo Williams, Nick Carter—a character that dates back to 1886—and James Bond. There's quite a bit of military action, including details about firearms and ordnance. And while there isn't as much sex or smut as there can be in some of the adult western series, there's usually the suggestion of sex; attraction or sexual tension, if not actual erotica.

After a federal agent is killed by air cargo hijackers associated with the Mafia, Bolan is brought in to investigate and eradicate those responsible. The family of the agent, a friend of our hero, is kidnapped, which turns the mission into a rescue effort, as well. The Mafia assigns several assassins to remove the threat of the Executioner, introducing several interesting characters, including one who could very well return in a future book. Another federal agent also becomes involved, suggesting another potential recurring character.

T&T 178-1

the President of the United States in this volume—*Dead Line* includes a couple of characters who might have already been featured in earlier books. Two of the Mafia-associated characters are the offspring of another Mob boss challenged by Bolan earlier in the series, even if he's not a named character in a previous book. *Dead Line* is also not the first Mack Bolan book set in Boston. For example, *Boston Blitz*, the 12th book in The Executioner series, was published in 1972.



While far from high literature, Mack Bolan books are very much comfort food for me. They remind me of the early independent reading of my youth, they're adjacent to other forms of writing I enjoy (mysteries and thrillers), I find series books intriguing generally—often wondering why shared-world series featuring multiple authors aren't more common in this age of fan fiction, ebooks, and mobile phone apps—and they're just plain fun. *Dead Line* was no exception.

I'm also interested in the concept of the whole of a series being greater than the sum of its parts. When you read one Mack Bolan book, you've pretty much read all of them. Each individual piece incorporates recurring elements present in the whole. I'm not enough of a deep reader of the series to be able to identify ghost writers I think are better than others, but I'm sure that some books are better written than others might be. Regardless, it's comforting to know that the

series and its offshoots existed—and are still available inexpensively on the secondary market.

When Harlequin was purchased by HarperCollins in 2015, the Gold Eagle line was shut down. (Under Harlequin, readers could subscribe to the books published by the imprint, receiving a handful of paperbacks a month.) Linda Pendleton, the spouse of the original author, died in late 2021. There doesn't seem to be any fan fiction based on The Executioner.

Such books serve as useful palate cleansers among other reading. They're light, they're quick reads, and they're dependable. Reading *Dead Line* brought some welcome consistency during this time of uncertainty and change.

From the Reading Pile: Newsletter Reviews

I'm a member of two old time radio-related organizations, the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama (<https://www.sperdvac.com>) and the Metropolitan Washington Old Time Radio Club (<http://www.mwotrc.com>). Both publish excellent newsletters that don't always touch on topics adjacent to sf, fantasy, and horror, but after reading several recent issues of each, I felt that they were worth discussing.

Sperdvac's *Radiogram* is the more polished of the two, published in a trim size just smaller than letter size, saddle stapled, and printed in black and white with spot color. In the inside front cover for Vol. 48 #4 (March/April 2025)—and subsequent issues—Jon D. Swartz is listed among the Sperdvac Friends, or financial contributors, "in memory of Jim Harmon."

I reached out to Swartz to thank him for the memorial, and he responded, saying, "Jim and I had some great times together, although we never met in person. ... We were both members of CAPA, along with Barbara, Len and June Moffatt, Ray Nelson, John Coker, and others. Jim and I had known each other since the 1950s, when we were both active in comic book fandom. And, of course, we both wrote books on old-time radio. I was a member [of Sperdvac] for a long time, borrowing its cassette collection when I was writing books about old-time radio."

John Slavney's article, "Button Up!", considers the source material for the Jan. 20, 1974, episode of *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*, "The Chinaman Button." His research touches on the episode's author, Henry Slesar, as well as possible sources, including Richard Matheson's short story "Button, Button," originally published in the June 1970 issue of *Playboy*. Matheson's story was later adapted for a 1986 episode of *The Twilight Zone* and the movie *The Box*, but it was not the episode's original source.

Instead, Slesar's script was based on a short story

with the same title that he wrote for the September 1964 issue of *Ace Magazine*. Slavney, who lives in Madison—I’ve yet to track him down—also explores other examples of the “killing at a distance” moral dilemma. He cites Honoré de Balzac’s 1835 novel *Père Goriot*, José Maria de Eça de Queirós’s 1880 novella *The Mandarin*, and Alexandre Dumas’s 1846 novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Queirós was a Portuguese realist compared to Balzac, Charles Dickens, and Leo Tolstoy. Queirós translated H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* into Portuguese as *As Minas de Salomão* in 1885.

In Vol. 48 #5 (May/June 2025), an interview with Karl Schadow touched on Robert Bloch’s writing for radio, including the series *Stay Tuned for Terror*. An advertisement for the program was published in *Weird Tales*. An article on Groucho Marx and *You Bet Your Life* includes a sidebar listing several genre-relevant guests such as Ray Bradbury, Gordon Scott, and Ray “Crash” Corrigan. My OTR listening mostly focuses on sf, fantasy, and horror programs; I’d never thought to seek out appearances by genre-adjacent “celebrities” on other programs.

And the Mysterious Traveler column focuses on Dudley Manlove, an actor and announcer primarily known for his appearance in Ed Wood’s *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. His role in that movie led to a part in the 1962 *The Creation of the Humanoids* and the narration of another movie by Wood, *Final Curtain*.

The cover line for Vol. 48 #6 (July/August 2025), “Eva Le Gallienne Welcomes You to Horror, Inc.” promotes a feature story by Gary Coville on the short-lived 1943 series. Primarily featuring adaptations of short stories, the program drew inspiration from Wilkie Collins’s “The Terribly Strange Bed,” Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” Ralph Adams Cram’s “The Valley of the Dead,” Ambrose Bierce’s “The Man and the Snake,” and Poe’s “The Black Cat.” Other stories serving as sources included W.F. Harvey’s “The Beast with Five Fingers,” Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death” and “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and Guy de Maupassant’s “The Necklace.” Unfortunately, recordings of and scripts from the program did not survive. The broadcast log accompanying the piece is a wonderful piece of research.

Patrick Lucanio’s “Out of This World” surveys early science fiction on radio. His two-page article touches on *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*; *Flash Gordon*; *The Strange Dr. Weird*; *The Mysterious Traveler*; *Dark Fantasy*; *Lights Out*; *Arch Oboler’s Plays*; *Quiet, Please*; *Suspense*; *Escape*; and *CBS Radio Workshop*. When discussing non-sf series, Lucanio specifies individual episodes that qualify as

sf. He also mentions the interplay between radio and TV—*Rocky Jones*, *Space Patrol*; and *Tom Corbett*—as well as programs such as *2000 Plus*, *Dimension X*, *X Minus One*, and *Exploring Tomorrow*, which was hosted by *Astounding Science Fiction*’s editor John W. Campbell.

He ends the piece exploring radio adaptations of the writing of Bradbury, Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. Lucanio writes that Ernest Kinoy, a writer for *Dimension X* and *X Minus One*, “often retained much of Bradbury’s poetic prose in his adaptations.” Not only does the article identify programs that sometimes—but not always—featured sf stories, it recommends specific episodes. That is very useful.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 5, 1954

Radio Recall, the bimonthly newsletter for the Metropolitan Washington Old Time Radio Club, is printed on letter-sized paper and stapled in the corner. In Vol. 42 #2 (April 2025), a piece by Lauren Kraut on the Lone Ranger’s horse, Silver, includes multiple illustrations reproducing comic book covers. Frank Morgan’s “Give Me Five” list of episode recommendations includes a couple of genre-related programs that are worth tracking down.

Vol. 42 #3 (June 2025) mentions a couple of online services that might be worth seeking out: *Radio Once More* (<http://www.radiooncemore.com>) and *Yesterday USA*. (<https://yesterdayusa.net>) A letter of comment from Karl Schadow mentioned Australian OTR researcher Ian Grieve and his Web site (<https://www.australianotr.com.au>), which made me think of fen in that part of the world. I wonder whether ANZAPA participants knew—or knew of—Grieve.

Vol. 42 #4 (August 2025) offered a memorial to Jim Cox, whose book *This Day in Network Radio* might be a relevant resource. I also learned about

another OTR club, Kentuckiana Radio Addicts. A book review by Stephen A. Kallis Jr. considers a Young Adult novel focusing on *Captain Midnight* and radio premiums. And a reprinted 2018 item by Steven Thompson looks at an Orson Welles appearance in *Superman* #62.

Usually, the September/October issue of *Radiogram* can be relied on for a Halloween-related feature. It's not common that both newsletters contain so much of genre interest in several consecutive issues!



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson II: Movie Reviews

Robot Holocaust

After seeing the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* apron at Mother Fool's on Labor Day (T&T #177), I was inspired to watch an episode of the television program midday. Originally airing Jan. 13, 1990, the 1987 movie—co-produced by Charles Band—was paired

with an excerpt of *Radar Men from the Moon* Chapter 9, "Battle in the Stratosphere." *Robot Holocaust* was the first color film aired on the nationwide show. Reader feedback had commented on how many black-and-white movies had been screened as part of the series on the Comedy Channel.

Robot Holocaust was released theatrically in Italy but went direct to video in the United States. The movie tells the tale of a hero who travels through a post-apocalyptic wasteland with a robot companion. That robot character is somewhat similar to C-3PO, though the suit is composed of fabric. They meet a woman whose father, ostensibly a scientist, has been captured by the Dark One. The villain maintains control of the area's population by occasionally removing the air supply. (Some of them are somehow immune to that.) Otherwise, they are enslaved, forced to maintain a Power Station.

Even though the characters are continuously searching for the city of New Terra, the skyline of New York City, including the Chrysler Building, is frequently visible in the distance. Much of the movie was filmed over the course of about two weeks in the abandoned Brooklyn Navy Yard. Scenes were also shot in South Point Park on Roosevelt Island.

One noteworthy scene features sewage worms, vicious creatures encountered while the heroes travel through the mines underground. They are effectively hand puppets but look pretty cool. In another scene, the scientist is encased in an egg-shaped cocoon reminiscent of *Alien*. That is also pretty cool.

Among the cast, the evil character Valaria, hand maiden to the Dark One, is also notable. She is beautiful, but her German accent is quite thick, at times almost incomprehensible, providing much fodder for the MST3K cast. IMDb suggests that she appeared in this movie and a 1988 TV miniseries. A comment on Reddit indicates that she might have also directed pornographic movies, but I haven't been able to confirm that yet.

While I've enjoyed other Band productions such as *Doctor Mordrid* (Snow Poster Township #21), I can't really recommend this movie by itself. I can, however, recommend the episode of MST3K in which it's aired. In addition to the *Radar Men from the Moon* excerpt, I



enjoyed references to *The Munsters*, *Underdog*, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, *Robot Monster* (T&T #73), and other pop culture and genre stalwarts.

Comments on APA-L #3127

I was quite pleased to see the cover artwork by Charles Lee Jackson II. Methinks Octopus's priorities are in the right place, even if threatened by Bat. Marc Schirmeister's artwork is worth protecting—as is that of Jackson! I look forward to seeing more.

In *Vanamonde* #3127, **John Hertz** told a joke involving Jesus, Moses, and golf—which was unexpected. Are stores such as Target, Walmart, and Costco the modern-day equivalents of department stores? One might be able to group such retailers in three tiers: luxury department stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus; a middle tier including Nordstrom, Macy's, Kohl's, and JCPenney; and mass-market options such as Target and Walmart. When I was growing up, JCPenney and Sears were favorites, though we shopped at Kmart and Shopko more frequently. The Sears Holiday Wish Book was an annual treasure trove.

Jeremy Yong's *Procrastinate Everything* #2—huzzah!—reported his receipt of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Your discussion of reading ebooks resonated with me. Do you actually read on your mobile phone rather than a tablet or e-reader? I occasionally do the same but find the screen of my mobile to be too small for a pleasurable reading experience. When my son went to university in Tokyo, I was surprised that we didn't need to budget much for textbook purchases. Not only were most of his textbooks available as ebooks, he's been able to procure inexpensive or free editions online. When I was a student, I spent much more on textbooks.

My family didn't own a set of encyclopedias per se, but we did have a couple editions of the *World Book Year Book*. Online, I still enjoy dipping into the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online (<https://www.britannica.com>). I'm not sure I use it often enough to warrant the ongoing subscription fee, however.

I was unfamiliar with Korean manhwa and look forward to learning more. An occasional reader of manga and much less familiar with Chinese comic books (manhua), I'm curious which manhwa you'd recommend to sf and fantasy fen! I'll check out *Ragnarok*, which has been published in English by Tokyopop.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown*, **Matthew Mitchell** indicated that a mobile phone app recently stopped working. Which app was it, and how often did you use it? My mobile is full of apps I rarely use. Midweek, I spent some time cleaning up my email

inbox, unsubscribing from newsletters and promotional emails, and adding some filters and labels, prioritizing what I'd like to show up at the top of my inbox on a daily basis. That led me to tinkering around with Password Checkup in Google Password Manager, which discovered that almost 160 of my passwords have been compromised, more than 660 have been reused (e.g., I use the same password for multiple accounts), and almost 350 use a weak password. I'll prioritize the compromised accounts, but they don't seem to include anything important. The exercise makes me wonder how many online accounts I have that I never or rarely use. I decline to use any biometric data—fingerprint or face print—to access my devices. That should be used sparingly. The digital and online junk drawer might be deep indeed!

You reminded me that I need to return my attention and energy to the hagiography. I'll do another edit of the meeting version for consistency before I send it to Matthew B. Tepper and Charles Lee Jackson II for their annotations. Tell me more about *The Meddlers Lexicon*. Are copies still available?

And **Barbara Gratz Harmon's** *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #87 updated ellers on the recent heat wave in the Los Angeles area. I think it's a great idea to consider sending an assortment of APA-L back issues for display in a future Worldcon Fanzine Lounge. I will keep my eyes open for back issues of *Monsters of the Movies*. I have #1 in my collection and PDFs of #1-3 and #5-8. It's neat seeing Jim Harmon listed on the masthead as editor or West Coast editor, depending on the issue. I hope he was able to heal the rift with Forrest J Ackerman.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 5, 1954

Sept. 12, 2025

Telling Stories About Storytelling

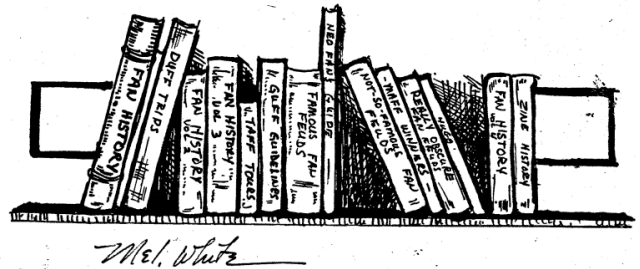
Given the theme “First Impressions,” participants were encouraged to tell a five-minute story about a first date, day of school, time visiting a new city, or time trying a new hobby. While I intended to just sit and listen despite a friend—and my wife—asking whether I would tell a story, the idea for one came to mind, and I decided that I’d regret not taking the opportunity. So I added my name to the list of storytellers even though I’d never gone to or participated in a storytelling event before.

The story I told was about the first time I flew through Heathrow Airport, how the airport is important to me because of my name, how people usually engage with my name and the meanings it has for others—and how anticlimactic my experience at Heathrow was. I was surprisingly nervous even though I've spoken in public quite a bit (Caitlin said she noticed a slight quaver in my voice), but people laughed in all the right places and seemed to enjoy my time at the mic. I'm glad I participated, and I'd do so again in a heartbeat.

A range of storytellers participated. Some just rambled on for a while. Some had clearly prepared or written the story they intended to tell, speaking extemporaneously. And some were visibly nervous and uncomfortable. Everyone was absolutely wonderful. Gomoll's story about her first experience cooking—an accidental soufflé—was excellent, and she was one of the better storytellers.

