

THE STF AMATEUR

#6 March 2024

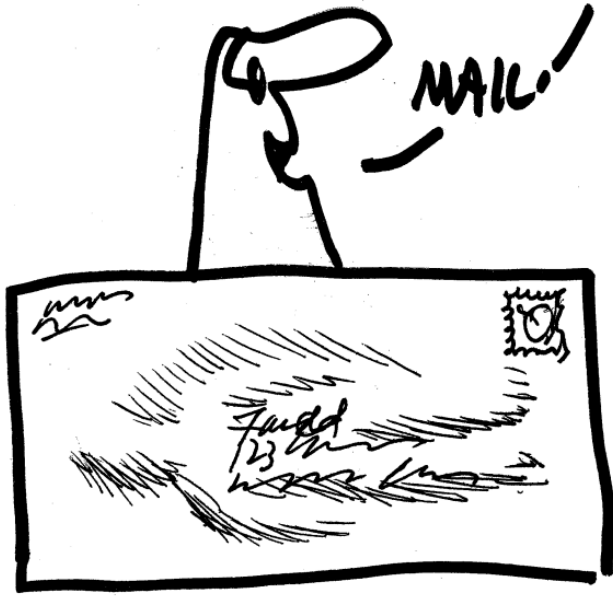


The Stf Amateur 6

March 2024

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



—William Rotsler

Before it gets away from me, I wanted to thank you for *The Stf Amateur*. I think it was actually a good thing that Bill Burns objected to posting all those singleton apazines; bundled together they make for a good strong read and give a peek into the mind and life of Heath Row.

Regarding the complaint from the [United Fanzine Organization member] that reading apa mailing comments might be a bore—I'm not experiencing it as such. I think you do a great job of giving context. But the fact that you are not discussing comics stuff, by and large, might be why he found it potentially a drag. However, your fanzine reviews are UFO comics fanzines; I'd be interested in seeing you do some reviews of sf fanzines to see how they compare in interest and quality for you.

There are many things that interest you (*Doctor Who*, James Bond) that I have little interest in, but I enjoy your insight and discussion. That goes for your fanzine reviews as well. I'm hoping you can get yourself fixed up for Corflu. I can't bunk you, but I'm hoping someone might be able to. Good luck and hope to see you there.

P.S. Your covers have been absolutely incredible! Kudos to you and your artists.

—William Breiding

Thank you for the kind words, William. Look for additional fanzine reviews in this issue (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #100), including *Idea* and *Rune*. While I do read sf fanzines, I mostly write letters of comment, figuring that I'd mostly be reviewing things people

already receive. Regardless, I'll accept the feedback and not leave it to *The Zine Dump*. (Now, let's see if I submit upcoming issues of *The Stf Amateur* for review in the mundane *Xerography Debt* [<https://www.leekinginc.com/xeroxdebt/>].)

Since the initial concern about whether apae comments are well suited for a general readership, my fellow UFO members seem to be receiving *The Stf Amateur* well. Part of the reason I joined was to help bridge sf and comics fandom. Your remarks about the relative merits of sf and comics fanzines, as well as other shared—or unshared—interests are interesting to me. As an omnifan, I enjoy Many Things. Some bump up against sf fandom—literary and media fandom. Some bump up against comics fandom. I'm a club fan. I'm a con fan. I enjoy reading multiple, adjacent genres. And I like fanzines of all kinds.

In the world of apae and similar fanac, one can be relatively selective and focus their attention on one aspect of fandom if they want to. Alarums & Excursions satisfies my roleplaying game yen. UFO helps me think about self-published comics, as well as more mainstream offerings. Within sf fandom, the line between literary and media fandom remains somewhat strong, as do the lines between different aspects of literary fandom (pre- and post-New Wave, sf vs. fantasy, older and newer books). Some fen are more open to adjacent aspects of fandom than others.

That's a challenge I face even in sf apae: Balancing Big Tent fandom—One Big Fandom—and more specialized interests. I try to ground everything in sf as much as I can to highlight the connective tissue. As my apahacking has steadily progressed toward publishing a perzine or genzine, which is the next logical step (indeed, thank you, Mr. Burns, for the goose), the challenge grows. So it's good to hear that my writing has enough appeal to different kinds of fen even if everyone doesn't dig everything. (Little interest is better than no interest.) And I hope to take cues from fanzines like *Xero* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #99) that also took more of a Big Tent approach.

Alas, I won't make it to Corflu after all. I've transferred my membership to Ross Chamberlain so he can go in my stead—and plan to Zoom in for some of the proceedings. I was really looking forward to meeting everyone. Not traveling freed me up for Gallifrey One (I know, *Doctor Who*... But I volunteered in hospitality and might write a con report for *Science Fact & Science Fiction Concatenation* online—their first *Doctor Who* conrep!) and a return to Portugal in April, hopefully.

All grist for the mill.

I received your package [*The Stf Amateur* #4-5] today. I'm still making the mental adjustment from reading sequential art-centric fanzines to text fanzines like yours and David Kling's, but I'll get there—honest!

Thank you for your mentions of my zines. I didn't send them trolling for reviews, but they are appreciated nonetheless.

On *Fanzine* #1, you smoked me out. It's supposed to be a light read, an extension of my United Fanzine Organization column for *Tetragrammaton Fragments*. I'm not sure a full review of anything I've listed would do them justice, so a blurb, a visual sample and a link felt right. At least for now. I have some other notions on what this amorphous zine concept could do, just need to put them in motion while doing my other zines and managing family activities. As a first issue, however, it was clean and crisp... another personal challenge: To see if I could make a "professional-looking" zine with a photocopier as opposed to the full-scale comic printer route.

With *Hologram*, it's interesting. It didn't get any mention at all when it launched beyond kind reviews from Larned Justin and Steve Keeter on their YouTube channel [<https://www.youtube.com/@LarnedJustin>], but the collected edition seems to have hit a chord. Perhaps it took combining the minis into a larger package to make a more compelling read.

For *Hologram*, I have the first three arcs rolling in my head. It all works together at some point with the rest of the *Heroes Now* world. Dunno if I can pull it all off, but it will be an interesting challenge and—if accomplished—a wild narrative.

On the Midjourney AI integration: Part of this whole minicomics/self-publishing thing is exploration of art and what it can be today. I used Midjourney to play with notions of "real" and "fantastic." Superimposing Joe over the images (semi-transparent, of course) in somewhat familiar geographic settings was intended to be just jarring enough to give the reader a sense of the crazy nature of this not-quite-real form dropping in on their real world experience. It worked for the geography-based issue IMHO. I'll admit that using it on the space issue was more of an attempt to cover up my significant artistic shortcomings.

William Caddell is a good artist, and I'm sad that we parted ways. We had a "skill swap" deal where he would draw *Hologram* in his spare time, and I would script his plots in mine. As we grew in our respective creative lives, it just didn't make sense to continue our arrangement. C'est la vie. I'm glad we had the six-issue run; it made for a nice Book One collection.

I don't really have a ton to say about your reviews of *Patriot*, *Heroes Past*, and *Heroes Now* beyond

"Thank you." You were kind in your comments and demonstrated that you read the zines. It is fascinating to take these loosely conceived teen hero characters and age them up. There are elements of my life experience (or perceptions of, to be more honest) in each one... each in a different way. Interesting, the hardest story to write was the Light's Christmas story—because I really didn't have any personal grounding. It's just a romp. When you're writing from within and then are trying to deliver something outside your personal space, it's hard to do and make it worth the reader's time.

Glad to see you mentioning our UFO brethren and their zines... and especially neat to see you tie the connections between the fanzine worlds as you did with Larry Johnson's work.

—Tom Fellrath

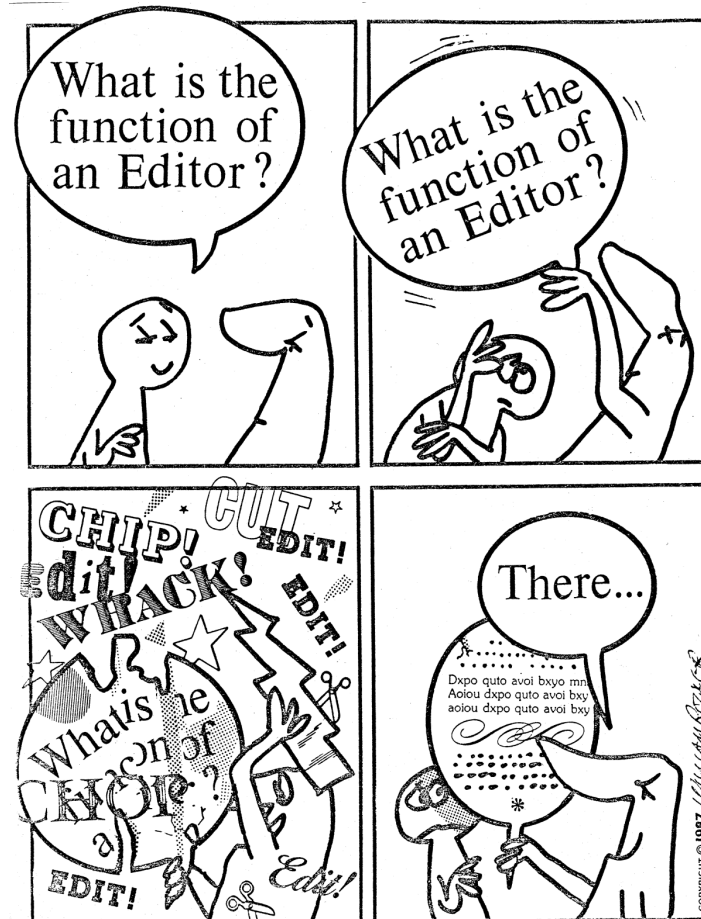
I appreciate the thoughtful response to my fanzine and comics reviews, Tom. I'm glad you got the spirit and intent of my commentary. I loved *Hologram* as a whole, though I voted on chapter one as though it were Book One in the 2023-2024 UFO Awards. I found the minicomics series very effective as a full piece, and it was easier to see what you were doing within and across the issues.

I'm also pleased that you've returned to your juvenalia—characters created as a teenager. Why let that work wither on the vine if it can grow up, too?

And you're right: *The Stf Amateur* is not the kind of fanzine some UFO members are used to. Joe Ely Carrales III's discussion in *Tetragrammaton Fragments* #273 resonated with me. "I consider [*The Stf Amateur*] a 'slow read' as there is a lot to unpack," he wrote. "I ... plan to enjoy reading this almost like a nightly television episode between publishing periods." My fanzines are ideal for dipping into over time, rather than reading cover to cover, perhaps. Especially when sent two issues to a packet! They'll hang out as long as you let them.

But I'm curious: What did you think of the *rest* of the issues?

Call for Submissions



—William Rotsler

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

The Stf Amateur is hereby requesting the following:

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

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

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

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #100

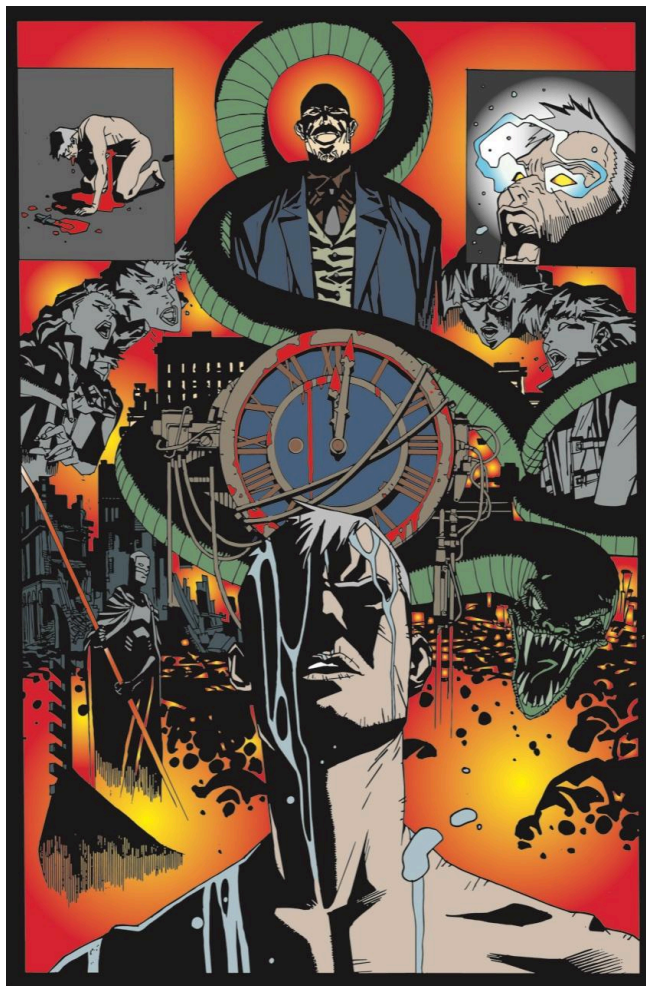
Jan. 31, 2024

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

A Cover Artist Speaks!

Thank you, everyone, for the comments on the cover to APA-L #3052.

Lee, the piece does have a title: "24 Hour Man." The character is based on a 120-page cyberpunk, Arthurian graphic novel that ran in *Heavy Metal* magazine a while back. It's set in a post-nuclear Venice Beach City State. Here's an image (below) from the graphic novel, which I wrote and which was illustrated by a wonderful Korean artist, Young Gi Yoon. I'm prepping it for an animated series pitch.



—Young Gi Yoon

Good catch on my use of white out in the illustration. If I sketch something up freehand without any penciling underdrawings, then I usually have to “fix” the beast with some judicious use of white out.

By the way, I really enjoy your reprinting of the William Rotsler illos in your fanzine. He was a rare talent and an interesting man.

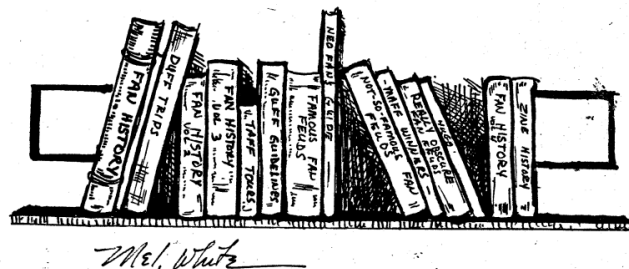
—Joe Pearson

Last Week's Senryu

LASFS is meeting in person tonight, but I'm dialing in. Traffic!

I didn't make it to the meeting in North Hollywood last week because of work, APA-L, and drive time, but a good number of people did—including many who don't usually join the online meetings. We had almost 60 people online and offline, with more in the room than otherwise. Some of the participants went to the North Hollywood Diner for an aftermeeting, as well.

I was able to do my scribely duties online, recording the minutes and performing the previous week's Condensed Cream of Menace for the club's approval and naming, but it wasn't entirely easy. I'm sure we'll sort out microphone and camera issues so everyone can fully experience others elsewhere as best as possible, but it was clear that being there was the Place to Be.



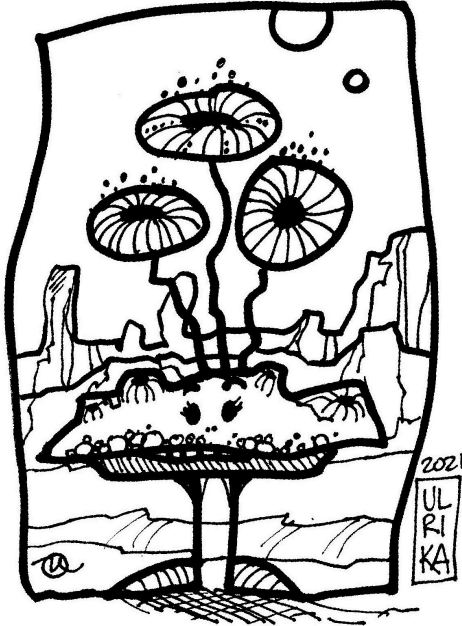
From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

A Star-Wheeled Sky by Brad R. Torgerson (Baen, 2018)

I read this novel last October but don't seem to have written about it yet, so my memory might be fuzzy. The 2019 winner of the Dragon Award for Best Science Fiction novel, *A Star-Wheeled Sky* was written during two military deployments. The book is described as hard sf—Torgerson was influenced by Larry Niven—and is a bit of a stretch (admitted in the acknowledgments) for an author who previously focused on short fiction. Regardless, I enjoyed reading the novel—even though it didn't stick with me much.

A thousand years after humanity left a devastated Earth, its remains populate worlds within the

Waywork, an alien transportation system involving wormholes. The Waywork system has been fully explored, its limits known, but the balance of power is thrown off kilter when a new waypoint is discovered on the border of two factions in conflict. The two vie for the new system and what it might offer.



—Ulrika O'Brien

The ancient Waywork, references to the alien Waymakers, the system's Keys, and "bits and pieces of inert Waymaker technology" and archaeological digs are interesting. As is the experience of traveling along the Waywork and its Slipway crossings.

That's what I remember. I don't really remember any of the characters (except, perhaps Zoam Kalbi, an "infotainer"), or anything about the five remaining Starstates in conflict. But there are Prophecies, and the end of the novel considers the exploration of an ark, a discovered wreck—perhaps ruins and a pyramid. The explorers encounter an alien being who animates the corpse of a pilot, and the first contact makes the prospects of a second novel intriguing.

Unfortunately, there hasn't been a sequel, and the only other work in the Waywork universe is a 2018 short story, "Axabrust," published on the Baen Books Web site. (<https://www.baen.com/axabrust>) *A Star-Wheeled Sky* is a fine novel, and I wish I'd reviewed it sooner after reading. You might also find Pat Patterson's review in the August 2019 issue of *The N3F Review of Books* informative.

Tatham Mound by Piers Anthony (Avon, 1991)

This historical novel by the author of the light fantasy Xanth series is a bit of an outlier for Piers Anthony,

but is a very good book. Largely a historical novel focusing on Florida's Native American tribes in the early 16th century, it's also a borderline fantasy. The protagonist, Tale Teller, is able to commune with spirits at burial mounds. That's what first drew me to the novel. Where I grew up in the midwest was originally populated by mound builders, also makers of intaglios.

The initial storyline focuses on Tale Teller's—originally named Hotfoot and then Throat Shot—quest for the Ulunsuti, a magic crystal. The spirit Dead Eagle warns the protagonist of a threat to his village, directing him to find the quartz, which is guarded by a giant serpent, the Uktena.

While searching for the crystal, he begins working (initially purchased as a slave) for a trader from another tribe, and his facility with languages makes him an asset among various groups in the area. Along the way, however, he forsakes his quest, distracted by other aspects of life: marriage and fatherhood, the arrival of the Spaniards (Castiles or Castilians) and the threat they pose as they search for gold, and other events, including widespread disease such as measles and smallpox.

The author's note at the end of the novel is particularly interesting. Not only is the story based on an actual mound, Tatham Mound located near the Withlacoochee River in Citrus County, Florida, but Anthony helped fund the archaeological dig there—donating about \$75,000. At least two dissertations resulted from that work. In fact, the entire novel is Anthony's fictional attempt to explain the positions in which remains were found at Tatham Mound.

Who were they? Who were they to each other? What had happened to the people who lived nearby? Anthony takes some liberties with history, but the novel is relatively accurate. And the story is very compelling. Even once Tale Teller has abandoned the quest, his travels and interactions with other people remain interesting.

I do want to warn lightly about Anthony's portrayal of sex and lovemaking throughout the novel. While the act itself is represented kindly and lovingly, readers who find polygamy or multiple partners, or underage participants distasteful might find those portions jarring. (Readers have criticized Anthony in recent years of being misogynistic and "rapey.") I have no idea whether his representation of sexual liaisons or marriage is historically accurate for the Native Americans considered.

From the Reading Pile: Fanzine Reviews

Idea Vol. 2 #13 (December 2023)

When I first learned that Geri Sullivan had relaunched her fanzine *Idea* after a 23-year hiatus from Arthur D. Hlavaty at the end of 2023, I emailed her immediately to offer a trade. What I didn't expect was that I'd also receive a physical edition of the fanzine, sent via Amazon—or that she'd recently visited our own Don Fitch after Loscon. I did not previously know Sullivan. Small world!

Idea is an attractively designed, 118-page squarebound fanzine slightly larger than a digest that features a cover by Sue Mason. The former guest editor-publisher of Lee Hoffman's Hugo-winning *Science-Fiction Five-Yearly* and graphic designer for the *Annals of Improbable Research*—as well as continuing to serve on the Board of Governors of the Ig Nobel Prizes—the long-standing faned has gathered a bumper crop of contributions for this much delayed and very welcome issue. #14 is expected this year.

Alison Scott, who encouraged Sullivan to end her fanpubbing hiatus, contributes a research note-ridden meet cute faanfiction screenplay set at an sf con in the late 1980s. It is very funny, in part because the writing is generally funny, but mostly because the self-referential asides and researcher's notes really truly are.

Jeff Schalles documents memories about a New Hampshire collective in the early 1970s and Peter Gould's *burnt toast*. Craig Hughes remembers his brother Terry Hughes, reprinting memorial service remarks from 2001. Jeanne Gomoll reprints her startling story "Barbie's Inferno." Mikolaj Kowalewski describes bringing the Ig Nobel dramatic readings to Poland.

A portion of Sandra Bond's in-depth conrep on Pemmi-Con—the remainder will be published elsewhere—is extremely detailed, wicked, and critical of the failures (and fun had at) the con. LASFSan Chris Marble and Garth Spencer play important roles during Bond's time in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Lenny Bailes contributes filk lyrics celebrating Syd Barrett. David Greenbaum makes apple cider, and Sullivan depicts DIY home ownership.

