



Cover by Alan White

Tightbeam 316

January 2021

The Editors are:

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

Jon Swartz jon_swartz@hotmail.com

Art Editors are Angela K. Scott, Jose Sanchez, and Cedar Sanderson.

Anime Reviews are courtesy Jessi Silver and her site www.s1e1.com. Ms. Silver writes of her site "S1E1 is primarily an outlet for views and reviews on Japanese animated media, and occasionally video games and other entertainment."

Regular contributors include Justin E. A. Busch, Tom Feller, Declan Finn, Greg Hullender, Jim McCoy, Chris Nuttall, Pat Patterson, Heath Row, Cedar Sanderson, and Tamara Wilhite. Declan Finn's web page declanfinn.com covers his books, reviews, writing, and more. Jim McCoy's reviews and more appear at jimboss-ffreviews.blogspot.com. Chris Nuttall's essays and writings are seen at chrishanger.wordpress.com and at superversivesf.com. Pat Patterson's reviews appear on his blog habakkuk21.blogspot.com and also on Good Reads and Amazon.com. Cedar Sanderson's reviews and other interesting articles appear on her site www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/ and its culinary extension. Tamara Wilhite's other essays appear on Liberty Island (libertyislandmag.com). Samuel Lubell originally published his reviews in The WSFA Journal. Anita Barrios is a former middle school ELA and Social Studies teacher. Regular short fiction reviewers Greg Hullender and Eric Wong publish at RocketStackRank.com. Stephanie Souders gives us reviews of western comics.

Some contributors have Amazon links for books they review, to be found with the review on the web; use them and they get a reward from Amazon.

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

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

To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines. Memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18; memberships with TNFF via email are \$6. Zines other than TNFF are email only. Additional memberships at the address of a current dues-paying member are \$4. Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah NV 89049 . Pay online at N3F.org. Our PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org.
Public memberships are free.

Table of Contents

Art

Front Cover ... Alan White

Back Cover ... Landing Party by Jose Sanchez

Letters of Comment:

4 ... John Thiel, Lloyd Penney, Bob Jennings

Anime

7 ... The Balancing Act of Being Critical: Part 1 — Passions are Personal ... Jessi Silver

Comics

10 ... Western Comics: Capsule Review ... Stephanie Souders

Fan News

13 ... FANAC Flash Update 5! January 1, 2021 ... Joe Siclari

Fanzines

14 ... Fanfaronade 6 ... Justin E. A. Busch

Interviews

15 ... An Interview with D. M. Wozniak ... Tamara Wilhite

18 ... An Interview with Douglas McKim ... Tamara Wilhite

Movies

20 ... WW84 Is Definitely an 80s Superhero Flick ... Jason P. Hunt

Novels

23 ... The Lost Symbol by Dan Brown ... John Thiel

24 ... The Demolished Man by Alfred Bester ... Will Mayo

Sercon

24 ... Henry Kuttner Bio-Bibliography ... Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

Video

28 ... She-Ra and the Princesses of Power ... Chris Nuttall

Food of Famous Authors

30 ... Daniel Allen Butler's Cockie-Leekie Soup ... Cedar Sanderson

Letters of Comment

Editor:

I'm assuming that the fanzine reviews can be commented on in the Tightbeam letter column, so I thought I'd say a few things about the reviews of my fanzines Pablo Lennis and Event Horizon. Event Horizon was intended to be an online substitute for Pablo Lennis, which I have not wanted to put online because it would be too much of a problem to go through everything involved. So much of the material in it is similar to what I have in Pablo Lennis, but it is available to people who don't have good paper exchange capabilities. Event Horizon also has in it things which are more net matters to go along with the other material, and not all the contributors are writers for Pablo Lennis.

Pablo Lennis does indeed presently have the same writers from issue to issue, with an occasional new one, and maintains a consistent format, but I think each issue has a lot of new things in it, if not new writers. At one time its format varied considerably from issue to issue, and there were complaints about that, but at this time I have not been receiving complaints about the format. There has been quite a variety of writers over the course of time; I've had over four hundred writers and poets appearing in it.

I did like the reviews of both publications and the reviews of the other fanzines as well, and am glad to see fanzine reviews appearing in Tightbeam.

-John Thiel

1706-24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke, ON
CANADA M9C 2B2
December 19, 2020

Dear George and Jon:

It's been a busy day, taking Yvonne out for breakfast, and bringing it home...we're under lockdown here, and today is her birthday. Now that a huge breakfast is eaten, and presents are opened, we can get down to some regularly scheduled fanac, which for me is working on a couple of fanzines. I have issues 314 and 315 of Tightbeam, so I'd best get with it.

314...In anticipation of the article about Ellison's Last Dangerous Visions, I did read recently that J. Michael Straczynski, the literary executor of the Ellison estate, intends to publish The Last Dangerous Visions in the new year. I have old library copies of the first two DVs, but the LDV has to be on my purchase list.

My letter here...I have hopes of getting close to 200 letters this year, but the time taken to work on Amazing Stories took away from that. I just finished a tight edit of modern issue 7, and sent it to editor Ira Nayman...who, by the way, find the press release on the Amazing Stories website, has resigned as editor as of December 15, but will continue on in the job to finish up issue 7, work on a few other projects, and train his successor. I have offered to stay on, but we shall see who the new editor is, and what they say.

Many thanks for the Cyril Kornbluth bio...I have a couple of books of his on the shelf, to be sure, but I did not know how young he was when he died, which was before I was born. Also, we have been watching and enjoying ST: Discovery, and recent episodes have put a smile on my face, to be honest, no spoilers. I suspect that with this season, plus predicted new series yet to come out, can a Star Trek Channel be far behind? I think you could run an episode or movie of Trek for every hour of the month without a repeat. Soon, a third animated series will debut, so that takes care of cartoons on a Saturday morning...

315... Free speech is under fire from both sides indeed, but because one says the other is abusing it. Politics now has some extremely sharp edges of division. I hope that with new leadership those divisions can be healed up. I think we could all use it.

Good research on Jack London. I remember the Murdoch Mysteries episode well. It was shot on location in Dawson City, Yukon.

I am currently working on/editing another book, on traditions of Wiccans, pagans and other witchy folks, and I hope to have it done by the end of year. With all of that, I think I am done for the time being. We wish all of you a wonderful Christmas and happy New Year, and we will see you in that Stfnal year of 2021.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

Hi George,

I hope you are having a happy and virus free holiday season.

As Heath Row should be aware, there is a small but active number of N3F members who are also fans of OTRadio, including me. His mention of The Creaking Door episode "The Cat Woman:" brings to mind a more famous title with an even more interesting premise titled "Cat Wife" that aired on the Lights Out radio show in 1936 and was so popular it was repeated almost every year thereafter, often with Boris Karloff as the lead.

In that story the teller of the tale calls his amoral wife a cat, after which she begins transforming in a real cat, with horrifying results. Or did she? Perhaps the husband is just descending into unchecked insanity and is unable to tell reality from delusion as he assumes his wife has become a feline and tries to adapt to the unexplained supernatural change. Early on he resorts to murder to hide the secret, but feels no remorse, and his actions become steadily more bizarre in trying to keep the secret that his wife has now become a genuine cat. This story was also pirated, sometimes without any payment or acknowledgement, by a number of syndicated radio programs and also showed up on a couple of Arch Obeler's later programs, as well as on Everyman's Theater. Similar themes were explored several times on the CBS Radio Mystery Theater that aired from 1974 thru 1982 on a daily basis. Unfortunately this hour-long program usually airing around 11:00 at night over the stations that carried the show, but still; managed to achieve a dedicated listener base.

The Creaking Door was a South African radio series that may have started in the mid 1950s as a direct imitation or perhaps even an authorized overseas version of The Inner Sanctum, but it is most familiar to collectors for its 1964-65 series of 39 shows which were extensively syndicated in the British Commonwealth nations and in the US. Original radio drama and comedy continued in South Africa well into the 1980s.

Hugh Heffner's interest in OTRadio was real, but I think it was mostly an adjunct to his long running interest in old movies. I believe people who knew him have noted that his primary interest was in radio programs such as Lux Radio Theater and Screen Guild Playhouse that featured big name movie stars in their dramas.

Jon Swartz did a good job discussing the Mark Trail comic strip and radio program, but I wonder what connection does this have with science fiction-fantasy-horror? There is none that I can tell. I am glad he mentioned that there is a new artist and writer on this feature, which for several decades has been regarded as the dullest comic strip adventure series in existence. Back when Ed Dodd was doing the stories and art things moved right along and it was carried by a lot of papers during the 1950s. But when Dodd he turned the reins over to his friend and assistant Jack Elrod things slowed down considerably, including rerunning a lot of earlier story lines with new art added and the plot development now moving at molasses like speed. Dropping the strip down to two panels for most of the dailies sure didn't help matters either.

Dell Comics may have reprinted some Mark Trail comics trips stories, or created brand new ones, but I don't think they were ever presented in their Tarzan comic book. I have an almost complete run of that title and I don't recall ever seeing anything like Mark Trail in its pages.