The Mad City Story Slam is a non-competitive, more grassroots version of the Moth (<https://themoth.org>), and attendees are encouraged to write notes of

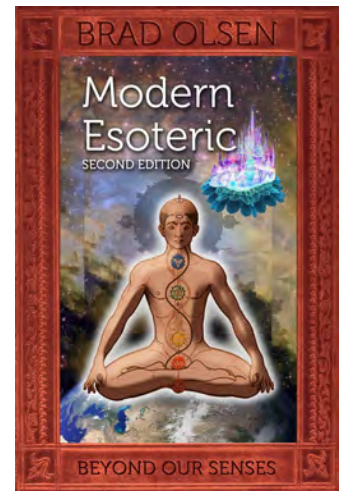
The event struck me as a combination of stand-up comedy, open mics, talk therapy, Toastmasters International, and PechaKucha because of the informal time limit. It was a friendly, welcoming room and seemed like a positive, supportive experience for organizers, participants, and the audience alike. Not a bad introduction to storytelling events!



Modern Esoteric by Brad Olsen (Consortium of Collective Consciousness, 2018)

I first became aware of Brad Olsen's writing through his grassroots, do-it-yourself travel book *World Stompers* in the mid-1990s. Meeting him at the Conscious Life Expo in Los Angeles earlier this year, I learned that his writing and publishing activities have continued. As a publisher (<https://cccpublishing.com>) and the executive producer and director ("director of weirdness") for the annual How Weird Street Faire (<https://howweird.org>) in San Francisco—y'all should go!—Olsen has written several books about sacred locations in North America, Europe, and elsewhere; and a trilogy focusing on esoteric and conspiracy-oriented topics.

Modern Esoteric is the first volume in the Esoteric Series. At almost 500 pages, it's a hefty read, offering a surface-level synthesis of multiple ideas, sources, and topics—and serving as a solid introduction to conspiratorial esotericism. (Or, esoteric conspiracies!) While reading the book, I was struck by the fact that multiple books could be—and have been—written



about many of the individual topics addressed in the book. For a newcomer, the wide-ranging survey might be a little daunting. It was an enjoyable and informative reading experience, offering a sizable number of entry points.

After an introduction suggesting that an alternative narrative is needed to break free from the illusion of conventional perception, thinking, and understanding, the book's Lifeology section focuses on the state of the environment, creation myths, secret societies such as the Illuminati, symbolism, dynastic bloodlines including the Rothschild family, genetics and evolution, shamanism, ancient astronauts, lost continents such as Atlantis, and Egyptian and Greek mystery schools. Olsen's writing owes a strong debt to the work of Graham Hancock, Erich von Däniken, Zecharia Sitchin (*The Talk Merchant* #2), and perhaps David Icke.

The Control section builds on the conspiracies touched on in the first 180 pages. Olsen explores how those in power strive to control and restrict human beings through fluoridation (it reportedly calcifies the pineal gland, suppressing the third eye), vaccination, chemtrails, political structures, high finance, organized religion, and the healthcare industry. He also considers sacred geometry and symbols (two of the more interesting chapters), and free energy.

In the third section, Thrive, the author expands on the potential for health and healing. Olsen explores the science of consciousness, enlightenment, quantum physics, the commandments of George Gurdjieff (see below), reincarnation, and utopianism. Near the end of the book, he shares some stories from his time working with the How Weird Street Faire before recommending Buddhism as one potential spiritual path for readers to consider.

The Reference section includes an acknowledgment of the Australian magazine *Nexus* (<https://nexusmagazine.com>), which further identifies Olsen's inspirations. He could also have indicated periodicals such as *Fate* (<https://www.fatemag.com>) and *Fortean Times* (<https://subscribe.forteanimes.com>).

While I'm skeptical of the conspiracies related to reptilian aliens, fluoride, and vaccination, *Modern Esoteric* is a thought-provoking drunkard's walk through current conspiracy-oriented esoteric theories and ideas. The book addresses spiritual matters but stops shy of concentrating on the occult. Instead, it contends that there's a select group of people in power, some secret, implicitly or explicitly working to keep most of the planet's population in a state of poor education, employment, wealth, and health—in a state of reactionary fear rather than proactive love—in

order to more easily control a global society that might not be able to think critically, exercise its freewill productively, or otherwise meet its own needs and serve its own interests.

That's actually somewhat difficult to argue against!

The Roots of Life by Mrs. Frank Lloyd Wright (Horizon, 1963)

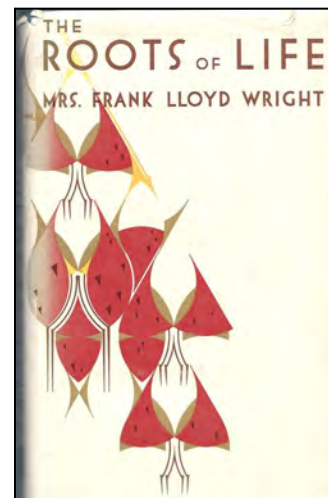
After visiting Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright's home, studio, and school in Spring Green, Wis., in mid-July, I read a couple of books related to the architect's work and life. The first was William R. Drennan's *Death in a Prairie House: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Murders* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #172), which investigates the 1914 killings of seven

people—including Wright's lover Mamah Borthwick Cheney—at the home. More recently, I read this book by Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, the architect's third and final wife.

I was initially interested in the book because the author was a student of George Gurdjieff and practiced Gurdjieff movements, or sacred dances. While she was not necessarily a proponent of New Thought, she introduced Gurdjieff's teachings to Wright, incorporating them into the work done through the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, or Taliesin Fellowship. She wrote five books about philosophy and her life with Wright.

This book didn't delve deeply into or focus strongly enough on her spiritual thinking but was still interesting. The author considers Wright and the role of art and architecture in life, and the meaning of experience. A number of talks given to groups such as the Taliesin Fellowship, the Junior League at the Phoenix Art Museum, the American Association of University Women, the YWCA in Madison, and the Phoenix Art Museum League are also transcribed.

But it is the chapter titled "On Science" that proved most interesting, at least for this forum. Primarily a discussion with Dr. Edward Teller, the theoretical physicist and chemical engineer, whom she met at an Arizona State University banquet, the chapter explores philosophy, learning, and the potential power of computer science. Teller's commentary on the limitations of computers resonated strongly given the



current focus on generative artificial intelligence: “Every time I have described a mental process, like the process of learning, I can make the machine execute that process. But if I cannot describe the mental process, then of course the machine is powerless. . . . The machine cannot make something out of nothing.”

The two discuss the value of human creativity and how freeing people of “mechanical thinking”—assisted by computers—could lead to a “new dawn of civilization.” Teller touches on the work of Bertrand Russell, John von Neumann, Albert Einstein, and others. The discussion participants also explore the development of knowledge and the difference between knowing nothing—or knowing something not worth knowing—and later learning that you were incorrect or wrong. It’s interesting stuff, to be sure.

Subsequent chapters address the power of thought and inner growth, perhaps coming closest to capturing the author’s spiritual philosophy, though still firmly grounded in the pragmatic. *The Roots of Life* struck this reader as an odd book: partly celebrity memoir, treatise on art and architecture, collection of speech transcripts, and exploration of the interplay between science and spirit.

Also read this week: *Action Comics* #23, *Batman* #1, *Beyond* #1, *Chamber of Chills* #1, *Daring Mystery Comics* #1, *Detective Comics* #36, *Forbidden Worlds* #2, *Mad* #3, *Marvel Mystery Comics* #11, *Red Raven Comics* #1, *Superman* #3, and *Witches Tales* #1

Storytelling Events in Madison

My first introduction to storytelling as a formal practice was likely the monologues of performers such as Spalding Gray, Mike Daisey, and Mike Birbiglia, whose *The Old Man & the Pool* strays far from what you might think of as stand-up comedy. When I lived in the Boston area, one of my housemates was active in the local storytelling community. And, of course, Nick Smith is active in Los Angeles-area storytelling. I hadn’t previously considered the practice’s adjacency to fandom, really.

During a brief foray to learn more about the storytelling community in Madison, I’ve identified several promising options:

Annual Evening of Storytelling

<https://am-indian-indigenous.wisc.edu/programs/storytelling>

“Traditional stories in indigenous languages with an English translation”

Mad City Story Slam

<https://www.facebook.com/madcitystoryslam>

Monthly themed storytelling events

Madison Storytellers

<https://www.facebook.com/MadStorytellers>

An inactive Facebook and Google group for area storytellers

The Moth Madison

<https://themoth.org/events/results?eventLocations=6456>

Monthly themed storytelling events

Storytelling Workshop

<https://www.hisawyer.com/arts-literature-laboratory/schedules/activity-set/1561293>

A three-class series hosted by the Arts + Literature Laboratory later this year



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson II: Television Reviews

Ren Faire

Since going to the Bristol Renaissance Faire last month (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #176), I've been on a bit of a Renaissance fair kick. I've been reading books about Renaissance fairs (*The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #33) and I've been seeking Ren fair-related television and documentary options. Despite the existence of books such as Kimberly Tony Korol-Evans's *Renaissance Festivals: Merrying the Past and Present* and *Well Met: Renaissance Faires and the American Counterculture* by Rachel Lee Rubin, there doesn't seem to be a good documentary film about the history or subcultures of Renaissance fairs—yet.

The 2009 romantic comedy *All's Faire in Love* involves a Renaissance fair and was filmed at the Michigan Renaissance Festival. Area residents, festival staff, and other participants were cast as extras. But nobody's made a documentary about, say, the history of Phyllis and Ron Patterson's Renaissance Pleasure Faire—or a survey of such festivals across the country. If we can have documentaries about Forrest J Ackerman's home and Bob Wilkins's *Creature Features*, why not Renaissance fairs?

What has been produced is *Ren Faire*, a 2024 three-episode HBO miniseries concentrating on the then-pending sale and succession planning for the Texas Renaissance Festival. (<https://www.texrenfest.com>) After working as a glassblower at the Renaissance Pleasure Faire, environmental artist George Coulam operated festivals in Utah and Minnesota before relocating to Texas. There, he purchased land and reincorporated a defunct town outside Houston, Todd Mission, serving as its mayor for many years. The Texas Renaissance Festival grew to be the largest such fair in the United States.

The miniseries is largely a character study of Coulam and two staff members vying for positions of power: A general manager who previously served as entertainment director, and a vendor who oversees a kettle corn operation and other on-site businesses. No one is very likeable except for the GM's wife and



assistant, and Coulam is downright distasteful and manipulative. The overarching theme of the program might be control.

Rather than focus their attention on the fair itself, the filmmakers chose to concentrate on the main characters and the reality TV-like competitive aspect of the succession planning. Viewers don't see much of the fair, its grounds, the adjacent campground, the performers, or attendees and other participants. They do see some of Coulam's home, property, and artwork, but the focus is almost entirely on the staff and owner rather than the experience of the fair itself. That results in a lot of close-up shots.

Each episode ends with a slightly fictionalized, more impressionistic series of scenes perhaps intended to heighten the drama and raise the stakes of the story. I found those portions interruptive, unconvincing, and largely unnecessary. Overall, *Ren Faire* is neither fish nor fowl. It's too close to reality TV to be a documentary film, but it's also too realistic to accomplish what scripted TV has to offer. Regardless, it's what's available—until someone makes a proper documentary about Renaissance fairs.

The story doesn't really end at the end of the series, however, and the aftermath of the sale and succession documented by the production is also quite interesting. Subsequent events include lawsuits and a suicide. For additional information on the festival and Coulam, seek out Taylor Mankin's article, "A Quest into the World of Rennies," in *Houston History* Vol. 13 #2 and Jordan Mackay's feature story in the November 1999 issue of *Texas Monthly*.

Comments on LASFAPA #582

In *It's Still Rock and Roll to Me* #14, Rich Lynch painted a concerning picture of President Trump's possible paths to continuing as a leader after this term as president. I was unaware that the *Expanse* series was written by collaborators: Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck. That reminded me of Stephen Bury, the pen name shared by Neal Stephenson and J. Frederick George. In turn, George is a pseudonym used by George Jewsbury, Stephenson's uncle. There are other examples. Catherine Curzon and Eleanor Harkstead write historical fiction as Ellie Curzon. Eando Binder was a joint pseudonym used by Earl Andrew Binder and Otto Binder. I've not yet read any Corey but shall have to do so—while also seeking out the writing of Abraham.

Now that we're in our fourth month living in Madison—and two weeks at our second domicile, an Airbnb exactly one mile from our previous furnished apartment (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* 177), I've turned my attention from utilizing the public library aggressively

to reading the books we currently have on hand, in order to place them in area Little Free Libraries once I'm finished. Read and release! Regardless, the Mrs. Frank Lloyd Wright book above was an interlibrary loan from the Sauk City Library—and my wife and I went to the library on Thursday so I could return it and pick up another book I requested that arrived this week. My wife is a more active reader of library ebooks than I am. She's even figured out that she can turn off the Wi-Fi for her e-reader so an ebook isn't returned once it's due—if she's not done reading it.

I enjoyed your reprinted essay on model rocketry. The Scout troop my son and I were active in hosted a rocket camp every year, offering multiple weekend launch events for Cub Scout packs. We'd hold multiple build nights leading up to the camp, as well as help Scouts build their rockets on site. We offered two kits, a simple version for younger Cub Scouts, and a slightly more complex kit for Webelos. Scouts from our troop ran the rocket launch, serving in a number of positions, and we'd stay an extra night ourselves so we could launch larger rockets the next day without other campers around. That allowed us to use larger engines.

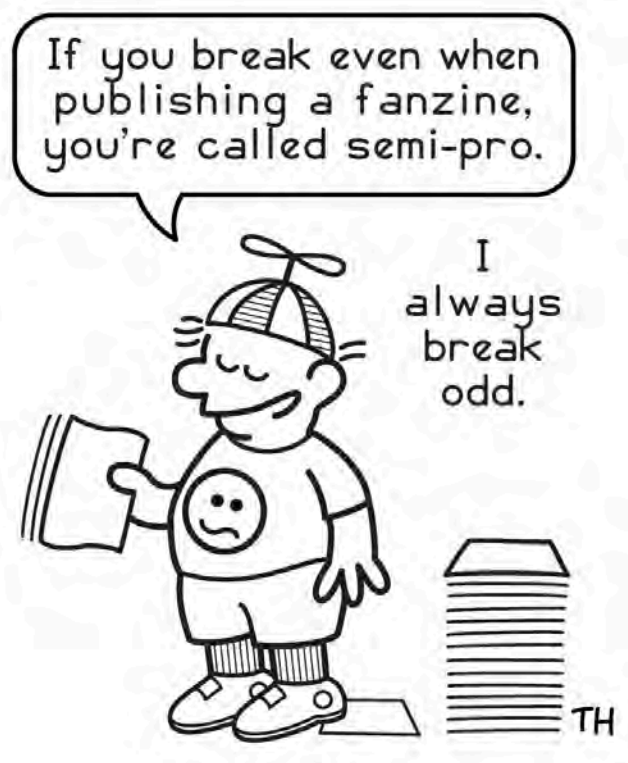
There's a National Association of Rocketry (<https://www.nar.org>), a Southern California Rocket Association (<http://mebowitz.com>), a Rocket Organization of California (<https://rocstock.org>), and other such clubs. East of Madison, Wis., in Johnson Creek, there's the Wisconsin Organization of Spacemodeling Hobbyists (<https://www.wooshrocketry.org>), the Tripoli Wisconsin Association (<https://www.tripoliwisconsin.org>) down toward Kenosha, the Lakeshore Area Rocketry Society (<http://larsrocketry.com>), and other clubs. There doesn't seem to be much model rocketry in Portugal, but the Tripoli Rocketry Association seems to have a club in Spain. (<https://www.tripoli-spain.org>)

David Schlosser's *Fool's Mate* #585 noted that he arranges LASFAPAn's apazines in the order in which they arrive. I probably already knew that! Your remark on misspelling Liz Copeland's name reminded me of the movie *Cop Land*. When that movie was released in 1997, when I first saw the poster, I misread the title as *Copland*. "Now, why would they cast Sylvester Stallone in an Aaron Copland biopic?" I wondered. That would have been a very different movie, indeed.

Your mention of desiring more Guy H. Lillian III fanzines in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance pulled at a heartstring. I never met Lillian, but we exchanged emails, I sent letters of comment to *Spartacus*, and I'll miss him, as well as *Challenger*, *Spartacus*, and *The Zine Dump*. Someone will have to start a new reviewzine to pick up where he left off.

I don't remember how we planned our route from California to Wisconsin, but the way we came isn't that much longer than if we'd gone through Utah and Colorado. We probably wanted to parallel the Route 66 vacation itinerary until Albuquerque, where I spent time with William Breiding (*F&F* #43). Alas, I also don't remember the intended route for the canoe trip in Washington.