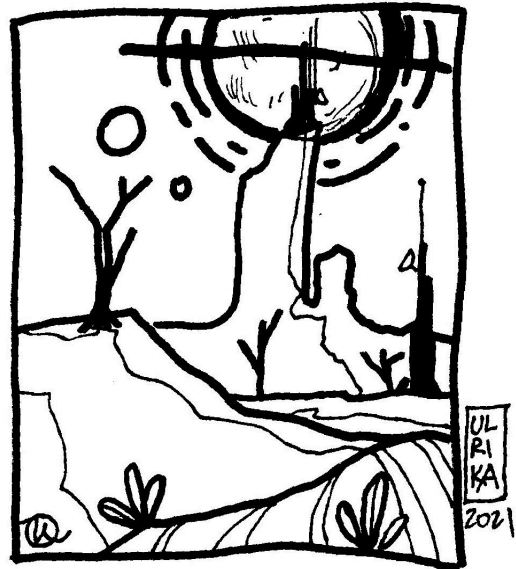
Ted White offers fan fiction, "The Last Fan on Earth." And there's a lettercol, "Park & LoC It," featuring missives from fellow fen such as Paul Skelton, Brad W. Foster, Dale Speirs, Sheryl Birkhead, William Breiding, Fitch, and John Hertz, and many others. Letters range from 2000-2023 and include a post from Usenet's rec.arts.sf.fandom.

This is the first issue of *Idea* that I've read, and it's an impressive effort. Similar in some ways to Kurt

Erichsen's *Endeavor*, also recently relaunched and offered via Amazon, this is more of a proper genzine. Science fiction and fandom play a clear role throughout—it's how its contributors and correspondents know each other—but most of the writing is about life itself.

In addition to the above-mentioned pieces on relationships, the death of family members, childhood, fanac, home ownership, and other topics, Skelton's missive about dealing with one's Stuff as we age offers another case in point. Worth returning to—or discovering all over again.

Available for \$7.30 via Amazon at <http://tinyurl.com/IdeaNumber13>, or write Geri Sullivan, Toad Woods, 37 Monson Road, Wales, MA 01081-9743; idea@toad-hall.com to inquire.



—Ulrika O'Brien

Rune #93 (2023)

With the publication of #92 in 2022 and this 40-page issue arriving in the mail this month, it looks as though the long-running clubzine for the Minnesota Science Fiction Society is settling into an annual publication schedule. That's a welcome development, especially with the cessation of the emailed *Einblatt*, which ended transmissions last March.

Guest editor Jeanne Mealy, butterfly herder for Stipple-APA, takes a genzine approach to the issue, eschewing the tradition of printing board minutes. The result is an excellent, diverse read involving local members—thus capturing a good sense of Minnesota fandom over time—as well as other contributors, some of them Stipple-Apans. And she's seeking additional submissions, so if you'd like to contribute to #94, consider the opportunity!

The issue opens with a page and a half of memorials, including brief profiles of Justin E.A. Busch, Denny Lien, and others who've contributed to fandom. Jerry Stearns offers an update on the activities of the Great Northern Audio Theatre.

Victor Raymond shares personal reflections on his early experiences with *Dungeons & Dragons* in Minneapolis, suggesting that roleplaying game fandom was relatively separate from other fandom, despite MnStF's similar game *Dungeon* (not the board game). John Purcell recalls the still-ongoing game nights at Dream Park, and Thorin N. Tatge contributes a geometry-oriented poem.

Stipple-Apan Cy Chauvin explores his book cabinets, offering reviews of recent reading, and Greg Bridges writes a brief piece about Justin Lieber's—son of Fritz Lieber—time as an academic. Linda Lounsbury, who guest edited #92, describes the handling of Denny and Terry Lien's belongings, focusing on Terry's collection of costuming fabric. She also offers a useful directory of Twin Cities organizations accepting material donations.

Chauvin also provides some faan fiction about local fen and their feline friends. That theme is continued by Cassandra Trainor's "The Cats of Day, the Cats of Night." ("The cats of night are thieves..." is a wonderful line.) Lloyd Penney updates readers on his editorship of *Amazing Stories*, and Marc Ortlieb considers the television program *QI* and the biological provenance of fish. The issue also includes a six-page lettercol. More than your usual clubzine, *Rune* will be of interest to locals and non-locals alike.

Available for the Usual from *Rune*, P.O. Box 8297, Minneapolis, MN; rune94@mnstf.org.

Comments on APA-L #3054

If you have any corrections, clarifications, amendments, comments, or complaints related to the 2024 APA-L roster, let me know. We'll return to doing this annually, perhaps semi-annually if membership changes over the course of the year.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #42, **Matthew Mitchell** memorialized Tony Benoun, a LASFS member who recently died. Thank you for sharing your memories of and friendship with him. I never met him but think I'd have liked him just fine.

Your mention of the *Normalman 40th Anniversary Omnibus* by Jim Valentino surprised and delighted me. I read *Normalman*—I know it's lowercase; I just can't—when it was first published by Aardvark-Vanaheim and later Renegade Press in the early to mid-1980s. Valentino printed a letter of comment I'd written in #5, I believe. Because his son, Aaron, now 40, had just been born, I'd sent him an "It's a Boy!"

pencil, which Valentino used to draw #6, mailing me the stub.

I, too, picked up the anniversary omnibus, and while I haven't read it yet, I look forward to returning to the series—even if they didn't reprint other editorial matter such as the lettercol. Valentino and I corresponded for several years when I was a teenager, and I still have those letters somewhere—as well as a box of comics to which he contributed, including Robert Asprin's *MythAdventures*. Early issues featured the artwork of Phil Foglio, but Valentino drew four issues. I look forward to your thoughts upon returning to it.

Not only did Gallifrey One release its programming schedule for next month's con, Eylat Poliner is now scheduling hospitality shifts, so I can cross-reference the two to optimize my time. I've asked to volunteer Saturday from 9-11 a.m. and 4-8 p.m., and Sunday from 10-11 a.m., 2-4 p.m., and 5-8 p.m. In the picture at the LASFS storage unit, you've identified Cathy and Dean Johnson, and Christian B. McGuire. The mysterious hooded figure is Elayne Pelz, who didn't want to be photographed but agreed once she was hooded.

We hope to perhaps move to Portugal when we stop working. So far we've been staying in Airbnbs, a house, and when we need to be closer to the airport, a hotel. I left the boots and some other items of clothing at the house we've been staying in.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1578 mentioned Frederick Winsor and Marian Parry's *The Space Child's Mother Goose*, with which I was unfamiliar. I shall see whether either of the library systems I use have it on hand. That it was also published in *The Atlantic* is indeed wonderful. Two such verses, as well as other writing, is available via <https://www.theatlantic.com/author/frederick-winsor>. I will share your feedback with cover artist Joe Pearson (see above), as well.

In *Leeway* dated for Jan. 25, 2024, **Lee Gold** recommended the *Mabinogion*, early Welsh stories. Reportedly, they portray King Arthur differently than other, later popular versions. I shall seek them out!

Joe Zeff's *Toony Loons* #746 reported on his participation in COSine mid-month. It interested me that you clean your face after each pass while shaving. I don't do that, and it never even crossed my mind to do so. It's neat how people can do such basic things differently. You're still a braver man than I am!

And **C.D. Carson** continued his partwork, which I plan to comment on once it's completed.

Faculae & Filigree #28

Feb. 5, 2023

Faculae & Filigree is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to LASFAPA, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. (Previously, it was prepared for Slanapa.) A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Fun with Fanzines

As detailed in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #98, I went to the LASFS storage unit in mid-January to salvage what I could of the archive copies of club-related fanzines and apae. By the end of several hours, I'd sorted and packed almost 20 Bankers boxes of literature, and I've since emailed Phoenix Alexander and Andrew Lippert at the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy at the University of California, Riverside, to see what they might want—and whether they've cataloged any of what they acquired from Marty Cantor's collection. (If they have, I can fill in gaps rather than send boxes of items they might already have.)

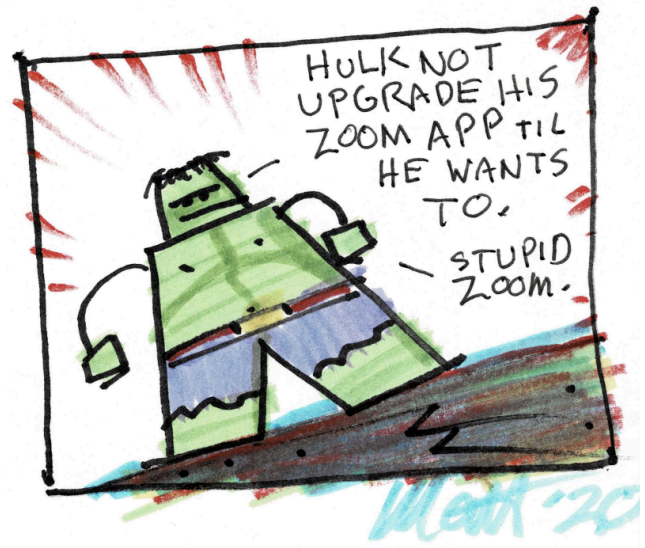
Here's what's now in my storage unit, ready for either Eaton or the University of Iowa:

- *De Profundis* 1957-1992
- *De Profundis* 1992-2004
- *De Profundis* 2004-2017 (includes issues of *Ad Astra* and SSAPA, which was new to me)
- LASFAPA #1-23
- LASFAPA #24-41
- LASFAPA #42-61
- LASFAPA #62-89
- LASFAPA #90-113
- LASFAPA #114-142
- LASFAPA #143-175 (potentially misnumbered)
- LASFAPA #175-279 (potentially misnumbered)
- LASFAPA #280-357
- LASFAPA #358-464
- LASFAPA #465-487

In addition, I salvaged APA-L #1-360 but didn't find any back issues of *Shangri-L'Affaires* among the material being disposed of.

In the meantime, David Schlosser has begun scanning LASFAPA mailings dating back to the beginning of its existence. I then combine the resulting scans and apply optical character recognition so they're more searchable. Since mid-January, he's scanned up to #21, which I've OCR'd and stored in a Google Drive folder.

If you'd like access to the archives as they grow, let me know, and we can share it with LASFAPAns.



On the 2023 LASFAPA Statistics

In 2023, we suffered the loss of our Little Tin God Marty Cantor, who was succeeded by our Little Sin God David Schlosser. We experienced a two-month hiatus while Cantor was ill before his unfortunate death, so we only had 10 mailings last year. We also lost contributor John DeChancie, who resigned after the June mailing.

In terms of pages submitted, LASFAPAns—excluding cover art contributors and other material—rank as follows:

1. David Schlosser (70 pages)
2. Alan Winston (51)
3. Heath Row (39)
4. Nick Smith (20)
5. Janice Morningstar (16)
6. Alva Svoboda (13)
7. John DeChancie (12)
8. Marty Cantor (8)

In terms of mailing presence, the rank order looks a little different (ties listed alphabetically by first name):

1. Alan Winston (10 mailings)
2. David Schlosser (10)
3. Heath Row (10)
4. Janice Morningstar (8)
5. Alva Svoboda (7)
6. Nick Smith (5)
7. John DeChancie (4)
8. Marty Cantor (2)

We are doing a pretty decent job of contributing at least bimonthly, even if I'm currently Not in a State of Grace. (I missed last month's deadline, and Schlosser post-mailed my contribution.)

reviews-heavy my fanzines might be, I do it more to document what I've read or seen, and to perhaps capture some of what's in the air or water now for future readers. It also encourages me to read and watch more, which I enjoy otherwise. For example, I might push through to finish reading a book in order to write about it for a given fanzine. If I didn't publish such reviews, I'd have to come up with something else to say, and while I can envision my collective output—*The Stf Amateur*, which bundles all my apazines monthly—transforming into more of a genzine, I'm not yet ready to turn my attention to writing more formal articles or essays. This is borderline sercon, not sercon. Sheesh!

In late January, I joined the World Science Fiction Society to support the Worldcon in Glasgow this year, but I've yet to sign up for Seattle in 2025. The only Worldcon I've participated in was CoNZeland, which was only online. Given the recent fallout after the Worldcon in China, I decided it's worth supporting even if I can't attend, at least to be able to explore the Hugo Awards voter packet. I've decided not to attend Corflu at the end of February in Las Vegas in order to dedicate time, attention, and resources to Gallifrey One mid-month and some potential international travel. In fact, I've transferred my membership to Ross Chamberlain so he can go in my stead.

The atmospheric river is unloading a second time in southern California in early February. Last week's rains were briefer but more intense—glorious thunder and lightning during the LASFS meeting—but rain since this weekend has been persistent. We stayed in Sunday night and built a fire in the fireplace, but I stepped out to check the gutters and drainage behind the garage. There have been flash flood warnings until midday, and we received an alert to stay off the highways.

You've seen a lot of movies recently! Caitlin and I went to the theater to see *Godzilla Minus One* before its first run ended. It's a very good movie, balancing character moments and human drama with the monstrous kaiju action, slightly over indexing on the human scope of the movie. I teared up several times. My one quibble with the flick might be that I never felt like Godzilla was actually a monster worth killing. I didn't want Godzilla to destroy the cities or hurt the humans confronting him, but it felt more like a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time rather than a willful threat. Godzilla as force of nature. I was also surprised that there was little time given to explaining where Godzilla came from and why he was there, though the movie's return to wartime brought back memories of earlier such movies.

Nick Smith's *Labyrinthine Lines* for January 2024

also commented on the rain in southern California. I was unaware of the injuries and deaths along the coast! Will you still go to Consonance given the new location? Thank you for sharing information about Marcy Robin. My wife and I went to a Dark Shadows Festival some time after moving here. It was a relatively small but interesting event. It's been quite a while since I've received a flier in the mail, and I'd been unaware there was a local fanzine.

I read and enjoyed your book reviews, especially Ellen MacGregor and Dora Pantell's *Miss Pickerell on the Moon*. I also enjoyed your movie commentary.

In **Alva Svoboda's** *That Flagon Last Night* #255, he mentioned Spotify's Release Radar playlist. Though it's different for everyone, including new music inspired by your listening, I check it out occasionally, too. Right now, it includes songs from Alkaline Trio, Dolly Parton, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Kim Gordon, the Jesus and Mary Chain, and others. Your book and movie recommendations, while brief, are welcome.

Alan Winston's *Remnants of Horizons* informed us that he has now *stopped* dating someone. Sad news, but so it goes. Might be another case of the wrong place, wrong time—like Godzilla!—given your remarks about external circumstances. I can't imagine dating at our age. It's got to be rough. Your home improvement narrative reminds me that I need to better prioritize hiring someone to clean our attic and replace the insulation. Your ongoing dance-related travel impresses me. It looks like you enjoyed your recent return to the Los Angeles area, at least closer to Santa Barbara, I think.

I generally read complaints about people or things being “woke” as signals that the speaker or writer is bigoted, not that there's anything wrong with the media or situation they're commenting on. As I've been watching *The Sandman*, I've not at all been thrown by the gender or race of actors being different than what was originally in the comic book. In some cases, it's been an improvement and proves more interesting.

Your recollection of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is definitely why such repetition exists in children's literature. Thank you for reminding me of the different needs and interests of different reading audiences. The book certainly wasn't written for an adult reader! Thanks, also, for the music recommendations.

And in *The Title Goes Here*, **Janice Morningstar** concluded her Pemmi-Con report. I appreciated your discussion of programming, the art show, the Masquerade, food options, and other aspects of the experience.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #101

Feb. 8, 2024

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Last Week's Senryu

Printing challenges:

Color mysteriously
okeh black and white.

Last week and this week have offered some interesting printing challenges. Last Thursday, I was unable to print Matthew Mitchell's fanzine in color. The images just didn't show up at all, leaving empty space. I changed the color cartridges, which were running low, thinking it might be that, but no dice. I even cropped the photos to see if that did anything. It did not.

After printing and collating, I decided to try one more time, printing his fanzine in black and white, and that worked fine. So his images are black and white instead of color. As I said to Mitchell in an email, problem solved, but not the mystery.

This week, then, before Collation Day, I was suddenly unable to print at all. The printer was always offline. That was particularly frustrating because I'd just finished the February *De Profundis* and the January *Menace of the LASFS*—and felt the approach of Collation Day. I unplugged the printer several times, updated my operating system, updated the driver, and restarted my computer. No joy. Then I removed the printer and added it again. Joy!

We shall print on.

On the Science Fiction Oral History Association

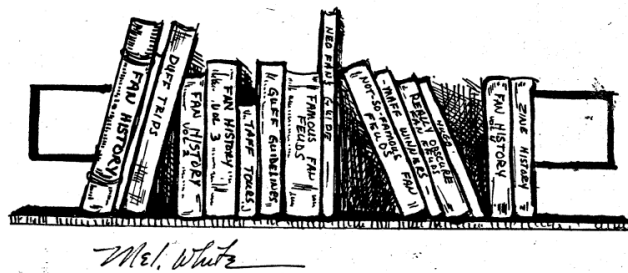
This week I went down a bit of a rabbit hole looking at the state of archiving convention, interview, and reading recordings—as well as the state of sf-related programs on the radio. I'll likely write about that in the future, but the rabbit hole brought the Science Fiction Oral History Association (<https://sfoha.org>) back to my attention. I briefly mentioned it in *T&T* #26, indicating that its Web site and Facebook page hadn't been recently active.

I reached out to the SFOHA via Facebook this week expressing interest in joining. A response indicated that the organization is "not really" active or

accepting memberships at this time, and that they've transferred their archives to Fanac.

According to *FANAC Fan History Project Newsletter* #16 (Aug. 23, 2021), Anne Gray helped secure Fanac as the new home for the SFOHA archives, maintaining its collection of recordings of pros and fans alike since 1975. At that time, Fanac planned to begin digitizing the SFOHA archive.

Various publications issued by the SFOHA, edited by Larry and Nancy Tucker, and David Gardner, are available at https://www.fanac.org/fanzines/SFOHA_Publications. I reached out to Fanac to learn more about their audio digitization efforts, and Edie Stern indicated that they're focusing on how to best approach the project before they undertake it with full vigor.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Extraterrestrial: The First Sign of Intelligent Life Beyond Earth by Avi Loeb (Mariner, 2021)

This is a nonfiction book about an interstellar body called 'Oumuamua that was first observed on Sept. 6, 2017. It is Loeb's hypothesis that this is a relic of some extraterrestrial civilization, a scout sent through space.

He bases that contention on three traits: its extreme shape, reflectivity (very bright, like metal), and orbit (it deviated from an orbit shaped by the Sun's gravity without showing any discernible comet's tail). He proposes that it is a "Lightsail," a large thin flat disk, rather than the cigar-shaped object others proposed, and the change to its orbit was a result of the pressure of the sun's light against the sail.

Convincing? Well, the only actual photograph in the book (there are other illustrations) is one of the time lapse pictures of stars that are reduced, fuzzy, blurry lines. No one knows, and I don't understand how anyone can find out more hard data; but his ideas are entertaining in a good and provocative way.

Not good is the excessive padding in the book. It's like hard science fiction: I really don't want to know about his early life on a family farm in Israel (as much as I might under different circumstances), I want to know more about 'Oumuamua. Except there is no

more information.

The rest of the book consists of background information on the SETI Institute, exoplanets and the possible chances for life, and how—for the future and benefit of mankind—we should continue exploring and funding research. Nothing a “hard science” sf fan already has not read before.

The only thing notably new to me was “Starchips.” That program (which Loeb worked on, too) involves sending tiny electronic devices with radio and camera attached via laser-propelled sails to Proxima Centauri, the closest star system.

I just have doubts about the inevitability of life being created from nothing; biology gets ever more complicated. As a boy, I saw pictures of Mars, with the polar caps melting in the spring, and large areas of dark spreading down from them—obviously the spread of vegetation watered by the polar caps melting. Nothing is obvious, and we fool ourselves. Skim a borrowed copy if you can. (Cy Chauvin)

Fisherman’s Hope by David Feintuch (Aspect, 1996) It’s rare that I’ll read the fourth book in a series without reading the previous three, but I’d not encountered David Feintuch’s Seafort Saga previously and was unaware that this book was so far into the series when I cracked its cover. While a reader might benefit from reading the three precursors—*Midshipman’s Hope*, *Challenger’s Hope*, and *Prisoner’s Hope*—first, *Fisherman’s Hope* reads relatively well on its own, and there are three subsequent novels, as well.

Set in the year 2201, this novel continues telling the tale of Nicholas Seafort, an officer in the United Nations Naval Service who, in the previous three novels, has been established as a midshipman, the elected leader of earth, and the captain of a UNNS flagship. He’s also a mutineer, a hero, and a definite leader. And he’s encountered hostile, amoeba-like aliens dubbed “fish” who are attracted to the N-waves of UNNS spacecraft, developing a method to counter their very effective attacks.

You’ll pick that up in bits and pieces over the course of this novel, which presumes the fish as a known entity and refers to previous experiences and indiscretions. What’s new in the novel is that Seafort has been named commandant of the naval academy, which requires that he take care of about 400 teenage recruits—N-waves seem to affect younger crew members with fewer deleterious effects—and exposes him to the political machinations of other military and political leaders. It’s not an easy fit, and much of the book explores how uneasily the new, two-pronged leadership sits. That leads to an interesting subplot

about criminal bookkeeping, as well as numerous flashback scenes revealing Seafort’s childhood and time as a recruit, almost serving as a prequel of sorts to the first novel.