I always thot the radio series, where an entire adventure had to be told in 30 minutes, less time for commercials, was pretty good. It was the favorite show of one of my childhood friends. So far as I am aware only 36 programs have survived, and none of the 15-minute programs are around at all.

I read Will Mayo's short review of Arthur Machen's classic story "The Great God Pan", but I wonder if he was talking about the same story I am familiar with. In the Machen story there is nothing about hells beyond the grave, or people living in a strange horrific land after death, and I sure don't remember anything about dead people serving as slaves to gigantic worker ants while even more alien creatures rip down the sky. The story as Machen wrote it is a supernatural fantasy with strong sexual references which features a young woman who has managed to directly experience the world of the old gods, and has become a human succubus who tempts, seduces, and ruins many man, often driving them insane with what she reveals of her experiences with the ancient and malicious god she serves. In the end she is forced to kill herself by those who have ferreted out her secret life. She ultimately dissolves into a blob-like puddle.

This story shocked Victorian era readers where it was originally published in 1894, but has since become universally acknowledged as one of the masterpieces of supernatural horror. It is certainly not obscure or once forgotten, as Mr. Mayo states. I don't think the story has been out of print since the day it was published, and it has also been translated into most of the major languages of the world. Those interested can read this novelette for free on Project Guttenberg at this link — <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/389>

Nice author interview this time. I am tempted to put Allen Goodner's novels on my TBR list, except I still have a huge stack of books that I haven't gotten around to yet. Still, perhaps I'll make a note anyway.

---Bob Jennings
Fabficbooks.com

Anime

The Balancing Act of Being Critical: Part 1 – Passions are Personal by Jessi Silver

Over the past couple of months I've had a lot of time to think about how I approach my writing and reviewing, and the things that go into crafting a well-written critique that has value to others. I think media criticism and textual analysis is interesting no matter what your chosen medium of focus is, but anime in particular appeals to me because I feel like there's a lot to unpack – both regarding the material itself, as well as the ways in which the Western fandom interacts with it. As an effect of the Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions, I've also had a lot more time to interact online with folks within my anime club friendship circle; as a result I've gotten into some interesting discussions regarding anime likes and dislikes and had the opportunity to consider some alternative viewpoints to my own. Because I've been hoping to write more about the more “meta” parts of anime fandom, I wanted to use this opportunity to record and ponder some of those thoughts.

I've been writing about anime for a long time (since early 2007 at least). While plenty of anime series have crossed my path over the years, some blazing onto the scene with a lot of fanfare before being largely forgotten and some remaining favorites of mine despite all the things I've experienced in the interim, one thing that's been a constant is that anime as a medium has always had its share of controversial material. This isn't something unique to anime; there are plenty of Western TV shows and films that push the boundaries of our collective social taboos (or just trample all over what I'd define as good taste). But I suspect that there are traits of anime that make these kinds of transgressions stand out to a greater degree than they might otherwise.

While the landscape has been changing rapidly in the last decade or so, for many years animation has been thought of as entertainment for children in the West. This doesn't mean that there was a complete drought on animation marketed toward adults, but productions like that were definitely more niche as compared to the candy-colored, corny stuff that was around in the 1980's when I was a kid. Because of this, I think a lot of folks (including myself sometimes, even to this day) have a visceral reaction toward animation that incorporates nudity and violence, or which incorporates gray-area morality or other material that doesn't fit into neat little boxes. I've seen so much anime at this point that I have an easier time seeing these things as parts of a whole (though it doesn't mean I always give them a pass to be as crass or taboo as possible for no reason), but I can understand that there are a lot of folks out there who are still a little put off by anime's ability to be more graphic than one's baseline expectations of a cartoon.



Probably the furthest thing from pornography that there is.

Because of that, I think the general public has had a certain perception of anime that's been pervasive at least until recently. I recall many years ago my mom outright asking me if anime was

just “animated porn,” and while I can laugh about it now (kinda wondering why anyone would think I’d be so outwardly passionate about any kind of pornography, let alone something with such niche appeal, but whatever), at the time it was clear to me why so many of my fellow anime fans just didn’t feel comfortable talking about their fandom around or with non-fans. It’s exhausting to repeatedly explain that, while that kind of thing definitely does exist, it doesn’t represent the fandom for most fans (the same way the existence of live-action pornography doesn’t represent or define the content of most live-action films). Because a lot of us older fans have been asked questions like that over the years I think we may have a special sensitivity to situations in which certain anime series do include sexuality, fanservice, nudity, violence, or gore – there’s an almost gut-wrenching drive to defend ourselves and our fandom from accusations of enjoying “cartoon porn;” just because something contains adult content doesn’t make it porn (and because of whatever unspoken hierarchy of entertainment exists, being labeled “pornography” is considered an insult).

These are a lot of words just to say that, while it’s unfair in many respects, there are a lot of complicated reasons why violence and sex in anime is perceived differently than it is in live action. Until it crapped the bed in the end, HBO’s *Game of Thrones* was by all accounts a major mainstream success; it was the type of TV series that people would talk about with their co-workers the next morning (I know this because my co-workers and I spent probably too much time and energy doing this). It was also, by my calculations, one of the most graphically-violent and sexually-explicit TV series available at that time. This didn’t prevent it from being a pop-culture touchpoint for a lot of people who didn’t previously watch other genre shows. Yet I’d be willing to bet that a good portion of *Game of Thrones* fans wouldn’t be comfortable watching the same material play out in an animated adaptation of the same material. It’s just where we are as a culture. It’s something that I feel sad about as a passionate anime fan, but something that I also try to understand.



This definitely isn’t everyone’s taste.

As a passionate anime writer and critic, however, I find that this state of affairs makes it very difficult to be critical about some anime series (though it’s definitely not the only reason). I’ve come to accept that there are anime series I really enjoy that contain content that will be rightfully off-putting to a lot of folks (*Golden Kamuy* is a recent example – copious male nudity, extreme violence, general grotesque behavior, war-related PTSD, animal hunting and slaughter... it’s got it all!), and can under-

stand criticism of them on those grounds even if the same things aren’t enough to drive me away (heck, in some cases I consider it part of their appeal). But in my experience there are many fans who take pretty reasonable criticism of series they like extremely personally, to the point that it creates a backlash. This isn’t limited to anime fandom (I will just mention *Star Wars* here and leave it to my readers to ponder that by themselves), but I see it a lot more frequently in anime fandom. Just speaking from my own experience, I think a lot of us come to anime fandom in our teens or early adulthood – times in which we’re developing our personalities in to the people we are to become. The anime we enjoy become our own sacred texts, of sorts; media that pinpoints the very intense, emotional transformations we are experiencing. In some cases I think it’s easier to look back on the things we watched then and identify that they had definite issues (believe me, I’ll always have a soft spot in my heart for *Ranma ½*, but there are undeniably criticisms to be made there). In other cases, though (especially if they are fresher in our minds or so well-loved that it’s difficult to want to pick them apart), it can feel very personal when someone says “hey, that thing had some flaws, and I’m going to examine them at

length now.” It can be very easy to take that as a personal affront; when you feel as though a piece of media has helped to define you as a person, a criticism of that media can feel like an attack. Add in the general perception and misunderstanding of anime as a medium as I’ve outlined above, and it’s very easy to feel as though someone is trying to take something away from you.

What originally prompted this post were some thoughts I had regarding media censorship (and since this looks like it’ll be at least a two-parter, it might be a little while until I get to my main point). Writers like me get accused of advocating censorship from time to time, because we have critical (and sometimes severely critical) things to say about anime series, some of them extremely popular. While most of the time it’s not at the forefront of my writing, my experiences as a woman in fandom and in life is often expressed through my opinions and intertwined within my writing. Unfortunately a good portion of media has a difficult time encapsulating those experiences in ways that are actually representative; many times they are actively contrary and occasionally they are outright hurtful. I try not to be shy about pointing these things out or making it clear why I’m not interested in watching them flail around further. Rather than taking this as one person’s opinion (one person of many – there are tons of other anime reviewers in the world with differing opinions), there are fans who interpret these opinions as direct assaults. And I know how they feel! I had a friend/mentor one time say something critical to my face about an anime that I absolutely adored (and still adore, more than a decade later). I was so angry and hurt that I didn’t know what to do with myself. Looking back, though, I can see that he just didn’t see the same things in it that I did, and while some nominal amount of tact and a gentler hand would have been preferred his critiques weren’t able to make the anime in question disappear from my life, or even really taint the experience of me watching it many times after that (although I’m sure I watched and enjoyed again at least once out of pure spite). In short, the “feminist killjoys” (including myself) aren’t coming for your or your anime. But we’re allowed not to like it and to point those things out. What you do with that information is a reflection on the type of person you want to be and the types of interactions that you hope to have.



Sometimes you might not understand something, and that’s okay. (But you should definitely check out *Windy Tales* if you get the chance).