Your description of *Elio* intrigued me. The movie wasn't on my radar otherwise. And the excerpt of the letter to the editor of your local newspaper was spot on. It's a shame that it wasn't published.



—Teddy Harvia

In *City on the Edge of a Copyright Infringement* #1, **Matthew Mitchell** made his debut in LASFAPA! Welcome to our pages, good sir. I remember you telling me that you were considering joining LASFAPA. And I remember how excited I was when you first joined APA-L. Very, very cool. Your election as scribe of the LASFS resonates with David Schlosser's description of searching for synagogue board nominees: "Who Is Involved Who Might Say Yes?" Thank you for saying, "Yes." I enjoyed reading your fannish bonafides. I enjoyed reading about your recent health challenges less—that's more a parallel structure joke than anything else—though I'm glad you continue to mend and overcome. Stay strong, brother man.

Nick Smith's *Labyrinthine Lines* dated July 2025

updated LASFAPAns on the state of martial law in Los Angeles. The events you detail resonate with more recent activity, some of it hopeful. A federal judge recently ruled that the National Guard's deployment in Los Angeles was illegal, violating the Posse Comitatus Act. (Of course it does!) Trump implemented a federal takeover of Washington D.C. and is considering troop deployments in Chicago, Baltimore, and New Orleans. In Michigan and California, lawmakers are considering bills that would ban masked, unidentified law enforcement officers. And civilians are impersonating police, wearing masks. Some have attempted sexual assault, and some have been shot by homeowners.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 12, 1954

I'm glad you're enjoying the *Star Wars Unlimited* collectible trading card game. Your book reviews are intriguing, and Brittany N. Williams's *Saint-Seducing Gold* sounds promising. I was also interested in Kristine Kathryn Rusch's *City of Ruins*. Her connection to *Fantasy Book* is wonderful, and your discussion of whether the novella-length pieces could have been serialized as a novel made me wonder whether they could have been fixed up as a novel, as well. I do like novellas lately, however.

Your discussion of units of klutziness—the farber and megafarber—amused me. *40 Acres* sounds like a movie worth watching. Wait a minute... Bob Clampett developed an animated demo for a John Carter of Mars series? Indeed he did, and it's available on YouTube! (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTAIgZlqwnQ>) I'm curious whether this is the demo you saw.

I've also encountered various spellings of Edogawa Rampo. I believe I utilized the spelling used in the books I reviewed, but I've seen Rampo and Ranpo. It turns out there's a reason for that! Rampo occasionally shows up as Ranpo because of an older style of Japanese-to-English localization conventions. When Ranpo was first translated, “m” was used for the れ sound. That later changed. So, Ranpo might be more correct now.

Apparently, the 2015 anime *Rampo Kitan: Game of Laplace* was inspired by the author's works, commemorating the 50th anniversary of his death. A 2016 anime, *Trickster*, places his characters in the 2030s. Personally, that seems to miss the point, but it might still work well!

In *The Title Goes Here* dated July 11, 2025, **Janice Morningstar** offered a conrep focusing on the recent Baycon and Westercon. I'm sorry to hear that the programming was lackluster and the logistics sloppy. Does TRMN mean the Royal Manticoran Navy? (<https://trmn.org>) Apparently, that's a fan club dedicated to the Honor Harrington science fiction universe. I haven't read any Honor Harrington novels—or other works by David Weber—recently, but I have several of his books in storage to ship to Portugal. The TRMN reminds me of Starfleet (<https://sfi.org>) and the Battlestar Galactica Fanclub (<https://battlestarfanclub.com>).

Baycon's lack of a focus on literature, coupled with few booksellers in the huckster room, surprises me. It must have been a relief to see Tachyon Publications. Is the collection of interviews you picked up the Richard Wolinsky-edited *Space Ships! Ray Guns! Martian Octopods!: Interviews with Science Fiction Legends?* That looks really promising. Despite the frustrations and gaffes, I'm that Chris Garcia's Fanzine in an Hour panel was enjoyable and offered a bit of redemption.

Alva Svoboda's *That Flagon Last Night* #265 offered several book reviews, which are always of interest. Ray Nayler's *Where the Axe Is Buried* and Daryl Gregory's *When We Were Real* both sound excellent.

And in *Truth Comes Limping After* dated July 11, 2025, **Alan Winston** mentioned the potential for destroying our country's food production system. According to recent reports, China opted not to purchase soybeans from the United States, costing domestic farmers billions of dollars. A *Fortune* article published online earlier this month indicates that, “[a]griculture contributes \$9.5 trillion to the U.S. economy annually, representing 18.7% of total national economic output. The agricultural sector directly and indirectly supports over a million American jobs.” With the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement targeting farm workers and prohibitive tariffs flummoxing exports, we face a double whammy.

Your commentary on Hey Days was enjoyable, and Green Mountain Retreat sounds glorious. “[B]eing away from the world” is an attractive option! Your group choreography session reminded me of improvisational theater—and seems like a worthy endeavor! Caitlin and I are heading back up to Door

County this weekend so she can participate in a friend's workshop. (<https://www.violaspolin.org/workshops/doorcounty25>) I plan to keep this work day as short as I possibly can so we can leave this afternoon and arrive before dark. I'll just hang out, explore the area, and read while she participates in the workshop. Some day, I'll start participating in them myself.

Earlier this week, both of us got our flu and Covid-19 vaccines, Caitlin at a CVS and me at a Walgreens. In order to qualify for the Covid-19 booster, we both claimed "inactivity," or concern about a sedentary lifestyle. That's not entirely inaccurate—I could definitely be more physically active—so I didn't feel too dishonest, and it doesn't seem like a pre-existing condition that could affect future healthcare access. After all, inactivity can turn into activity relatively easily.

Both of our passports are returning from the Portugal consulate in San Francisco today, so we'll be able to schedule our immigration flights soon. I'm now a month away from ending work at my employer—I was accepted for Voluntary Exit, which is like being laid off, only you choose it—and we've moved from the furnished apartment on Wilson Street to an Airbnb on Wilson Street. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #177) We aim to be in Portugal in time for Halloween. Our health insurance will end at the end of October, but we'll procure travel insurance—and qualify for local insurance once our residency is granted. There's still more to do before we're settled, but I am beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The liminal state we've been in since May will soon end!

You should definitely read the Jessica Jones comic books at some point. I remember enjoying *Alias* quite a bit. The show was also quite entertaining but did get pretty intense. The episodes featuring David Tennant as Zebediah Killgrave or the Purple Man rank among the most disturbing TV storylines I've ever experienced. (I might have said that before; I'm likely to say it again.)

Both you and David Schlosser commented on my driving speed during our road trip from California to Wisconsin. Without revisiting what I wrote, it's likely that I mentioned drive time estimates offered by Google Maps, which might not reflect actual drive times. We usually added an hour to the estimates to account for fuel and rest stops. Regardless, I did enjoy speed limits of 70 and 80 miles per hour when I could.

I'm glad you noticed my use of "okeh" instead of "OK." The word came up in an APA-L discussion a while ago, if I remember correctly, and I decided to start using it in my fanwriting. I hope that's okeh. Heath Points galore for recognizing the similarity to

Okeh Records. The label's name first was spelled "OkeH" because of the initials of its founder, Otto K. E. Heinemann, but was later changed to "OKeh."

Well, okeh, then! That's another ish pubbed.



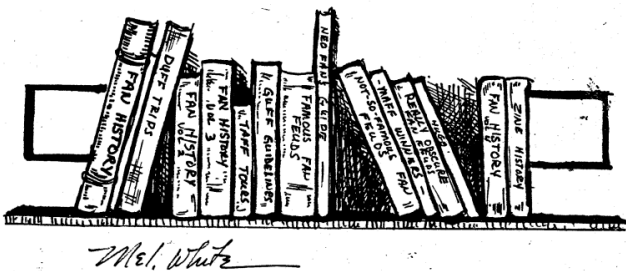
Chicago Tribune, Feb. 12, 1954



Snow Poster Township #23

Sept. 12, 2025

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From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Altered Carbon by Richard K. Morgan (Del Rey, 2017)

I've been aware of this cyberpunk novel for some time and held off on watching the 2018 television adaptation until recently when my wife was out of town. After watching the first episode, which was pretty good, I decided that I should read the book before seeing another installment. So I checked the book out of the library and finished reading it last weekend while in Door County. I'll return it to the library tonight.

The first of three novels featuring the character Takeshi Kovacs, *Altered Carbon* is an energetic read. The primary focus of the book is an advanced

technology with which people can achieve near-immortality by "re-sleeving" themselves in new bodies, either the bodies of people whose consciousness has been removed and put into storage or grown clones. True death can still occur if the cortical stack in which consciousness is stored is destroyed. That is considered a very serious crime.

Kovacs worked as an elite soldier, an Envoy, for the United Nations before he was imprisoned, his consciousness put into storage. He is brought back and re-sleeved to serve as a private investigator, assigned to solve either the murder or suicide (it's initially unclear which it is) of a wealthy Methuselah—someone who's been able to afford

re-sleeving for multiple lifetimes. Such long lifespans introduce an element of moral turpitude as people become increasingly distant from everyday existence.

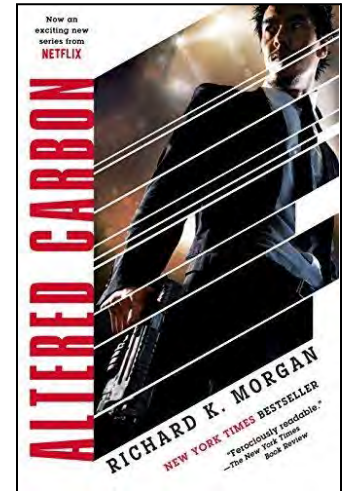
The novel plays up the noir aspects of cyberpunk, blending Raymond Chandler-esque whodunit with the gritty futuristic setting. I won't give away too much of the plot, but the storyline involves chemically and technologically heightened awareness and abilities, artificial intelligence-operated hotels, a Russian assassin who goes rogue, virtual and actual sex, designer drugs, widespread corruption, an organized religion aspect—Roman Catholics do not pursue re-sleeving—and political lobbying and legislation.

Parts of the novel reminded me of *Twin Peaks* and *Top of the Lake* as much as the fiction of writers such as William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, and others. I'll probably watch the rest of the TV show before exploring the subsequent books, if I do either. This novel is firmly footed on one planet, Harlan's World. The existence of interstellar travel offers some wonderful options for future storytelling.

Other colony planets are occasionally referred to, as is an extinct alien civilization, the Elder. I'm curious whether the other books in the series focus more on that aspect and the remains of that society. The characters in *Altered Carbon* are compelling, the world intriguing, and the story gripping.

From the Reading Pile: Magazine Reviews

As we were packing up our belongings in California earlier this year to put them into storage for eventual



shipping to Portugal—and with our son going to university in Tokyo—we discovered a toy box full of magazines in his bedroom. Many of them were back issues of *Cricket*, *Highlights for Children*, and *Ranger Rick* magazines. We donated most of those to a local educator for use in school rooms, perhaps for collage art, but I salvaged a few periodicals for later reading myself.

One of those was *Comic Heroes* #21, published by Future Publishing in 2013. The magazine (<https://www.facebook.com/ComicHeroes>) has since ceased publication, but reading this issue even a dozen years later reminded me of magazines such as *Comics Scene* and perhaps *Comics Collector*: a mainstream version of the *Comics Journal* or a less speculative approach to *Wizard*. *Comic Heroes* is very much a magazine for readers of comics.



—Teddy Harvia

Weighing in at 162 pages in an oversized, squarebound format, this issue of the “world’s No. 1 comic magazine” offers the “ultimate guide to Batman & Superman,” also serving as the team-up issue focusing on titles such as *Marvel Team-Up* and *Marvel Two-in-One*, and offering 40 pages of comic reviews.

The magazine does several things really well. First of all, it pays attention to comic art. The relatively large trim size, bigger than that of a standard comic book, affords ample opportunity to highlight the artwork present in comics beyond the mere inclusion of sample panels to illustrate articles. The issue opens with Splash Pages, a section featuring “a showcase of

spectacular current comics artwork” that provides two-page spreads as well as paneled page samples. And the more than 30-page Sidekick section includes multi-page previews of comics such as the *Lost Planet* graphic novel, *Eternal Warrior* #2, *Conan and the People of the Black Circle*, *S.H.O.O.T. First*, and *Chronos Commandos* #5.

Secondly, while the front-of-the-book section, Heat Vision, concentrates on comics news, it offers short pieces that are inspired by recent releases but do more than merely promote a title. This is not the reprinting of promotional copy from publishers, but actual reportage, interviewing the writers and artists behind a given series or title. That journalistic approach continues throughout, perhaps coming close to the *Comic Book Creator* of today. The writing contextualizes the comics featured in a broad manner, referring to other comics, publishers, and aspects of popular culture—positioning comics in a broader media landscape.

Comics Heroes also provides a sensible survey of active publishers, concentrating on the Big Three publishers while also exploring material published by smaller imprints. For example, in Heat Vision alone, titles published by Dark Horse, IDW, and Jet City Comics (Amazon’s imprint) are featured. The magazine also balances the old and new, reproducing older panels and covers in a Beatlemania sidebar, reviewing *Superman: The Golden Age Sundays 1943-1946*, and offering a two-page piece on the comics appearances of Doc Savage. The magazine doesn’t go quite as far as *Alter Ego* or *Back Issue!*, however.

Feature stories enable the magazine to delve even deeper into the context and history of comics. In the Superman and Batman cover story, multiple covers for *World’s Finest Comics*, *Superman*, and other series are featured, along with more recent artwork by Frank Miller. The article focusing on *Marvel Team-Up* reproduces even more covers, including American and British printings.

Matt Bielby’s listicle “The League of Superfriends” considers the top 20 character pairings. Given that *Comics Heroes* was published in England, its focus is relatively global, drawing on American and British characters, as well as those from anime and manga, and bandes dessinées.

The magazine’s in-depth focus on the creators behind the comics is impressive. Interviews feature artists and writers such as Vertigo writer Peter Milligan, *Resident Alien* writer Peter Hogan, *Hinterkind*’s Ian Edginton, *Fantomex*’s Andrew Hope (featuring a *Fantomas* movie poster!), and multiple media tie-in writer Tony Lee. Longer features

highlight the Dead Boy Detectives' writer Toby Litt, Alan Moore (showcasing Avatar's *Fashion Beast* with Malcolm McLaren), the science fiction comics of Walt Simonson, *Elfquest*'s Wendy and Richard Pini, *Love & Rockets*' Jaime Hernandez, and Bob Layton. Several articles refer to comics fandom—and creators' emergence from fanzine activity.

While the magazine is no longer published, at least eight issues—#25-32, covering 2015-2017—are available via *Readly*. Outside of Twomorrows' periodicals, I'm not aware of a current magazine similar to *Comics Heroes*—at least not a mainstream periodical available on newsstands. If you ever come across any back issues of this magazine, consider picking them up. They're worth reading.

Also read this week: *Classics Illustrated* #24 (1971), "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court;" and *Santos Sisters* #8

Comments on N'APA #277

I previously commented on *Intermission* #155 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #31 for eAPA.

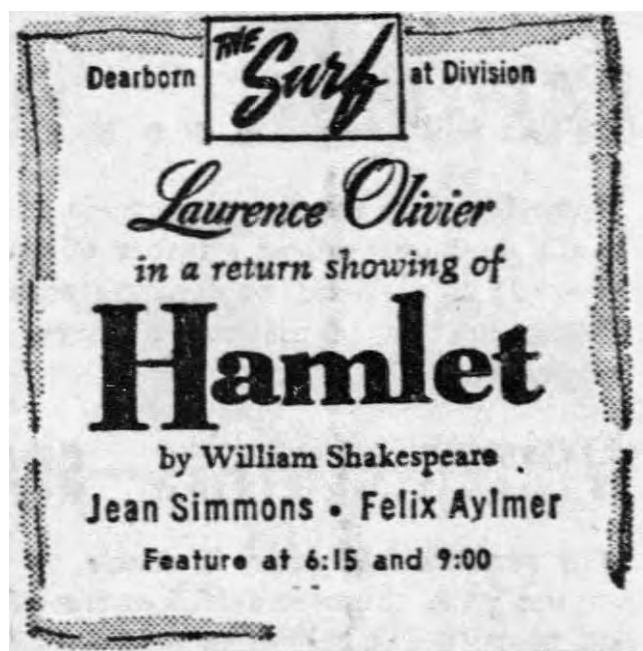
"Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #155 claimed to be an 'explosive rag.' We shall what's in the ish! I disagree with much in your editorial but don't feel the need to discuss it or debate it in this forum. We do, however, agree on this: 'There are so many reasons to dump Trump!' And this: 'If we never hear different opinions, we never need to worry about anything. But how can we grow if opposing views aren't allowed to clash?' We might not agree, but I'll continue to read you with interest and attention.