Over the course of the book, Seafort learns to be a more empathetic leader, taking several raw recruits under his wing while staving off the intrusive inquiries of the politician father of a student, often with the support of his administrative assistant or second in command, perhaps, who’d served with him previously. He also travels to Earth, to the “transpop” gang-controlled Manhattan of Old New York City, to look for his wife, who escapes from a medical facility while recovering from a rape in an earlier book.

There’s a space station and a facility on the far side of the moon. The fish return, attacking Earth, and unable to persuade the remaining forces that fleeing in spaceships will only attract more invaders with their N-waves, Seafort develops a cunning and perhaps cruel plan to fend off the alien attack. That plan might cost him and his charges their lives.

While Feintuch’s novel is more intensely military sf than I’m used to, I found the setting and multiple relationships compelling, particularly the transpop angle. I’m almost glad I hadn’t read the previous books because the prequel nature of this—via flashbacks—was particularly interesting. And there was enough action, among the recruits and officers during extravehicular activities and when leading the fish on the wild goose chase at the end to speed one’s pulse. Though much of the story takes place at the naval academy, there’s also sufficient spacefaring to scratch that itch.

I might not run to read any of the other novels in the series, but I’m glad I read this one, randomly pulled from a Little Library and then my bookshelf as it was. Feintuch received the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in Science Fiction in 1996 and also penned a fantasy series, *Rodrigo of Caledon*. He died in 2006.

“A prestigious literary award for science fiction, which was hosted in China for the first time, has come under fire for excluding several authors from the 2023 awards, raising concerns about interference or censorship in the awards process.

“The *New York Times* bestseller *Babel* by RF Kuang, an episode of the Netflix drama *The Sandman* and the author Xiran Jay Zhao were among the works and authors excluded from the 2023 Hugo awards, which were administered by the World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon) in Chengdu in October. ...

“No reason was given for the exclusions... . Certain titles were listed as having been given votes, but were marked with an asterisk and the words ‘not eligible,’ with no further details given.”—*The Guardian*, Jan. 24, 2024



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews *Child's Play 2*

It's been years since I've seen *Child's Play*, and I haven't watched the more recent television show *Chucky*, but a friend and I recently turned to *Child's Play 2* on video tape for our weekly movie night. In classic horror franchise tradition, the possessed doll—an animatronic toy similar to Teddy Ruxpin—was destroyed at the end of the first movie only to be recovered and rebuilt at the beginning of the sequel. We all know how well that goes.

The initial scenes involving the toy company Play Pals, maker of the Good Guy dolls, and Chucky's revivification are somewhat fun—featuring Greg Germann who went on to *Ally McBeal*—and the bulk of the movie details the malevolent plaything seeking out its former owner, who's been placed in foster care.

That leads to a couple of things. One, viewers learn—or are reminded—that the doll is possessed by a Chicago serial killer who's trapped in the toy's body

until he can possess another, preferably the boy. (Occasionally, the doll's nose bleeds, suggesting he's becoming more human, a la Pinocchio.) And there's a bit of a Mr. Snuffleupagus effect in which the boy's new foster parents think their new ward's blaming broken tchotchkes and other such occurrences on Chucky is the deflection of a disturbed child acting out while his mother recovers in a medical facility. Much to his surprise, the foster father realizes the threat posed by Chucky only too late. The set design of the basement is particularly good.

The boy finds a champion in another foster child, the teenager Kyle, played by Christine Elise, with whom my wife used to work. Elise also appeared on *Beverly Hills, 90210* and stars in the newer *Chucky* TV program. She, too, realizes the threat posed by Chucky and proves a formidable companion.

The final scenes in the Play Pals factory are absolutely wonderful, reminiscent of *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*. The large number of Good Guy boxes suggests the awesome potential power of an army of such dolls and proves an adequate maze for an effective chase scene. And the manufacturing process leads to some risky situations and excellent visuals, especially the machine with which limbs are attached and the vat of melted wax or plastic. Goop galore!

A fun outing in a franchise that's now yielded eight movies and a TV show. The possession angle reminded me slightly of *Shocker*, though there's an undertone of the Puppet Master series, as well. A fine example of the Creepy Doll, Demonic Dummy, and Vengeful Abandoned Toy tropes.

The Terror

This 1963 movie produced and directed by Roger Corman was an opportunistic movie made to take advantage of sets left over from *The Raven* and two days of shooting with Boris Karloff. While Karloff's scenes were indeed completed in that time, the movie took nine months to complete, utilizing a total of five directors. Francis Ford Coppola was one of those directors.

Jack Nicholson portrays a French soldier separated from his unit who collapses on the beach after meeting a beautiful young woman who lures him into the pounding surf. He's brought back to health by an elderly woman in a rustic cabin within walking distance of a nearby castle.

Going there to look for the young woman, he meets the castle's owner, Baron von Leppe (Karloff). Von Leppe and his servant—played by Dick Miller—attempt to shoo the soldier away, especially once he shows an interest in the baron's dead wife, who looks

a lot like the young woman the soldier met on the beach.



—William Rotsler

The servant seeks out the elderly woman, arriving at the cabin as she hypnotizes the young woman, calling on the forces of darkness and evil. (And using a pretty cool rotating colored lantern.) It's not entirely clear, but it seems that the woman is not the baron's wife returned from the dead, but that she's been hypnotized to act as though she is, in order to seek revenge on the baron.

You see—or perhaps you won't—the baron's wife

is dead because the baron once returned home to find her in flagrante delicto with a local youth. Presumably, the baron and his servant attempted to kill the youth, accidentally killing the woman, as well. Only, that's not what actually happened. Charles Lee Jackson II remarked to me that he also found the movie quite confusing, understanding only after seeing *Sventoonie's* 2022 synopsis. (<https://youtu.be/Dn26HwOpBJg?si=RRK8KfVdWEYC0in8>)

I won't tell you what the big revelation involving mistaken identity is, but I will say that the movie might have worked if the young woman hadn't called a specific character another name during the dramatic crypt-flooding scene at the end of the flick. If the elderly woman didn't know, the young woman wouldn't have known—or wanted to kill her intended victim. I can wave my hands at the servant knowing, even though that doesn't make a lot of sense either.

All in all, a fine movie, despite the occasional confusion. It's truly fantastic, because the girl—and the woman, perhaps—can turn into a hawk. And there's an absolutely wonderful scene in which a body decays rapidly—suggesting that she might not have been a hypnotized young woman. There's also the suggestion of a monstrous creature on the other side of a door at one point, though it's never seen.

The confusion is understandable. Reportedly, many of the scenes were shot without a script, so the actors didn't even know what was happening, or why. And five directors don't necessarily make for a cohesive vision, though the movie holds itself together remarkably.

Comments on APA-L #3055

In *Leeway* dated for Feb. 1, 2024, **Lee Gold** mentioned several audio recordings with which I was unfamiliar. They included Reuben Ship's radio play *The Investigator* (<https://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol3/investigator/investigator.html>) and Don Ralke's *Introspection IV* (https://youtu.be/PgcuKwqcb_4?si=LkXurqX4fU_kHf-H). Five of the spoken word pieces on the latter album were indeed written by Fredric Brown: "Sentry," "Blood," "Imagine," "Voodoo," and "Pattern." As an appreciator of Brown, I had no idea!

We keep our home heated at 68 degrees Fahrenheit when we're inside a heated portion of our home. (The "master bedroom" bathroom and my wife's office, both additions, are unheated.) At night, the temperature inside goes down to 60 degrees. The bathroom can be quite cold in the winter, so we have a space heater that can handle humid air. My mother also used the more formal living room in my childhood home for bridge parties. My parents still play bridge hands daily.

Jean-Paul L. Garnier's *Space Cowboy's Accretion* #4 updated ellers on recent *Simultaneous Times* podcasts and in-store events at Space Cowboy Books in Joshua Tree. Congratulations on receiving the American Booksellers Association's James Patterson Holiday Bookstore Bonus! I was wondering whether the relaunch of *Worlds of If* would also revitalize *Galaxy Science Fiction*. If you succeed in prioritizing *If* over *Galaxy*, that would certainly run counter to the periodicals' histories! I look forward to the first issue of *If* at the end of the month. I recently started reading Weston Ochse's novel *Dead Sky* (T&T #95). Thank you for the reminder!

In *Vanamonde* #1579, **John Hertz** addressed the controversies surrounding the Hugo Awards associated with the recent Worldcon in Chengdu, China. In addition to the *Guardian* article quoted on p. 2, the brouhaha also attracted the attention of *Publishers Weekly* and *Esquire*, so the mainstream media has picked up on the mischievous inner workings of the Secret Masters of Fandom and totalitarian governments. Heads have rolled, and social media is all aflutter with fannish recommendations for procedural reform as well as various degrees of character assassination.

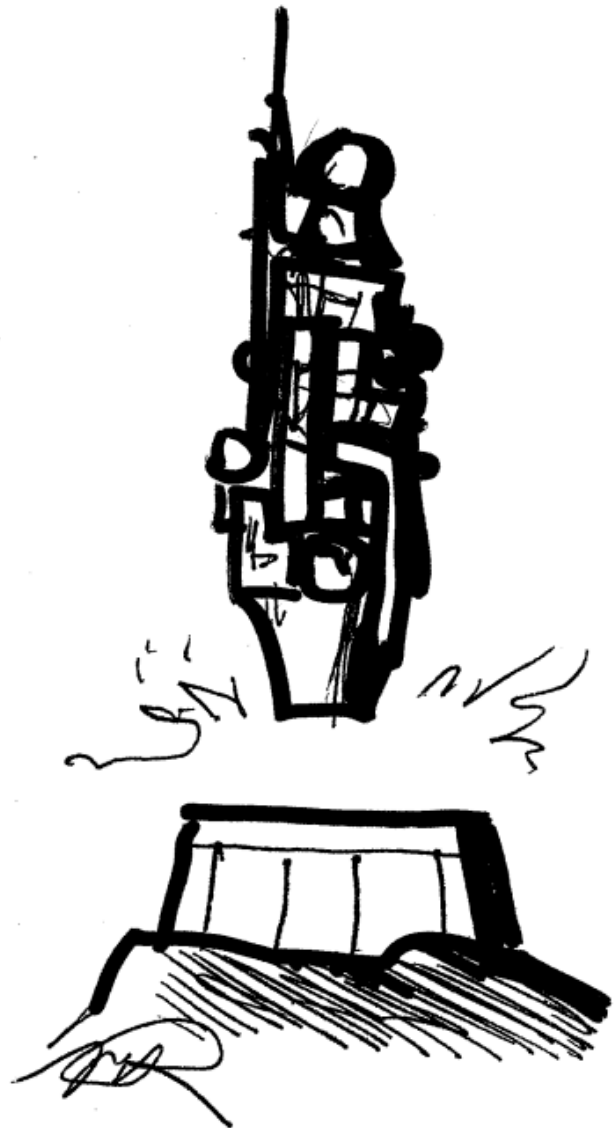
As a partwork, C.D. Carson's *Blast!* #1 will indeed be hard to follow—until it's completed. Then you can separate those pages from the run of APA-L distributions to compile your own digest fanzine. The pages will make more sense once it's all together and folded like a chapbook.

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #43 remarked on rereading Harry Harrison's *The Stainless Steel Rat*. If I remember correctly, the Four Points by Sheraton Los Angeles International Airport offers an excellent restaurant, open for breakfast and dinner. When my parents would stay there before departing after a visit, I'd sometimes join them for dinner. The food was excellent and staff friendly and helpful.

In *Toony Loons* #747, **Joe Zeff** commented on potential plans to participate in Bubonicon in New Mexico. I hope that works out. I'll be volunteering in hospitality for Gallifrey One mid-month and perhaps writing a con report for *Science Fact & Science Fiction Concatenation* online. My Loscon 48 conrep was recently published at <http://www.concatenation.org/conrep/loscon-48-2022.html>. And I won't be going to Corflu at the end of the month, though Ross Chamberlain will utilize my membership. I hope to join some of the sessions via Zoom.

Sorry to hear that you didn't receive last week's APA-L in time to comment. C.D. Carson and John Hertz reported receiving #3055 more quickly than

usual, which I didn't expect given the recent rain. Shaving at high altitudes! Just how tall *are* you?



—William Rotsler

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #102

Feb. 13, 2024

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Last Week's Senryu

Troubleshooting tip:

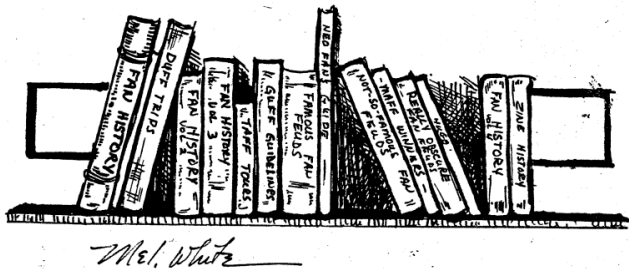
Turn the printer off and on.

Yes, repeatedly.

I experienced intermittent printing challenges while preparing last week's distribution for collation. It wasn't as problematic as the previous week, however, and I'm developing a decent checklist of Things to Do when the printer says it's offline but isn't.

Correction: *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #95

In *T&T* #95's "From the Reading Pile: Comix Reviews," I misattributed *Smorgasbord* #1. The anthology comic is published by Jim Main.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

In the Wet by Nevil Shute (William Heinemann, 1953)

This book took me by surprise, because about a chapter in, it turned from a mainstream novel into science fiction (or, being that the future it described is now past, alternate history).

The story as it starts is told by Roger Hargreaves, a priest in the Church of England who is stationed in the outback of Queensland, Australia. He writes as a middle-aged man doing his parish duties in a rural and sparse area, trying to attend to the duties of his parish (an area several thousand square miles in area). In the course of his duties, he meets a dying man named Stevie, a drunk and opium addict.

Hargreaves is sick himself, and because their medicines have been washed away in a flood, he and a

nurse assistant let Stevie smoke opium to ease his pain. Hargreaves asks him to tell his life story. What follows is this vision of the 1980s, in which Stevie (or David Anderson, as he calls himself), is a pilot for the Queen's Flight, in charge of a new, fast airplane that flies Queen Elizabeth II and the royal family to Australia and other locations.

In this time period, there is mention of a third world war, England is still under rationing, and Australia has a voting system in which some people get up to seven votes (influenced by education, earning your living abroad for two years, raising two children to age 14 without getting a divorce, and other accomplishments). Anderson is of mixed race, but he is not held back in Australia. Regardless, he is defensive and concerned about how people in England will perceive him, because that is where the Queen's aeronautical job is based.

That part of the story is embroiled with politics concerning the expense of the monarchy and a love story between Anderson and a secretary in the Queen's employ, Rosemary Long. (It is worth noting that Shute worked in aviation design.) After Stevie dies and the novel returns to the present, others tell Hargreaves that they didn't hear Stevie speaking at all, and that his real name is not David Anderson, but Figgins. It was apparently a hallucination.

Hargreaves later attends to a stockman named Jock Anderson, who has married a half-caste woman, fathering a son, whom he wants baptized. "We were trying to decide whether to call him David or Steve, but we settled on David."

I thought at some points that this story was a half-finished novel that the author couldn't really resolve, but all the Shute novels I've read so far have a framing device, and are "told" by someone, rather than directly related by the author. I read it straight through, but his others are better.

It leaves some questions. He immigrated from England to Australia. Did he really think about voting reform in this way? He wrote quite sympathetically about the Queen in this novel—did he know her, or the royal family? In an afterword he writes, "The Monarch is the one strong link that holds the countries of the Commonwealth together; without that link they would soon fall apart." And "[N]obody takes a novelist too seriously. The puppets born of his imagination walk upon their little stage for our amusement, and if we find that their creator is impertinent his errors of taste do not sway the world."

This is very much a time capsule of a book. The copy that I read is marked "Erin Township Library," which predated our present library system by many years! (Cy Chauvin)

New Maps of Hell by Kingsley Amis (Harcourt, Brace; 1960)

If James Blish's review and subsequent letters of comment in *Xero* (T&T #99) are any indication, this survey of the state of science fiction was relatively controversial at the time. At 160 pages, it's a pretty quick read, and Amis—author of books such as *Lucky Jim* and an avid reader of sf since childhood—covers a lot of ground, offering impressive depth given the book's small size. While I think the book begs rereading, my first read suggests that Amis might have been on to something. The genre continues to offer potential that hasn't been fully realized yet.

Clearly, with a book like this, other active readers will identify gaps in the author's consideration. Why didn't he mention that author or fanzine? Why didn't he elevate this particular novel or story? Why does he read that magazine? Similarly, critical readers might very well disagree with his perspective. Our reading and interests are driven by our tastes and preferences, and one author's sensibilities might not be our own.

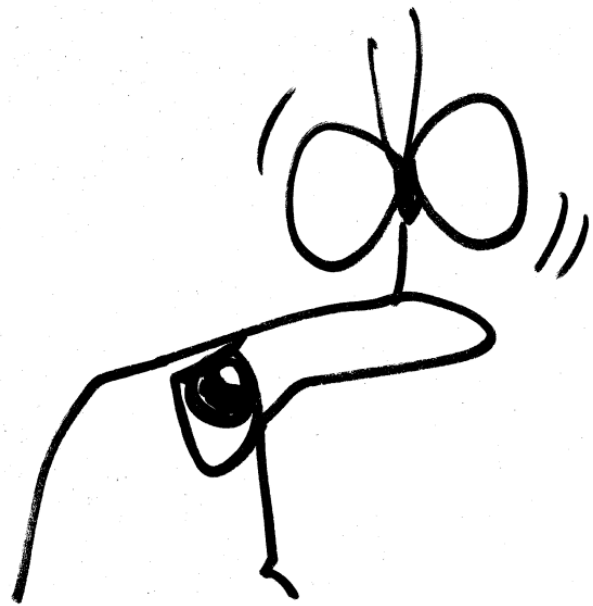
But overall, I think that what Amis liked at the time—Fredric Brown, Damon Knight, Frederik Pohl, Robert Sheckley, Clifford Simak, and others—is very much worth reading now. And *New Maps of Hell* is a very sympathetic book. Amis, though he never wrote sf, is a champion of its stories, magazines, and books. Even though he details common conventions of the genre such as bug-eyed monsters, mad scientists, and questionable science, science fiction fans couldn't have asked for a better mainstream documentarian.

Over the course of the too-short book—based on a series of lectures given at Princeton University—Amis offers a definition and brief history of sf, finally concentrating on H.G. Wells and Jules Verne as leading inspirations and the 1926 launch of *Amazing Stories* as a springboard of sorts. He compares an interest in sf to one's listening to jazz and draws connection between sf and detective literature. Amis also offers a snapshot of the genre in terms of adjacent forms—fantasy and space opera at the time—the boom in sf magazines, readers—and clubs—authors, and the general accessibility of such material.

Two thirds of the book, however, focuses on themes addressed in science fiction, as well as its prospects. Amis touches on undercurrents of sex, horror, insecurity, rural nostalgia (holding up Simak as its lead practitioner), activism, science and art, and religion. He also explores what he terms the utopian aspects of sf, considering sex and gender relationships (again), colonialism, politics and conformism, the dangers of technology, and character types. His book resonates with my recognition that sf is often about smart, caring people solving challenging problems.

More than 60 years on, the state of sf is obviously different than it was then. When the book was written, sf was largely a short story form; it's perhaps less so now. While Amis was correct about sf not being a predictive literature, that perspective remains to this day. Similarly, authors who set their sights on mainstream success often write sf without identifying it as such. Amis also contends that sf is largely plot driven rather than character driven, which might have changed slightly over time. And his exploration of idea as hero still merits consideration.

It's wondrous stuff and excellent food for thought. Because it was written in the late 1950s, it's time to return to such an analysis. Who will write the new *New Maps of Hell*?



—William Rotsler

From the Reading Pile: Fanzine Reviews

The Triumvirate Vol. 3 (2024)

This annish of David Oliver Kling's journal of fantasy, science fiction, and horror resurrects the fanzine he published in the 1980s. Originally publishing a gaming fanzine, Kling joined the United Fanzine Organization as a teenager but stopped self-publishing because of military service and other commitments. Now a minister—he played *Vampire the Masquerade* as a seminarian—Kling offers a wonderful fiction-driven periodical that will hopefully be published more frequently than annually. It's not yet a paying market.

This roughly 80-page squarebound digest collects six short stories, a prose poem of sorts, and an eight-page comic that sat in a box unpublished since 1987. The fiction is largely military sf, which isn't a surprise given Kling's service in the Navy, and carries

an undercurrent of spirituality and religion, which is also appropriate given Kling and the other contributors. The religious aspect is a little more subtle than that in Wesley Kawata's *Nova SF*, which hasn't been publishing recently. And the fiction is relatively well written!

Each story is offered as a "chapter" of the volume, or issue. Kerry Perdy's story "Crimson" takes place during a rainstorm in which the liquid falling from the sky is blood, not water. A Catholic airship pirate captain rescues a small kitten before encountering a Puritan soldier. At first fearing that she'll be captured, the two women form a friendship—and perhaps more. A little gothic or supernatural, a little steampunk, the story shows potential.

Kling's "The Rage of the Stone Chaplain" might be among the best pieces in the issue. A pacifist, nonviolent chaplain is assigned to a fighting unit that expects more from its members. His ability to protect himself—and others—astounds even their most hardened warriors. I would welcome more featuring this character.