But, over the years, I’ve learned that there’s also value in crafting critiques that at least try to take into account the reader sitting on the other side of the screen, even if some of those same folks aren’t

always willing to afford me the same courtesy. I think some of the best advice I’ve been given as a writer is to criticize the media, not the fan. Pointing out a story’s flaws, whether they be craft-related things like poor pacing or stilted dialog, or more problematic choices such as an indulgence in one of the many “isms” that serve to hurt various groups, is simply a responsibility I feel I have to people who are reading. They may not entirely agree with me, but they deserve to have the best information I can provide them. But it’s irresponsible to throw around statements like “only an idiot would watch this,” because as off-putting as I’ve found some series to be I know I have friends who have likely watched those same series and enjoyed them – see the above statements regarding myself and *Golden Kamuy*, if you’re looking to me to hold up a mirror to myself on this. It may be incomprehensible to think that someone with whom you share mutual respect could have such a differing opinion about the implications of some controversial content in a particular anime, but it happens. And it doesn’t make them Satan incarnate – as long as they don’t come back and tell you to “get over it.”

Criticism is a balance between truth and finesse, and it's a balance that unfortunately we can never truly achieve in the eyes of all readers. Writing that tip-toes around in an attempt to avoid saying anything critical feels incomplete to me and I don't believe it serves much of a purpose other than to advertise (though if you truly love the piece of media you're talking about and really want to sing its praises to others, that type of writing serves its own purpose). Writing that does nothing but talk shit and cause controversy can feel very fun and cathartic in the moment, but in the aftermath it just feels dreadfully empty and alienating. Writing essays and reviews that reveal enough about a piece of media to be informative, and which capture its highs and lows in ways that welcome debate and discussion without starting a war, well, perhaps that's my own "white whale." I may never be accomplished enough to maintain that balancing act for any length of time. But one thing I do hope is to help readers recognize, and perhaps to remind myself, that passionate enjoyment of a piece of media does not somehow make it flawless, that acknowledging those flaws does not amount to censorship, and that flaws do not make something irredeemable.

Comics

Western Comics: Capsule Reviews Stephanie Souders

Hello, gentle readers! Starting with this column, I have volunteered to help cover Western-style comics for Tightbeam. I'm a self-taught (and extremely dedicated) Iron Man historian — but as you can hopefully see below, I will be trying my level best each month to sample comics from both mainstream and independent creators to keep our focus broad.

Note: Yes, I take requests! If there's a particular review you'd like to see, please contact me at hobsonphile@gmail.com and tell me the title, creators, and - most importantly - point of sale. Assuming the comic in question is available for immediate purchase, I will respond in the following issue!

Marvel
Iron Man, #1-4
Writer: Christopher Cantwell
Artists: Cafu, Frank D'Armata, & Alex Ross

Yes: as an Iron Man historian, I *have* to start here.

It would be a spectacular understatement to say that the past decade has been a troubled one for Marvel's Iron Man title. The time frame in question has seen an unasked-for retcon of Tony Stark's parentage, an attempt to replace Tony with an entirely new character, and a confused robot revolution plot in which Disney animatronics are depicted rampaging through the streets of New York (among other things this Iron Man fan would rather forget). So when it was announced this past spring that the Golden Avenger was getting yet another soft reboot, I was initially happy. The promised "back to basics" vision couldn't possibly be worse than *Iron Man 2020*, right?

Well, as it turns out, the new Iron Man run *is* better than its immediate predecessor — but not by much. Alex Ross’ covers and classic armor design are poster worthy, as is much of the interior art. And there have been several moments in the story so far that *have* felt very much like the Tony Stark of old, including one outstanding scene in the second issue in which Tony nearly breaks every bone in his body trying to rescue some of his employees from a trap Cardiac has devised. Unfortunately, Christopher Cantwell’s apparent determination to pay tribute to the zeitgeist of the moment threatens to overshadow every single one of these unquestioned positives. Mixed in with the occasional flashes of brilliance are unpleasant sequences in which Tony is scolded for his supposed failure to “check his privilege” — scenes which betray a lack of familiarity with Tony’s multi-decade history as an icon of “responsible” capitalism and noblesse oblige. Even more importantly, Cantwell’s Tony often comes across as whiny and passive, which, once again, does not do justice to the character as he was established in the Silver and Bronze Ages.

There’s probably no one out there who wanted to like this new run more than I did. But even with the support of a terrific art team, Cantwell is simply getting too many things wrong. Buy these issues if you’re looking for some eye candy — but not if you’re an Iron Man fan hoping for the return of the *real* Tony Stark. ★★

DC
Three Jokers
Writer: Geoff Johns
Artist: Jason Fabok

Billed as a follow-up to *A Death in the Family* and *The Killing Joke*, this Black Label graphic novel proposes that there are three different versions of the Joker — a high concept that, admittedly, feels too clever by half. Nonetheless, this is a quality book. Jason Fabok’s work is superb, and Geoff Johns’ treatment of the personal drama between Bruce Wayne, Barbara Gordon, and Jason Todd is skilled, emotionally resonant, and accessible for Batman newbies. As a Marvel girl, I only have Wikipedia-level knowledge on the travails of the Bat family, but I was very, *very* interested in all the scenes that deal with Todd’s evident PTSD -- and was equally entranced by the pages that tackle Bruce’s guilt over the same. On the whole, if you too haven’t read many Batman comics, this character-driven mystery is not a bad place to jump right in.

★★★★

Primer
Writers: Thomas Krajewski & Jennifer Muro
Artist: Gretel Lusky
(Young Adult)

Lately, several of DC’s young adult graphic novels have attracted substantial negative attention for their inept attempts to “reinvent” classic characters to appeal to the next generation’s supposedly “woke” sensibilities — and as an after-school tutor, I have to say I tend to agree with these more critical takes. Kids don’t want lectures any more than adults do; like adults, they want fun stories and *relatable* protagonists. That’s why Raina Telgemeier is a top-seller — and that’s why, in my estimation, DC’s *Primer* - in which a foster kid stumbles upon a set of paints that grants her magical powers - has seen more relative success than the other books in its line. *Primer*’s main character, Ashley, is a likable - and, crucially, *original* - female superhero whose

mischievous inspires genuine laughter at points. Moreover, her struggle to rise above the influence of her criminal father grounds a development arc with *actual meaning*. *This right here* is how you write comics for the all-ages set: instead of pandering, you hew to universal principles of good writing. If you have a pre-teen girl in your life - or if you're young at heart - definitely give this book a look. ★★★★★

Independent/Crowdfunded Comics

Kamen America, Vol. 2

Writer: Mark Pellegrini

Artist: Timothy Lim

(Iconic Comics; Superhero)

Carly Vanders has a problem: she's now a superhero, but no one seems to appreciate her — or even notice that she exists. And if she's perfectly honest with herself, that really sticks in her craw. But does the recognition of adoring crowds actually matter? Or is Carly allowing her envy of an old childhood rival to cloud her view?

Like everything else produced by this artist/writer team, the second volume of *Kamen America* features bright, adorable manga-inspired art and an entertaining story driven by a powerful - and sadly rare - *moral* sensibility. Specifically, Lim and Pellegrini take direct aim at the unearned emotional validation and "yass-queen-slay!" cheerleading that is sadly epidemic in mainstream comics featuring female heroes, electing instead to keep their leading lady humble and focused on doing good for its own sake. The result? A book that's a breath of fresh air in a genre otherwise weighed down by tiresome narcissism and political correctness. ★★★★★

E-Ratic #1

Writer: Kaare Andrews

Artists: Kaare Andrews & Brian Reber

(AWA Studios - Upshot; Superhero, Young Adult)

Like *Primer* above, this young-adult-friendly series is likely to succeed on the strength of its original premise and the realistic "kid-ness" of its main character, who can only be a superhero for ten minutes at a time. Awkward Oliver Leif - who's just moved to a new town with his single mother and his popular, athletic older brother - feels like many real teenage boys I've encountered in my fifteen years of teaching. And from the first page of this inaugural issue, the storytelling-potential of Oliver's time-limited power set is instantly apparent. Couple these features with attractive visuals and some biting social satire that challenges *actual* sacred cows and what you have is a comic that quickly won me over. An A-grade premier! ★★★★★

Bass Reeves, #1-2

Writer: Kevin Greivoux

Artist: David Williams

(Allegiance Arts; Historical)

If there's one African American historical figure who deserves a star-studded biopic, it's Bass Reeves, a former slave who served as a US Marshall in the Oklahoma Territory and gained legendary status by successfully capturing thousands of criminals despite widespread racism and his own illiteracy. But while we wait for someone in Hollywood to finally recognize where the

real stories are, we can read these comics, which ably capture the difficulties Reeves encounters as he tries to balance his challenging professional obligations with his equally demanding family life. What particularly stands out in these books so far is the honesty and respect with which Kevin Greivoux tackles Reeves' devout Christianity. Moreover, the conflict Greivoux is setting up between Reeves and his high-spirited son is truly hard-hitting; indeed, one panel in issue two actually made me gasp. Given Greivoux's excellent writing and Williams' unique, highly-stylized art, this series should not be missed! ★★★★★

Fan News

FANAC Flash Update 5! January 1, 2021

Happy New Year! We are very glad to see the end of 2020, and hope that you all have a new year full of health, joy and all the other good things.

This Flash is to tell you three things:

First, we want to announce our next Fanhistory zoom. Please RSVP if you would like to attend.