"Your coverage of the Eurovision Song Contest was welcome and informative. I particularly appreciated the discussion of Finland's history as part of Sweden. Why the 2025 Seattle Worldcon didn't continue using the Seacon name baffles me. There's been a Worldcon in Seattle previously: Seacon in 1961. Why not call it Seacon II? Heck, Robert A. Heinlein was the guest of honor and Harlan Ellison was the toastmaster. That's not a history the concom wants to draw a straight line to? At that Seacon, Hugos were awarded to *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, *The Twilight Zone*, and Ed Emshwiller. It's been 64 years since the last Worldcon in Seattle. Distancing from the previous such Worldcon is perplexing. Even if no one on the concom was involved in fandom then, I'd expect more pride in Worldcon's return to the city. (Or, maybe they're embarrassed it took so long to bring it back.) They could still use the tagline, which seems to be where they put the most effort.

"I think the 1979 Worldcon was called Seacon '79 because its location, Brighton, is a seaside resort on

the English Channel. In that case, they might have added the '79 to distinguish it from its predecessor. The 2025 Worldcon could still be Seacon II.

"Given my recent relocation to Wisconsin, the photographs of Robert Bloch and the Milwaukee Fictioneers were fun to see. I'll have to learn more about the Fictioneers, which apparently wasn't an sf group but a general writing group. Fredric Brown, one of my favorite writers, was a member! (I didn't know Brown had a Wisconsin connection. Something else to learn about!) The Fictioneers merged with Allied Authors of Wisconsin (<https://allied-authors.org>) in the 1990s, and the surviving organization remains '[o]ne of Wisconsin's oldest writing collectives.'



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 19, 1954

"Your mention of Percy Greg's *Across the Zodiac: The Story of a Wrecked Record* in the History Corner intrigued me. Your consideration of language- and linguistics-oriented literature reminded me of movie makers who employ such specialists. For example, the involvement of Jessica Coon, a McGill University associate professor in syntax and indigenous languages, in the production of *Arrival*. (<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-arrival-movie-linguist-20161125-story.html>) James Cameron also brought in language specialists when producing *Avatar* so the Na'vi language was more fleshed out. Maybe we can blame it all on Marc Okrand, who reportedly invented the Klingon language in 1984. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/06/magazine/06FOB-onlanguage-t.html>) Before that, spoken Klingon was effectively gibberish.

"In response to Garth Spencer, you mentioned a

hibachi on a balcony. That reminded me of one of my favorite jokes. One telling has it thusly: ‘One 6-year-old says to another, “I found a condom on the patio.” To which the other responds, “What’s a patio?”’ In this case, hibachi:condom::balcony:patio, and away we go!”

In *The Swamp Spot Sentinel* #1.2, **Robert Jennings** referred to the swamps of Massachusetts. Indeed, there are several, including Hockomock Swamp in southeastern Massachusetts, the Greene Swamp Preserve in Sunderland, the Wolf Swamp in Boxborough, and at least two on Cape Cod: the Atlantic White Cedar Swamp Trail and the Red Maple Swamp. So saith the Internet! When I lived in the Boston area from 1996- 2004, I don’t think I spent any time in swamps, though I did go to Cape Cod. Notable outdoor memories include getting lost in Dogtown up by Gloucester and a nighttime swim among bioluminescent plankton in a pond near Woods Hole.

Last weekend, I thought of Cape Cod often. My wife and I spent the weekend with friends in Door County, Wis., so she could participate in a theater games workshop. I spent the time reading, walking along the waterfront, and hiking. Door County is an exceptional coastal community that combines maritime interests, a rich history, and vacation-oriented tourism. Lake Michigan isn’t as intense as the Atlantic Ocean, but there are similarities and parallels.

Saturday afternoon, I went for a short hike at Three Springs Nature Preserve near Sister Bay. One highlight of the preserve includes the remains of the Erickson homestead, which dates back to the 1800s. A farmhouse and barn still stand, the house quite overgrown, and there are several wonderful old stone walls, some in better shape than others. The most tumbledown are mouldering beautifully.



The farmhouse



The barn

According to *Landings* Vol. 11 # 2 (Fall 2008), published by the Door County Land Trust, “The first recorded transaction involving the Three Springs property was in 1883 when Franz Erickson purchased 160 acres under the Homestead Act... . Several generations of the Erickson family owned the tract until 1940 when they sold it to Harold Wilson of Ephraim.”

John R. Seaquist’s 1954 text *Pioneer Experiences in Door County, Wisconsin*, excerpted in that issue of *Landings*, offers additional detail:

Grandfather (Erickson) came to Door County and took up a “homestead” and built a log cabin either in 1875 or 1876. The family—grandmother and the four older children, of which my mother was the oldest, arrived in 1877. ... The sun was far in the west before they came to the trail that led through thick woods to the cabin. Finally they came to the little lake they had heard about and there beyond it saw for the first time what was to be their home. Evidently they had thought of a mansion all their own and the sight of the low log cabin was a keen disappointment. ... The house was of rectangular shape, built of huge cedar logs. ... The chinks between the logs were filled with moss... . All provisions had to be carried several miles thru thick woods where wolves howled and bears prowled. The only school to which the children could go was three miles away. To get to it a crooked trail had to be followed through the woods. Even the main roads were narrow, stony and full of mud holes.



The spring-fed “little lake”



Stone wall along the access road, my return trail

After Wilson bought the property, he opened the Three Springs Nature Center in 1947. It was located in the barn and was designed to educate visitors about Door County’s wildlife and ecology. Upstairs, Wilson displayed taxidermy specimens. Downstairs, there were exhibits of live fish, snakes, and reptiles. Outside, there were fenced-in and caged deer, fox, wolves, coyotes, beaver, raccoons, opossums, and other animals native to the county. He also offered a nature trail with signs identifying plants and trees. The nature center closed in the early 1950s, and the land was subsequently taken care of by George and Jean Reynolds.

Clearly, the farmhouse I photographed is of later construction than the 19th century cabin, but a similar cabin, the Loom House, is available at the Corner of the Past Museum in Sister Bay. The Erickson family name still exists in Door County. It’s fun to think that I might have walked a portion of the Ericksons’s “crooked trail” or Wilson’s nature trail.

I enjoyed your commentary on the Tom Mix silent

Trailin’, as well as your book reviews. Bart D. Ehran’s *Misquoting Jesus* sounds particularly interesting. I wonder why *A Drop of Corruption* by Robert Jackson Bennett is considered or marketed as fantasy rather than sf.

Your utilization of the library is laudable: “I generally rely on reviews and recommendations from people whose opinions I respect, and then request the new stuff thru inter-library loan.” Hear! Hear! I am a big fan of interlibrary loan. My parents check out DVDs, but given that my wife and I don’t currently have a DVD player, we rely on streaming. Not only is DAW Books still around (<https://astrapublishinghouse.com/imprints/daw-books>), Betsy Wollheim is still active as its publisher!

Jefferson P. Swycaffer’s *Archive Midwinter* dated July 6, 2025, reported that he’s “putting perfectly good comics into the trash.” Stop that, immediately! Set them aside and donate them somewhere: your local comic shop—you don’t even have to try to sell them—the library, a school, Goodwill, even a Little Library in your neighborhood. But throwing them away seems avoidable and unnecessary. Someone is sure to find them and enjoy them.

In *The Murdered Master Mage*, **George Phillies** updated N’APAns on the debut of *A Gentle Stroll* and commented on recent computer difficulties. I hope you sort out the technological difficulties so *Tightbeam* isn’t difficult to publish. I’m curious what you mean by, “The large problem with N’APA is members who attach significant numbers of images in inflexible formats.” Am I one of those participants? Would you rather I submit compressed PDFs?

Last weekend, while in Door County, I read a mystery novel that made me think about Massachusetts: Tempa Pagel’s *Here’s the Church, Here’s the Steeple*. It’s set in Newburyport, Mass., and might qualify as an alternate history because it speculates on the cause and modern-day impact of the Great Fire of 1811. I’m still debating whether I’ll review it in a fanzine; we’ll see where I settle on whether it’s an alternate history.

Garth Spencer’s *Brownian Motion* #14 also reported technological challenges. There must be something in the electrical system—or the ether. Ooh! You might have a story idea: “the Eurovision Song Contest [as] a form of war... .” Pop music as propaganda. There seem to be examples of such: In China, state-sanctioned boy bands such as TFBoys record pop songs that promote communist values; and in the former Zaire, dictator Mobutu Sese Seko supported musical groups such as OK Jazz that praised him in song. Wikipedia offers an entry for “Music and political warfare.”

Your use of the phrase “the best of British luck” inspired me to look up its meaning, which made me chuckle. Thank you for clarifying the state of fandom in your neck of the woods. “I’m beginning to feel my age, and my unwillingness to try out new people,” you wrote. I can understand that, and I’m glad I slipped in under the wire! As we prepare to move to Portugal—we’ve received our passports and visas from the consulate and will book our airfare this week—I’m poised to encounter quite a bit of newness in the years to come. We’ll see how long I maintain an appetite for that! Why, just last night I decided not to meet a friend at an electronic music performance because I needed some home time after the active weekend.

In *Esmeralda County Line* #11, **Kevin Trainor Jr.** updated N’APAns on the outcome of tax season, recent travels, and the approach of Son of Silvercon III. I hope the con went well! Your recent DVD acquisitions seem appealing, and I am intrigued by D.J. Butler’s *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Interestingly, the ebook costs \$8 more than a physical copy via Amazon. One doesn’t often see that. The promotional copy highlighting “failed visionaries who preach a dysfunctional anti-human future such as Ursula LeGuin and the covens of woke disciples infesting the literature of the imagination” offers some cause for caution.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 19, 1954

The concept of incensepunk is new to me. There’s a subreddit (<https://www.reddit.com/r/incensepunk>), a Substack by Jon James (<https://www.incensepunk.com>), and a list of recommended reading on Goodreads (<https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/178398.Incensepunk>). Works by Yuval Kordov are well represented in that list. I wonder whether David Oliver Kling’s *The Triumvirate* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #102 and *The Brass Hat Mind* #7) would qualify!

Adrian Kresnak’s *R.A.I.L.* #7 turned me on to Emily Grant Hutchings’s *Jap Herron: A Novel Written from the Ouija Board*. I was surprised that it was published shortly after the death of Samuel Clemens,

in 1917. I’ll have to learn more about the history of the novel. In a contemporary review, a writer for the *Oakland Tribune* remarked, “The style is not Mark Twain’s, the choice of words is not his, and to the lover of the humorist, the book is in no other way his.” So, it must not be a very good pastiche. Or, having recently died, Mark Twain was off his game. That’s understandable. His writing could have gotten garbled in transmission.

In *Brandy Hall* #13, **Mark Nelson** reported on moving at the end of May. I hope you’ve settled in quite comfortably by now. That family arrived for a visit shortly after your relocation must have been somewhat challenging! Your description of British barbecue reminded me of the meat offerings mentioned in the Bible, though those didn’t necessarily involve meat. Thank you for introducing me to Ted Prior’s children’s book character Grug.

We do already have a shipping address in Portugal; we bought a house there a couple of years ago. Now that our visas have been approved and passports returned by the consulate, we’re turning our attention to booking our travel to immigrate by the end of October. We’ve also reached out to the companies we’re working with to store and ship our belongings to schedule that. That seems rather complicated right now. Our belongings will be shipped to Portugal in a 40-foot container. We will likely leave our stereo in the United States; eventually we’ll establish a longer-term footprint here, as well.

If a fanzine were printed in and mailed from a given country, I’d consider the fanzine as having been published in that country. Especially if the person publishing the fanzine was in—or living in—that country at the time. Now, if one had a friend print and mail a fanzine from that country, while the publisher was in a different country, I could understand it being a “cheat.” I agree with your epiphany: “[I]f I am living in New Zealand then I should be reading novels written by New Zealanders.” Go local when you’re able!

Samuel Lubell’s *Samizdat* #32 offered an update on his state of employment. I hope that it’s been clarified even further by now! Your piece titled “Men Are Not Reading” inspired me to quip “Real men read westerns!” I don’t have a horse in the race determining what a “real man” is, but that struck me as funny. If I were to take my assertion seriously, at least “real men” are reading something. Anything! One could also contend that “real men” read Mack Bolan books. Or instruction manuals.

I enjoyed your Author Spotlight on Naomi Kritzer. She was a guest of honor at the most recent WisCon (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #165), and I appreciated her

participation. Your reprint of “Science Fiction: Cult or Fraternity?” was thought provoking. I’m more inspired by the fraternal aspects of fandom. I continue to enjoy your Status of Projects reports. I’ve put identifying my forthcoming projects on hold except for a few. In the near term, there are two: Read the Stuff I Have With Me (and Release It) and Move to Portugal. I’ve largely stopped buying books, comic books, and magazines. Now I need to stop going to the library and checking out the contents of Little Libraries. I’m also planning a fanac project for 2026 that will replace *The Stf Amateur*. I’m looking forward to it and think it’ll be fun.

We’re moving to Portugal for several reasons: to experience life as a citizen of the planet on which we live rather than a citizen of a state or country, to learn more about the culture and history of the country itself, to lower our cost of living enough that we can stop working a decade and a half before we might retire otherwise, and to create time to engage in activities that bring us closer to the people and places in our lives—rather than spending so much time at work. I’ve dedicated my working years to professional endeavors. It’s time to focus on the side projects and activities that my job interferes with, if we can afford to do so.

The only reasons I conflate the writing of Mike Resnick and Michael Swanwick is their names: their first names and the last three letters in their surnames. You’re right: Their writing is quite different.

I previously commented on *Intermission* #156 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #32 for eAPA: “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 [in the eAPA distribution]. 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? ...

“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.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 19, 1954

“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* [*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #174], 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.

"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, Feb. 26, 1954

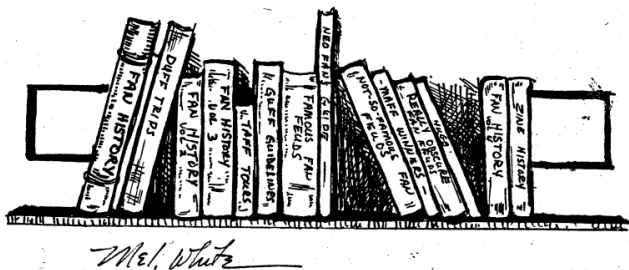
Sept. 17, 2025

Natter: Preparing to Move

Late last week, we received our passports from the consulate in San Francisco, along with our visas. Huzzah! But the celebration, though well deserved, was short-lived. We're now figuring out what we have to do, in what order, to successfully land in Portugal (the easy part; we hope to be there by Halloween), claim residence, and arrange for the shipment of our belongings from the United States to our home there. One of the challenges we're facing is that our appointment with the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum—while scheduled, which isn't always the case, so we lucked out there—is in July 2026. That's a long time from now. 10 months!

Right now it's unclear whether we can do what we need to do in order to ship our belongings to our home in Portugal before that appointment, or before our residency cards are received—which could be months later. We'd prefer getting our belongings out of storage before 10 months or more from now. As soon as we're able to upon arriving would be ideal. So we've entered a newly daunting and confusing phase of our liminal state. We'll figure it out.

Slow and steady wins the race. We just need to find the path forward.