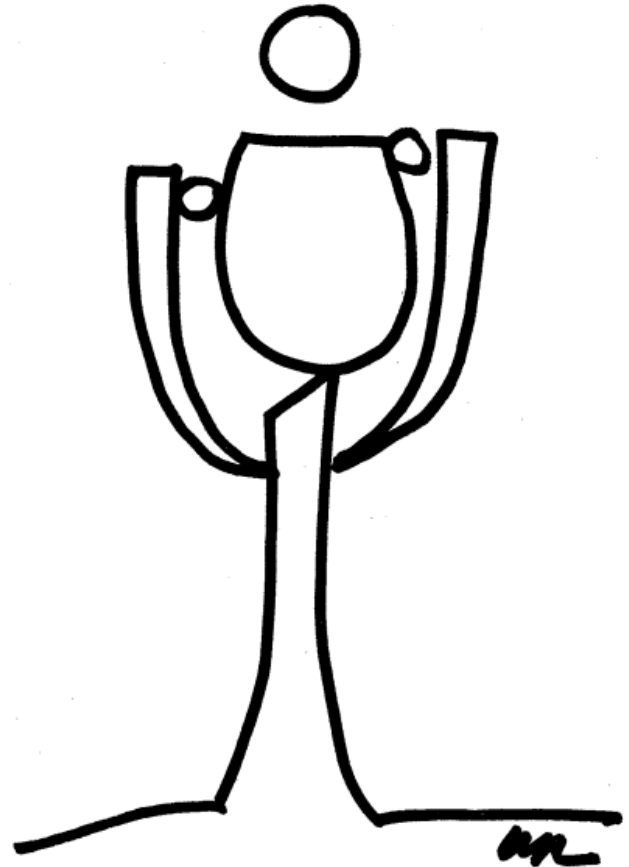
"And the Sky Rained Fire," by Nicholas Macon Hurst blends hard sf or space opera with the promise of a vengeful religious force. The Solarian Marines gain control of the Cordova system, forming an alliance of sorts with its current leadership. Their victory might be short lived. "You think that sweeping aside our defenses is power?" Kling writes. "[Y]ou've done nothing more than catch the attention of the Convent. They will be coming." That reminded me of *Warhammer 40,000*'s Sisters of Battle.

Benjamin Norman Pierce's "Cold Fusion" is a prose poem recipe for just that. "...Of Precious Boreas" by Robert Henry offers a wonderful fantasy in which the wind at the edge of the world plays a role. A girl with disabilities finds new freedom and power when she follows in the footsteps of a mysterious visitor across a bridge.

"Hands-On Experiment" by Larry Johnson—even including an excellent illustration by him—could have been published in any number of pulp sf magazines 60-plus years ago. An inventor finds an old piece of electronics that still works in a way he didn't expect. Mir Plemmons's "Seven" is either a story or a personal essay about the role that J.R.R. Tolkien's writing can play in one's life.

And the comic piece, Steve Keeter and Steve Shipley's "South Side Tales," is a humorous story featuring the Beacon (*Faculae & Filigree* #23) and a bandit who robs beer trucks to provide fuel for a "heat-seeking booze missile." It's silly but well drawn, perhaps a little racially insensitive for current times, and I'm glad it finally saw the light of day.

Inquire via David Oliver Kling, 1714 Connecticut Ave. SE, Massillon, OH 44646; or order via Amazon at <http://tinyurl.com/Kling-Amazon>. Additional issues of *The Triumvirate* and *The Triumvirate Anthology*—perhaps a retitling—are also available. Hurst's story continues a piece published in *The Triumvirate Anthology* Vol. 2.



—William Rotsler

Juvenalia: "The Flying Things"

I wrote the following story when I was 10 years old. Its published form varies slightly from the handwritten original.

This morning at about 2 a.m., I was awakened by a strange light. At first I thought it was just a dream—because there was a good science fiction movie on last night—so, being the curious kind of boy that I am, I got out of bed and went downstairs to see what was happening.

Once I got downstairs, I saw the light again. This time, it was a little brighter, but it wasn't coming from inside the house. It was coming from something outside, so I went outside to investigate more.

After I got outside, the light took off and started flying toward a field two or three miles away. I got

into my Porsche and followed it. After driving an hour and a half, my car died. Suddenly, my radio started switching from channel to channel spelling this out: “We come in peace—do you?” I answered, “Yes, I do.”

The radio came back on, playing the Steve Miller Band song “Abra Cadabra.” But the only part played was, “I’m going to reach out and grab you!” All of a sudden, the doors locked, and a bright yellow light just about melted because of the bright yellow light.

Suddenly, the car lifted off the ground and into a flying saucer. I started to worry. When I got into the flying saucer, I was startled by the spaceship creatures that looked like the *Star Wars* characters Greedo, Hammerhead, and Walrusman. After a while, they took human form.

After they unlocked the doors, I couldn’t unlock them because of their mental hold (cosmic telepathy). Once I got out of my car, the martians told me that they were here because they needed fuel for their spaceship. After a while, they beamed me back to Earth.

The next day, I went to police headquarters and told them about the incident. All they said was, “Mister, don’t try to be a glory-finding man, OK?” The next morning in the newspaper, the front page headline read “Flying Saucer Sighting a Hoax!”

The following was a separate composition, written at the same age.

“The Flying Things” Book II

Last night, I had a dream, but I don’t know whether it was a dream or not. Well, anyway, about midnight, I saw a strange light. It was kind of reddish-greenish. Along with the light, there was the sound “boopy doopy doop.” I thought it was my radio alarm, so I got out of bed and turned it off.

Actually, I turned it on. Suddenly, the radio started turning its channels by itself, spelling out the message, “Meet—Us—in—the—Forest—at—1:30.” I was kind of startled. I thought it over a while. Finally decided, I looked at the clock. It was 1:25!

I put on my coat and filled my backpack with food. At 1:30, I started on my way to the forest. I brought my shotgun for safety. At 1:45, I got to the forest. I saw a really bright light. It kept on getting brighter and brighter, followed by a thud.

I turned around to see if my backpack had fallen. A moment later, I heard someone say, “Put away your gun.” I turned around and saw a wispy creature. He told me they needed fuel for their ship, something called uranium. I told him that I didn’t have any, whatever that stuff is.

So they got back into their ship and took off. It was 2:50, so I went home and went back to bed.



—William Rotsler

Comments on APA-L #3056

In *Leeway* dated for Feb. 8, 2024, Lee Gold complimented Taral Wayne on his cover art. I’ll send him the distribution! James Patterson also co-wrote a 2021 relaunch of the *Shadow* with Brian Sitts. I reviewed *The Shadow* for the April 2022 edition of

The N3F Review of Books (<https://tnfff.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/N3FReview202204.pdf>). A second Shadow book, *Circle of Death*, was published last year. I find much of Patterson's work formulaic and at this stage in his career largely co-written, but he is a publishing innovator and seems to use his wealth well. In addition to the bookseller bonus, he also revitalized pulp hero Doc Savage with the 2022 *The Perfect Assassin*, which I've yet to read. He's co-written YA and children's books. His writing has been adapted to film. And he's dabbled in very short books—his BookShots line—that also had a mobile app presence.

Your vignette about John Norman's Gor books being shelved in the children's section of a library made me chuckle. That series is definitely not children's fare. Though what happened might not be regulation, but reshelving. I've only read one Gor book and—while very much what it is—enjoyed it enough that I'm willing to check out another at some point. I find his fantasy in general intriguing, though the gender relations and erotic elements—and power dynamics—can be a bit much. People who truly appreciate his work connect with it strongly, and his writing inspired a Gorean subculture that focuses on the power dynamic aspects.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1580 recommended the work of Buckminster Fuller to our resident nuclear proponent. I appreciate Fuller almost as much as I appreciate Marshall McLuhan—a *lot*—and am curious about C.D. Carson's perspective on how it resonates with his thinking.

Do you like licorice now? Black or red? I prefer black, and the quality of licorice can range quite widely. Most immediately accessible licorice such as Twizzlers isn't very good. That said, Good and Plenty and licorice jelly beans can suffice in a pinch. I wonder what licorice sweet tooth Charles Lee Jackson II would recommend!

Cyrano de Bergerac's *Voyage dans la Lune* is cited in Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell* (see above). He offers it as an example of a work being included in the "traditional role call" of early sf—1650 in this case—based on "accidental similarities."

After an abortive experiment with bottles of dew—the sun sucks up dew, you see—Cyrano gets to the moon in a chariot powered by rockets. It is much worse than pointless to take this as an "anticipation" of the engine recently fired at the moon by the Russians or of anything in recent literature...

Were I named so, I could be Ewing Heath Row II, but I wasn't. I still like that there was someone with my full name before me. I've seen a photograph of

him. I will share your feedback with cover artist Jose Sanchez.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #44, **Matthew Mitchell** indicated that he's already preparing for Gallifrey One next month. I'll be participating—and volunteering in hospitality that weekend. Here's my schedule: 7-11 a.m. and 4-6 p.m. Saturday; and 10-11 a.m., 2-4 p.m., and 5-8 p.m. Sunday. Chances are good that I'll be in the con suite or otherwise working during those times. Otherwise, I'm likely to be checking out panels, the dealers room, or in the screening room.

Friday afternoon, there's a panel discussion about *Doctor Who* fanzines. There are also sessions focusing on the Target (*T&T* #96) and other novelizations, *Star Trek*, comic books, the legacy of Douglas Adams, the year in review for television and film, and other topics. I hope to participate in enough of the con to write a report for *Science Fact & Science Fiction Concatenation* online.

And **Joe Zeff's** *Toony Loons* #748 mentioned Marcia Minsky's application for TSA PreCheck. I heartily endorse doing so. My wife and I also recently applied for Global Entry. We've been conditionally approved and just need to schedule the interviews. But our experience with PreCheck has been smooth sailing.



—William Rotsler

Emulators & Engines #11

Feb. 20, 2024

Emulators & Engines is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to *Alarums & Excursions* and select others. (It succeeds *Theoretically: Game* and *The Game Closet*.) A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Solo Game Report: *A Torch in the Dark*

While in Wisconsin visiting family for the winter holidays at the end of last year, I had some time to try my hand at playing *A Torch in the Dark*. Michael Elliott's single-player dungeon crawler posits the exploration of "sanctified burial grounds" beneath the Imperial capital of Kynburgh. When the Emperor Titan Kyn died, he cursed the city, and its dead nobles returned to life—or unlife—prompting revolutionaries to clear the crypts and claim their wealth.

There are two phases in the game, delves—adventuring sessions—and downtime—recovery and resupply as needed. Character creation and inventory is simplistic, and rolls utilize a number of d6, boosted if you have appropriate skills or items to aid in an action. Encounters are determined by drawing playing cards from a standard deck, so I could play *A Torch in the Dark* easily using materials my parents already had on hand. (Though I generally travel with a set of small polyhedral dice.) And you can enlist the aid of companions as you progress through the tombs.

Each crypt, featuring a different noble or personage of import, offers its own encounter table. With my character Scorena Kelon, below, I played through two scenarios.

SCORENA KELON

Skills - Scavenging
Scrambling
Stealing
Bravling
Maneuvering

XP - 13

Stress - 1

Corruption - 0

Stash - 49

Armor		(2)
Climb Tools		(2)
Sword	(1)	Torch
		Torch
		Torch

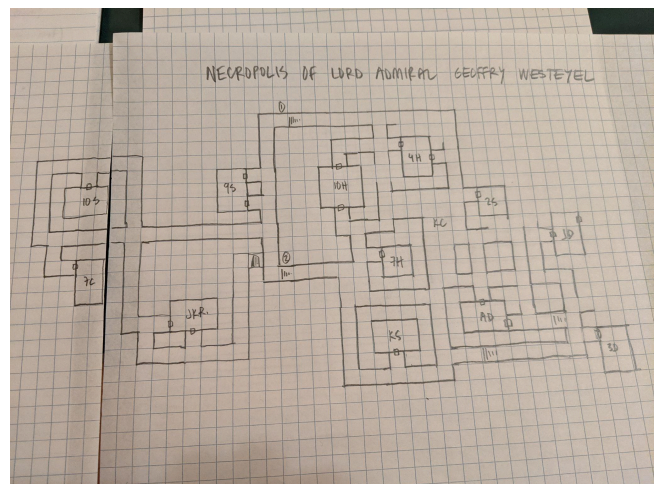
Before doing so, I utilized *Roll & Play: The Fantasy Character Kit*, also on my iPad, to put some meat on Kelon's bones. Kelon became a revolutionary, an adventurer, because her parents, talented blacksmiths, used to test their weapons before they sold them. Customers told stories of a legendary pair of daggers hidden far away. When she was old enough, Kelon left home to find those daggers.

Having become a soldier to earn pay once away from home, her battalion—the Silver Ravens— fought against a larger army because its soldiers were looting vulnerable villages. Her small unit defeated the larger force by laying siege to their camp after approaching under cover. A royal banquet was held to celebrate. Her unit was later assigned to find and apprehend a gang of unstable and dangerous marauding spellcasters.

Tall and of average weight, she's of light complexion and has long, light brown hair. Smiling with crooked teeth, she dresses above her station. Brash but loving, she's motivated by pleasure and hates being in crowds.

Kelon's possessions include muddy slacks that contrast a shiny armored breastplate, her tried and true well-worn long sword, a slim book of military maneuvers—she's a tactician—and a raven-shaped silver medallion. She often smokes a briarwood pipe.

The two scenarios I played included the first two offered, "The Vault of Viscount Alard Hund" and "The Necropolis of Lord Admiral Geoffry Westeyel," map below. In the latter location, I encountered an undead crocodile riddled with arrows and spears, a group of delvers about to be overwhelmed by ghouls, a stone fountain overgrown with ivy and full of crystal clear water, and a group of delvers trying to close a crypt. Undead hands and skeletal fingers reach for them from between the stone doors. Kelon also experienced other aspects of the tomb.



the need to argue why one roll might have succeeded while another did not. I find this to be less of an issue with Old School Revival and longer-standing players.

Kudos to Don Shimizu for encouraging the Great PDFifying Project. We're currently scanning and applying optical character recognition to LASFAPA's run. So far David Schlosser and I have done 1976-1979. Your question about the "boiling tar-filled pit" I mentioned in *E&E* #9 made me chuckle. Sometimes, when playing solo, you miss out on sensory details like that. I knew I'd encountered a trap, and I wanted to know what kind, so I picked one. Had I been running the game for a party, you're right: They might have been able to smell it as they approached. Playing solo, I had no such forewarning and don't think it messed up the enjoyment of game play.

In *Interactive Movies That Could Be Gamebooks* Part XXVIII, **Pedro Panhoca da Silva** commented on the Brazilian translation of foreign roleplaying games. I've found Brazil to have a much stronger roleplaying game community than Portugal, especially focusing on *Savage Worlds* and itch.io-style independent games. I think that's an outgrowth of population scale. More than 214 million people live in Brazil, while more than 10 million live in Portugal. While I plan to learn to speak Portuguese as spoken in Portugal, I'll likely be agnostic in terms of which Portuguese I read. There's just so much going on in Brazil! We hope to return to Portugal next month.

Jim Vassilakos and **Timothy Collinson's** *Traveller Play-By-Email* campaign writeup included the sentence, "Always be pleasant to the help and security." That's strong life advice, though I don't remember where or how I first encountered it. To paraphrase, "Always be kind to them what carry the keys."

In *Sinister Things* #323, **Patrick Riley** expressed frustration with players taking time to roll the dice. When I GM'd more frequently in organized play situations, I'd encourage players to pre-roll so they'd be ready when I got to them. That way, if they could do what they intended to do, they'd already rolled. It's particularly useful with larger tables, say, six or more players. I hope you enjoyed DunDraCon last weekend! I was at Gallifrey One during that time. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #103) I didn't look for roleplaying game materials in the dealers room. I was looking for fanzines!

John Redden reported sending me A&E #200-299 in *Reddened Stars* #32638-.8bit. I still need to send you a check to reimburse you for your postage. I reached out to Gabriel Roark about whether he still needs any of the mailings in that lot and will send the remainder to the University of Iowa soon. I just need

to retape and label the boxes for shipping. Thank you, again, for helping me find an archival home for your back issues! I've also got a bunch of *De Profundis* and LASFAPA to donate, as well, salvaged during a recent Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society work day at one of our storage units. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #98 and *Faculae & Filigree* #28)



—Grant Canfield

Jerry Stratton mentioned the Doctor Who serial "The Daleks" in *The Biblyon Free Press* dated January 2024. Oddly enough, I also recently watched it. (*The Brass Hat Mind* #6) The novelization by David Whitaker is much better. At Gallifrey One, they screened a recent colorization of the serial. Having just seen it in black and white—and read the tie-in book—I left after I'd seen what the colorization was like... and many Daleks. Wait... you meant the Peter Cushing movie, *Doctor Who and the Daleks*. Geez, you mean I have to watch *that* now, too? I RAE your Carpe Librum remarks.

Clark B. Timmins's *QUA AE7KL* #101 was an awesome array of game table irritations. I agree enthusiastically that mobile phones and tablets can be frustrating during game play—especially if the GM is running the game off a tablet. It always takes so long to find what they're looking for! The Mini Dump in particular made me chuckle. When I used minis more frequently, I'd organize them at home and would only take what I needed for that session, also organized.

Organizer boxes like those used for fishing lures and crafting beads are wonderful things. The one campaign I joined that used VTT irritated me even more than mobile phones and tablets. Personally, I just don't see the point, but then I hand draw maps and use handwritten character sheets.



—Teddy Harvia

A soundtrack can be useful, but only if it's ambient or atmospheric music that's turned on once, set at a reasonable volume, and left alone. I don't need to hear the crowd noise of the market square. One I think you missed: max-min optimizers. At least, they irritate me—players who've so creatively constructed a character that it takes advantage of every single boon or buff available to them across a game's rulebooks. Then they change things so a very straight-forward sword attack is in fact the force of violet flower petals or something similarly colorful. Yawn, and harrumph.

In *Mermecolion at a Picnic* #448, **Spike Y Jones** called me out on calling *Tabletop Gaming* a roleplaying game magazine. Of course, he's right. It's more than that.

In *The Silent Temple* #27, **Dylan Capel** mentioned *Frostgrave: Perilous Dark*. I look forward to learning more about your exploration of its dungeon crawl potential!

Lisa Padol's *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #387 continued our discussion of AI GMs. Do you, then, see a scenario in which a group of humans utilizes an AI to run a game for the group? That might

be worth considering, especially because in some cities and communities, there are more interested parties than interested GMs. The idea of a GM running the game they wanted to run for a bunch of AI players boggles my mind a little. I still think a human GM would result in a better experience in terms of a human, social situation, but I'd grant that AIs running games for groups of humans could also be interesting.

I have no interest in using an AI for solo play and would prefer tools that increase sociability rather than decrease. My concern might be that AI will tend to decrease sociability. (A similar line of thought could be applied to sexting or erotic roleplay online. The idea of people sexting with AIs makes me squeamish more than people roleplaying together does. One approach helps you learn how to interact with humans—even if online—and one does not. At least, not currently.) Your list of pet peeves I also RAE.

Mark Nemeth, have you learned anything more about the roleplaying forums featuring wolves that you mentioned in *The Seedling* #32? Not to be glib, but I'm sure that there's plenty that we don't know about. Rabbit holes within rabbit holes!

In *Random Access* #291, **Joshua Kronengold's** contention that a GM is also a player resonated with me in terms of the AI exchange with Lisa Padol above. "RPGs are ... social interactions." Hear! Hear! Rather than utilizing an AI as a player or a GM, I can see asking an AI questions about the content of rulebooks and references rather than referring to the texts ourselves... That might be interesting, but we'd have to figure out how to control for GM knowledge, character knowledge, and player knowledge.

Now, what arcane apae lingo did I use? Your remark pleased me, and I'll refer back to whichever *E&E* (#9?) was in *A&E* #576, but I must admit to consciously not using any of *A&E's* abbreviations, perhaps using RAE but eschewing RYCT and RYCTM—which aren't even on the list!—and the like, because I republush this stuff in a fanzine with a more general readership, *The Stf Amateur*.

And in *Bugbears & Ballyhoo* #28, **Gabriel Roark** mentioned the 31-Day Character Generation Challenge. Where do you folks learn about these things?

Comments on *Alarums & Excursions* #579

In **Jim Vassilakos** and **Timothy Collinson's** *Traveller Play-By-Email* writeup, I appreciated Vassilakos's consideration of different AI scenarios for GMs. I hadn't thought much about GM'ing for AI players. Your comment to Patrick Zoch about drawing inspiration using short stories reminded me of a solo play session in a hotel room during a business trip. I

had a paperback copy of the Tor double of Harlan Ellison's *Run for the Stars* and Jack Dann and Jack C. Haldeman II's *Echoes of Thunder*. (*Snow Poster Township* #10) When I needed to add some color or description, I opened the book to a random page for inspiration. How is this NPC feeling emotionally? Ah, a character on this page feels like this. Where am I right now? OK, I need to work in some sort of storage room or construction site element based on this random bit of text. That's not exactly what Zoch meant, but I recommend the practice. One could even use an issue of A&E for such things.



—Edd Vick

Your enthusiasm for your reMarkable might inspire me to return to using my own! We shall see. I only ever used it to take notes and send them as PDFs. I use my iPad for reading documents like fanzines, old magazines, and roleplaying game material.

A belated happy birthday to **Doc Cross**, as referenced in *Oops, Wrong Planet!* I turn 51 on Feb. 26. I'll have to check out your blog for the unfolding of *The Endless Mother Road*. That's not a bad way to repurpose the text! I hope you, too, had fun at DunDraCon.