Topic: The fannish life and times of Ted White – an interview of Ted by John D. Berry

Date: January 23, 2021

Time: 4PM, EST

If you were unable to attend our first Fanhistory zoom, a virtual fannish walking tour of Holborn (London) by Rob Hansen, you can now see it all at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4ra2QiiZ48>

Secondly, we've taken an end of year look at what's available on the archive and wanted to share the numbers with you. You can see gory details on our FANAC by the numbers page: https://fanac.org/FANAC_Inc/fanacnumbers.html

A quick summary:

FANAC.org: Over 270,000 pages of fanzines, conpubs and photos

Fancylopedia.org: Over 27,000 articles, including people, fanzines, conventions and clubs

Fanhhistory YouTube channel: Over 100,000 views and 90 titles

We're jazzed.

Lastly, to start the new year right, we're happy to tell you that we have uploaded two of the biggest fanzines ever published.

Outworlds 71, Bill Bowers posthumous publication, <https://fanac.org/fanzines/Outworlds/> (>500 pages, thanks to the kind offices of Pat Virzi, and

Warhoon 28, Dick Bergeron's monumental compendium of all things Walt Willis - <https://>

fanac.org/fanzines/Warhoon/ (>600 pages, scan by Mark Olson) . This one is in progress and will be up by Monday.

And no, they are not included in the page counts I gave you.

Best wishes to everyone for 2021.

Fanhistorically yours,

Joe Siclari

jsiclari@fanac.org

Copyright © 2021 Florida Association for Nucleation and Conventions, All rights reserved.
Our mailing address is: Florida Association for Nucleation and Conventions, 663 Hanover St,
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598-5901

Fanzines

Fanfaronade 6 by Justin E. A. Busch

George Phillies forwarded me an e-mail from Nic Farey: “Might be helpful if Justin Busch published his email address - he could get more fanzines that way (or he could subscribe to the efanazines update mailing list)”. I admit that I thought my e-mail was permanently attached to this column, but I was wrong. I think it best to reprint a slightly trimmed version of the original call for fanzines:

I have just been given the honor and privilege of becoming NF3's new Fanzine Reviewer-- and I need your assistance. If you publish a print fanzine, please send a copy to me, Justin E.A. Busch, at 306 Prince St., #422, St. Paul Minnesota, 55101. If you publish exclusively online, please send a message to jeab@musician.org (heading 'Fanzine Listing') with two or three short sentences describing the basic character of your zine (perzine, genzine, main genre focus, or whatever you think most important) and one or two of the highlights of the current issue, along with the URL, and it shall be listed in the next column.



There are two reasons, one practical and one philosophical, why I don't generally review e-fanzines. The practical one is that my access to the internet is limited and irregular; it is quite possible that the day I head to the public library to e-mail 'Fanfaronade' to George is the first glimpse I have of an e-mail with a fanzine attached (this is one reason I did not realize that my e-mail wasn't attached to the column in *Tightbeam*; I'd never actually seen the column, as my limited time on-line is spent doing things other than reading my own deathless prose).

The philosophical one is based in what I take to be the point of this column: to give readers an idea as to whether a fanzine will or won't be to their taste. This, for print fanzines, make sense; to see a print

fanzine requires sending away for it. E-fanzines, on the other hand, are accessible with just a click or two. The reader can examine them in less time than it takes to read my review; they don't need me to help.

That said— if an editor sends me a PDF of an on-line fanzine I will review it. Otherwise, feel free, as noted above, to send a description, and I will append it to the column (make sure you include the URL).

It may well be that some future column consists of nothing but e-fanzines; the number of print zines dwindles regularly. This month, for example, we have but one....

Pablo Lennis 397, December 2020. Edited by John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana, 47904. Available “for an exchange of fanzines, the price of 2.00 a copy, any art or written material being used herein, or for the simple reply of a letter of comment.”

John Thiel's first fanzine was published over sixty years ago; *Pablo Lennis* itself has been being published for over forty years. It has a communal feel; most of the authors and loccers are regulars whose work is predictably reliable. This, though, does not entail stagnation; Thiel often manages, even within the structural and presentational boundaries which have developed over time, to add a splash of something unexpected. In this issue, the first surprise is Thiel's cover, credited to Peter Zenger (who most readers will recognize as the focal point of the first great judicial victory for freedom of the press). It may be a reprint, as it's dated 2002, but in any case it's a vibrant, striking, and mysterious invitation into the magazine (yes, I'm biased; original art is a better gateway to a fanzine than a random image pulled off the internet).

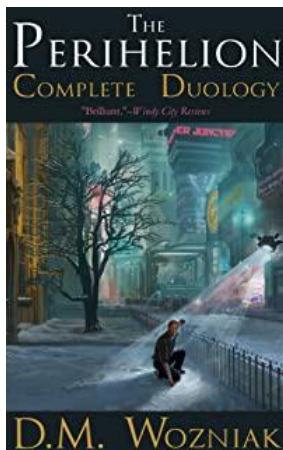
There is a greater mix of essays, fiction, and poetry here than usual, headlined by Jeffrey Redmond's two contributions, a story and an essay on “Future Utopias” (which, despite the title, is primarily about dystopias). Serials by Joanne Tolson and Celine Rose Mariotti continue apace; I still think their impact would be strengthened if each segment could be developed at greater length. There's a gently touching poem, “Autumn Rain,” by Will Mayo, essays by Mayo and Dr. Mel Waldman, and the lettercol.

This is an enjoyable issue; it's difficult to imagine a reader who could find nothing with which to engage here. Thiel invites letters; surely a new reader would feel welcome to express an opinion or two, and would find plenty to which to respond....

Interviews

An Interview with D.M. Wozniak by Tamara Wilhite

I read and reviewed D.M. Wozniak's science fiction duology “The Perihelion Complete Duology” several years ago. It may yet prove to be prescient. I had the opportunity to interview him after the contested 2020 Presidential election.



Tamara Wilhite: In that duology, a post-Civil War 2 American has split between the Redlands and the Bluecore cities. This is arguably more practical than trying to have entire states secede from the United States, because it doesn't force millions of people to be relocated in order to get ideologically consistent populations. Can you tell the audience more about these novels?

D.M. Wozniak: It all started with my desire to write a modern, literary fiction “disaster” novel with a sci-fi edge. I loved the idea of building a story around a macro-level disaster (an EMP taking down an entire city), but making it character-driven instead of plot-driven. I did this by creating a cast of six protagonists, each of whom were going through a personal disaster that uniquely echoed the macro disaster.

The symbolic correlation between earth's perihelion and an EMP came to me one day, and then the theme of the novel sort of fell into place. The perihelion is the moment that the earth is closest to the sun (usually in early January). This is counter-intuitive for us in the northern hemisphere, because it is set during winter. The axial tilt of the planet causes seasons, not our proximity to the sun. This “turning away” from all that is good—our better selves, our ideal state—is exemplified in our over-reliance of technology over humanity. So the novel is really one of redemption. Of rediscovering what really nurtures us. Or rediscovering what it means to have power—the freedom to better ourselves and others.

As for the writing style, I was highly influenced by *The Poisonwood Bible*, by Barbara Kingsolver—specifically, her use of first person for all her protagonists, and cycling through them in a consistent manner. This choice allows the reader to fully immerse themselves into the internal conflict of each of the characters.

Tamara Wilhite: The de facto secession or rejection of federal policies conservatives don't like could be implemented via Sanctuary policies. A few pro-life and Second Amendment sanctuaries already exist, and they are based on the precedence established by liberals' Sanctuaries for illegal aliens. What do you think of that trend? And could it lead to a scenario like the divided blue core cities and Redlands minus a civil war?

D.M. Wozniak: As you point out, sanctuary policies are political tools utilized by both the right and left to claim immunity from federal laws they think violate the constitution. It is no secret that the denser the population, the more liberal those geographic areas tend to become. This is why major cities use sanctuary policies for typically liberal causes (e.g. immigration reform), while smaller, rural towns employ the same tool for typically conservative causes (e.g. pro-life, gun rights).

No matter what one's political affiliation is, I am sure they can agree that as a country, we are trending in an unhealthy direction of polarization; increased use of sanctuary policies is an indicator of this. There are many potential causes, which I won't get into right now (although I highly recommend the Netflix documentary *The Social Dilemma*), but what is fascinating is how geography plays into this polarization, much like it did during the Civil War.

The bloodshed of the Civil War was necessary to end the brutal and unjust practice of slavery, an evil which the southern states had relied upon for decades due to their geographic placement (i.e. agricultural-based instead of industrial-based economy). If there would ever be a looming

second civil war, I believe that geography would again play into the lines which would certainly have to be drawn. Except, instead of North and the South, you would have dense population zones and rural areas, as these are where the constitutional philosophies now differ. In other words, the Bluecores and the Redlands.

Tamara Wilhite: “The Perihelion” is science fiction, but you write fantasy, as well. Can you tell me about your “Age of Axion” books?

D.M. Wozniak: Age of Axion is a new series; Book one is titled *The Indivisible and the Void*. It certainly reads like fantasy, but it has a science fiction heart. Which is sort of why I prefer the term “Speculative Fiction”.