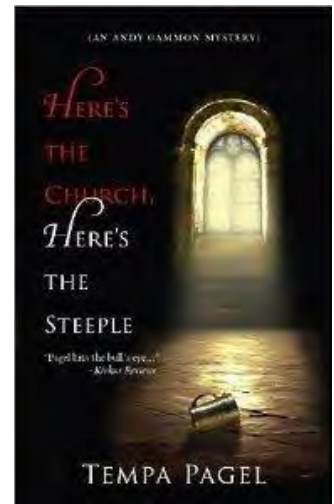
Here's the Church, Here's the Steeple by Tempa Pagel (Worldwide, 2007)

On the first page of the book, which includes a promotional excerpt and blurb, there's a rubber stamp for Book Stop (<https://www.bookstopinc.info>), a used book store located in Green Bay. I usually look up such stores whenever I find a stamp or bookmark, and I was pleased that the shop is still in business. Next time we go through Green Bay, we'll stop at the store.

Set in Newburyport, Mass., the book's coastal setting resonated with me during our time in Door County, and I read the book in its entirety that day—sitting on our friends' screened-in porch and in a park on the water in Fish Creek. I'll pass it on to my sister and parents to read next. It's partly a historic mystery; a crime committed in 1811 continues to have repercussions in the present day, and is investigated—and solved—by a modern-day sleuth. That's Gammon, a woman who moved to New England from Detroit to live closer to her husband's family.

However, the book might also qualify as an alternate history. The Great Fire of 1811 referenced in the book actually occurred, razing about 250 buildings and affecting Newburyport's commercial center and wharves. It was started in a stable by an arsonist, and Pagel's novel speculates on the identity of the arsonist, his complicity with several civic leaders, stolen church silver, and one leader's involvement in smuggling activity even after the Embargo of 1807. In the novel, descendants of some of those people still live and work in the city, one serving as an elected leader.

The character in the novel who represents the arsonist might be partly inspired by a later fire in 1811, Newburyport's second worst conflagration. In



that case, the arsonist was a teenage boy known for his mischievous nature, dishonesty, and profane language. The potential conflation of the two disasters, the chapters set in 1811 that punctuate the narrative, and the long-standing conspiracy of secrecy makes for a solid mystery, even if it's borderline alternate history.

Worldwide, a division of Harlequin, no longer publishes Mack Bolan books, but its line of mysteries continues. The imprint publishes four books monthly, and subscriptions are available. While I've subscribed to the line in the past—for myself as well as my sister—I don't remember paying much attention to the books' original publishers.

In this novel's case, the original publisher, Five Star, had an intriguing relationship with science fiction. *Black Gate* describes the imprint as the “short-lived but extremely prolific genre publishing arm of Gale, which produced almost exclusively hardcovers aimed at the library market.” A 2015 article by John O'Neill indicates that John Helfers at Teckno Books served as the acquisitions editor. Five Star published 48 mystery, 36 romance, and 24 sf and fantasy titles annually.

Five Star published novella collections by authors such as Robert Silverberg, Pamela Sargent, Gregory Benford, and Mike Resnick, and offered two lines: Five Star First Edition Science Fiction and Fantasy and Five Star First Edition Speculative Fiction. Other authors published by Five Star include Spider Robinson, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, L. Sprague de Camp, Jack L. Chalker, and James Blish. Such publications were mostly released in 2002-2004.

I didn't expect to find so much of interest in this Little Library-sourced mystery paperback, which stands well on its own. *Here's the Church, Here's the Steeple* is an excellent regional mystery that contains aspects of alternate history. It was at one time bought at a still-active used bookstore, traveling from Green Bay to Sister Bay. And its original publisher offers additional titles that might be worth tracking down. It also inspires me to learn more about sf published for the library market. What delights might we not be finding in bookstores?

***The Spider* No. 2** by Grant Stockbridge (Carroll & Graf, 1991)

This was one of the first books I obtained after arriving in Madison, purchased at Frugal Muse. (*T&T* #169) One of eight Spider pulp reprint collections published by Carroll & Graf between 1991 and 1993, this volume contains two “rampaging action novels.”

The first, “Dictator of the Damned,” was originally published in the January 1937 issue of *The Spider*, written by Emile C. Tepperman as Grant Stockbridge.

The story was later reprinted by Steeger Books in 2020. The Dictator of the title is a mysterious, cruel, hooded villain who controls the underworld and law enforcement of New York City. The Spider, the secret identity of a wealthy millionaire, works with his Sikh colleague Ram Singh, his fiancée Nita Van Sloan, and his chauffeur to defeat the Dictator and his henchmen. There's little of the fantastic or science fiction in this story that I can remember—other than a poisonous gas that could threaten Michigan; Cleveland, Ohio; and Washington, D.C.—but it still offers pulpy fun.

The second reprint, “The Mill-Town Massacres,” is slightly more relevant in its genre adjacency. Originally published in the eponymous pulp's February 1937 issue, this story was also written by Tepperman as Stockbridge, later reprinted by Steeger.

Set in the fictional steel-mill town of Keystone, the novel focuses on a labor dispute in which criminal forces strive to gain control of the production facilities. Workers are overcome by sudden fits of madness, caused by some kind of injection or chemical, becoming zombies that serve the criminal leaders, including a Russian second in command (Number Two) and the mysterious Number One. Don't get confused, but the Number Three referred to near the end of the book is a production facility.

Of the two pieces, I found this story more enjoyable, and the sections in which the Spider is deducing who the leaders of the uprising are, the scenes involving the tugboat and conveyor belt, and the union leader character, Mike Foley (who might have appeared in a previous story) are notable. Even though the Spider might have been the first pulp hero I read, I've long considered him a distant second to the Shadow. I might have to reconsider that estimation!

If you're in the Madison area, Hank Luttrell's 20th Century Books (<https://www.southparkbooks.com>) has several Carroll & Graf Spider reprint volumes among its stock. Apparently, I have #3-6 and #8 in storage, so I'll leave Luttrell's on the shelves for others to find—and read mine once our belongings arrive in Portugal.



From the Reading File: Comic Book Reviews

While at the Madison Comic Book Convention earlier this summer (*T&T* #167), I picked up several back issues of a black-and-white sf magazine published by Marvel's parent company, Magazine Management Co. Inc. Launched after the cancellation of Marvel's early-1970s eight-issue sf anthology comic *Worlds Unknown*, the magazine *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction* lasted only seven issues. Six bimonthly editions were published in 1975, and a special issue was published in 1976 to use up the remaining materials. Despite its short lifespan, the magazine is quite an impressive read, combining original stories, literary adaptations, interviews—even a column reporting on fandom.

Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction #4 (July 1975) opens with the first part of a framing story that bookends the periodical. Through the use of “slow glass,” a concept credited to Bob Shaw, an antique dealer is able to see scenes from distant worlds, similar to photography or television. “This prism of slow glass comes from an alternate universe, where it was positioned in such a manner as to record any interesting events that might occur in that universe,” writes Tony Isabella. Each story in the issue, then, could be considered a story told through the imagery captured in slow glass.

The first piece is a comics adaptation of A.E. van Vogt's short story “The Enchanted Village,” scripted by Don and Maggie Thompson. I thought the story seemed familiar as I read it, and it was—it first appeared in van Vogt's *Destination: Universe!* (*T&T* #33) The Thompsons' writing, coupled with artwork by Dick Giordano, successfully captures the tenor and tempo of the tale.

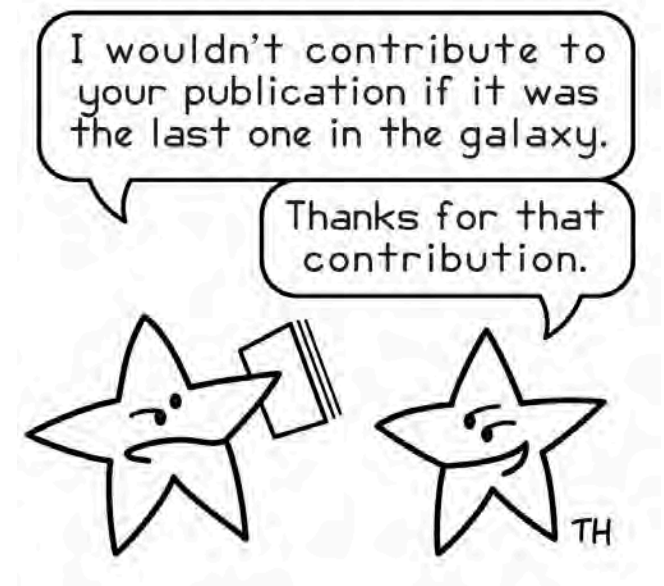
Following the adaptation, Alan Brennert interviews van Vogt in a six-page feature that touches on gleaning inspiration from dreams, working with Harlan Ellison, the use of “fictional sentences” in confession stories and science fiction (the latter involves hang-ups, or “something that the reader has to fill in”), incorporating reality in fiction, Dianetics, future shock, and other topics. It's an excellent interview, offering several opportunities for further exploration, as well as a wonderful counterpoint to the literary adaptation that preceded it.

David Anthony Kraft of *Comics Interview* provides a one-page profile of pulp writer Otis Adelert Kline preceding Pete Conrad's adaptation of Kline's short story, “A Vision of Venus.” That piece originally appeared in the December 1933 issue of *Amazing Stories*. Conrad's comic retooling results in a fun sword and sorcery adventure.

The Thompsons also weigh in with “Fantastic Worlds,” a column concentrating on sf and fandom. In this issue's installment, they address fanzines (a newszine, really: *Locus*), conventions, then-new books they recommend, the Science Fiction Book Club, and fanac—specifically the different kinds of fen. “You may be weird, but you are not alone,” they write.

Robert Silverberg's short story “Good News from the Vatican” is adapted by Gerry Conway and Ading Gonzales. That story first appeared in the Terry Carr-edited anthology *Universe 1*. The adaptation is excellent, though I'm sure the story itself is even more worth reading. What if a robot was elected pope?

There is also some original work in this issue, including pieces by Jan S. Strnad and Rich Corben, and Bruce Jones. The Jones piece in particular would read well as a short story. A two-page lettercol ends the issue, offering three letters and editorial responses.



—Teddy Harvia

Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction Vol. 1 (1976) is a “giant size special issue” that explicitly addresses the magazine's demise. In an “editorial last hurrah,” Roy Thomas remarks on the short-lived experiment undertaken by the magazine. “[S]cience fiction was not exactly the most salable kind of story matter,” he writes. “[T]he magazine didn't quite succeed in selling the magic number of copies needed to sustain it.” The title didn't lose money, but it was canceled all the same. Enough material remained for several more issues, so Marvel published this one-shot. I'm glad it saw the light of day.

Adaptations include Stanley Weinbaum's “A Martian Odyssey” (*Wonder Stories*, July 1934) and Fredric Brown's “Arena” (*Astounding Science Fiction*,

June 1944), which might seem familiar. Original work includes pieces by artists and writers such as Bruce Jones, Alex Nino, Vicente Alcazar, Redondo, Archie Goodwin, Mat Warrick, and Gonzales. Jones and Nino's "Journey's End," Jones and Alcazar's "The Forest for the Trees," and Goodwin's "Sinner" are especially good.

A Brennert interview with Theodore Sturgeon considers the challenges faced by sf authors who want to write mainstream novels, women writers such as Joanna Russ (*T&T* #174) and Ursula K. LeGuin, the differences between biographical and cosmological perspectives, the importance of relationships, the role of education, slow sculpture, and Sturgeon's experience working with Orson Welles.

The Thompsons return with another "Fantastic Worlds" column. In it, they discuss the growing—and perhaps concerning—popularity of and academic interest in sf at the time, the "best science fiction anthologies ever published," Pyramid Books' Harlan Ellison editions, the sf-related game *Stellar Conquest*, Doubleday's Early series of collections featuring writers such as Jack Williamson and Frank Belknap Long, and Hyperion Press reprint editions.

It's a shame that this magazine didn't last longer, though the issues that were published were excellent. *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction* is similar to other black-and-white comics magazines of the time, but it also sat adjacent to prozines and fanzines in a way the others didn't, nodding in the direction of *Starburst*. By publishing adaptations of short stories, author interviews, and the Thompsons' column, the periodical offered multiple entry points to the genre, as well as paths that readers could follow in fandom. Read the comic, and then seek out an author, pick up an anthology book, read a fanzine, or go to a con.

Conan the Barbarian and Doc Savage must have been jealous.

Screened at the Infernal Wilson II: Movie Reviews

Freaky Tales

This week, a friend and I watched this 2024 anthology film written and directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck. The two are perhaps best known for writing and directing *Captain Marvel*, one of the highest-grossing movies of all time.

Freaky Tales is a



series of four interconnected segments that intersect narratively. In terms of story structure, *Freaky Tales* reminded me of *Short Cuts* and *Magnolia*. Visually, it very much reminded me of the cinema of Quentin Tarantino—as well as the rich history of action and exploitation movies that inspire him. It also resonates with movies such as *The Last Black Man in San Francisco* and *Sorry to Bother You*.



—William Rotsler

Set in Oakland and Berkeley, Calif., in 1987, the four stories focus on characters including young punk rockers associated with 924 Gilman Street in Berkeley, a female hip-hop duo that engages in a rap battle with Too Short (or Too \$hort), a collections agent undertaking what he thinks is his final assignment before retiring, and Sleepy Floyd, a basketball player for the Golden State Warriors.

It is very much an East Bay movie, and the filmmakers accurately capture the city and its subcultures. The punks fight skinheads—based on a real-world brawl—Danger Zone holds its own on

stage with Too Short, the collections agent (performed by Pedro Pascal) decides he has nothing left to lose prematurely, and Sleepy Floyd seeks revenge against burglars. The storylines and characters crisscross convincingly, and there's an overarching storyline involving a corrupt police officer. A KQED article (<https://www.kqed.org/arts/13974034/freaky-tales-movie-easter-eggs-locations-cameos-oakland>) documents some of the East Bay references and influences.

There's also an aspect of the fantastic in the film, though it's more background than foreground—and is debatable. Throughout the movie, green lightning, auras, and other coloring shows up at noteworthy moments: the donning of a spiked arm band, a single tear while standing in a police lineup—even an airborne bus, which reminded me of *Repo Man*. Online articles suggest the green elements symbolize the special energy or “juice” of the East Bay in the late 1980s. It could be something else entirely.

A Dianetics-like spiritual and personal development practice called Psytopics (<https://www.psytopics.com>) is also prominently featured throughout the movie: a bus placard, a suspect being found with a copy of the book, and several television commercials for workshops hosted by Sleepy Floyd. Was Sleepy Floyd actually there, engaging in martial arts combat with the racist gang members, or was he at home meditating, projecting his astral self? Either interpretation works.

The title of the movie was drawn from a Too Short song on the *Born to Mack* album. That phrase is also used in one of the chapter's titles, and Too Short serves as narrator. Regardless of whether you love the East Bay, feel nostalgic for the 1980s, or enjoy the One Crazy Night trope, *Freaky Tales* is a film worth seeing. Each chapter could have made an excellent movie on its own.

Comments on APA-L #3128

I was pleased to see Mark Bondurant continue to contribute covers to APA-L. I especially appreciated the description published on the inside front cover.

In *Vanamonde* #1652, **John Hertz** mentioned Walter R. Brooks's 1955 children's book *Freddy and the Baseball Team from Mars*, the 23rd book in the Freddy the Pig series. Other titles from the series that might be of interest to fen include *Freddy and the Clockwork Twin*, *Freddy and the Space Ship*, *Freddy and the Men from Mars*, and *Freddy and the Flying Saucer Plans*. That's some pig!

I think it's neat that you took the bus to Seattle for Worldcon. Did you take a Flixbus? The travel time by bus is estimated at about 34 hours. I'm curious how

long it took and whether you stretched your legs at any stops along the way. That must have been an interesting trip. Your suggestion that someone loving what you do could prove dangerous reminded me of American fan Curt Claudio, who traveled to John Lennon's estate in England. Claudio thought that Lennon's songs were written about him—or to him. Lennon invited Claudio to breakfast. (<https://www.johnlennon.com/news/curt-claudio>)

Roger Hill's Report from Hoople #156.295 reported that his house was burned in the fires of Altadena earlier this year. My heart goes out to you, Roger. I had no idea. May the rest of this year and the year to come bring much more comfort and stability.