I applaud **Joshua Kronengold's** efforts to not read Brandon Sanderson, as mentioned in *Random Access* #292. He's like the Yankees: Plenty of fans, doesn't need my help. I say that with a nod and a wink, of course. I've enjoyed the Sanderson I've read, but there's so much more to read. Which apa experienced the New York coup? I seem to have missed that story in a previous A&E. Your remarks on abstracting monetary systems intrigued me.

Clark B. Timmins's *QUA AE7KL* #102 reminded me that I recently read the release dates for *Dungeons & Dragons' One D&D*. The three core books will total more than 1,000 pages, and 80 new monsters will be introduced. The *One D&D Player's Handbook* is expected Sept. 17, the *Dungeon Master's Guide* Nov. 12, and the *Monster Manual* Feb. 18, 2025. Part of me

is excited about the new edition, and part of me feels like I felt when the second edition of AD&D was forthcoming: I'll pass; AD&D and BECMI is just fine. (In that case—and in the case of 3 and 3.5—I went back and picked it all up used later.) For 5th edition, I've kept up with the releases, mostly well after their publication, though I haven't used them at all. I might have finally evolved from a D&D player to a roleplaying game player! Regardless, part of me wants to return to 4th edition: gasp, shock, horror. That's when I returned to playing after a long dry spell—and got my son involved.

In *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #388, **Lisa Padol** offered me additional resources related to downtime. Thank you! Your comments about the services offered by Candle Mill (*E&E* #10) also made me chuckle. Similar to my comments to Lee Gold above, that I didn't populate Candle Mill with services inspired by its name identifies too much rote use of generators, perhaps, in this case a community name generator and a city generator. That was definitely an opportunity not to treat either—or both—as meaningless or incoherent.

Your discussion of Fate's Aspects reminded me how much I enjoyed playing *Dresden Files* (way back in 2011's *The Game Closet* #7). One could apply *A Torch in the Dark's* skills (above) like Aspects, in addition to modifying dice rolls. An interesting thought.

Patrick Riley offered an excellent tower design in *Sinister Things* #324. Kudos! In *The Dragon's Beard* #73, **Patrick Zoch** demonstrated what he meant by drawing roleplaying game inspiration from short stories. What fun! One Halloween, I adapted a Clive Barker short story for a one-off *Chill* game. I should still have the notes around somewhere. I often consider returning to a superhero-oriented campaign—say, using *Champions*, *Villains and Vigilantes*, or even *Mutants & Masterminds*—where the campaign and sessions draw inspiration from whatever comic book I've read recently. This is brilliant. I also appreciated your consideration of pet peeves.

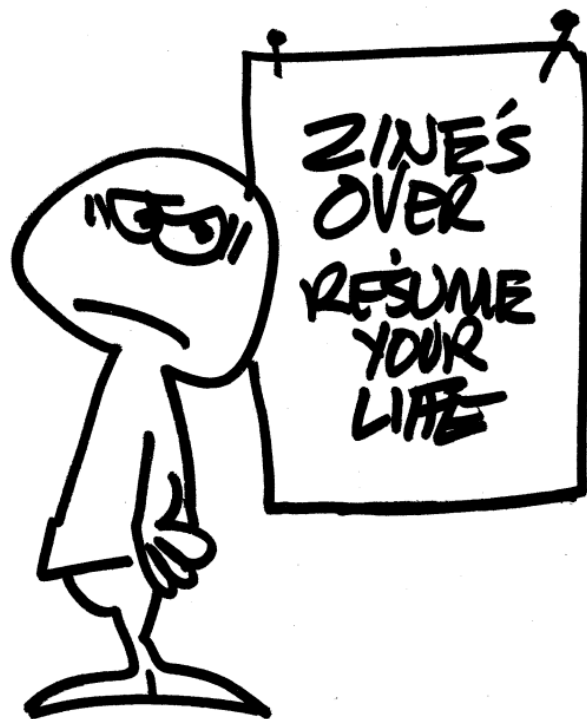
In *The Silent Temple* #27, **Dylan Capel's** report on the British Library's *Fantasy* exhibit made me jealous. It sounds like the curators took a broad approach to the subject, which is wonderful. I don't need any more books, but your comments about Robin Dews and John Stallard's *Talking Miniatures*, John Wombat and Ruth Moreira's *Blanche: The Rise of Grimdark*, and Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson's *Dice Men* resulted in some Amazon Wish List additions. Luckily, I already have *Dice Men*, so I shall need to find my copy.

Mark A. Wilson offered some roleplaying game goals for 2024 in *Bumbling Through Dungeons* #51. They inspired me to think about my own. I'd like to more consistently contribute to A&E, perhaps taking advantage of the Ignorable Themes for writing prompts. I'd like to more programmatically approach my solo play; right now I'm very much a dilettante, dipping into random games here and there, and never for long. I could better approach organizing the development of my own system utilizing aspects of various games.

I'd like to use what I have rather than seek out, buy, or otherwise acquire new materials to meet identified needs or gaps. I'd like to identify a number of different roleplaying game challenges—the 31-Day Character Generation Challenge, etc.—and decide which ones to calendar for participation.

I'd like to return to gaming with friends. I've fallen out of the OD&D game run by Lee Grixit on Discord because I can't dedicate four hours every Saturday midday. That suggests that... I'd like to return the game room that's become my home office and sorting (i.e. clutter) room to be able to host friends to play games. That would also help me accomplish other life goals of a more general nature.

And **Brian Christopher Misiaszek's** *Age of Menace* #226 included a wonderful story about the painting of miniatures and friendship. I particularly appreciated the photographs.



—William Rotsler

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #103

Feb. 21, 2024

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Last Week's Senryu

There are so many
books that I would like to read.
Read faster, drokk it!

Convention Report: Gallifrey One

Last Friday afternoon, I ended my work day early in order to head over to Gallifrey One at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott. I wasn't scheduled to volunteer in hospitality until Saturday, but there were a couple of panels I wanted to check out—as well as an evening screening. I was glad my work day accommodated doing so!

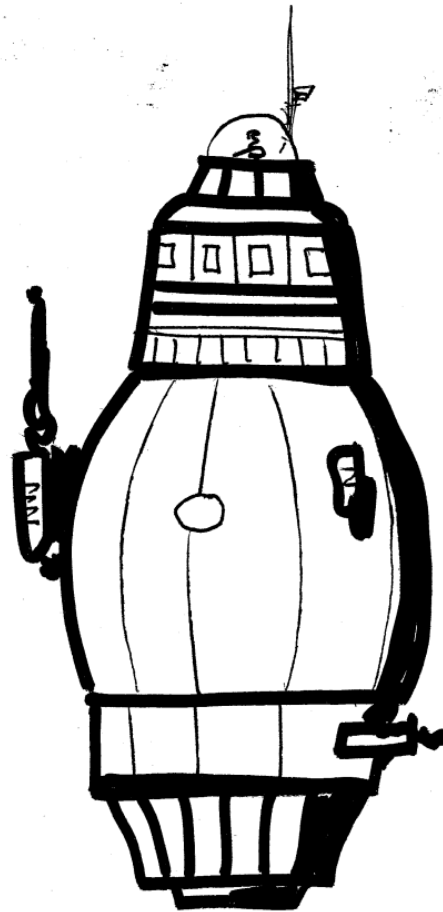
Upon arriving, I encountered Elayne Pelz at registration and procured my staff badge and program book—yes, a proper program book!—to orient myself. I had some time before the 4:30 p.m. panel began, so I took a turn around the dealers room. In addition to the usual hucksters selling *Doctor Who* tie-in novels, DVDs, Big Finish audio recordings, and other items, including clothing and crafts, I was pleased to see the return of a seller offering more general science fiction and related books, as well as Jim and Melody Rondeau (<https://www.crossovers.net/makeitgoaway>), whose booth is always a joy to behold.

While I later discovered that other vendors were also selling older *Doctor Who*-related comic books, including *Doctor Who Weekly* and *Doctor Who Monthly*, and in a couple instances, a very small number of fanzines, the Rondeaus can be relied on to offer the best in *Doctor Who*- and *Blake's 7*-related magazines, comics, and other items such as buttons and pins. They shall remain my first and last stop.

At 4:30, there was a panel discussion titled “Silence in the Zine Library” (inspired by the Tenth Doctor episode “Silence in the Library”—S4E8). Moderated by Ivy Hanover, the discussion featured Lena Barkin, Gareth Kavanagh, and Steven Sautter, who offered multiple perspectives on the history and current state of *Doctor Who* fanzines.

Barkin is a fandom studies enthusiast and freelancer who contributed to the Bloomsbury book

Adventures Across Space and Time: A Doctor Who Reader, focusing on *Doctor Who* fandom on Tumblr. Currently interested in *Starsky & Hutch* fanzines, she in part concentrates on fanzine archives, collections, and scholarship.



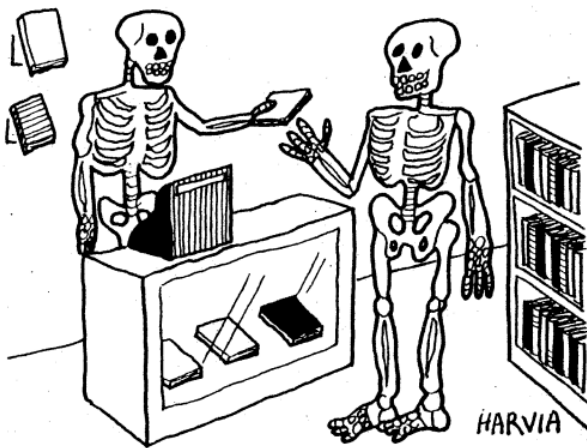
—William Rotsler

Kavanagh publishes the semiprozine *Vworp Vworp!*, an utterly luscious periodical that's slightly overwhelming. (<https://vworpvworp.co.uk>) And Sautter served as assistant editor and artist for *The Terrible Zodin*, a “new wave” *Doctor Who* fanzine active between 2008-2020. (<https://doctorwhottz.blogspot.com>) He also contributed to Tucker DS Press' book *A World of Demons: The Villains of Doctor Who*.

The panel's discussion explored the evolution of *Doctor Who* fanzines over time, touching on the earliest such publications as well as current fan activities. Barkin remarked that *Doctor Who* fandom seems to be somewhat separate from other

fanfiction-driven media fandoms. “*Who* is its own ecosystem,” she said.

Kavanagh highlighted fanzines’ contributions to keeping *Doctor Who* fandom alive even when the show was off the air. “We had *Doctor Who Monthly*, and that was it,” he said. “Fanzines became a form of open-source software to fill in the gaps.” The return of the program and its new mainstream appeal and success has resulted in a resurgence in fan activity—though it’s more challenging to engage fanzine contributors online than it used to be. A lot of people express interest in contributing something to a forthcoming fanzine, but don’t end up doing so.



**A real tribute to a great author
is that fans keep buying his books
long after they’re dead.**

—Teddy Harvia

Sautter first encountered fanzines through *Star Trek* fandom—*Enterprise Incidents*—but didn’t know what they were. When he was 16, the editor of the fanzine published by the Bay Area club the Legion of Rassilon left, and Sautter stepped in. He later also published the fanzine *I’ll Explain Later*. Participants agreed that successful fanzines rely on an energetic, inspired editor, even when multiple participants contribute material.

People in the audience weren’t very familiar with fanzines, and a few asked how someone might get involved in them—or even begin collecting them. Kavanagh indicated that in the past, the best way to get involved in fanzines was to read fanzines—and to send away for them responding to advertisements and reviews. Now that so much fan communication has moved online, entry points might be more challenging to find, even in spaces dedicated to fan activity.

“It can be difficult to find people who are making fanzines to be aware of their call for stories,” Barkin

said. “*Doctor Who* is interesting, but there’s not a lot of talk about making fanzines. Other fandoms aren’t fanzines all the time, but they’re present.”

Sautter indicated that Facebook offers several groups dedicated to *Doctor Who* fanzines, such as *Doctor Who Fanzine Collectors*, but they’re mostly dedicated to cataloging older materials. Regardless, when the show resumed broadcasting, a new generation of fen brought a new wave of fanzines—which didn’t last very long. Panelists joked about the challenge of publishing a third issue.

The group also discussed the different kinds of *Doctor Who* fanzines available. Some include news and interviews, researching the production and history of the show. Others concentrate on fanfiction and other fannish writing such as poetry. Sautter commented that really intense, personal fanzines—goshwowboyoboy—can be difficult to sustain. “Raw intensity burns out quickly versus exploring a broader subject,” he said.

Production and design was also considered. Suggesting that few fanzine publishers still print at home—or utilize photocopy shops—panelists oddly focused on digital printing, which requires more concentration on design and results in higher-priced physical fanzines—particularly when using Lulu. Regardless, readers still desire a physical item.

The Internet can make it easier to work with contributors around the world—*The Terrible Zodin* featured work by people in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, and Ethiopia, for example—but online-only fanzines might be less successful. “People don’t do digital fanzines because they want an artifact,” Kavanagh said. “It’s a conscious decision. People don’t read PDF fanzines.” Panelists joked about filing them away to read later, and then never doing so.

The Internet did, however, open new avenues for fen such as Archive of Our Own and Gallifrey Base, said Barkin. Panelists agreed that it can be dangerous to rely on online repositories. A person in the audience said, “The Internet is also transient. A fanzine will last 1,000 times longer.” Parallels were drawn to cuneiform tablets, as well as how television show producers use social media and fanzines to gauge public opinion about a given program.

“The fanzines that endure are somehow different,” Kavanagh remarked. Hanover suggested that the value of fanzines is that people have come together to make something, rather than individual activity online such as social media or discussion forum posts. For example, at least one recent *Doctor Who* novelist first wrote for fanzines.

Will fanzines continue to thrive and survive? “The

fanzines that are left will keep going,” Kavanagh predicted. “The *Doctor Who Magazine* specials are really fanzines. Pick a thing you love that will resonate [and start your own].” Barkin also encouraged people to publish their own fanzines. “It helps to have a group of friends interested in the same thing,” she said. “The only way to see a fanzine you want to read is to do it yourself.”

After the panel, I gave each of the participants the recent distribution of APA-L, indicating that it’s a weekly amateur press association active since 1964. “This is the real underground!” replied Kavanagh.

I then went to another panel, “Stay on Target,” which focused on the role the Target Books novelizations played in filling in the gaps before the advent of home video, DVDs, and streaming. The panel, moderated by podcaster Jason Miller (*Trap One* and *Doctor Who Literature*), featured novelization authors Paul Cornell, James Goss, Mark Morris, Gary Russell; and Kathryn Sullivan, who represented readers.

Cornell wrote several *Doctor Who* episodes, including “Father’s Day,” “Human Nature,” and “The Family of Blood,” as well as several New Adventures novels such as *Timewyrm: Revelation, Love and War, No Future, Happy Endings*, and *Oh No It Isn’t!*

Goss worked on the BBC Web site before moving into animated Webcasts and missing episodes prior to writing for Big Finish audio dramas. He wrote the novelizations of Douglas Adams’s scripts for *Doctor Who* “City of Death” and “The Pirate Planet” as well as the more recent adaptation of *The Giggle*.

Morris, a horror author otherwise, has written multiple *Doctor Who* novels and novelizations, as well as Big Finish audios. Most recently, he novelized the 60th anniversary special “Wild Blue Yonder.” (*T&T* #96). Gary Russell edited *Doctor Who Magazine* from 1992-1995, worked as a producer for Big Finish, and wrote multiple novels and novelizations, including *The Star Beast*. (*T&T* #96)

An author of young adult fantasy and science fiction, Sullivan wrote “The Fanzine Factor” in the Hugo-winning anthology *Chicks Dig Time Lords*. She also contributed essays to *Children of Time: The Companions of Doctor Who, Outside in: 160 New Perspectives on 160 Classic Doctor Who Stories by 160 Writers* and *Outside In Regenerates*. She also wrote fanfiction between 1982-2001.

This wasn’t the best or most organized panel discussion—it started after light debate about who was going to moderate—but the experiences and expertise of the panelists more than made up for the disorganization. Regardless, discussion mostly focused on “best” and “most favorite” questions

touching on Target novelizations, authors, and covers.

The Target line of novelizations launched in 1973, and most of the participants started reading them at or shortly after their inception. They agreed that the value of the novelizations was twofold. First of all, before the advent of home video, the books were a way to keep up with *Doctor Who* even if you weren’t able to watch it frequently—it wasn’t aired where you lived, for example—or to catch up on a serial if you had to miss an episode to go to a friend’s birthday party.



—Edd Vick

Secondly, while many of the novelizations were scene-by-scene recaps of a serial, many of them went above and beyond that mandate, introducing new characters, back story, and lore, to build on the worlds presented in the program. That wasn’t always possible, however, and depending on the book project, authors—old and new alike—are directed to either stick to the script, or to take more free rein in their writing. Terrance Dicks was largely viewed as a good example of an economical, efficient novelization writer while Malcolm Hulke “was more freeform,” according to Cornell. That potential to build on what was in a given serial struck me while reading *Doctor Who and the Daleks* recently. (*The Brass Hat Mind* #6)

Sullivan suggested that it is that opportunity for additional information that makes the books worth reading to this day. “Why does Rose go to the basement?” she asked. “They can also give you pieces

of information you missed in the show.”

Cornell, Goss, Morris, and Russell discussed the editorial process, including how many notes—and of what type—various products received. And much of the conversation centered on the secrecy surrounding the three recent 60th anniversary special novelizations. “It’s hard to write without seeing the episode,” Russell said. “We had to work out what we could get access to.” In some cases, authors are able to watch early cuts without special effects.



—Alan White

In other cases, they might go off the script only. And while Russell was also able to draw on the original comic book version of “The Star Beast,” Morris drew sketches while watching the episode—later asking for reference stills—and when Cornell adapted “Twice Upon a Time,” he had to skip a family holiday dinner in order to watch the special in order to fill in some details.

While I’d read *The Star Beast* and *Wild Blue Yonder*, I hadn’t yet read *The Giggle*. Inspired by Goss’s stories about the song lyrics copyright clearance process and descriptions of the book, I started reading it upon arriving home Friday evening. “The book is outrageously silly and wrong,” Goss said. “It’s progressively more chaotic. The book breaks down completely.” I’m only a third of the way through, and he’s not incorrect.

The Target books and ongoing novelizations—like those available to *Star Trek* fans—help bring *Doctor Who*’s media fandom closer to literary sf fandom. And, like fanzines, the novelizations and other books have helped sustain the fandom over the decades regardless of the TV show’s prospects at any point in time.

After the two panels, I walked a short distance to the nearest affordable food for dinner: Carl’s Jr. There were other Gallifrey One participants there, and I overheard a couple of interesting conversations. One discussion among two Strategicon OrcCon attendees touched on ideological debates between roleplaying

game enthusiasts at Gen Con, such as people who play roleplaying games versus people who play *Dungeons & Dragons*. They also talked about countries with more competitive roleplaying game industries, such as Japan. (*Emulators & Engines* #8)

While walking back to Gallifrey One, I overheard a mobile phone conversation in which a man was describing the con to a friend. He told them to bring a scarf and said he had friends at the con, but there was a lot of programming going on at once, so it was challenging to meet up with them. “You have to make choices,” he said.

Over the course of my time at the con Friday, in addition to Pelz, I saw Chris Marble several times (Ozanne’s Law in effect, perhaps), as well as Craig Miller and Cathy Johnson. Marble recognized my voice—but not me—when I said hi, and I didn’t get a chance to talk to Miller or Johnson.

Upon returning, I ducked briefly into a screening of fan videos—featuring Peter Capaldi and *Star Wars*—before looking for an electrical outlet at which to charge my mobile. Most of the outlets weren’t accessible for use, but I eventually found one that was outside a meeting room. The line for the Masquerade of Mandragora was down the hall and around the corner. People reportedly started lining up at 7 p.m., so it must have been a popular event.

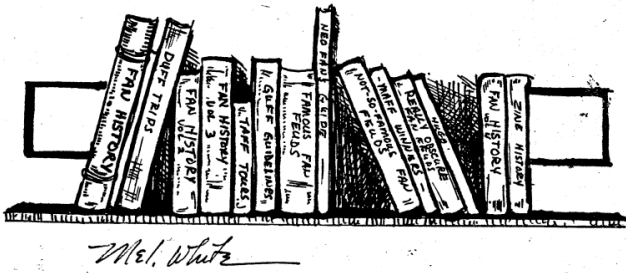
After my mobile had enough juice—so I could call a car when I wanted to go home—I made my way to the screening room, where I saw much of “Wild Blue Yonder” and “The Giggle” in its entirety. I arrived a little into the second 60th anniversary special and had just missed “The Star Beast,” which I still haven’t seen. Had I referred to the program book and schedule, I would have made a point to arrive earlier!

I enjoyed both episodes—“Wild Blue Yonder” is an excellent example of a more compact, foreboding episode of *Doctor Who*, and “The Giggle” was a goofy delight—and then headed to the main room for the screening of the recently colorized “The Daleks.”