My desire to write this series was built out of a personal reaction to the modern genre market. In the past decade, there seems to have been a proliferation of Young Wizard Heroes (think: Harry Potter, Kvothe from *Name of the Wind*, etc.), and little to no middle-aged protagonists whose problems and issues I find more relatable. Note, I am not disparaging those said works; in fact, I adore them. I simply wanted to write something more “adult” and approach complex themes such as faith vs. reason, and the abuse of power. What I ended up creating was the story of a man whose entire world falls apart. It’s a novel of disillusionment. Of tearing everything down in order to build something back up.

Tamara Wilhite: And what is “The Gardener of Nahi” about?

D.M. Wozniak: *The Gardener of Nahi* is my first novel—a film-noir time paradox work. I employ two interwoven storylines that center around a star-crossed couple. There are two worlds: the dystopian hierarchical society of Cassidian, and the more classical world of Nahi. As the novel progresses, the two storylines converge as the relationship between those two worlds are revealed.

Looking back on it now, it reminds me of *Memento* meets *Blade Runner*. But it is oddly prescient as well, due to the novel’s themes of immigration and population control.

Tamara Wilhite: Your bio says that you’re a software architect by trade. How has that influenced your work? And what else has influenced your writing?

D.M. Wozniak: I would like to say that software architecture has influenced me, but in truth, it hasn’t greatly. It’s not like I wrote the next great “Snow Crash”, or anything like that. Being a technologist sometimes helps with my writing, but more often than not, I don’t care about the “tech”. I care more about the characters. I want the “science” in my science fiction to be plausible and consistent, and I sometimes perform research in order to ensure this, but I don’t want these details to attract too much attention. It’s the Gold in my Pulp Fiction suitcase.

Tamara Wilhite: What are you currently working on now?

D.M. Wozniak: I’m a little more than 50% done with book two of *Age of Axion*! It’s titled *Temberlain’s Ashes*, and it will be out next year. I am very excited to release it. Book one ended on somewhat of a climax. Here is the blurb:

In the ruins of the Celestium, secrets were revealed. Chimeline was changed. And a dark prom

ise was made: They're coming.

As Democryos struggles with the horrifying truth behind the power of voidance, the veiled man's prophetic words come true. A new evil from beyond their world has been awakened, forcing Dem and his companions to flee south to Xiland. Everything that they hold dear will be put to the test: friendships and loves.

The war with the veiled man may be over, but the real one has just begun.

Tamara Wilhite: Is there anything you'd like to add?

D.M. Wozniak: I appreciate you raising awareness of independent authors such as myself. I welcome anyone to go to www.dmwozniak.com and sign up for my mailing list. I send out emails every two weeks, where I share progress and insights into my latest work, as well as links to other free and discounted speculative fiction books.

Tamara Wilhite: Thank you for speaking with me.

Interview with Douglas McKim by Tamara Wilhite

I had the opportunity to interview fantasy and young adult fiction author Douglas McKim. He's written two fantasy novels: "Just Plain Old Jeremy" and "Are You Man Enough?"

Tamara Wilhite: "Just Plain Old Jeremy" reminds me of a Conan cover. Is it swords and sorcery or sword and planet?

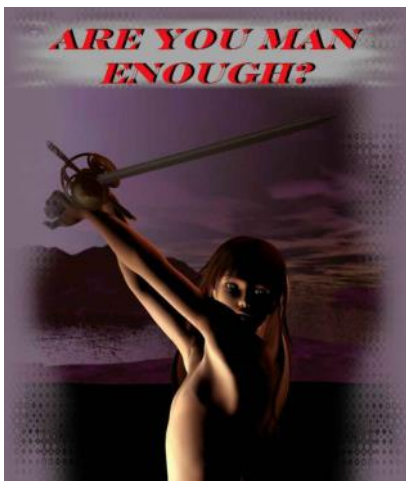
Doug McKim: In truth, I was inspired more by the Tarzan novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. My father was a huge fan of Burroughs. Dad passed away in January of the year I began working on JUST PLAIN OLD JEREMY, and the novel was dedicated to him.

There are other elements which motivated and inspired JEREMY. I also wished to tell a story of a faraway land which is being fought over by nations hoping to exploit its natural resources. As well, we have an allegory concerning the athlete dying young.... An individual of great promise who, despite his considerable talents and abilities, becomes overwhelmed by events greater than

himself. Jeremy Kentworth is forced to accept changes and challenges facing him, whether they involve growing up, the horrors of war, the death of a loved one, the loss of innocence. Jeremy is forced to make decisions he doesn't want to face, such as needs to leave the comforts and safety of home. It is a coming of age tale, with often tragic consequences.

Tamara Wilhite: The sequel "Are You Man Enough?" puts the central character of the first novel in a military school of sorts. Can you tell me about it?

Doug McKim: Jeremy Kentworth does not appear in ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH? A few minor characters from the first story do. MAN



ENOUGH is a sequel, of sorts, since it takes place in the same world, though its story is more based in reality. The planned third entry of this series, titled INFERNUS, will send our characters from ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH? to the location of the first novel, JUST PLAIN OLD JEREMY.

But where JEREMY is inspired by the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, MAN ENOUGH is harder-edged and brutal. I had always wanted to write an anti-war parable. The death of a family member in Afghanistan motivated me to write a tale of war's effects on youth. ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH? is an ensemble piece, and the majority of its characters are young adults and children.

Tamara Wilhite: Is the young adult novel you're working on a continuation of this series?

Doug McKim: No. The story I'm presently working on, HARVEY MADDEN, is the third of a series concerning at-risk and troubled youth in contemporary eastern Oregon. I had been a volunteer and later paid tutor and mentor for kids who stemmed from broken homes. I dealt with children who, despite their backgrounds, were regarded as "salvageable." My job was to keep these children in school while also offering them guidance and proper role models.

The first story in this series, ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF MARTY McKENNA, involves an angry gay teen who learns that vulgar language, caustic behavior and violence are not the best solutions to handle adversity. The second story, LOVE, DEATH, AND ART deals with an aspiring young artist who is the target of frequent bullying.

Finally.....

A weekend in the Willowa Mountains becomes a journey of self-awareness and discovery for teenager HARVEY MADDEN. This is the tagline and brief synopsis for the third tale. I grew up in rural Oregon, near the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area. Hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping were the leisure activities of my own youth. In that regard, HARVEY MADDEN is my most personal and autobiographical story.

Tamara Wilhite: Have you had short stories published anywhere?

Doug McKim: Only in my high school and college newspaper, back in the 70s and 80s. Darn it.

Tamara Wilhite: How much of your work is influenced by your history degree?

Doug McKim: My college education had influenced my work a great deal. I have a degree in history, with minors in English and education. ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH? in particular, found much of its basis in nations which had undergone major political, social, economic, and technical changes. Much of my research involved everything from the Russian Revolution, to the United States at the beginning of the 20th Century.

Tamara Wilhite: And what else has influenced your writing?

Doug McKim: I watched a great deal of Italian Neo-Realism Cinema while I worked on ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH? This included classic films such as SHOESHINE, OPEN CITY, GER-MANY YEAR ZERO, and THE BICYCLE THIEF. As well, I'd like to cite Bernardo Bertoluc-

ci's epic masterpiece 1900. Once more, I studied nations and societies during periods of transition, and I found these movies to be very helpful.

Tamara Wilhite: What do you like to do in your spare time?

Doug McKim: I enjoy walking a great deal. I'm fifty-eight, and I hope to maintain good physical health into retirement and old age. I've always had dreams of walking across America, but it may only happen in my dreams. Darn it.

Tamara Wilhite: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Doug McKim: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to chat with you. I'd like to place eastern Oregon on the literary map. I can only hope that my example and influence will motivate more artists in the rural Pacific Northwest. I'm extremely grateful for your interest in my work.

Tamara Wilhite: Thank you for speaking with me.

Movies

WW84 Is Definitely an 80s Superhero Flick Jason P. Hunt



Wonder Woman 1984 is every bit the superhero film of the 80s. And that's both good and bad, as the films of that era are a mixed bag as well. For every Superman II (1980), there's Superman IV: The Quest for Peace. But perhaps a more apt comparison we should review is between WW84 and Supergirl, also from 1984. But more on that in a bit.

First, to get this out of the way: I enjoyed the movie. But...

For a film with "Truth" as its core theme, this movie doesn't have a huge amount of it. While Gal Gadot, Chris Pine, Kristin Wiig, and Pedro Pascal deliver solid performances (Pine comes out better than the rest), the actors are betrayed by a ham-fisted plot straight out of the 80s. A greedy corporate type (think Lex Luthor lite) wants it all, and the MacGuffin on which the film relies is a ball of Handwavium that feels very much like it's lifted from the cape stories of yore.

The opening scene — a young Diana (Lilly Aspell) competing in the Amazonian Games — sets up quite nicely the theme of the story, that true heroes are not born of lies. Honesty and truth are at the heart of what it means to be a champion, and Diana has to learn that lesson in more ways than one throughout the film. Especially as it concerns her love for Steve Trevor, dead these many many years since World War I. And there's a payoff for



this, but it's not as emotionally rich as it could have been, seated as it is in the midst of a visual effects barrage.