Chicago Tribune, March 12, 1954

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #114, **Matthew Mitchell** indicated that he and Nick saw the 50th anniversary screening of *Jaws*. What a good movie. In Madison, at the end of August, Meep Meepleton's World of Fun hosted an outdoor screening of the flick. And here I am going to a screening of *Shark Attack 3: Megalodon*. (*Le Chimpanzé Arrogant* #3) My wife and I considered going, but it was a bring-your-own-chair affair, and we didn't feel like borrowing or buying lawn chairs. Your quip about the Romans made me chuckle. What have they done for me lately?

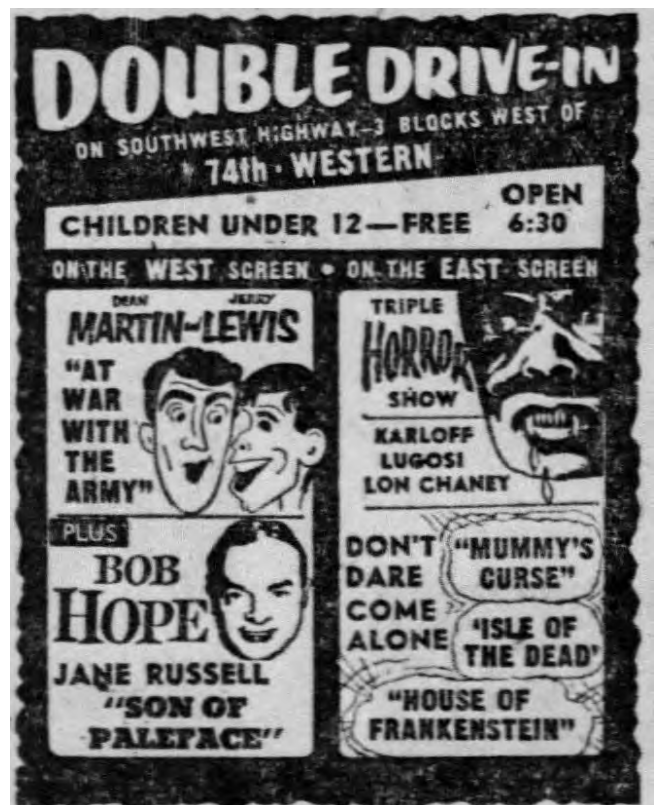
Barbara Gratz Harmon's Reflections from a Fish Bowl #88 featured an issue number that matched that Monday's high! The weather has gotten warmer here, too. I thought we were steadily tipping toward fall, but the high today is 82. I no longer wear my flannel, stocking cap, and work gloves when walking to work. Congratulations on the resumption of your cello

lessons.

Thank you for sharing the story about your first LASFS meeting. When I first went to a meeting at the clubhouse on Tyrone Avenue in Van Nuys after we moved to the Los Angeles area in 2009, it was to meet Marty Cantor, contribute to APA-L, and help collate the distribution. I don't remember meeting anyone else really; I might have been greeted by Michelle Pincus, but I was shy otherwise. I remember being impressed that Jerry Pournelle was there, and I regret not engaging him in conversation. I only went a couple of times, impressed by the chaotic energy of the meeting proceedings, because of traffic, work, and family responsibilities. I was more able to participate via Zoom during the pandemic.

I also stopped by the clubhouse a few times when meetings weren't in session, at least once for some sort of screening, and a couple of times to donate review copies of books that I'd received as editor of the National Fantasy Fan Federation's *The National Fantasy Fan*—but hadn't succeeded in assigning for review. All of the books I donated were rubber stamped "N3F" in red, so if you ever encounter any such books in the library, it's my fault.

Finally, Nola Frame-Gray contributed a bacover, drawn on lined paper. I enjoyed the quip about frying eggs on the sidewalk and the Alternate Universe Selector. May we all live happily ever after.



Chicago Tribune, March 12, 1954

Engines & Emulators #4

Sept. 19, 2025

Engines & Emulators is an apazine 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 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.

Expanded Options for *Super City*

Inspired by last issue's exchange with Brian Rogers about rules-light superhero roleplaying games, I spent some time in late August with *Super City*. (<https://carpedavid.itch.io/super-city>) Apparently designed for grade school students, the game is simple indeed—but still offered an evening of lightweight fun. At \$1, it's very affordable.

Playing through the game once, completing four scenes before accomplishing my mission, the fifth scene, I determined two things. One, even if playing solo, it's a good idea to play with more than one character. You get more Energy that way. And two, for replay opportunities to yield fun value, more options might be welcome. So I made some up. These are the first tables I've ever made.

What follows are proposed expansions for David Garrett's suggested Heroic Verbs, Mission elements, and Scene elements as included in the two-page *Super City*. Basically, this is a series of expanded tables; I've indicated what was included in the original, shorter tables or lists to place authorial credit where it's due.

Suggested Heroic Verbs

Now a six-by-six table rather than a list. Roll a d6 twice to select. (* denotes Garrett's original options)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|------------|-----------|------------|----------|--------------|------------------|
| 1 | Fly* | Teleport* | Vanish* | Build | Absorb | Control Elements |
| 2 | Dash* | Lift* | Jump* | Punch | X-Ray Vision | Sonic Scream |
| 3 | Blast* | Zap* | Freeze* | Squeeze | Shape-shift | Weather Control |
| 4 | Crush* | Explode* | Repel* | Wrestle | Elasticity | Animal Empathy |
| 5 | Hyponotize | Unlock | Brain-push | Levitate | Fire Mind | Magic |
| 6 | Mend | Hack | Tinker | Heal | Magnetism | Camouflage |

Mission Elements

Roll a d20 rather than a d6 to select.

Citizens (* denotes Garrett's original options)

1. Construction worker*
2. Delivery driver*
3. Garbage collector*
4. Hot dog vendor*
5. Meter reader*
6. Talking mouse*
7. Stern librarian
8. Police officer
9. Fire fighter
10. Bounty hunter
11. Little old lady
12. Grumpy farmer
13. Newspaper reporter
14. Dog walker
15. Short-order cook
16. Bartender
17. Fashion model
18. Bank teller
19. Computer programmer
20. Rodeo cowboy

Dangers (* denotes Garrett's original options)

1. Chasing a sneaktopus*
2. Covered in poison goo*
3. Floating into the sky*
4. Hiding from a monster*
5. Running from a robot*
6. Stuck to the sidewalk*
7. Kidnapped by criminals
8. Threatened by a street gang
9. Stampede!
10. Mysterious snowstorm
11. Molasses flood
12. Street riot
13. Boiling in oil
14. Trapped in a mirror maze
15. Pecked to death by ducks
16. Quicksand!
17. Invaded by an enemy army
18. Pulled a muscle
19. Lost lunch money
20. Brain freeze

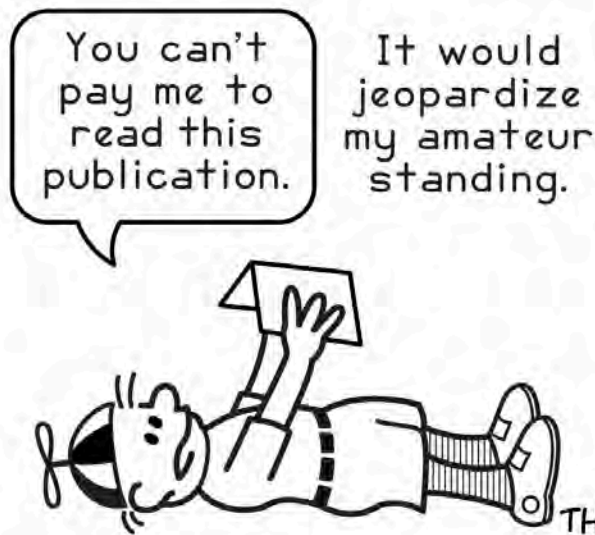
Scene Elements

Roll a d20 rather than a d6 to select.

Places (* denotes Garrett's original options)

1. Amazing Avenue*
2. Green Gardens*

3. Powers Park*
4. Super Square*
5. Terrific Towers*
6. Wild Waterfront*
7. Agitation Alley
8. Bountiful Boulevard
9. Capitol Square
10. Merchandise Mart
11. Terrible Tavern
12. Sunday Drive
13. Fresh Field
14. Garment District
15. Hooligan's Hideaway
16. Secondary School
17. Police Department
18. Learning Library
19. Rambling Road
20. Musty Museum



—Teddy Harvia

Problems (* denotes Garrett's original options)

1. Catch a falling meteor*
2. Clean up super goop*
3. Destroy a mind-ray*
4. Fix a falling building*
5. Repair a broken robot*
6. Shoo away giant bugs*
7. End an alien invasion
8. Stop a burglary
9. Thwart mole men
10. Divert a flood of acid
11. Eliminate embezzlers
12. Avoid a car accident
13. Save an endangered baby
14. Help an old woman cross the street

15. Protect newborn kittens
16. Stop a volcano eruption
17. Eradicate gambling
18. Stymie shoplifters
19. End the threat of electrocution
20. Confuse counterfeiters

I also drafted some hero description prompts that could be used to flesh out the lightweight character (which possesses just a name, a favorite ice cream, and three Heroic Verbs). Some of the prompts suggest other possible tables I can create in the future.

What do they look like?
 What is their uniform or costume like?
 How does their voice sound?
 Do they use a vehicle?
 Do they have a sidekick?
 Do they use a catchphrase?
 What is their secret weakness?
 Who is their alter ego?
 Who is their alter ego's best friend or helpful contact?
 Do they have an arch enemy? Who?
 Where did they come from?
 How did they get their powers?

And if a player wants to play *Super City* as more of a journaling game, I drafted some prompts that can be used to describe missions and scenes in more detail, if desired.

Who
 ... is causing the problem?
 ... are they with?
 ... do they care about most?
 ... proves most difficult?
 ... gets hurt?
 ... is most helpful?

What
 ... happened just before?
 ... were they doing?
 ... tools are available?
 ... did it sound like?
 ... did it smell like?
 ... got in their way?

Where
 ... did it happen?
 ... were they going?
 ... had they come from?
 ... would they rather be?
 ... were they born?
 ... did the threat come from?

When
 ... did it occur?

... did they first notice?
 ... did the threat begin?
 ... had the plan been made?
 ... was the deadline?
 ... did the hero arrive?

Why

... was the danger occurring?
 ... was the hero there?
 ... was the citizen there?
 ... did it happen then?
 ... did it occur there?
 ... did it matter?

On the Forthcoming English Translation of *Sword World*

In late 2023, I briefly explored the state of roleplaying games in Japan (*Emulators & Engines* #8) after visiting Tokyo, commenting on the long-running popularity and impact of *Sword World*. Kansas City, Mo.-based Mugen Gaming is working on an English translation of GroupSNE's *Sword World* 2.5. (<https://mugengaming.com/pages/sword-world-rpg-coming-soon>) If you sign up for alerts related to their upcoming crowdfunding campaign, you'll receive a 67-page primer.

I haven't spent any time with it yet, but the primer contains the basic rules, a solo adventure, a one-shot adventure, and premade characters. The crowdfunding campaign is expected to launch in early 2026, and the American release of *Sword World* could be a big deal given recent and growing interest in manga, anime, and LitRPG.

Not only did the game inspire *Record of Lodoss War*, more than 10 million copies of the roleplaying game have sold in Japan. There's 35-plus years of official content just waiting to be translated. The mind boggles. Heck, we might even see replay fiction—similar to our session reports—reach our shores.

Comments on Ever & Anon #3

The recruitment advertisement made me chuckle. I also enjoyed the cover artwork.

In *Firedrake's Hoard* #1, **Roger BW** joined our august ranks. I'll have to explore your work with Whartson Hall, *Improvvised Radio Theatre with Dice*, *The Path of Cunning* and other such efforts. You certainly have your hand in a lot of pies. I, for one, welcome the growing cabal. Welcome!

Pedro Panhoca da Silva and **Camila Lourenço Panhoca's** *Ficções Interativas Infantis* Parte IV concentrated on *Os 33 porquinhos*, an interactive version of the Three Little Pigs. With 1,331 possible paths, it sounds like an interesting artifact!

In *Reddened Stars* #1, **John Redden** reported on

recent viewing and reading, including three space operas written by John Scalzi. At some point, I'll more thoroughly explore his work. I enjoyed your description of the *Mouse Guard* session. Lee Gold sent me a refund of my A&E balance in late April.

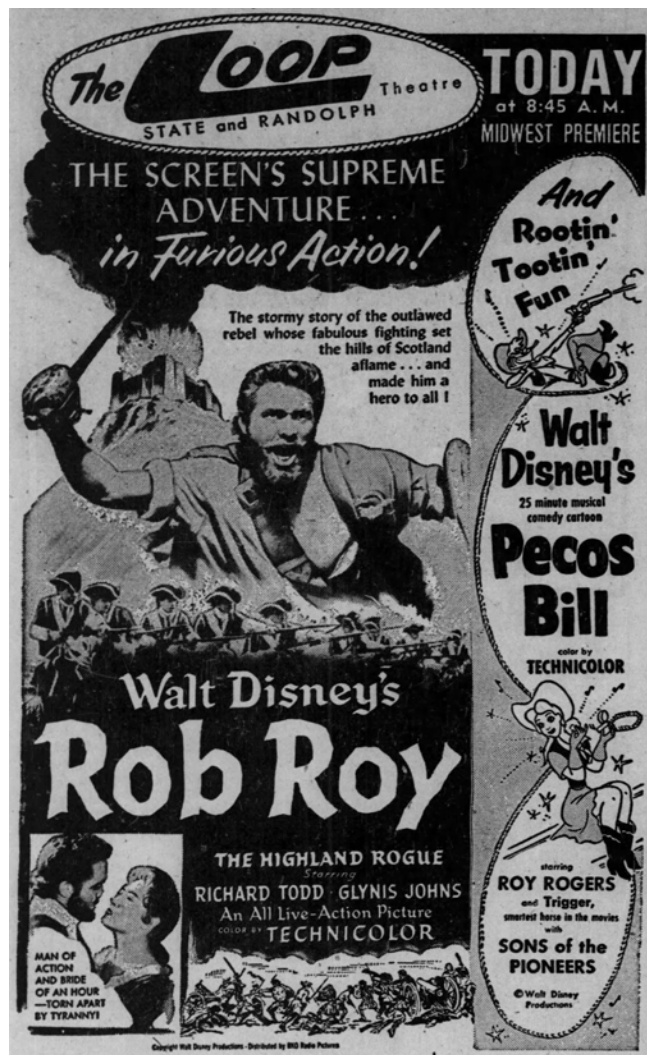
I quite enjoyed the date headers, illustrations, and layout of **Attronarch's** *Overlord's Annals* Vol. 4 #7. While I recognize the effort that goes into the session reports, I was especially pleased to see the Exedra of mailing comments. I look forward to future such discussion!



Chicago Tribune, March 19, 1954

Gabriel Roark's *Bugbears & Ballyhoo* #42 updated apans on the continuation of his ice skating! How neat that it's "become a highlight—often the highlight—of the week" for you. You have The Lord of Chaos #1-13 in PDF? I have but #1-5. Faunch! I enjoyed your remarks to George Phillis about your staged routine for reading and writing for apae. Now that E&A and Anzapa are the heftiest apae in which I

participate, with Anzapa far surpassing even our page counts in E&A, I might need to come up with a method other than Hack It All Out Just Before Deadline.



Chicago Tribune, March 19, 1954

For thish, at least, I've given myself some wiggle room. I wrote "Expanded Options for *Super City*" shortly after filing last month because I didn't like how short my previous ish was. I haven't been playing, prepping, or reading much game-related stuff lately. But because my wife and I are going away this weekend—to Lake Geneva, Wis., for a bit of a self-led *Dungeons & Dragons* magical history tour (I mapped it out Friday, drawing on numerous sources)—I know that I won't be able to finish that trip prep in time for the deadline early next week. So I'm writing mailing comments several days before the upcoming deadline in order to have a middling-sized issue to contribute. Next ish will be very, very cool. Or so I expect.

I try to mix session reports—when I'm more actively playing—reviews of game-related materials,

and mailing comments. Given A&E's history of including more player and GM aids—especially in the early days—I'm going to explore offering such material even if we don't all play the same games. That intent is what inspired the lead piece for thish.

You're right, though. I appreciate that you "let myself off the hook about commenting on every zine, every issue..." That way—trying to do so—lies madness. With Anzapa, for example, which frequently surpasses 600 pages, I've taken to alternating: I comment on them what I have time for one round, and next ish, I comment on them what I didn't. We can't do All the Things All the Time. I also try to write my comments in such a way that readers who aren't in the apa can understand what's going on.