Arriving before the end of the previous session, I caught the tail end of a rousing DJ performance by composer Dominic Glynn accompanied by large-screen projections of computer animation and other visual imagery. A CD of his score for *Doctor Who: Survival* is available, and his SoundCloud includes work related to *Blake’s 7* and *Doctor Who*. (<https://soundcloud.com/nobones-2>)

I stayed just long enough to get a sense of what “The Daleks” colorization was like—and to see the 1963-1964 Daleks in full-color glory. (It was pretty cool.) I’d just watched the serial in black and white—and read the novelization—so I didn’t feel like

hanging around much longer given the time I had to wake up on Saturday morning.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Aliens: The World's Leading Scientists on the Search for Extraterrestrial Life edited by Jim Al-Khalili (Picador, 2017)

This is a collection of essays by various scientists about aliens, ranging in themes from “Close Encounters” (the actuality of alien visitors on Earth), “Where to look for life elsewhere,” “Life As We Know It,” and “Alien Hunting.”

Most of it will probably be overly familiar, but I did find some surprises in at least one essay, “Alone in the Universe: The Improbability of Alien Civilizations,” by Matthew Cobb. I learned a term there: abiogenesis—the appearance of living matter from non-living components.

Cobb is doubtful about life elsewhere because, he writes, “We have no evidence that it has happened more than once on Earth.” He also wrote about another term new to me—eukaryogenesis—the creation of multi-celled organisms. He writes, “What happened was not the consequence of random mutation and the subsequent sifting of inherited characters that have differential fitness. . . . Instead, there appears to have been a single event of mind boggling improbability, for it involved two life forms interacting in a most unusual way.” (p. 159)

So, in other words, it took two exceptional events to create multicellular life on earth—besides dodging all those meteors and comets. After reading this essay, it is definitely several steps down to discussing what might be in that Air Force hangar in Arizona! (Cy Chauvin)

From the Reading Pile: Fanzine Reviews

Blood Will Tell by Julie Harrington (Knightwriter Press, 1999)

I picked up this comb-bound fanzine at Gallifrey One last weekend. Published in 1999, it's a 95-page typewritten fanfiction novel or novella written by Julie Harrington. I debated whether to include this in the book review section above, but in *Doctor Who*

fandom—and perhaps more general sf fandom—this would be considered a fanzine, not a book.

While I don't read a lot of fanfiction, I do enjoy reading *Doctor Who* novelizations and novels, and Harrington's story featuring the Seventh Doctor is written relatively well. In it, the Doctor, traveling without a companion, lands on a planet, Seri, that seems to be taking a developmental path different than the one he expects it to be on.

He leaves the Tardis to identify the cause of gravitational fluctuations or something and finds himself in the midst of a nascent civil war between the planet's working class, farmers, and the ruling class, led by someone who survived the Vampire War. Livestock have been mysteriously dying. Some of the humanoids on the planet, the Serum (harf—I should've seen *that* coming) are descendents of the vampires, while others are the result of genetic manipulation.

The leader of the Serum intends to return to Gallifrey in a fleet of mothballed and pre-programmed spaceships in order to destroy it, and the Doctor is left to figure out how to best help the planet's original inhabitants while stopping the vampires from running rampant throughout the universe.

While there are several misspellings or typographical errors throughout the fanzine, as fiction, it's written very well. The story is definitely better than what I'm used to from online fanfiction, which can be atrocious.

The Great Vampires only appear in one television storyline, 1980's four-part serial “State of Decay,” which features the Fourth Doctor. The description I read online resonates with several aspects of this fanfiction—including a spaceship disguised as a castle. The vampires have also been featured in multiple novels, including Andrew Hickey's *Head of State* and Neil Penswick's *The Pit*—which also featured the Seventh Doctor—as well as several short stories. This is a good example of a fanfiction author focusing on an aspect of *Doctor Who* that hasn't gotten too much attention. Similarly, I'm curious about her selection of the Seventh Doctor as the protagonist. Perhaps he's the author's favorite!

There are a couple of interesting science fictional elements in the fanzine. The leader of the Serum plans to travel to Gallifrey using a wormhole bridging a black hole (the entry point) and a white hole (the exit). And those who imprisoned the Serum on the planet utilize mini black holes as extremely destructive bombs. “The size of a nucleus of an atom, a mini black hole can level hundreds of miles. . . .” Harrington writes. “It is the ultimate weapon.”

Even though I was looking for other fanzines—not

predominantly fanfiction—at Gallifrey One, I’m glad I picked this up. It was an enjoyable read, points to a serial I might not seek out in the near term otherwise, and makes me wonder whether folks still distribute fanzines like this—rather than concentrating on online fanfiction. KnightWriter Press, also known as the Waveney Zine Shop, once offered about 2,000 fanzines and closed in 2010.



—William Rotsler

Juvenalia: “The Trip to Mars”

I wrote the following story when I was 10 years old. Its published form varies slightly from the handwritten original.

Hello! I am a 10 year old named Heath Row. Could I tell you a secret? You won’t tell anyone? OK, the secret is: Alan and I are building a rocket ship! I know

it sounds crazy, but we are. What’s that? You say it won’t work? OK, tell you what—Alan and I will go to Mars and bring you back a cassette tape of our trip! Fair enough? Well, because I’m at school and all, I’ll tell you the story now.

It was midnight on a Saturday. I was in bed waiting for Alan’s signal. I heard a “Meow,” hopped out of bed, and ran to the window. It was just an ordinary alley cat! I said to myself, “I wonder if I’ll have to do this all night.” About 10 minutes later, I heard a bird-like call: “He-rrr-eathcheap—He-rrr-eathcheap,” hopped out of bed, and ran to the window again.

It was Alan. I dressed and climbed out of the window, looked at the roof to make sure I could jump without getting hurt, and jumped to the front lawn. Alan said, “Heath, did your parents give you any trouble?”

“No. Did yours?” I replied.

“A little,” he answered.

“OK then; let’s go!”

In a few minutes, we were behind Tuttle’s Pharmacy. Alan said, “There she is! What a beauty.”

“Let’s not stand here and admire it too long,” I said. In a few minutes, we were in the ship. “Air gauge full?”

Alan replied, “Check. Everything’s all ready!”

“OK,” I said. “Thanks for shortening the list!”

“You’re welcome,” Alan replied.

“Alan, start the countdown,” I said.

“OK. 10... 9... 8... ,” Alan started to count. “7... 6... 5... 4... 3... 2... 1... blast off!” With a roar and a billow of smoke, we were in the air.

“Heath, do you think we will crash?” Alan asked.

I answered, “No. Well, I hope not.”

“I also hope it doesn’t crash. My mother would kill me.”

“Alan,” I said. “You’d already be dead!”

“Oh yeah. Sorry!” Alan said apologetically.

“Let’s not talk about it any more, OK?” I said.

“OK,” he said.

In a few more minutes, we could see Mars. “Alan, how much fuel did you put in the rocket?” I asked.

“Fuel? None!” he answered.

I exclaimed, “Well, then how are we flying?”

“The wind’s behind us or something,” he said quietly.

“Mars is coming up, Alan,” I said. “Let’s crash there, OK?”

“OK!” Alan said.

“How many more miles to go, Alan?” I asked.

He answered, “None. We’re going to crash!”

In a few minutes, we recovered and started looking for civilization. Alan said, “Heath? Why do you think

there's people here?"

I answered, "Because Ray Bradbury says there is!"

"Ray Bradbury?" Alan asked. "Who's Ray Bradbury?"

"~~Never mind that now~~ He wrote *The Martian Chronicles*," I said. "I see something moving." We walked quietly over to what seemed to be a car with gull-wing doors, dual laser blasters in front, wings on the side, and rocket engines in the back. "Hello there!" I called. "We mean you peace—peace!"

A martian stepped out and said, "Where is this peace? Give it to me!"

"Uhh," I said. "We can't give it to you."

"OK, wise guys," the martian said. "Come with me."

"Why?" Alan asked.

"For fooling an officer! That's why," the martian exclaimed.

"Under whose law?" I spoke up.

The martian answered, "King Groomba-lambie's, of course!" The martian shoved us into the vehicle, and in a few minutes, he said, "OK. We're here. Get out!" We got out, and the martian walked us to a gigantic castle and left us with the guards.

"So, some more loonies!" one guard said.

"What?" Alan asked.

"Never mind. He's ready for you," the second guard said. We walked through the doors, down a long passageway, down some stairs, and into King Groomba-lambie's throne room.

"Halt!" cried the guard. Two other guards frisked us.

"We have no weapons. Please let us go," said Alan. One of the guards found a flashlight in my pocket, turned it on, and shone it in another guard's face.

The guard yelled in surprise, and the king said, "Guards! Take them to the chamber for being armed illegally in the town of Eegle-weegle. Now!"

The guards took us to a very small room with a mat on the floor, no windows, no doors, skeletons on the floor, and a trapdoor in the ceiling. One guard shoved us through the trapdoor while the other said, "I hope you enjoy your stay. You will get fed twice, once at noon, once at midnight. If you're not awake, you won't be fed. Bye!" They shut the trapdoor and walked away laughing.

"How are we going to get out of here, Heath?" Alan asked.

"I don't know," I answered.

"Well, I'm tired. Let's sleep a while," Alan yawned.

"OK," I replied.

I don't know how long we slept, but when we woke, there was light pouring in through the cracks around the trapdoor.

"Alan," I asked. "What time is it?"

Alan answered, "12 p.m. Why?"

"Maybe we can escape now!" I exclaimed.

"OK," Alan asked. "How?"

"Well, you'd stand on my shoulders, push open the trapdoor and climb out!" I said.

"How will you get out?" Alan asked.

I replied, "Well, you'd find some rope and I'd climb right out."

"OK," Alan said. "But this better work!"

"It will; it will," I assured him.

He got on my shoulders, pushed the trapdoor open, and climbed out. 10 minutes passed. Then 20. Finally, Alan opened the trapdoor.

"What took you so long?" I asked.

"I don't know my way around here. Do you?" Alan panted.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?" a guard shouted.

"Nothing. Ha ha... oh boy," Alan said nervously.

The guard pulled me out, slapped handcuffs on both of us, and shoved us toward the throne room. Two guards pushed open the doors, and the guard shoved us through them. "Yes, guard number WRKR100.7?" the king said.

The guard reported, "I found these two trying to escape from the chamber!"

"OK," the king ordered. "You will shoot them out into space in the spaceship that guard number WIBA104 found."

"Yes, sir," the guard said.

In about 10 minutes, we got to the spaceship. "That's our ship!" Alan whispered to me.

"What?" the guard asked.

"I said, 'That's a nice ship!'" Alan shouted. The guard shoved us out of the vehicle and into the ship.

"Now, goodbye!" the guard said as he pressed a button marked autopilot.

In 20 minutes, we crashed behind Tuttle's. A big crowd started to form, and Alan's mother—and my mother—inched through the crowd.

"Heath, where have you been?" my mother asked me.

I answered, "Alan and I went to Mars."

"Heath," my mother said. "You've read too many comic books!"

Editor's Notes: This short story was hand written on spiral notebook paper with pencil and ballpoint pen. While ungraded, it had been marked up by a teacher,

perhaps, and it's notable that I utilized almost no paragraph breaks throughout the original piece. The same was true in "The Flying Things." (T&T #102).

I misspelled several words, for which spelling has been corrected, and the strikethrough is my own writing, while the more serious answer was my teacher's suggestion. Alan is most likely Alan Wagner, a friend from grade school (I wonder what he's up to these days!), and the guard numbers were apparently inspired by local radio stations.



—Mel. White

WRKR 100.7 FM broadcast from Racine, Wis., and the other number is a combination of two stations. WIBA's frequency was actually 101.5 FM, broadcasting from Madison, and 104 FM would have been WZEE—Z104—also out of Madison. I remember Z104 as the station I listened to most before I discovered WORT in Madison and the college station WSUW in nearby Whitewater. WIBA was more classic rock oriented. I do not remember WRKR.

Rereading this story helps me begin to date my introduction to science fiction. The description of the martian "car" is reminiscent of the T-47 Airspeeder used on Hoth in *The Empire Strikes Back*, released in 1980 when I was 7 years old. (I saw *Star Wars* in the theater with my parents when I was 4.) Given the Ray Bradbury reference, I'd clearly read *The Martian Chronicles* by the time of this writing, perhaps in fifth grade if I was indeed 10. (Most of my library reading up to that point included Hardy Boys and Tarzan books, as well as the Three Investigators. I was aware of Tom Swift but wasn't interested in reading those books as a child for some reason. Somehow, I wasn't aware of Edgar Rice Burroughs's non-Tarzan writing.

I wish I had been!

Regardless, my mother places blame for the fanciful tale on my reading of comic books. I bought many such items at Tuttle's—the business's real name—which adjoined a tea room and, later, a Hallmark store. The parking lot for my father's workplace was adjacent to the Hallmark store. While not actually *behind* Tuttle's, the rocket ship would have taken off from that parking lot.

Comments on APA-L #3057

In *Leeway* dated for Feb. 15, 2024, **Lee Gold** indicated that the recent rains haven't affected her home too much. That's good news. We've been relatively unaffected in Culver City, as well, though the rain continued into early this week after taking a break for most of the weekend. Good luck with Barry's upcoming medical appointments and surgery. Your remarks on Stephen Jay Gould's biological homage to Mickey Mouse was interesting.

The house I grew up in had a functional fireplace. We used it occasionally and had a woodpile beside the mulch piles adjacent to the garden plot that eventually was give over to lawn grass. In our Culver City home, we also have a working fireplace. In the past, I've gotten yard carts of wood from nearby Whitt's Wood Yard and stored it by the garage. We didn't buy wood last winter, and now spring is approaching.

The home in which we stay in Portugal has two fireplaces, one on the main level in the kitchen—and one downstairs in the basement. They're different than our fireplaces in the United States. They're enclosed in metal to harness the ambient heat and are equipped with fans and vents to distribute that heat into the house. The fireplaces here seem to be more for ambiance than heating. The house in Portugal also has an outdoor grill for cooking... in the open-air garage.

Your recollection of the space Navy books that might have been written by David Feintuch tracks with my experience of *Fisherman's Hope* (T&T #101). Discipline of students in that book included caning.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1581 described a Pontian-dance party. I found your description evocative. The return of *Worlds of If* magazine is indeed worth cheering about. Jean-Paul Garnier sent me an advanced reading copy earlier this week, and I read it that night. A review shall appear in a forthcoming issue. In short: It's very good. I shall share your cover art feedback with Taral Wayne.

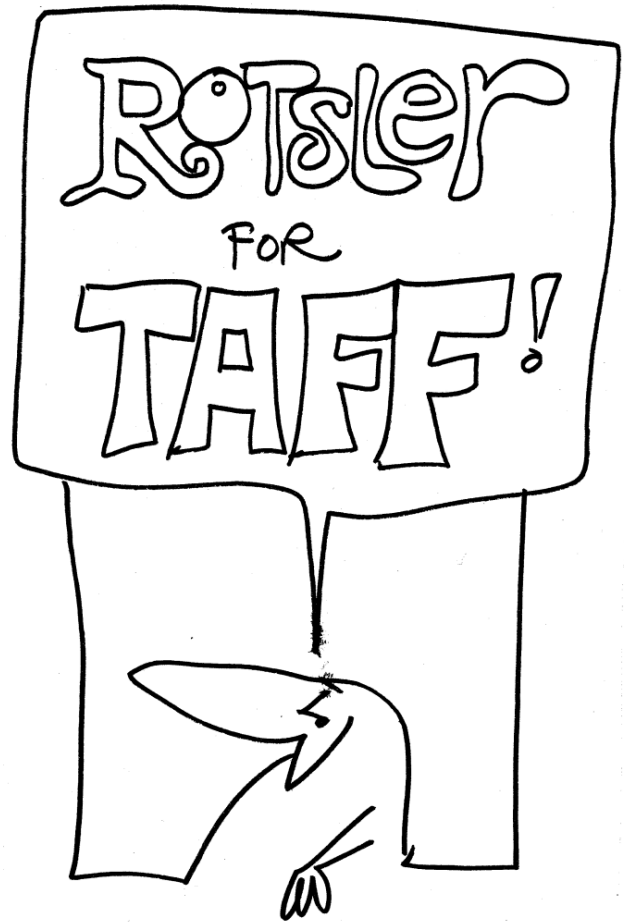
In *Late Breaking Gnus* Vol. 2 #18, **Joe Zeff** offered some "stale comments" on APA-L #3054, mentioning the precursor to the more recent omnibus, Jim Valentino's *Normalman: The Novel*. I have a copy of that, too. It's out of print, but the omnibus is in color,

while the previous collection was black and white. You know? I've never watched *Farscape*. Perhaps it's frelling time I do so. In the *Doctor Who* fanzine I review above, Julie Harrington uses the word "flog" as an all-purpose expletive, I believe.

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #45 speculated about potential rain during the now-past Gallifrey One. It ended up not raining until, I think, Sunday evening. I checked the precipitation forecast in WeatherBug multiple times during the con and was pleasantly surprised it was only lightly misting when I called a car home Sunday night. Midweek now, it's sunny, and I can see blue skies from my home office window.

I used to employ commas in names that featured junior or senior, but the *Associated Press Stylebook*, much used by journalists and editors, eschews them. So it'd be "Jim Terry Jr." rather than "Jim Terry, Jr." The AP also eschews commas for corporate entities: "Time Warner Inc." vs. "Time Warner, Inc." Personally, I find either is fine, but sans commas is likely easier to read. Unfortunately, I didn't run into Marcia Minsky at Gallifrey One. I hope she had a great time!

In *Always Going Home* #46, **C.D. Carson** reported narrowly escaping the collapse of a wheeled shelving unit. Glad you made it out alive! I found your discussion of R. Buckminster Fuller and the need for concentrated energy rather than diffuse energy interesting. I appreciated the sentence fragment "[W]e have dammed almost every stream worth damming... ." Thank you for ending your fanzine with "Soon Hari." I liked that in *Vanamonde*, too.



—William Rotsler

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #104

Feb. 29, 2024

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Administrivia: Ignorable Themes

Occasionally, others remark on not finding enough comment hooks in a given distribution. That could mean that we don't always write about topics that interest each other. It could also mean that we don't always respond to each other in meaningful ways, or engage each other in discussion. It could mean many other things.

Taking a cue from *Alarums & Excursions*, I'd like to experiment with the idea of Ignorable Themes, or potential areas of inquiry. Each week, starting in this distribution, the next three Ignorable Themes will be offered in the table of contents. You can ignore them, or you can choose to use them as a writing prompt of sorts to encourage discussion beyond our usual natter, mailing comments, and other writing. (They work quite well in A&E, though I tend not to utilize them.)

I'll be making these up as we go along, and some might work better than others. If you'd like to suggest an Ignorable Theme, please do so. We can even call them something else if we want to, like Potential Speculation.

Last Week's Senryu

Gallifrey One is now in the past until the next one: The future.

I enjoyed Gallifrey One so much last weekend that I eagerly awaited participating in Corflu 41 online—to the extent that I thought it was the weekend prior to its actual occurrence! Last weekend, I dialed into the Zoom channel several times and wrote several letters of comment to fanzines while taking note of Corflu's schedule for Friday and Saturday. Andy Hooper reminded me that Corflu is actually... this weekend.

Convention Report: Gallifrey One (cont.)

On Saturday during Gallifrey One mid-month, I volunteered in hospitality from 7-11 a.m. and 4-6 p.m., my first year pursuing an a la carte schedule rather than a six-hour shift in order to be able to

participate in programming and other aspects of the con. The convention didn't host a con suite this year, but we offered a staff lounge featuring three meals a day for con staff, as well as snacks and refreshments throughout the day.

During my morning shift, I emptied water from the coolers, dumping the water outside in the grass by the hotel pool. I then restocked our ice supply, a laborious process at the ice machine down the hall. You fill a scoop with ice from the machine, and you drop that in the ice cart. You repeat that hundreds of times to amass an adequate supply of ice for the food displays and beverage coolers.

I restocked and faced food items on display for fellow staff, and before the end of my morning shift, I replaced breakfast items—cereal and oatmeal, yogurt, and the like—with lunch items: sandwiches, salads, and frozen burritos and chimichangas. While I was skeptical of the Mexican options, staff reported that they were actually quite good!

Not too many of the staff availed themselves of the lounge Saturday morning, though we had a moderate breakfast rush. The con suite for Loscon is a generally more active affair.

IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD
for YOU, DON'T MAKE FUN
of PHIL'S FEATHER CAP..



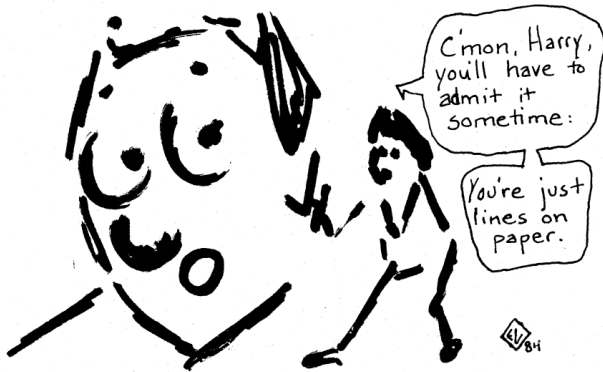
After my morning shift, the first panel I went to was "The State of *Star Trek*," moderated by Larry Nemecek, or "Dr. Trek." Panelists included writer of licensed comic books Jody Houser, *Star Trek Continues* Web series writer and director James Kerwin, and comic book writer and historian Scott Tipton. The panel discussed the current state of affairs for *Star Trek* and potential future developments.

Nemecek opened the panel by asking members of the audience which *Star Trek* series made them a fan of the franchise, as well as which *Star Trek* was their favorite. He remarked that the results were more diverse than the last couple of years; the range represented surprised me a little. The more recent series drew less enthusiasm than some of the middle series.