Speaking of which, the effects are fairly well done, nothing spectacular or ground-breaking. A lot of cataclysm that you'd expect to find in a Zack Snyder adjacent film, and it does leave a lot of head-scratching at the end in terms of aftershock and long-term effects on the timeline. Because if this is in continuity with the Snyderverse, it leaves a very big mark that in retrospect is too big to ignore in later events. But hindsight being what it is, you can't always go back to earlier films and retcon a reference to that time Maxwell Lord almost destroyed the Earth or anything...



Unless you're George Lucas, maybe...

The comparison to Supergirl is perhaps more apt than it should be, but it's almost a parallel plot. Substitute Selena's Omegahedron for Max Lord's Stone, and you essentially have the same narrative: small-time operator gets tremendous power and the whole thing gets way out of hand. The only real difference is the scale. Where Selena's reach extends only through Midvale, Lord manages to extend his influence worldwide using technology based on the Strategic Defense Initiative from the US military.

And while we're on the subject, is that supposed to be Ronald Reagan? Because it's a poor copy of Ronald Reagan. It's even a poor parody of the media portrayal of Reagan as the Doddering Old Man With His Finger on the Button, the war-mongering cowboy who was going to start World War III. In truth, Reagan was continuously concerned that the United States was honoring even her informal agreements with the Soviet Union while they violated arms reduction agreements left and right. Reagan was never the "Moar Missiles!" type.

And while we're on the subject, is that supposed to be Ronald Reagan? Because it's a poor copy of Ronald Reagan. It's even a poor parody of the media portrayal of Reagan as the Doddering Old Man With His Finger on the Button, the war-mongering cowboy who was going to start World War III. In truth, Reagan was continuously concerned that the United States was honoring even her informal agreements with the Soviet Union while they violated arms reduction agreements left and right. Reagan was never the "Moar Missiles!" type.

Now, before it seems that this review is going to be one hundred percent negative, let's look at some of the things that worked:

Even though we have to apply comic book physics to the plane itself, the mechanics of getting the "invisible jet" into the film works here. There's an in-story logic to the way it happens, although you have to suspend disbelief quite a bit with the rest of that story beat. How can Steve fly a modern aircraft? How does a plane on display at the Smithsonian have fuel?

Diana's ability to fly was first introduced in 1958, but it gained momentum in the animated Justice League Unlimited. Here it's given as it was originally shown, with Diana riding the air currents and jet streams to essentially float more than fly. It deftly moves us away from the early era invisible jet to the modern era flight ability with a cute in-story explanation, and for the most part it works.

The rom-com bits between Diana and Steve are handled well. Gadot and Pine have a good bit of chemistry, and they play up the "fish out of water" bit for the comedy it sets up, but not to the point where it becomes a parody of itself. The film knows what it's doing here, with the send-up of the wardrobe and music stylings of the period, but it doesn't play it for laughs as much as it's wry humor for those of us who remember being there when all of that was popular — and some of us actually were part of that scene. (I was not. I have always and shall forever remain a



square.) The elephant in the room, of course, is the Here Comes Mr. Jordan way of getting Steve into 1984. And that's a pitfall for the feminists, should they bother to acknowledge it...

Hans Zimmer's score is solid, and even though he may have reused some cues, the music underscores the emotional beats of the narrative in just the right way. Of course, we could have used a few more cuts of actual music from

1984, but...

The fact that this film is set in 1984 actually does nothing for the plot. It's been pointed out in several outlets (rightly so) that this could take place in the modern era of the DCEU and not miss anything. There's an opportunity to take shots at both President Reagan and President Trump, but those shots are more subtle than I expected them to be. Director Patty Jenkins has said that the movie isn't political, that it's more a commentary on the greed of the 80s, but Patty's just a year younger than I am.

We grew up in the 80s. There was a lot of the corporate growth and political instability, yes, but there was also a lot of technological advancement. We were back in space, the personal computer became a thing, and we won the decades-long Cold War. We also got the beginnings of the internet and the early video games. We got the first artificial heart in 1982, a vaccine for Hepatitis B, research in fighting AIDS. Just like any other time period in history, the 1980s were a mixed bag. To focus on the "decade of greed" is to make a political statement based on a media narrative that isn't altogether truthful.

Nor are the characters truthful, much. Steve Trevor is probably the one character who's the most comic book accurate of the four principals, and he's dead. Maxwell Lord bears almost no resemblance to his comic book inspiration, especially in the power set.

Barbara Minerva's transformation into Cheetah is wholly contrived out of the Handwavium plot of the movie instead of taking anything from her comic book origin (she's actually the fourth Cheetah). And Diana ... well, the whole bit about Wonder Woman operating in secret? That's Batman's bag. Princess Diana, Wonder Woman, Diana of Themyscira, whatever role she plays, she's never operated in the shadows, that I can recall. Her whole schtick is to present Man's World with the ideal of Hope and Love.

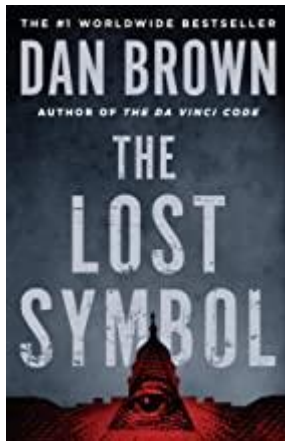
Now, taking all of that into account, if you ignore all of that, and realize that this is completely and totally a contrived-handwavium-plot of a superhero movie not only set in the 80s, but also made in the 80s, it totally works. It's almost beat for beat another Supergirl, just with a bigger budget and more epic scale. It's a complete popcorn flick. As such, it's just as good as anything else that was made back in the day. Will it hold up in ten years? Probably not, but then we'll be into a whole 'nuther set of reboots, anyway.

Speaking of popcorn, go see this in the theaters. Buy popcorn and soda and Twizzlers and Milk Duds and hot dogs and nachos. The theaters need the business much more than HBO Max does.

And stay for the mid-credits bit. You'll be glad you did.

Novels

The Lost Symbol by Dan Brown Review by John Thiel



Dan Brown made quite a sensation in the early years of the first decade of this century with *THE DA VINCI CODE*, which was being televised at the height of the acclaim the book received, and was being highly advertised in television “ballyhoo”. *THE LOST SYMBOL* was not televised and one can see why in reading it; the action isn’t very reproducible. Thereby the book was not as much heard of or discussed as the earlier work. Brown’s writings since then have not been as available, and he seems to have faded into obscurity as an author with the passing of the first decade of the century.

THE DA VINCI CODE showed an international chase, replete with espionage, intrigue, and organized crime, through various geographical locations, in search of rumored esoterica which might lead to finding the secrets held by secret societies in earlier times. In *THE LOST SYMBOL* there is the same “secrets withheld through the ages” theme, with the action taking place in America rather than Europe, and uncomfortably involving the American government.

George Washington was portrayed as having been involved in the hidden mysticism, and most of the action of the book takes place in the nation’s capitol city. It portrays a different Washington DC than the one we know of, although certain of the differences can be verified as relevant by computer research. Blood rites are described as taking place within sight of the chief governmental buildings.

The action centers around a sorcerer who has found the ancient secrets and sought to apply them, selling his soul and becoming possessed as he makes a play for ruling the world, and he kills wantonly to achieve these ends. There are massive chases and collisions of agents of various factions accompanied by their staffs, showing a world of havoc and chaos, and finally the author shows (again, as he did in *THE DA VINCI CODE*) that he takes his refuge in religion. The outcome proves to have religious significance as the quest ends in a discovery of Biblical truth. Had it ended otherwise, apparently it would have been the end not only of the government but perhaps the rest of the world.

The book is not an easy read, but it keeps the reader interested in finding out what will happen. Following the action through its mazes is good reading for those liking cryptic lore, and the author does a good exploration of the territory he has outlined. The book is undeniably one a reader will long remember having read, and one which evokes a troubled uncertainty existing between fiction and reality. A review of it appearing in the *Washington Post* says “Read the book and be enlightened”.

The Demolished Man by Alfred Bester

Review by Will Mayo

I read this book nearly fifty years ago and such was the time of my life - for I had just become a teenager - that I greeted its premise - that a man may have his entire mind demolished in order to build one more in line with what a society would demand out of the criminal and the delinquent - that I greeted it with such a horror that now, decades later, this horror stays with me now in the early morning hours. I have no idea if Mr. Bester intended such an impression but, if so, this book comes highly recommended. It is a dystopia in the waiting.

Sercon

Henry Kuttner Bio-Bibliography

by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. N3F Historian



Henry Kuttner (April 7, 1915 - February 3, 1958) was a writer of science fiction (SF), fantasy (F), and horror (H) stories.

He was born in Los Angeles, California in 1915. The parents of his father, the rare book dealer Henry Kuttner, had come from Prussia and had lived in San Francisco since 1859; the parents of his mother were from Great Britain.

Kuttner grew up in relative poverty, following the death of his father, when he was only five. After graduating from high school, he worked for the literary agency of his uncle. His first sale was a poem, "Ballad of the Gods," (February, 1936), followed by a short story, "The Graveyard Rats" (March, 1936), both published in *Weird Tales*. He later came to hate this early story of his; so many fans told him it was their favorite story that he felt his writing was not improving.