I call our domicile the Infernal Wilson—and now, the Infernal Wilson II—because we live on Wilson Street. Furthermore, because I write my apazines as Blasted Heath Row, an Anzapa participant turned me on to *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again*, a BBC radio comedy program from the 1960s and 1970s. The show featured John Cleese, Graeme Garden, Jo Kendall, David Hatch, Tim Brooke Taylor, and Bill Oddie. That program's parody of *Macbeth* is what provided the name for our homes, which are not slan shacks:

Announcer: Scene 1.

Voice (Oddie): I've seen 2.

Announcer: The blasted heath.

Voice (Oddie): Better than the infernal Wilson.

I'm not sure what they meant by that joke—maybe they knew a Heath Wilson?—but I like it. A lot. So, the Infernal Wilson it is. That the Airbnb we moved to from the furnished apartment was also located on Wilson Street is solid gold.

Your discussion with Attronarch about dungeon economics reminded me of my recent reading of James Webb's Vietnam War novel *Fields of Fire*. The Marines in that novel frequently trade cigarettes and C-rations with non-hostile villagers. Regardless of NPCs' alignment, there could be several reasons to trade with adventurers: friendliness, fear, seeking influence or leverage, and other motivations.

In **Michael Cule's** *The Phoenix Nest* for E&A #3, he detailed his approach to developing a city. On the topic of Gormenghast, if a house can contain a cabin (<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Property/HI68389>), I figure a castle could contain—or at least serve as—a city. A case in point, perhaps: Kowloon Walled City. (<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/kowloon-walled-city>) Aegis sounds grand indeed. I enjoyed your reading report and conrep. There've been at least two *Brindlewood Bay* references in this

mailing, so I'll have to prioritize finding it among our belongings once we arrive in Portugal.

Clark Timmins's *Four Things* adapts several creatures from pulp fiction magazines for use in 5E gameplay. I applaud your experimentation along these lines. At the very least, I'll have to seek out William J. Elliott's "Doctor Doom, Ghost Detective" in *The Weird Story Magazine* #1 (August 1940), Jack Williamson's "The Moon Era" in *Tales of Wonder and Super-Science* #15 (Autumn 1941), Mark Schorer's "A Bottle from Corezzi" in *Strange Stories* Vol. 2 #3 (December 1939), and George Allen England's "The Thing from— 'Outside'" in *Amazing Stories* Vol. 1 #1 (April 1926). I've had the pleasure of reading the last story listed already. (*Faculae & Filigree* #32) Here's what I said in a previous apazine:

George Allan England's "The Thing from— 'Outside'" is a pleasant example of the outre. An invisible creature (or creatures) terrorizes a group of people in a remote cabin, resulting in disfigurement, insanity, and memory loss.

What you are doing is absolutely brilliant. Kudos!

In *A Rhodomontadulous Promenade* #3, **George Phillis** discussed the difference between rulings and rules. I enjoyed your Preparatory Tale substantially. **Dylan Capel's** *Attacks of Opportunity* #2 reported on a session of Chaosium's *QuestWorlds*. Not that I need another system to explore, but darn, *DriveThruRPG's* description rings all the bells: "A Setting-Agnostic Roleplaying System: *QuestWorlds* is a rules engine designed for play in cinematic, larger-than-life settings inspired by classic pulps, comic books, and weird fiction." Grumble, mumble. Twitch.

I'm glad you're enjoying the *Foundation* television program. You should read the books, too! I also think the noble society, planetary authorities, and hereditary royal families influenced the *Warhammer 40,000* worldbuilding.

The ASCII art banner for **Avram Grumer's** *Going to Be Ad-Libbed* was a sight for sore eyes. Well done, and welcome back! I very much got a kick out of you referring to polyhedral dice as Platonic solids. That's the second such reference I've encountered in perhaps as many weeks. I enjoyed your descriptions of *Tiān Dēng*, *Scum and Villainy* ("for people who like making little bullet lists then filling in little boxes": Harf!), *Masks: A New Generation*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Mothership*, and *Black Star*. I've had a yen for an sf or cyberpunk-oriented game of late, and there's a lot of skiffy in your gaming. I've been eyeing Micro RPG's *Neon Road* for solo play.

In **Paul Holman's** *De Ludis Elficis Fictis* dated

August 2025, he continued to stoke my jealousy of the growing British cabal. Oh, you lot! Your remark that "world building can resemble solo RPGing quite a lot" brought to mind Brandon Lee's *Cartograph*, a "solo roleplaying game of mapmaking and discovery." I haven't spent any time yet, but it recently arrived.



Chicago Tribune, March 26, 1954

Myles Corcoran's *Twisting the Rope* #3 self-defined the author as a redneck. I've long thought that that term described farmhands and other working class people whose necks got sunburned because of fieldwork and other outdoor labor, but I recently learned that there might be another source. While the aforementioned usage might date back to the late 19th century, "redneck" can also be applied to workers protesting during the West Virginia Mine Wars of the early 1920s. Those fighting for labor rights wore red bandanas tied around their necks during marches. That makes me curious: Have any roleplaying games focused on the labor movement?

I continue to enjoy your *Mausritter* campaign. Just as the Wizards of the Coast house art style "dominates a lot of the imagery of high fantasy RPGs" and leaves you cold, I dislike that so many self-publishers riffing off the license utilize page templates replicating the design of *D&D* materials. So much of the same old. In the sf vein, I'll have to check out *Offworlders*. Thank you for describing the meaning of your fanzine title. Me? I just reversed the order of my previous title, like E&A did with A&E's initials.

In *Dreadsword* #2, **Mitch Hyde** continued

documenting his *AD&D* campaign. The artwork is excellent! **Patrick Riley's** *Quasipseudoludognostication* #3 commented on his playing style and offered a session report—complete with boxed text, which I adore. The quest list and map were also welcome. “Dyson Logos is da bomb.” Heck yeah.



Chicago Tribune, March 26, 1954

Brian Rogers's *Denizens of the Library* #2 mentioned reading five books during his trip to New Hampshire. That's the stuff! Lost River Gorge in

Woodstock, N.H., looks wonderful. Your weekly *Knave* game riffing off The Dyson Megadelve (<https://dysonlogos.blog/maps/the-dyson-megadelve>) also sounds glorious. I'll need to return to *Knave* at some point. (Peter Mullen's artwork: le swoon.)

Between Clark Timmins's *Four Things* and your “Stating up Regrets” entries, I'm aswim in awesomeness. I'll have to continue my exploration begun in *E&E* #3 to scratch my public domain supers itch. Your assessment of Matt Dinniman's *Dungeon Crawler Carl* series surprised me. The books aren't... crud? Given my limited experience and enthusiasm for LitRPG (*Theoretically: Game* #2), I just figured that mainstream LitRPG couldn't be any better.

In *The Dragon's Beard* dated September 2025, **Patrick Zoch** reported technical issues that briefly interrupted his regular gameplay. When I stop working in mid-October, once we're firmly ensconced in Portugal, I plan to return to either online game sessions via video calls and Discord in real time or play-by-forum games like I used to enjoy on *RolePlay onLine*. I'm kind of looking forward to that. I enjoyed your writeup of the Fort Leavenworth Area Wargaming and Research Studies group's Epic Game Day. You should definitely flesh out the stats for the Dream Fish.

Mark Nemeth's *The Seedling* #50 offered a session report in time for the deadline. May your days become less busy! In *Age of Menace* #240, **Brian Christopher Misiaszek** indicated that he chose not to go to PulpFest this year. Similarly, Lloyd Penney forwent participating in Worldcon recently. I wonder if Mr. Penney knows about Attic Books! (<https://atticbooks.ca>) Just in case, I'll inform him. TSR's *Monstrous Compendium* binders can indeed be a mess and a muddle if obtained on the secondary market. They're still pretty neat.

Your research on Havana, Cuba, and its environs continues to fascinate me. Your map of Mazorra and the encounter tables are quite impressive. Keep going. Keep going! I appreciated your mention of the May-June 1939 issue of *Operator* #5. Your exchange with Patrick Zoch on antifascist stories and imagery in pulp magazines and comic books was also really interesting.

With *Ronin Engineer*, **Jim Eckman** offered a short but solid ish, including some intriguing artwork. RAEBNCs all around! And **Lisa Padol's** *An Unlooked For Zine* #2 mentioned the post-A&E one-shot, *Something Completely Different*. I look forward to receiving it when it's completed! While I didn't quite make it to the end of this mailing—page 129 of 161—I did make it to the bottom of this page. Off to Lake Geneva!

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #180

Sept. 24, 2025

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine 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 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: Fort Atkinson, Wis.

Last weekend, Caitlin and I went down to Lake Geneva, Wis., for a magical history tour of *Dungeons & Dragons*-, TSR-, and Gary Gygax-related sights and sites. I'll document that experience thoroughly in my Ever & Anon apazine, *Engines & Emulators* #4. On the way home Sunday, we also stopped in the city in which I was born and raised, Fort Atkinson. While there, we revisited many of the places that were important to me during my childhood, but I was also pleasantly surprised by a couple of developments.

First of all, while I relied on a local drug store (Tuttle's Pharmacy), office supply store (Jonas Office Products), and Kmart for comic books, magazines, and paperback books as a child, there are two retail businesses now available that weren't around when I was younger. Planet Chaos (<https://www.facebook.com/planetchaos>), located near the old roller skating rink, is a store offering comic books, collectible trading card games, and roleplaying and board games.



Planet Chaos is closed on Sundays—the planet's not *that* chaotic—so we weren't able to check it out, but I grew up a seven-minute bicycle ride away from the location of the store. I would have been thrilled to have access to a local comic and game store when I was younger, so current local residents are lucky

indeed. When I was growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, the closest such options were available in Madison and perhaps Whitewater for a short time. (I forget the name of the store in Whitewater, but I bought independent and alternative comics there in the mid-1980s.) The nearest source for roleplaying game materials was Waldenbooks in Janesville.



It doesn't look like the store hosts roleplaying game sessions, but it has held Free Comic Book Day events and frequently holds *Magic: The Gathering* prerelease and other events.

Similarly, downtown, there's now a sports card and collectibles store on Main Street, Dude's Card Shop. (<https://www.facebook.com/dudescardshop>) Even though the store was open, we didn't venture inside, and it's a welcome addition to the city. The proprietor often offers "live breaks" on Whatnot, a live shopping marketplace.



Unfortunately, Velveteen Rabbit Bookshop—which opened after I left home—ceased operations about a decade ago, but there are reports of another bookstore

Secondly, I was inspired by the *Fort Atkinson Wis., Historic Walking & Driving Tour Booklet & Map*. (<https://fortpreserves.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/districttourbrochure.pdf>) That resource details architectural and historical highlights in the Merchants Avenue and Main Street districts, as well as local, state, and national landmarks.

A photograph of a grassy field with a wooden fence made of vertical posts. In the background, there is a small wooden structure and trees under a blue sky with clouds.

[illegible]

While visiting the Mid-Century Modern Museum (<https://www.midcentrismuseum.org>) in North Freedom, Wis., a few weekends ago, after an hour-long round-trip train ride on a former branch line of the Chicago & North Western Railway and thoroughly exploring the indoor and outdoor

The author also considers various promotional efforts targeting various groups and classes of passengers, as well as developments in fare collection and seating. I was especially interested in such transportation modes' competition with the already-existing turnpike system, rival bus companies before consolidation, law enforcement oversight and licensing, and the impact of "pirate" jitneys. Developments in urban transportation technology also led to changes in civic organizations, legislation, urban planning, and fare structures.



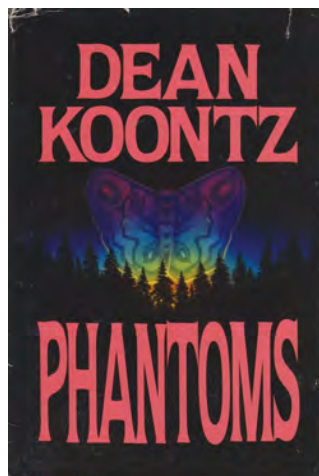
Buses, Trolleys & Trams is explicitly global in its scope, concentrating primarily on the United Kingdom and United States but addressing developments in multiple other countries throughout, as well. The photographs featured are truly worldwide, even including a double-decker bus and tram in Lisbon, Portugal.

At the end of the book, Dunbar explores the impact of the private automobile on public transit, as well as future technological possibilities. The author's discussion of the potential for self-guided bus-trains offers an early nod toward autonomous and self-driving vehicles, and Dunbar suggests that monorails and hovercraft—"vehicles of the air-cushion type"—could also become widespread.

The book makes for an interesting read—and could offer creative fodder for transportation-related storytelling.

Phantoms by Dean Koontz (Putnam, 1983)

Early this week, I felt like reading a story about exploring a mysteriously empty city. Searching for "novel about abandoned town" yielded references to this 1983 novel by Dean Koontz, and—having procured an ebook edition of the novel recently (*T&T* #165), I read it over the course of two evenings. It's a very good book!



In addition to its Lovecraftian nature—the ancient enemy lurking under the northern California town is reportedly a portrayal of Nyarlathotep and one of the characters is named Arkham—the novel also resonates with Stephen King's *It*, which was published several years later, though King started writing it in 1980. The early portions of *Phantoms* are quite frightening and suspenseful because you don't know what's causing the deaths plaguing the town in the Sierras. (Animal, vegetable, or mineral?) Once the reader learns, it becomes more of an action-adventure tale as the protagonists challenge the ancient evil. Regardless, the stakes remain high and Koontz maintains an impressive level of tension throughout.

The book veers toward science fiction once scientists begin to attempt to learn more about the creature, and there are references to cellular biology, undifferentiated cells, cellular learning, and related topics. Koontz also builds on Ananda Mohan

Chakrabarty's work with petroleum-degrading bacteria—which proves interesting and important.

Phantoms is also adjacent to alternate history because the author suggests the antagonist is the cause of mass extinctions and disappearances such as the demise of the dinosaurs, the collapse of the Mayan civilization, the fate of the Roanoke Colony, ghost ships including the *Mary Celeste*, and the since-debunked abandonment of an Inuit village on Lake Angikuni in Nunavut, Canada.

Eager readers of Lovecraftian horror and supernatural military sf, as well as aficionados of the Town with a Dark Secret or King's "Peculiar Little Town" trope, are likely to enjoy this novel.

Midweek, I read William Preston's novelette "Helping Them Take the Old Man Down," which first appeared in the March 2010 issue of *Asimov's Science Fiction*. It's a wonderful homage to pulp heroes such as Doc Savage—and led to subsequent Old Man stories.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson II: Movie Reviews

Phantoms

Inspired by reading Dean Koontz's novel (above), a friend and I watched the 1998 film adaptation midweek. Given the streaming services we both have access to, we watched the movie on *YouTube*, where someone has created a playlist of 11 nine-minute segments of the movie. We were able to watch the movie in its entirety, but I wouldn't recommend that method.



The pixelation was pretty severe, which made some of the darker and more CGI-oriented scenes challenging. Otherwise, the segments flowed relatively seamlessly, with brief periods of blackness between segments.

The movie's cast is pretty impressive in terms of named actors—Ben Affleck (the sheriff), Peter O'Toole (the academic), Liev Schreiber (the creepy cop), and Rose McGowan (the doctor's sister)—but the acting is pretty poor. The film plays up the mysterious mass disappearance and ancient biological horror aspects of the story while it downplays the Lovecraftian elements—even if the ancient enemy remains “chaos in the flesh.”

While the movie hits most of the narrative beats of the novel—pretty much everything is there except for the subplot featuring Fletcher Kale and the leader of a motorcycle gang—it treats everything at a shallow, surface level and develops pretty rapidly. A tense, suspenseful piece of fiction with a good amount of uncertainty becomes a quickly unfolding movie in which the discoveries occur relatively easily. For example, in the film, the petroleum-degrading bacteria just happens to be on the shelves of a mobile laboratory. Well, that's that!

In the end, it's not an awful adaptation, but it's not a very good movie. You'd be better off just reading the book.