The moderator posited that while there is currently "tons of Trek" available for fans, reception of new

programs such as *Star Trek: Lower Decks* and *Star Trek: Prodigy* can occasionally pose challenges—and the state of streaming and uncertainty related to Paramount’s stability as a business could complicate matters.

Kerwin indicated that Paramount’s current debt status and being up for sale could affect the future of *Star Trek*. Some potential buyers might not bode well for the franchise—particularly Warner Bros., which has a history of “deleting things” such as the *Batgirl* movie—while other buyers could be more positive. When shows return for future seasons, will there be 10 episodes, 15-16, or 26?



—Edd Vick

Regardless of the potential production and distribution challenges, there is currently a lot of *Trek* available for viewing, including several new series. That hasn’t always been the case. “It’s hilarious that there’s only two or three *Star Trek* series on the air right now,” Tipton commented. “Not every *Trek* show is for me any more. That brings more people in.”

What’s on the air, or streaming? *Star Trek: Discovery* will end after Season 5, though there was speculation about a sixth season. *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* is quite popular. *Star Trek: Lower Decks* will return. *Star Trek: Prodigy* is an underappreciated option on Netflix. There’s *Star Trek: Starfleet Academy*. And there’s speculation about the forthcoming *Star Trek: Section 31* movie starring Michelle Yeoh—and whether it would inspire a new series.

Star Trek: Picard recently “swept” the Saturn Awards, earning four trophies, including Best Television Series and accolades for actors Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, and Jeri Ryan. James Cameron reportedly quipped, “What is this, the *Star Trek* awards?”

In addition to the current wealth of *Trek* options available, licensed comic books are relatively healthy right now, even if there’s not a lot of merchandise

available. Panelists and audience members alike discussed the licensing status for merchandisers such as EXO-6, Eaglemoss, Playmates, and WizKids.

Comic books face their own production and distribution challenges—even if licensed comics are widely available. “It’s hard to be a comic shop,” Houser said. “[We] need to reconsider distribution, though the book market and libraries seem OK.”

In fact, Houser and Tipton don’t consider digital distribution of comics as a threat to the format. “I owned a comic shop for eight years. I did really well, but I wouldn’t do it again,” Tipton said. “Digital comics didn’t hurt sales because comics collectors always come in weekly. Digital comics lead people to books.” (Tipton used to co-own Blastoff Comics in North Hollywood, which was bought by Collector’s Paradise.)

Another area that attracted interest was gaming. Modiphius’ roleplaying game *Star Trek Adventures* and its recent range of solo Captain’s Logs, as well as *Star Trek Online* are continuing to attract players and fan—and are beginning to contribute to what might be considered canon. Houser indicated that a ship designer for *Star Trek Online* also contributed designs for the roleplaying game, and that such designs later appeared in *Star Trek: Picard* Season 2.

That situation reminded me of the West End Games’ *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* and its contribution to related lore. *Star Wars* was once so active in terms of licensed editorial content (including comic books and novels) that Lucasfilms had to reassert what was to be considered canon via strict delineation between canon and the Expanded Universe, later termed Legends.

Regardless, licensed content is no longer the red-headed stepchild, Nemecek said. *Star Trek: Discovery* took steps to bring the licensed world into the storyline, a first. “It’s a revolution bringing fans into the writing room,” he said. Tipton agreed: “Fans used to have to hide that they were [if they wanted to work on the property].”

And some of *Trek*’s recent risks—especially *Star Trek: Lower Decks*—seem to have paid off. “*Lower Decks*’ comedy and animation worried people,” Nemecek suggested. “I thought the tone would be fun, and it took an episode or two to find its feet. But the visuals are amazing.” Houser agreed: “It’s clear that it’s made by people who love the show.” And Tipton indicated that *Lower Decks* is drawing on many different series from the franchise in order to offer Easter eggs for all fan.

Star Trek: Prodigy was held up as a bit of a sleeper. Nemecek indicated that it “looks *Star Wars*-y” and that airing the first season on Nickelodeon was intended to

bring in a younger audience. “*Prodigy* might be the purest Star Trek,” he said. “It’s got amazing science and is big on canon.” In fact, astrophysicist Erin Macdonald served as science advisor for the series, working in the writers room. Rather than concentrating on scientific accuracy like she does for the rest of the franchise, she focused on STEM education opportunities.

At the end of the panel discussion, during audience Q&A, participants expressed frustration sizing the current Star Trek audience. Not only do streaming services not release audience statistics, comic book sales are also relatively opaque. Tipton suggested that streamers don’t want quantifiable popularity, because then they’d have to pay more appropriate royalties. Nemecek indicated that it might come down to fen. “The audience should ask for transparency,” he said.

Another question expressed curiosity whether Star Trek fen might soon tire of the wide range of options, similar to speculation about waning public desire for superhero movies. Tipton didn’t seem concerned. “Trek has a wide variety of shows, but they’re self-contained,” he said. “Each one satisfies on its own.” Kerwin concurred: “Trek isn’t releasing two or three movies a year.”

Next, I went to the main room for the “Novelizing *Doctor Who*” panel discussion moderated by tie-in novelist Peter Anghelides. Overlapping somewhat with Friday’s “Stay on Target” panel (*T&T* #103), panelists included authors Paul Cornell, James Goss, Esmie Jikiemi-Pearson, Mark Morris, and Gary Russell, as well as BBC Books editor Stephen Cole—whose presence was felt even if he didn’t say a lot. The boss was in the room!

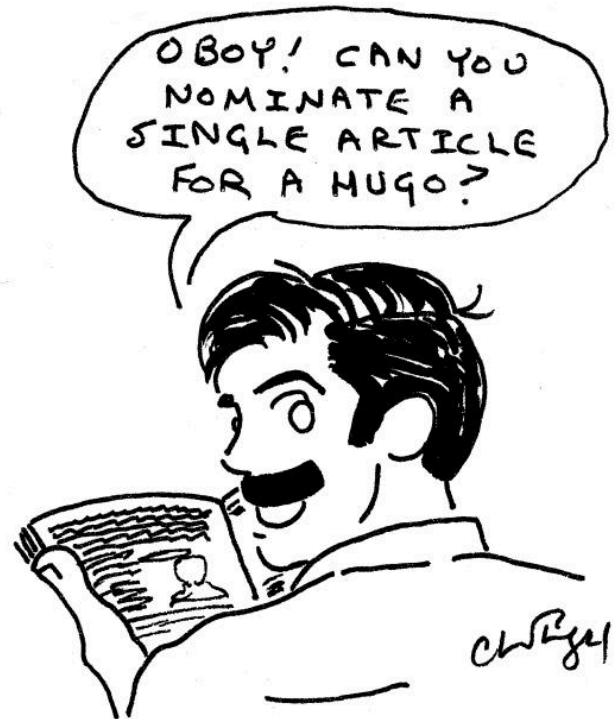
Some of the sentiments expressed resonated with the Friday panel’s discussion. The novelizations helped fill in the gaps before the advent of home video and DVDs. Novelizations enable writers and readers to further explore what’s shown on screen, perhaps offering greater insights and understanding, as well as a different experience.

This panel focused more on the experiences of novelists adapting TV episodes, rather than nostalgia for the Target line of books. The writers discussed how they became involved in adapting *Doctor Who*, as well as what source material they were able to draw on, influences, and the writing process.

Cornell, for example, knew Terrance Dicks and was able to read a submitted synopsis for a New Adventures novelizations. It included the line, “The Doctor comes up with a clever trick and gets out of the situation,” suggesting that Dicks’s approach to writing was concise and crisp—and that he wasn’t afraid to

change what didn’t work well.

Most of the time, authors were able to see rough cuts of the episodes they were hired to adapt, though some details might require originality. When shoots diverged from scripts, it was occasionally uncertain whether they’d be able to see a scene before deadline. “In one case, a [character] didn’t have a name,” Jikiemi-Pearson said. “What should I call him?”



—Charles Lee Jackson II

Discussion also centered on how much—or how little—an author was directed to stick to the script or fill in the gaps themselves. “I wasn’t aware of novelization culture but fleshed it out anyway,” Jikiemi-Pearson remarked. “I wanted it to be a *novel*, not just a play by play.” For example, in *The Church on Ruby Road*, she inserted a scene about a Jamaican woman who was part of the Windrush generation, inspired by her grandmother. That section was retained by the editors.

At times, writers would slightly alter dialogue because it read better, even if it worked as originally written on screen. Cornell indicated that he has reordered material and smoothed out rough spots when adapting scripts. “You can do a different take that stands besides TV,” he said.

Regardless, secrecy occasionally reigns. The authors on the panel shared stories similar to those offered during the Friday panel, and Goss told a new one that was quite fun. To honor the 50th anniversary

of the Target line, he organized an academic symposium at which researchers could present papers. BBC Books employees were invited to participate in a panel but couldn't secure permission to participate, so they held a panel—to stay on schedule—during which the panelists could say... nothing.



**Omelets for the poor!
Omelets for the poor!**

—Teddy Harvia

Next up in my programming day was the panel discussion “How Comics Have Shaped Popular Culture” moderated by comic book writer and editor Robert Napton. The panelists included comic book artist Christopher Jones and comic book writers Jody Houser, Tony Lee, Gareth Kavanagh, and Marv Wolfman.

Panel members shared stories about how they were first introduced to comic books—ranging from DC titles of the 1950s to an anti-smoking comic book published in the 1990s—where they bought them, and whether the supply was reliable. I particularly enjoyed the experiences of Kavanagh and Lee in the United Kingdom, where they were primarily exposed to British comics such as *2000 AD*, as well as Marvel's black-and-white reprints and *Doctor Who Weekly*. (Someone mentioned *Dandy* over the course of the con, but no one mentioned *Beano*.) Incidentally, Lee was allowed to read comic books primarily when he was ill; he was encouraged to participate in other activities when he was in good health. So he's long associated comic books with sickness. And in the United States, Jones didn't have a reliable source as a child and relied on multi-packs.

The primary focus of the panel, however, was the effect comic books have had on broader popular

culture—as seen in movies and on TV—and whether such mass culture embodiments then spill back to and benefit comics. Jones suggested that mainstream interest in superheroes hasn't necessarily translated to similar interest in comics. “Comics continue to be seen as development for properties for movies, TV, and games,” he said. “You can tap into the excitement and immediacy without the investment. It's frustrating that it has popularized characters, but the mainstream doesn't go back to comics.” A similar question could be asked about movie and TV adaptations of sf and fantasy books.

Houser suggested that that's in part because of how comic books are distributed. “Going to comic shops is a minority experience,” she said. “They're a specialty retailer. Distribution needs to be sorted out. Collections are doing better than floppies.”

Wolfman suggested that the most popular comic book right now is Raina Telgemeier's graphic memoir *Smile*, which isn't even sold in comic book stores. “It was the bestselling book last year,” he said. “They're reaching out now to find personal stories for non-superhero fans.”

Lee picked up on that theme and asked audience members whether they'd seen the movies *A History of Violence* or *Road to Perdition*. He then asked how many people knew they were adaptations of comic books. Very few did. “Movies are the worst thing that has happened to comics,” he said. “After *Arrow*'s success on TV, there was pressure at DC to make the comic book more like the TV show—versus TV like the comic. The tail is wagging the dog.”

Napton shared a similar story. When *Iron Man* came out, his wife wanted to see it because of Robert Downey Jr.—not because of the comic books. “People like the Avengers with those specific actors, but not the underlying source,” he said. “No one is going back to the source material.”

Kavanagh suggested that comic books then become merchandise for the movie. Regardless, fans are often elitists and therefore resistant to change. “It's OK to like *Game of Thrones* but never read the books,” he said. “I dislike it when people say it isn't like the books.”

Wolfman has experienced that first hand, with *Teen Titans* later inspiring the cartoon *Teen Titans Go!* and the TV show *Titans*. “I like the show, and I liked the Titans cartoons,” he said. “*Teen Titans Go!* was hilarious. To make a live action show, they made it more adult than the comics. That reached out to all sorts of people. The show referenced the comics.”

He expanded on that, suggesting that altering an original work when adapting it doesn't diminish the value of the original. “Once something comes out, it's

its own entity,” he said. “Is it a good show or not? My stuff is still there. I don’t own the characters. If I’ve changed other people’s characters, others can change my stuff.”

Panelists also discussed whether comic book-inspired movies have reached a saturation point. In short, it might depend on the property. “It’s not superhero fatigue, but it’s no longer a novelty,” Jones said. “Good ones will find an audience. I think there’s mediocrity fatigue.”

Houser indicated that the bar for success has been raised. “It’s no longer enough to just do a superhero movie,” she said. “We need good, quality, moving stories.”

Part of the problem, Lee suggested, is that while comic books are made by individual creators—writers and artists—movies and TV shows are made by committee. That dilutes the vision. “When a script draft comes back, someone else is writing the movie,” he said.

Wolfman distinguished between the concepts of genre and format. “No one ever says that we have too many dramas or romance,” he said. “When there’s a problem, don’t blame the genre. Blame the bad movie.” And Kavanagh suggested that TV might be a better home for comics-related material because it can take more of a long-form approach—like comic books themselves.

My final panel of the day before returning to the staff lounge to work hospitality was the Craig Miller-moderated “Worlds That Might Have Been,” which featured David Gerrold, Simon Guerrier, Barbara Hambly, Robert Napton, and Ian Winterton, who writes for *Vworp! Vworp!*-related Cutaway Comics.

The topic of the panel focused on alternate history as a form of science fiction, which resonated strongly with the themes of *Doctor Who*. Some of the panelists approached the topic through the lens of *Doctor Who*, while others did not.

Miller kicked off the panel by asking panelists to differentiate between alternate history and fiction set in the past. Hambly talked about how she writes historical mysteries in which John and Abigail Adams are detectives. She described such work as a period piece. “Alternate history would be if the past had been changed, like Harry Turtledove,” she said. “As an educator, I like to ask ‘What would happen if...’ There’s a connection between events that happened and those that didn’t happen.”

Gerrold agreed: “Alternate histories start with the question ‘What if...’” He offered his short story “The Kennedy Enterprise” from the Mike Resnick-edited anthology *Alternate Kennedys* as an

example. What if Joe Kennedy had continued working in Hollywood and John F. Kennedy was cast as Captain Kirk instead of William Shatner?

Winterton suggested that *Doctor Who*’s “Inferno” is similar to Star Trek’s mirror universe. He also referenced Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* and *For All Mankind*, in which Russia reaches the moon first. In some cases, such examples might be counterhistories.



Guerrier, who had done quite a bit of research on the development of alternate histories, commented that counterfactual history is actually a form of historiography, and that Winston Churchill employed it in his “If Lee Had Not Won the Battle at Gettysburg.” In such exercises, historians look at choices made in history and consider how events could have progressed another way. “Science fiction got into it later than history,” he said. “There are examples that predate Churchill, but the 1930s was when it really emerged.” Gerrold mentioned Sinclair Lewis’s *It Can’t Happen Here*, and Guerrier also cited H.G. Wells’s *The Shape of Things to Come*, which followed his *A Short History of the World*.

Other panelists also offered examples from other media, including Marvel’s comic book series *What If*, DC’s imaginary stories, and *Back to the Future II*.

Miller asked panelists why alternate history resonates so strongly with some readers. Hambly indicated that it's human nature. "We think about the future because that's where we'll spend most of our time," she said. "It's also human nature to regret."

Gerrold remarked that some of his best stories have been about choices he's made. That led to discussion about choices and fixed points in history. "As a historian, some things could be changed, but some things couldn't," Hambly said. "Take Martin Luther. Six other guys were lined up with reforms, so Luther dying wouldn't have mattered."

Guerrier later mentioned Kingsley Amis's alternate history *The Alteration*, which focused on Luther in the Catholic church. (Amis might not have written sf before *New Maps of Hell* [T&T #102], but he did subsequently!)

Winterton commented that when considering counterfactuals or alternate history, we need to think about the grand sweep of history versus the effect of individuals. Was Adolf Hitler pivotal? Gerrold said that World War II was inevitable because of the harsh penalties in response to World War I. "Now people see it as one war with an intermission," he said. Similarly, Archimedes was about to invent Calculus, but he was killed. The Catholic church still would have suppressed it. Moors leaving Greek documents behind led to the Renaissance, but the Catholic church stultified a lot of knowledge. Robert Silverberg's *Roma Eterna* explores what might have happened had the Roman Empire survived. Rome fell because of climate change, famine, and volcanoes.

Hambly said that Connie Willis's novel *To Say Nothing of the Dog* is one of the finest books about time travel. "Time is self-correcting," she said. "There are feedback loops and slippage." In fact, many sf authors address counterfactual or time travel inconsistencies by having flex points—changes in history—result in parallel universes. Gerrold mentioned Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*. (*The N3F Review of Books*, February 2020)

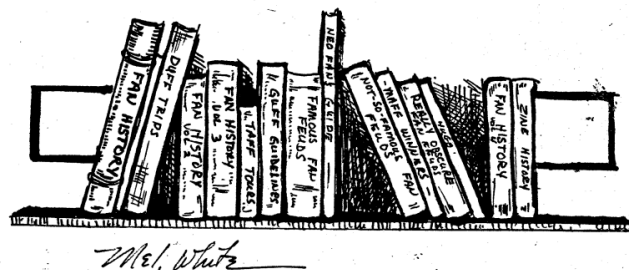
Guerrier indicated that *Doctor Who* novels fell into the trap of parallel universes in the 2000s. "Too many alternate histories make everything meaningless," he said. "You have to make your viewers care."

In the case of *Doctor Who*, not being able to alter history came up in "The Aztecs." (T&T #55) Guerrier suggested that *Doctor Who* is less strict with canon than *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* are. "The TV episodes are the playground," he said. "The other stuff is detail."

Gerrold experienced that slightly himself, when his *Star Trek* episode "The Trouble with Tribbles" was revisited in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*'s "Trials and

Tribble-ations." "It had a brilliant script, and production was brilliant," he said. "It didn't take away from the original episode, and I was delighted I was an extra."

After the panel ended, I made my way around the Dealers Room again, picking up several issues of *Vworp! Vworp!*, Alstair McGown's *The Fanzine Book*, and a handful of inexpensive issues of *Doctor Who Weekly* and the fanzine *Celestial Toyroom*. Returning to the staff lounge, I then worked from 4-6 p.m., stocking and facing food items, washing serving utensils in the bathtub for dinner, and otherwise helping out. I then left to eat dinner with my wife before a screening of *The General* at the Old Town Music Hall in El Segundo to belatedly recognize Valentine's Day.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Dead Sky by Weston Ochse (Solaris, 2019)

Inspired by Jean-Paul Garnier's mention of Ochse's novel, which features Space Cowboy Books, I read an ebook of *Dead Sky*, the second book in the author's Burning Sky series.

It was fun to read Ochse's portrayal of the store, as well as Garnier himself, in the novel. Even though the novel was occasionally a bit violent for my tastes, I enjoyed it thoroughly otherwise. For the most part, *Dead Sky* is an excellent example of supernatural military sf. There are guns galore, plenty of firepower, and eldritch horrors that recalled a cross between Don Pendleton's Mack Bolan, Able Team, or Phoenix Force with H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos. It also reminded me of James Axler's Gold Eagle series *Outlanders*.

In any event, there's more to the book than that. Over the course of the story, Ochse considers automatic writing, chakras, astral projection, out-of-body experiences, and remote viewing, as well as ley lines and possession. He also incorporates spiritual elements such as weaponized Sufi whirling dervishes, Zoroastrian daeva, *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, Rumi, Iram, djinn (the sons of God), and other elements.

The Los Angeles area also features prominently. Not

only is Space Cowboy Books in Joshua Tree referenced, Ochse's novel offers a driving itinerary of sorts as its characters make their way through the narrative. The book includes mentions of the San Bernardino Mountains, Del Amo Fashion Center in Torrance, Goodyear's blimp base in Carson, the 405, Huell Howser, White Point Park, the Vincent Thomas Bridge, Hollywood, the Pacific Coast Highway, and other details.

Media fen might also get a kick out of Ochse's discussion of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed*, as well as *Heathers* and *The Illustrated Man*. Buffy tie-in novels are recommended by author and title. And the book of interest in the scene featuring Space Cowboy Books? Philip K. Dick's *The Cosmic Puppets*. If I'm not mistaken, the characters still owe Garnier \$5. I'm tempted to reimburse him myself.

Piranesi by Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury, 2020)
Sometimes our enjoyment of fiction is affected by our expectations. Most descriptions I have read of *Piranesi* made it sound not just disappointing but ridiculous. "Piranesi's house is no ordinary building: its rooms are infinite, its corridors endless, its walls are lined with thousands upon thousands of statues, each one different from all the others. But Piranesi is not afraid; he understands the tides as he understands the pattern of the labyrinth itself."

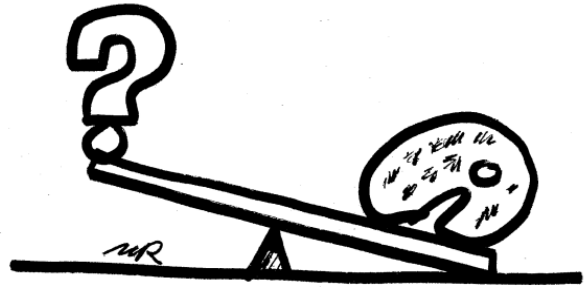
I thought of small book-sized statuettes (like Hugo Awards, perhaps) lining walls, but the novel's building has museum-sized rooms lined with large marble statues. (None is less than shoulder tall.) More importantly, the character of Piranesi is unusual—he is an innocent—and our discovery of him and his previous life is as important (or more important) than our discovery of this fantasy world.