He was a member of fandom, a busy correspondent, and a contributor to fanzines. He was a member of LASFS, FAPA, and the Mañana Literary Society (and part of the inspiration for Matt Duncan, a character in Anthony Boucher's famous SF mystery, *Rocket to the Morgue*, which was dedicated to the Society.)

It was while working for his uncle's agency that Kuttner picked Leigh Brackett's early manuscripts off the slush pile; and it was under his tutelage that she sold her first story to *Astounding Stories*.

During World War II, Kuttner was excused from active military service due to a heart murmur.

Because of this, he volunteered to serve in the Medical Corps, and subsequently was stationed in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. C. L. Moore lived at nearby Red Bank from 1942 until 1945.

Marriage to C. L. Moore

Kuttner was known for his literary prose and worked in close collaboration with his wife, Catherine Lucille Moore (1911 - 1987). They met through their association with the "Lovecraft Circle," a group of writers and fans who corresponded with weird fiction author H. P. Lovecraft. The Kuttners married in 1940 and their work together spanned the 1940s and 1950s, with most of their writing credited to various pen names.



Among Kuttner's most popular works were his Gallegher stories -- published under the Lewis Padgett pen name -- about a man who invented high-tech solutions to client problems (assisted by his insufferably ego-maniacal robot) when he was drunk, only to be completely unable to remember what he had built, or why, after sobering up. These stories were later collected in *Robots Have No Tails*. Moore has stated that Kuttner wrote all the Gallegher stories by himself.

Principal Genre Novels

A Million Years to Conquer (1940), published in book form as *The Creature from Beyond Infinity* (1968)
 Earth's Last Citadel [with C. L. Moore] (1943, first book publication 1964)
 The Fairy Chessmen (1946, as by Lewis Padgett, also retitled as *Chessboard Planet* and *The Far Reality*)
 Valley of the Flame (1946, first book publication 1964)
 The Dark World (with Moore, 1946/first book publication 1965)
 Tomorrow and Tomorrow, 1947, as by Padgett)
 Fury (1947, first book publication 1950), aka *Destination: Infinity* (1958)
 The Mask of Circe (1948, first book publication 1971)
 The Time Axis (1949, first book publication 1965)
 The Portal in the Picture [with Moore] (1949/aka *Beyond Earth's Gates*)
 Well of the Worlds (1952, first book publication 1953)

Principal Genre Collections

Ahead of Time (1953)
 Best of Kuttner 1 (1965)
 Best of Kuttner 2 (1966)
 The Book of Iod (1995)
 Bypass to Otherness (1961)
 Chessboard Planet and Other Stories [with Moore] (1956)
 Clash by Night and Other Stories [with Moore] (1980)
 Detour to Otherness [with Moore] (2010)
 Elak of Atlantis (2016)

A Gnome There Was (1950)
 Kuttner Times Three (1988)
 Line to Tomorrow and Other Stories of Fantasy and Science Fiction [with Moore] (1954)
 No Boundaries [with Moore] (1955)
 Prince Raynor (1987)
 Return to Otherness (1962)
 Secret of the Earth Star and Others (1991)
 The Startling Worlds of Henry Kuttner (1965)
 Terror in the House (2010)
 Thunder in the Void (2012)
 Two-Handed Engine: The Selected Short Fiction of Henry Kuttner & C. L. Moore (2006)

Comic Book Work

Kuttner wrote several stories about the Golden Age comic book character, The Green Lantern, for DC comics. These stories appeared in Green Lantern Comics, All-American Comics, and Comic Cavalcade Comics, and all were published in the 1940s.

Kuttner Pseudonyms

Kuttner used many pen names over his career, including the following:
 Edward J. Bellin, Paul Edmonds, Noel Gardner, Will Garth, James Hall, Keith Hammond, Hudson Hastings, Peter Horn, Kelvin Kent (used for work with Arthur K. Barnes), Robert O. Kenyon, C. H. Liddell (used for work with C. L. Moore), Hugh Maepenn, Scott Morgan, Lawrence O'Donnell (used mainly for collaborations with Moore), Lewis Padgett (used mainly for collaborations with Moore), Woodrow Wilson Smith, and Charles Stoddard.

According to SF historian Sam Moskowitz, the fact that Kuttner used so many pseudonyms was leaked to the reading public by Astounding editor John W. Campbell, in 1943.

Awards/Nominations

Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award (for writers deserving renewed attention), 2004,
 Kuttner & Moore.
 Retro Hugo Award (for SF works 50 years past, voted by members of the World SF Convention (8 nominations; 2 wins, as described below):
 2019, “Mimsy Were the Borogoves” (by Moore & Kuttner) (Astounding Science Fiction -- February, 1943)
 2018, “The Twonky” (by Moore & Kuttner) (Astounding Science Fiction -- September, 1942)
 Gernsback Award (short fiction) in 1983 for “Vintage Season” (by Kuttner & Moore), written in 1946.
 First Fandom Hall of Fame (Posthumous), 1996.
 Readercon 16 (Memorial Guest), 2005.

Critical Evaluations

Fellow author L. Sprague de Camp, who knew both Kuttner and Moore well, has stated that their collaboration was so seamless that, after a story was completed, it was often impossible for either Kuttner or Moore to recall who had written what. According to de Camp, it was typical

for either of them to break off from a story in mid-paragraph or even mid-sentence, with the latest page of the manuscript still in the typewriter. The other spouse would routinely continue the story where the first had left off. They alternated in this manner as many times as necessary until the story was finished.

Marion Zimmer Bradley is among many authors who have cited Kuttner as an influence. Her novel, *The Bloody Sun*, was dedicated to him.

Roger Zelazny has talked about the influence of Kuttner's *The Dark World* on his *Amber Series*. Kuttner's friend Richard Matheson dedicated his 1954 novel, *I Am Legend*, to Kuttner, with thanks for his help and encouragement.

Ray Bradbury has said that Kuttner wrote the last 300 words of his, Bradbury's, first horror story, "The Candle" (*Weird Tales*, November, 1942).

Fellow author and SF critic, James Blish, once wrote: "The Kuttners learned a few thing writing for the pulp magazines . . . that one doesn't learn reading Henry James."

Genre author/scholar James Gunn has written: "The Kuttners expanded the frontiers of science fiction to include techniques prevalent in the mainstream; they expanded its scope to include the vast cultural tradition available outside science fiction. . . ."

Some Concluding Comments

In 1950, Kuttner entered the University of Southern California as a freshman under the GI Bill of Rights; he and Moore wrote a few mystery novels in the 1950s, but very few SF stories.

Kuttner graduated with a degree in psychology in 1954, and went on to work for an M. A. in clinical psychology. He died of a heart attack (or stroke) in his sleep, early in 1958, before his degree was completed -- although Moskowitz has reported that he had finished writing his thesis.

Kuttner picked his story, "Don't Look Now," for publication in the SF short fiction anthology, *My Best Science Fiction Story* (1949), edited by Leo Margulies and Oscar J. Friend.

Sources

Bloom, Harold. *Science Fiction Writers of the Golden Age*. NY: Chelsea House, 1995.

Clute, John & Peter Nicholls (eds.). *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. London: Orbit, 1993.

Currey, L. W. *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors*. Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1979.

Jaffery, Sheldon R. & Fred Cook. *The Collector's Index to Weird Tales*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985.

Margulies, Leo & Oscar J. Friend (eds.). *My Best Science Fiction Story*. NY: Merlin Press, 1949.

Moskowitz, Sam. *Seekers of Tomorrow*. NY: Ballantine Books, 1967.

Swartz, Jon D. *Pseudonyms of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Authors*. Little Rock, AR: The National Fantasy Fan Federation, 2010.

Tuck, Donald H. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy, Volume 1: Who's Who, A-L*. Chicago, IL: Advent, 1974.

Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were consulted.

Video

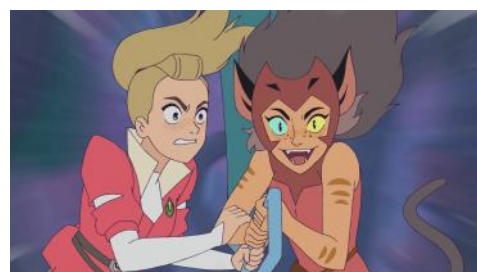
She-Ra And The Princesses of Power Overall Review by Chris Nuttall



I find it hard to put my feelings regarding She-Ra and the Princesses of Power into words because, in many ways, they depend on points of view. The final season was not a bad season, unlike – for example – *Battlestar Galactica* – but, at the same time, it represented something of an abandonment of its previous concept. The show expanded to the point it could handle an ensemble cast, yet this weakened many of the characters. Indeed, the whole

thing was let down – to some extent – by several characters grabbing the idiot ball in quick succession.

Originally, the core of the series centered on Adora and Catra, who grew up together as Horde Cadets in the Fright Zone. They were both subjected to abuse by Shadow Weaver, their surrogate mother, who expected Adora to be a hyper-perfect cadet and, at the same time, piled Catra with physical and verbal abuse. By the time we are introduced to them, the damage has been done. Adora feels responsible for everything, while Catra – blamed for everything – feels permanently trapped in Adora's shadow (and responsible for nothing).