Comments on APA-L #3129

I enjoyed seeing the flier promoting John Hertz's selections for the intended Classics of Science Fiction discussions at the Worldcon in Seattle. How was it meeting outside Bombo Italian Kitchen at the Seattle Convention Center—Summit?

In *Vanamonde* #1653, **John Hertz** reprinted a letter

he wrote to President Barack Obama and Barbra Streisand. The poems you wrote for each were enjoyable. I was unaware Moondog had collaborated with Julie Andrews; I shall have to seek out *Tell It Again—Songs of Sense & Nonsense*.

I appreciated your list of the benefits of paper books. I'd add that they also make it more difficult to revise or alter a text from its original form—and that you can actually own them, while many ebooks are merely licensed or borrowed, even if purchased. My wife will attest that I frequently bemoan how streaming television and movies is so much less efficient and effective than watching a DVD, Blu-ray, or video tape. You put them into the player and press play—there's no possibility of bandwidth issues, no need for Wi-Fi, and no buffering.

There's a bit of a physical media renaissance underway, which I appreciate. Growing numbers of people seek alternatives to streaming services, turning to books, records, CDs, and DVDs. Motivations include subscription fatigue—subscribing to multiple streaming services is better than cable TV was?—desired ownership, nostalgia, and other drivers.

And **Barbara Gratz Harmon's** *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #89 reported the resumption of cello lessons. Calloo! I'm glad your musical groups welcome your return when you're able to re-engage. The question you pose about books is a good one. I would keep books you plan to reread or refer to, and to release books otherwise. I'm doing my best not to buy more books: I've been utilizing the library, exploring Little Libraries when I encounter them, and seeking out inexpensive ebooks or other digital formats. I'm also prioritizing reading the books I already have on hand—and have already slowed my library visits in order to focus on reading and releasing, which frees up more space than reading and returning. (One there, one out vs. one in, one out.)

I put the books I've read in Little Libraries. Before we left the Los Angeles area, we donated multiple boxes to the Last Bookstore for resale. Sometimes, I give books to family members. For example, I'll give Tempa Pagel's *Here's the Church, Here's the Steeple* (T&T #179) to my sister to eventually share with my parents, and I'll give Grant Stockbridge's *The Spider No. 2* by (also T&T #179) and Chas. S. Dunbar's *Buses, Trolleys & Trams* to my father. In Los Angeles, the LASFS book table at Loscon is a solid option, as are the multiple Goodwill locations.

The only time I ever remember frustrating my father because I wasn't more manly or masculine—or stoic in the face of pain, perhaps—was while participating in archery at home. We had our own bows and arrows, as well as arm guards, and we'd

affix targets to bales of hay in the backyard. As a child, I was concerned about the bowstring hitting the inside of my forearm when shooting an arrow. One time, the bowstring hit my arm, and it smarted so badly that I cried. That was the only time my dad said something along the lines of, "Be a man."

While the Bristol Renaissance Faire's site is permanent, the festival is seasonal. This year, it was held on Saturdays, Sundays, and Labor Day between July 5 and Sept. 1. It ran July 6 to Sept. 2, 2024, and July 8 to Sept 4, 2023, so it's usually around the same time every year: roughly July and August. I do not know whether the grounds are used other times.

Natter: Preparing to Move

We have now purchased our airplane tickets to relocate to Portugal. Our scheduled departure date is Oct. 22 and we arrive Oct. 23. This week, we're focusing on preparing for the shipment of our belongings—completing various forms of paperwork to obtain needed certificates—and wrapping up work at my employer. I now have about two and a half weeks remaining before my exit.

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Chicago Tribune, March 26, 1954

Sept. 30, 2025

[illegible]

PEBBLE
IN THE
SKY

Isaac
Asimov

"ONE OF
THE WORLD'S PREMIER
SCIENCE FICTION
WRITERS"
NEWSDAY

ECU 34-1

was new to me. He suggests that mental representations don't reside in the individual brain but are instead distributed in sociocultural systems. Cognition involves the brain, external artifacts, groups of people, and cultural systems for interpreting reality. That's not quite distributed consciousness but indicates an extensibility of thought processes. Andy Clark later proposed a theory of extended cognition.

Distributed consciousness also made me think about remote viewing, which is also not quite the same thing. Distributed consciousness also resonates with Erwin Schrödinger's open individualism and the single mind theory, as well as the Hindu philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, which holds that the ultimate reality is a single, unified consciousness. There's also double consciousness, or multiple consciousnesses in one body rather than one consciousness in multiple bodies. All might bear further research!



Chicago Tribune, April 9, 1954

I'm glad that you discuss other eAPAns' responses to your writing in mailing comments. Exercising your brain is good! Building on my rambling above, the ethical issues related to the treatment of such multiple consciousnesses also intrigue me. If human twins deserve the same treatment as "singletons"—which I believe to be the case—it might come down to whether the body is natural or synthetic. It seems reasonable that virtual bodies might not have the same rights as natural bodies, but you've addressed that in previous issues (#61, for example), so it might not be

so cut and dried. Besides, how does one define "natural"?

Ah! What if it's not the body that has rights, but the consciousness, even if it's a duplicate? "Even if you made a trillion copies of yourself and had them in a box on your desk, they would all have to have the same rights and obligations as everyone else," you wrote. Whether we consider them human seems to be the determining factor.

In response to Ahrvid Engholm, you wrote, "Humans aren't programmed the way robots could be." Aren't we, though? We might not execute the programming exactly as entered into our system via cultural and social norms, familial expectations, the demands of a capitalist economy, education, and other means, but my brief reading about Hutchins' theory that sociocultural systems influence cognition might suggest otherwise. Regardless, thank goodness our free will—even if partially free rather than entirely free—can get in the way. The contention that "only mediocre people ... aren't fanatical" requires additional thought.

Your consideration of age changing and body swapping in literature and cinema was intriguing. It evoked real-world occurrences such as child parentification, the role reversal in which a child takes on inappropriate adult responsibilities in relationship to their parents or siblings; infantilization; and acting younger because of subjective age bias, societal pressure, and other causes—as well as in an attempt to escape adult responsibilities.

I can understand your attraction to this topic. If humans embody consciousness, what does it mean if the container changes? The *Internet Speculative Fiction Database* offers multiple works that have been tagged "body swap" (<https://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/tag.cgi?6066>). Fewer works are tagged "age regression" (<https://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/tag.cgi?17344>) and "age retrogression" (<https://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/tag.cgi?4945>). Tags for "sex change" (<https://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/tag.cgi?3959>), "race change" (<https://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/tag.cgi?8087>), and "gender change" (<https://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/tag.cgi?6142>) also exist.

Personally, while I've seen *Big* (a boy embodying a man), I tend to avoid movies such as *Freaky Friday*. I might be slightly more interested in books such as Mary Rodgers's children's novel *Freaky Friday* and Thorne Smith's *Turnabout*. I generally don't find the idea very interesting—or funny.

Feeling like the body you inhabit is not your body—depersonalization or depersonalization-derealization disorder—would be absolutely horrible to experience. Similarly, body dysmorphic disorder, a mental health

condition with which people focus on flaws in their appearance, would be very challenging. Even if not quite locked-in syndrome, learning to utilize a body that's a different size and shape than your own would be frustrating.

William McCabe's *In the Meantime* #14 described the sound of "something fairly solid in a dryer" as "repeated thumping noises..." When my wife and I were still living in the furnished apartment, the Infernal Wilson, one night we heard what we initially interpreted as particularly enthusiastic lovemaking. After a while, because the pounding was incessant and very rhythmic, we realized that—if that was indeed what the sound was—it was relentless and perhaps not enjoyed by at least one partner. Then we determined that it was more likely the staff laundry downstairs—and items in a dryer.

The smart boiler you detail sounds pretty dumb. A couple of weeks ago, my wife, sister, and I met a cousin who was traveling through the area with his wife for dinner midweek. While we were waiting for them at the restaurant we'd arranged to meet at, he called asking where we were. They'd gone to Vintage Spirits & Grill (where they were) rather than Vintage Brewing Co. Capitol East (where we were). That was easily sorted; they were only a mile and a half away. That cousin is the son of my aunt, my mother's sister. We hadn't seen him or his wife since our wedding in 2008. It was good to catch up; their daughter will soon get married herself.

Your comments about romance fiction and book sales intrigued me. "The biggest genre by way of sales in most western countries is Romance," you wrote. That's certainly true in terms of fiction. "This seems to sell almost entirely to women and the books are mostly of the Mills & Boon/Harlequin style. They sell mostly by subscription or in supermarkets/convenience stores and are both cheap and short. The male equivalent used to be pulp fiction but that has all-but-disappeared from publication."

I was unaware of the connection between Harlequin and Mills & Boon, an imprint of Harlequin UK Ltd. Mills & Boon was founded in 1908 as a general publisher before focusing on "escapist fiction." It was bought by Harlequin Enterprises in the early 1970s. The two companies publish about three-quarters of the romance paperbacks released in Britain. More than 100 Mills & Boon novels are published monthly. That's a lot of romance!

Your assertion that pulp fiction used to be the male equivalent also interested me. Western genre book sales declined significantly after peaking around the early 1960s. When I think of modern pulp, I usually think about adult western series and men's adventure

series such as the Destroyer and the Executioner (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #178), many of which were also published by Harlequin via its Gold Eagle imprint. Somewhere between pulp series and literary fiction resides political and other thrillers such as those by Tom Clancy, John Sandford, Clive Cussler, and others, some of which rub up against the mystery genre. The Hard Case Crime imprint (<http://www.hardcasecrime.com>) is always worth exploring.

In *Intermission* #158, **Ahrvid Engholm** shared a cautionary tale about the impersonalization of online customer service. I most recently received an email from you Sept. 1. Its header indicates Gmail and Rocketship addresses, so you might have moved on to greener pastures. I'm sorry to hear about the hassles.



Chicago Tribune, April 9, 1954

I'd never heard about the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society's Atomicon! Forrest J Ackerman did indeed contribute a report on the 1946 event in *Shangri-L'Affaires* #28. You beat me to reprinting it. I was impressed by Ack's write-up, which even captured the Q&A session and subsequent discussion. I wonder what happened to Elmer Perdue's recordings. Your selection of pre-1945 atomic fiction is inspiring.

Sometimes our serendipities surprise me. I enjoyed reading your piece on Bob Shaw and stopped short when you mentioned the "slow glass" concept. Why, I recently read and reviewed *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction* #4 in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #179. That comic magazine utilizes slow glass in a framing sequence that bookends the issue's stories. One Big Fanzine, indeed. I'll have to seek out *The Serious Scientific Talks*. I believe you misread "Worldcon 76" as "1976 Worldcon." You can see one article at <https://file770.com/worldcon-76-spent-over-100k-defending-suit-by-jon-del-arroz>.

And **Garth Spencer's** *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #237 remarked that “the only coherent message I could attribute to science fiction writing or screenplays as a whole is the idea that our environment—well, our reality as a whole—can be utterly different, and we may make the difference.” I love that description. I often enjoy sf that portrays people who know how to do things doing their best to solve problems or improve the world. Both perspectives on the genre are meaningful to me.



Chicago Tribune, April 16, 1954

I sometimes wonder whether the introduction of drugs to the counterculture of the 1960s wasn't a plot to soften the impact of political activism. Apparently I riffed on that in *ECU* #30, so I won't dwell on the concept. Your discussion of “the flakiest part of the ‘hippy’ phenomenon as something invented and promoted by American agents to discredit dissenters against American government policies” might also have merit. If we make activists appear foolish, dissolute, or otherwise distasteful, other citizens might

be less likely to take them seriously, align with them, or support them. That sounds like psychological operations or warfare, which was in part developed by a science fiction author: Cordwainer Smith, a pen name of Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger. Interestingly, Linebarger was born in Milwaukee; I was just reading about him last night!

The questions you pose are thought provoking. I shall address them briefly in turn:

What sources does any one of us consider reliable, and why? My media diet includes news sources such as the *Wisconsin State Journal*, *Milwaukee Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Guardian*. Ad Fontes Media's (<https://adfontesmedia.com>) Media Bias Chart, which requires a subscription for active use, might indicate that those sources are primarily Middle or Balanced Bias or Skews Left. I also read magazines such as *The Progressive*, *In These Times*, *The Economist*, *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, *New Republic*, and *Reason*. I read the first set for news and information, and the second set for news, opinion, and analysis the first set might not offer. In the past, I've also subscribed to several conservative and right-leaning publications as a form of do-it-yourself opposition research. And I've subscribed to anarchist, communist, and socialist newspapers and magazines over the years, as well. I'd like to consider as many points of view as possible.

Social media and online discussion might draw my attention to news events or developments, but I'm more interested in rigorous reporting than I am opinion, talk radio, or Some Random Guy Talking About What He Thinks. (That I can get in fanzines! Half kidding.) I cannot rely on random individual commentary—even if it's presented in a Substack—as the truth or facts on which I can make decisions or form opinions. I can appreciate or enjoy it as an opinion or commentary, however, even if I don't agree with it.

When and why are we open to new information? I am always open to new information because I don't know everything and cannot possibly read, watch, or listen to everything. But I do consider the source when encountering new information.

On what basis do we make these decisions? The News Literacy Project's Breaking News Checklist (<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/breaking-news-checklist>) is a useful framework. There are also guidelines for determining the credibility of a Web site (https://guides.lib.unc.edu/ld.php?content_id=

40897433) and detecting fake news (<https://courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/courts/default/2024-12/btb24-precon2g-3.pdf>).

For the most part, I consider whether a source is contributing something new or merely rehashing or repackaging other reporters' work. Did they actually have access to information sources? Did they actively report the story? (Reporting takes energy, time, and resources.) Who is the reporter, if unaffiliated with a media organization? What do I know about the media organization, think tank, or source otherwise? Who pays their bills?

It just struck me that there might also be a difference between free media and paid media. In a perfect world, all things should be free for all people. But in a world in which some things cost money and other things don't, can we rely on the free things being better than the paid things? That feels counterintuitive.

These days, it is so easy to produce and distribute falsehoods and fictions, cloaked as facts. That actual news media is being drubbed as fake news is concerning to me. (The very use of the phrase "fake news"—as well as the phrase "legacy media"—is psyops. Show me this new media. Where is it?) If we don't have news media, who's going to do the real work of reporting: Joe Schmotz with his X and TikTok accounts? Does the choice of platform introduce bias? Why would the mayor talk to Joe Schmotz? That hardly seems like a positive and productive alternative. American commercial news media might be biased toward capitalism, if anything.

"[W]e just get different information from trusting different sources" and "we will all continue to pick and choose information that fits what we already believe" are causes for concern, not celebrations of individuality or discernment. I know that you weren't celebrating. Somewhere in all of this, I still think that some things are True. That doesn't mean things aren't Complicated or Nuanced. Or that we don't need to consider other points of view.

Well, what do you know? Maybe this takes us back to Hutchins's distributed cognition. Maybe we need sociocultural systems in order to make sense of the world. These days it feels like we're pulling our sociocultural systems apart. That's likely to make things more challenging and difficult.

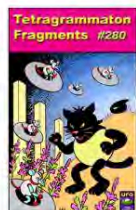
Who benefits from that?



Chicago Tribune, April 16, 1954

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 Acting Chairman Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195 (robimes@yahoo.com). Check out the Official UFO Website at <https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com> (For complete contact and ordering information click on "Current UFO Members") 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 Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195 or via Paypal to robimes@yahoo.com) The Official Newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization features articles, artwork, and more from co-op members.



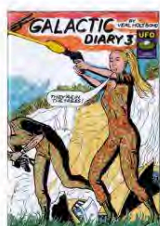
BUCK NELSON & HIS GALACTIC ADVENTURES TO SAVE PLANET EARTH (Available for \$10.00 plus shipping from "Doff Hoff's" website: www.dochoffcomics.com) Based on a purportedly true story, this unique comic from Matt "Doc Hoff" Hoffman details the amazing story of Buck Nelson and his tale of alien encounter and a journey to Mars, the Moon, and Venus! Many say he did!



DISPATCHES FROM THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AND THE EARLY FUR TRADE (\$8.00 postpaid. from <https://kofi.com/phoenixprodscomics>) Early fur traders encountered strange new wildlife in Northern Canada...this zine shares the drawings they sent home to Europe to explain what they saw! A completely unique minizine from the creative talent known as Tom Fellrath.



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