Their paths diverge when Adora finds the Sword of Protection, becomes She-Ra, meets Glimmer and Bow and joins the Great Rebellion. Catra, in the meantime, chooses to stay with the Horde (particularly after Hordak gives her the first true appreciation in her entire life). The first season remains focused on them, with the Best Friend Squad and the Super Pal Trio serving as backup characters. Team Adora and Team Catra clash repeatedly despite the remnants of Adora and Catra's former friendship; both characters build up their positions and powers (Catra, in a moment she thoroughly deserves, bests Shadow Weaver for the first time and then comes within a hair's breathe of total victory). In a sense, both characters come out ahead. They both beat Shadow Weaver, then win what they crave (a meaningful life for Adora, power and respect for Catra).

This balancing act starts to fall apart in seasons two and three (which are really one combined

season). As more characters take on significant roles, the two main characters are partly shunted aside. Worse, the good guys keep winning undeserved victories (one of the less pleasant aspects of the show is the way in which the good guys are so much better than the bad ones, when they use their powers – an odd hint of elitism I don't like). It's difficult to blame Catra for starting a villainous breakdown, particularly as she discovers that being Force Commander (Hordak's second-in-command) isn't all it's cracked up to be. And yet, with her being well aware of Shadow Weaver's true nature, she allows herself to be manipulated far too easily. Adora, of course, makes the same mistake.

This is the point where too many characters grab the idiot ball. Hordak tortures Catra because he's in a bad mood, not because she deserved punishment. Catra allows Shadow Weaver to manipulate her, accidentally freeing her from prison. (I'm not including Catra trying to lie to Hordak, because he gave her plenty of reason to think he wouldn't take the truth very calmly). Adora heals Shadow Weaver (when she makes it to Bright Moon). Angelia (who has good reason to know about Shadow Weaver) doesn't think to fill Glimmer in on the truth. Adora, Glimmer and Bow set off to the Crimson Wastes without bothering to make any preparations; Adora tells Catra about Shadow Weaver and the Portal. Catra decides to open the portal, rather than staying in the Wastes with Scorpia and building a kingdom of her own. Between them, they come pretty close to blowing up the entire planet and Adora had every right to be angry at Catra, but Adora bears some of the blame too.

Season four covers an ever-expanding war between the Horde – now co-led by Catra and Hordak – and the Great Rebellion. The war extracts a price on its fighters, with Catra and Scorpia having a falling out and Glimmer, Bow and Adora coming ever-closer to a falling out of their own. Catra makes a serious – but understandable – mistake and loses the war, only to have Glimmer return the planet to the original universe ... allowing Horde Prime to invade. Season five covers the war against Horde Prime, a far more powerful and determined enemy than Hordak (now exposed a defective clone).

It isn't a bad season, but it's greatest flaw is that it abandons the Team Adora and Team Catra format. Characters have switched teams before (Entrapta to Team Catra, Scorpia to Team Adora). It might have worked better, IMHO, if Glimmer had switched teams and, with Catra and Hordak, found a way to break out of Horde Prime's custody ... allowing Adora and Catra to meet as equals. The moments we get – Catra risking everything to save Glimmer, Adora returning the favour for Catra – are good, but they're not good enough. In a way, they diminish Catra. It's nice to see Adora and Catra get together, at the end of the show, but they're not quite equals.

Catra is not the only character to be diminished by the ongoing series. Hordak is introduced to us as a powerful warlord, with a very definite presence. He's evil, but he's not completely unreasonable. Season two/three weakens that by giving him a sympathetic backstory and partnering him with Entrapta, who eventually ends up in a relationship with him at the very end of the series. It's something of a cop-out – Mermista is the only one to ask if Hordak and Entrapta getting away with everything is fine – although, to be fair, he does make a stand against his abusive 'big brother.'

That said, the expanded format does have its upsides. Scorpia grows and develops as a character, as does Glimmer. Both Sea Hawk and Swift Wind grew on me, as did many of the lesser characters (King Micah's attempts to practice fathering on Frosta come across as creepy, partic-

ularly as Glimmer is six years or so older than Frosta). Indeed, Horde Prime is perhaps the only completely irredeemable character in the series. Shadow Weaver sacrifices herself to save her daughters, leaving the question of just why she chose to do it.

The show has been both praised and criticized for feminist and lesbian themes. This is something of a mixed bag. On one hand, the princesses inherit their power by birth rather than ability (Scorpia may be the only exception, as she's the one who makes a conscious decision to lay claim to power). There's a certain elitism about the show that is only called out once, by villagers caught in the middle during the fifth season. On the other, Catra – who works for her victories – is also female. It's also true that Bow, Sea Hawk and Hordak worked for their skills in a manner none of the princesses could match. It's fair enough to say that the vast majority of the best and the worst people in the series are all female (Horde Prime being the major exception, although he may well be genderless). How important you consider this to be is up to you.

And while I'm happy to see Adora and Catra wind up together, the relationship wasn't really developed properly.

Overall, it's difficult to rate the show. As an action and adventure cartoon, it does very well (but, to some extent, it becomes more focused on characters than the action.) As a look into the effects of abuse, it does better; it puts human faces on the abused, much as Anne Frank is a human face on statistics. At the same time, however, it is quick to absolve too many characters of their mistakes and offers quick solutions rather than more thoughtful (or deserved) answers. Format wise, you pretty much have to follow from the beginning. That's something that, IMHO, should have been rethought.

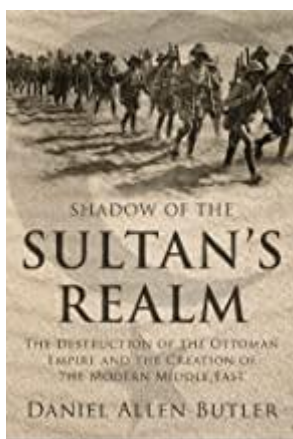
On the whole, I enjoyed it. But it could have been so much more.

Food of Famous Writers

Eat This While You Read That: Daniel Allen Butler

By Cedar Sanderson

I think I surprised Daniel when I asked him to take part in this series. He doesn't write fiction.



[Ed. For writing alternative history novels, there is no substitute for careful, extensive, historical research.] But this isn't about fiction, it's about books we love to read, and good food. Daniel Allen Butler is a maritime and military historian, and he writes darn good books. I suspect that many of my readers, like me, appreciate history, and even more so when we find an author who can write well enough to make reading a history book painless. The Burden of Guilt was well done, and I'm looking forward to the Lusitania (even if it is available in hardcover only!)

Coming from a historian, it's perhaps no surprise that he sent me a historical recipe.

Cockie–Leekie Soup

You MUST remember that after the first boil the soup should be allowed to simmer gently. Cooking it too hard or on too high a heat will turn the chicken tough. You will need a 4 quart stockpot to prepare this properly. This makes a generous amount of a meat-heavy soup, so there will be plenty for lunch the next day, after all the flavors have really “gotten acquainted.”

This recipe was a frequent feature on First Class Dining Saloon menus on almost every British liner for over a century. It's ideal as a starter if you're having an Officers' Mess Guest Night, by the way....

2 bottles of McEwan's Export (cool but not chilled) — Optional but recommended.
4 chicken quarters
2½lb leeks, sliced and washed (including the green bit)
12 prunes

Begin by opening the first bottle of McEwan's. Consume 1/2 bottle, and recite, “There's damned few like us, and most o' them are died.” Place the chicken in the stockpot with 5 pts (2 1/2 quarts) of water and bring to the boil. With a ladle, skim off the white scum that comes to the surface and IMMEDIATELY reduce the heat to a gentle simmer.

Consume remainder of first bottle of McEwan's. Simmer for a half-hour, then add half the leeks and all the prunes, plus a couple of fat pinches of salt and a grinding of pepper.

Simmer for 1 1/2 hours, then add the rest of the leeks and keep simmering for 1/2 hour more. Enjoy second bottle of McEwan's during this time. Taste and add more salt and pepper as necessary. Scoop out the chicken quarters, leave to cool slightly, then pull off the skins; discard the skins.

Pull the flesh from the bones, shredding it slightly, and return to the pan. Heat through gently, and serve. Best served in a proper soup plate and eaten with a proper soup spoon.

Recommended beverage at serving: McEwan's Export. A hearty loaf of bread accompanied the soup nicely.

Cedar's notes: I was a little taken aback at the prunes, but on second (and third) thoughts, they made sense. If this was a soup for on board ship, fresh fruit wasn't an option and the prunes are high in certain vitamins. I faithfully followed the recipe and it came out very well! I did have to add chicken broth, the initial amount of liquid evaporated more than I wanted.



Chickens were at one time an expensive item, but they made sense aboard ship, as a coop of chickens would be possible where beef wouldn't make it long without preservation methods.

The First Reader's comment on this was that it was chicken soup, and not bad chicken soup at that. He says he's really glad he lives in modern times where it doesn't qualify as rich food.



Landing Party by Jose Sanchez