Because Piranesi does not really know who he is. (Although he believes he does.) He lives in this world almost entirely by himself, meeting only another person he calls "the Other," plus the remains of 13 other people, whom he ritually cares for. His food consists of fish, mussels, and seaweed, and he is engaged with the Other in scientific exploration, which he records in various notebooks. All is well, if a bit lonely, until he learns that #16 is about to enter this world. The sixteenth person. (The 13 dead, Piranesi, and the Other make 15 people; these are all he knows of in existence.)

That's all I'm going to write about the plot. As the mystery evolves, Piranesi only has partial knowledge of his true situation. So does the reader. The book's style is understated and unsensational. I also found Clarke's devoted attention to Piranesi's viewpoint a relief after reading so many novels that jump around

from character to character, giving a short potted biography of each.

This is also not a novel contained entirely within its secondary imagined world. The other, real world is part of Clarke's story as well. And her portrait of Piranesi in our world rings true, as well. It is a puzzle, a mystery to be solved.



—William Rotsler

This world with its outrageous concept is developed realistically and logically (as well as perhaps poetically). It even has certain scientific-philosophical justifications: "[T]he Ancients had a different way of relating to the world ... they experienced it as something that interacted with them. When they observed the world, the world observed them back. If ... they travelled in a boat on a river, then the river was in some way aware of carrying them and had in fact agreed to it. When they looked up to the stars, the constellations were not simply patterns enabling them to organize what they saw, they were vehicles of meaning, a never ending flow of information." (p. 148) This is not something that happened in their heads, but happened in reality.

That detail is part of the novel's constant attempt to provide background to convince the reader of its truth. So is the verisimilitude provided by the various journals that Piranesi consults. By the end of the story, Piranesi changes, but not as much as our perception of him. We, the readers, have solved some of the puzzle. But now I feel curious to re-read and find out what I missed. I don't know what the novel "means"—what symbolic message the statues might have, if any. This is not a novel with detachable ideas, ready for debate (like *The Handmaid's Tale*). There is no sensationalistic violence. "I don't think I could kill anyone," says Piranesi. Instead, the book is the kind that grows in your memory.

But as I wrote above, our expectations influence our enjoyment of many things. A respected friend of mine has been put off this book by all the favorable praise it has received. "Too much hype," he wrote.

So: Don't read this book! It isn't that good at all.

And all those statues I described at the beginning: I lied to you. They are not only Hugo-Award sized, they are statues of Hugo Awards from the very beginning and beyond, back to 1926 or *Frankenstein*, whichever you prefer. Let's face it: The hint from that is obvious, so we know what kind of author Susanna Clarke is.

However, the physical book does have beautiful endpapers, printed with etchings of sea creatures in light brown ink, plus one bee. You are permitted to buy the book and admire them. I do believe that is what most people are doing.

I haven't figured out the significance of the sole bee yet. (Cy Chauvin)

Juvenalia: "The Letter"

I wrote and illustrated the following story when I was a preteen. Apparently, it was written for leisure rather than school. Its published form varies slightly from the handwritten original.

Our story begins with Dr. Williams, famed English alienologist, reading a letter from his son Heath. The letter read:

Dear Father,

I have contacted aliens from outer space. Rather, they have contacted me. I shall go to meet them. Be back soon.

What a discovery!

—Your son, Heath

As Dr. Williams finishes reading the letter, the expression of awe on his face changes to happiness.

"My son has contacted aliens! That's great! But *where* did he go to meet them?" As he begins folding the letter, he notices some writing on the back:

P.S. Gone to Northallerton.

"Oh... that's 45 kilometers from here. Oh, fudge! He's taken the auto. I can always take a tram." As Dr. Williams walked the drive to downtown Mallon, he remembered that he didn't have any coins. He said, "I can always leave a receipt!" In 10 minutes, he arrived at the station.

"I'd like a tram to Northallerton," he said to the attendant.

"You crazy! Aliens have landed!"

It was already dark when Heath arrived in Northallerton. He pulled the Bianca IV automobile into a filling station to ponder his message a while. "Go to Charles Berkeley's farm in Northallerton. Hmm... I wonder where he lives."

A man walked up and asked, "May I help you?"

"Yes. Do you happen to know where Charles

Berkeley lives, by chance?" Heath asked.

"Yep. I'm he. Why do you ask?"

"I was told to meet someone there," Heath answered.

"No, not the aliens," the man muttered.

"What? What have they done?"

The man answered, "Nothing. I just don't like them."

"May I," Heath asked, "go out to your farm?"

"If you think it'll do yourself any good. C'mon. You can follow me." The man hopped into a beat-up pickup. In 20 minutes, they arrived at the farm.

The grass around the alien's ship was steaming. As Charles Berkeley and Heath approached, a panel lowered. One of the aliens stepped out. Mr. Berkeley screamed and ran away. The alien looked like this:



Heath stood speechless, motionless, until at last he dared to speak. "Uh... welcome, I guess," he said. "Well, I'm Heath Williams, junior alienologist. I study aliens!"

The alien looked around. Then it made a noise like, "Grogga!" A beam of orange light shot from the strange weapon scorching Heath's leg. Heath turned tail and sped away.

When Heath reached town, he saw his father talking to the attendant at the filling station. Heath ran up panting, "Dad! The alien shot at me! My leg!" It was then that Dr. Williams noticed Heath's leg. Part of his pant leg was gone, and the rest was charred.

"Heath! How did you find the aliens?" Dr. Williams asked.

"It's a long story. I was resting when I heard a

humming noise above the house. I stepped onto the porch and saw a pale light. I hopped into the auto, sped here, and met Mr. Berkeley. Then we went out to his farm and saw the alien. That's when it shot me!" Heath explained.

"Come, we must get there before dawn with some weapons."

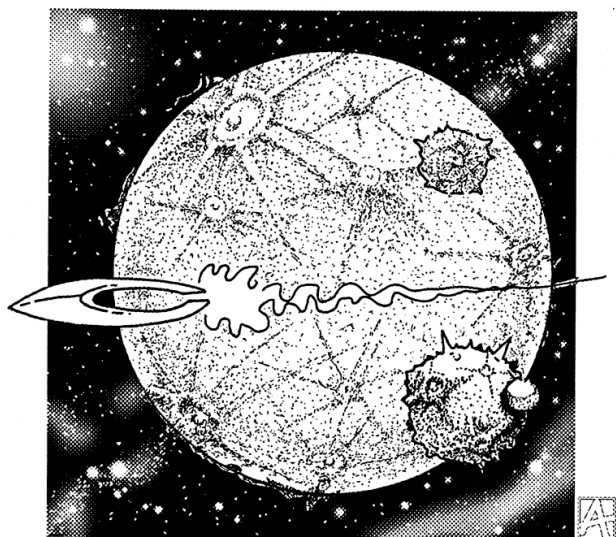
When the police force arrived at the farm, the Williams took them to the alien. The entire field was filled with flying shrapnel and bullets. Not to mention the aliens' rays. In about two hours, it started to rain. The police chief said, "Looks bad for us! Our bullets can't hurt them. But their beams can hurt us." Another squad car blew up. "Our cars, too," he added.

Suddenly, the aliens started running back to their ship.

"Look! They're flying away," Heath yelled.

"Yes!" the chief shouted. The alien ship blasted off and sped away.

The police and the Williams left. They were glad it had rained.



—Alan White

Comments on APA-L #3058

In *Leeway* dated Feb. 22, **Lee Gold** indicated that Barry Gold's hernia repair surgery is scheduled for the end of the month. I hope his cardiologist and internist appointments went well and that the surgery occurs smoothly. May he heal fully and quickly! If you two need any help running errands, feel free to let me know. I don't live far away, and if I'm able to help, I will. Every time you mention *Xenofilkia*, I'm inspired to participate, though I'm wary of overextending myself. Some weeks, my existing deadlines are sufficient, though new projects are always appealing. You might find that Zoom is easier to use if you avoid

the chat function. I'm sorry to hear that Zoom proved difficult.

The feedback you received from the editor of *Valhalla: Into Brightness* warmed my heart, and I didn't even write your book! I don't know that I've ever received feedback along those lines, and it must have felt wonderful to read it for the first—and perhaps subsequent times. Thank you for sharing it with us.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White. He's been a joy to work with and has sent several pieces of art that we'll see as APA-L covers in the months to come. How are you two faring with the recent rain? I've thrilled to the recent sunny days with blue skies, though it did rain a little early this week. My wife and I joined a friend for a birthday hike—I turned 51 on Feb. 26—last weekend, with lunch following.

If the Rubber Bible is the CRC Handbook of Chemistry and Physics, it was initially published in 1919. There was a decent article about its history published in *Science* in 1979 recognizing its 60th anniversary. (<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.204.4398.1181>) I actually remember using it while in high school, though I haven't thought about the tome in decades.

Your commentary on electrical outlet placement and vacuuming made me think about vacuums in Portugal. In that country, it's not uncommon for houses to have a central vacuum system. For example, in the house we stay in near Povoia de Lanhoso, many rooms have a vacuum outlet located in a wall. There's a portable vacuum attachment that you can plug into them, which turns on the vacuum system. You vacuum like you normally would, and vacuumed material is transported to the central vacuum storage bag, which serves the entire home. In the kitchen, there's a horizontal slot near the floor in front of the sink. There, you can adjust the slot to activate the vacuum system, and sweep the floor toward the slot to transport material to the central storage bag. I've never seen that anywhere before and find it intriguing. How and when were central vacuum systems developed? What functions do they serve that a self-contained portable vacuum does not? I'll have to learn more. There's even a Portuguese Vacuum Society (<http://www.soporvac.pt/ing>) that supports the International Union for Vacuum Science, Technique, and Applications. You can see what some central vacuum system equipment looks like at <https://litoralvac.com/produtos>.

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #46 offered a con report on Gallifrey One, on which I've also been reporting. He and I met for

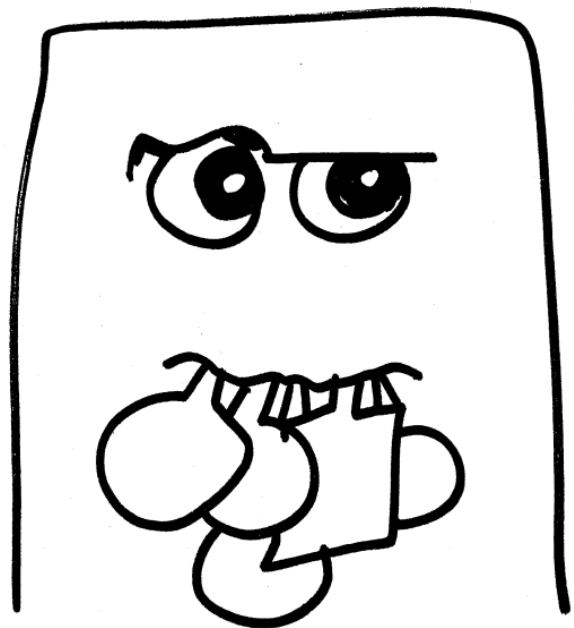
breakfast Sunday morning, which was grand—largely because I didn't see him otherwise at all during the convention. I wonder whether hotel room drawers are being replaced with cubby holes in order to save money on furniture costs, as well as to decrease the likelihood of guests leaving items behind. I usually don't use such drawers, but I always open them to see if there's anything in them. Sometimes you can still find phone books, Gideon Bibles, and hotel stationery if you're lucky.

I'm glad you were able to encounter fellow members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, as well as the Time Meddlers pre-Gallifrey One. I think it's neat that the con is so large and diversely programmed that we could both participate and have such different experiences. Given your photography, I might reach out to you seeking pictures to use in my review of the con for *Science Fact & Science Fiction Concatenation* (<http://www.concatenation.org>). I didn't take many photos at all, largely neglecting to do so even during the panels I attended after my first day. We were both in the same room for the "Stay on Target" panel (*T&T* #103), though we didn't know it at the time. Next year, I'll have to check out Lobby Con with more attention.

I reached out to Elayne Pelz to inquire whether Bob Burns was ever a member of the LASFS. She has no record of Burns being a member. While I've tried to save samples of my writing over the years, I was relatively surprised that so much of what I wrote as a preteen was somewhat science fictional. I've enjoyed rereading it and trying to identify what I'd read or seen that inspired a particular piece or aspect of a story. Even then, I was a literary and a media fan, as well as a comic book reader. I was also the perfect age for the toys and other merchandise of the 1970s and 1980s. A while ago, I sold my *Star Wars* and G.I. Joe action figures, including the Death Star Space Station playset; He-Man and the Masters of the Universe toys; and *Six Million Dollar Man* toys to Big Lou's Toys & Collectibles. I still have a credit slip I'll need to use at some point.

In *Toony Loons* #749, **Joe Zeff** updated ellers on Marcia Minsky's return from Gallifrey One. I hope she had a good time at the con! My wife and I now think we might return to Portugal in early April. Jonah wants to come home from college for the summer, so he'd return in late April, returning to Tokyo for the fall semester in September or so. Because I recently turned 51, we've started discussing a trip to New Mexico in order to explore some of the UFO-related tourist options and history. We'll see if that plan comes together before I turn 52. I'll share your cover art

feedback with artist Alan White, as well as the ongoing discussion of Taral Wayne's piece.



—William Rotsler

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #17

March 1, 2024

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

Bookstore Capitals

An exchange between two Corflu participants on that fanned con's Discord server in late February made me curious about which cities had the most bookstores—or used bookstores—per capita. So I poked around a little to see if I could find out.

According to a 2023 article published by *WordsRated* (<https://wordsrated.com/number-of-bookstores-statistics>), the 2020 Census counted 10,800 bookstores in the United States. That number has been decreasing since 2012, when there were 16,819 stores. In 2020, there was an average of one bookstore per 54,299 people in my home country. That's about 1.84 bookstores per 100,000 people.

Globally, some cities do much better than the United States does as a country. For example, the top five cities around the world in terms of bookstores per 100,000 residents are as follows:

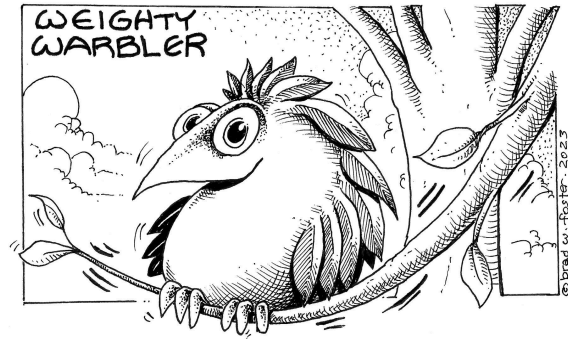
- Lisbon, Portugal: 35.97
- Melbourne, Australia: 33.9
- Nanjing, China: 29.37
- Buenos Aires, Argentina: 20.1
- Barcelona, Spain: 19.8

Returning to the United States, Clever Real Estate offers a weighted ranking of the “Best Book Places in the U.S.” (<https://listwithclever.com/research/best-book-places-2022>) Their ranking takes into account the number of libraries, independent bookstores, and coffee shops per 100,000 residents; Google search trends for bestselling books and book-related terms; and average literacy rate scores. The top 10 U.S. cities using that method from highest to lowest are as follows:

- Providence, R.I.
- Hartford, Conn.
- Boston
- San Jose, Calif.
- Seattle
- Washington, D.C.
- Baltimore
- San Francisco
- Minneapolis

- Portland, Ore.

Where does Los Angeles sit? According to Clever Real Estate's weighted ranking, it comes in at 41st place. Oof. A 2021 United States Census Bureau article indicated that California, the country's most populous state, had more bookstores (605) and employed the most workers (7,763) than any other state in 2019.



ApartmentGuide offers a 2021 piece on the “Best Cities for Book Lovers” in the United States. (<https://www.apartmentguide.com/blog/best-cities-for-booklovers>) That top 10 list of cities by “book establishments” per capita from highest to lowest is as follows:

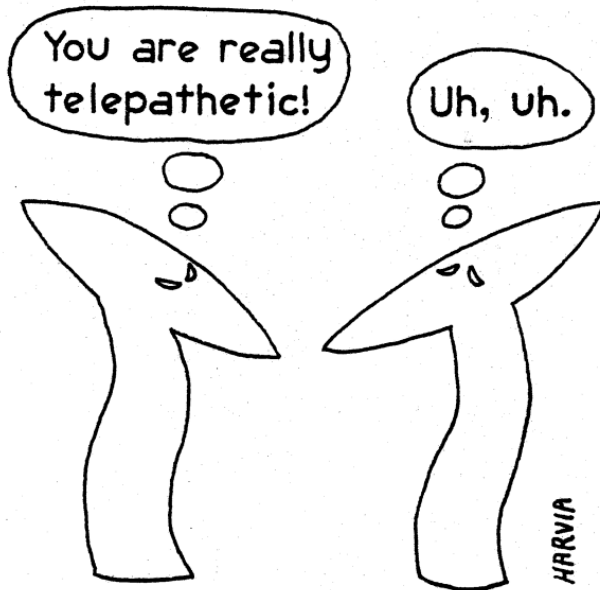
- Cambridge, Mass.: 51 book establishments per 100,000 people
- Berkeley, Calif.: 49
- Pensacola, Fla.: 44
- Ann Arbor, Mich.: 43
- Chapel Hill, N.C.: 43
- Santa Fe, N.M.: 40
- Marietta, Ga.: 38
- Saint Louis, Mo.: 36
- Cincinnati, Ohio: 34
- Birmingham, Ala.: 33

While that list also includes “book dealers” and libraries, the book establishments count isn't a sum of those. Los Angeles doesn't rank in the overall book establishments listing, but it does place in the top 10 list of “cities with the most total book retailers and libraries.” According to that listing, Los Angeles claims third place with 118 book dealers, 128 libraries, and 246 “total book establishments” (which does represent the sum), indicating six book establishments per 100,000 people.

I haven't been able to find a comprehensive list of bookstores in Los Angeles or Los Angeles County yet, but a 2022 *Los Angeles Times* article lists the “65 best bookstores in L.A.” (<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/books/list/65-best-bookstores-in-los-angeles>), and *MomsLA* lists 32 independent bookstores in southern California (<https://momsla>).

com/independent-bookstores-los-angeles).

How many bookstores per capita are there where you live?



—Teddy Harvia

Comments on eAPA #238

In an email in late February, Garth Spencer asked “What is the role of fan funds in the contemporary world of separate fandoms?” Also in that email, Spencer said, “I am administrator of the Canadian Unity Fan Fund. ... I have to build up the Fan Fund, and find a convention to host the next delegate, and then solicit candidates and manage nominations and elections and hand on funds. ... I have received no responses from any of the Canadian conventions I approached.”

Responding to the second issue—the lack of response from cons—first, I wonder: Even if the ideal situation is that a con formally host the CUFF representative, might it be enough for a CUFF delegate to attend or participate in a con? I recognize that a major part of the fan fund idea is the hosting, recognition, and formal opportunities to develop relationships across the country or world, but not being able to secure a host con doesn’t necessarily mean that CUFF has to end. Regardless, if the cons you’ve reached out to so far don’t take the bait, I’d work on down the list. Move beyond fannish cons or fan-run cons and engage with newer, growth-oriented cons, or other fan events.

We might also have reached a point at which we can no longer assume that fen know what fan funds are or recognize their inherent value. Among older fen, they’re a known entity. Even with fen running

longer-running fan-run cons, we might need to make a stronger case for involving a fan fund delegate. What’s the pitch to a con? Why should they involve a delegate in programming? How have other cons done so in the past? What impact did it have on the con in terms of increased local, regional, or global awareness, or otherwise? Does it open opportunities for local media coverage or publicity? Do we pitch articles to local media about a con participating in something larger than itself? Does hosting a fan fund delegate give them additional tools they can use to promote the con? We might not know the answers to those questions.

Returning to Spencer’s question about the role of fan funds in contemporary fandom, we can probably answer that historically and traditionally, but history and tradition might not be enough to persuade more recent conrunners. What role could it play? One thing I’d pitch is that hosting a fan fund delegate could diversify the points of view at a con. It could diversify the membership, even if only geographically, and it can certainly diversify the points of view and ideas that could inform programming. One benefit is that a fan fund delegate is a programming guest the conrunners wouldn’t have already known about or involved locally—and they don’t have to fly them in like a guest of honor, perhaps. When we’re pitching fan fund participants, are we also pitching programming they could plug into? What’s the value fan fund delegates offer con members?

I’d reach out to the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund and the Down Under Fan Fund administrators to see whether they’re facing similar challenges and how they’re addressing them. This might be a general issue, not a specific issue. Do they have pitch packets? What business—or fannish—case do they make potential host cons?

We might be at a point in history at which we can’t assume that fen running cons will already plan to involve a fan fund delegate. Why should they? We can answer that question, even if we haven’t had to for quite some time, perhaps.

If, as the cover to eAPA #238 suggests, the lot of an ancient horned nature god isn’t one of hot naked Wicca chicks, fertility rites, and dancing in the woods, what is it? He seems disappointed.

In *Wild Ideas* #44, **Henry Grynsten** considered whether aliens are already among us. Your opening vignette about the publisher who didn’t recognize your presence was bizarre. Did you and your friend, or the publisher’s former girlfriend, discuss the situation at all? That would have made me very uncomfortable. Perhaps because your friend and the publisher’s ex-girlfriend were writers, he was “working” and wrote you off as not being meaningful or important.

Regardless, it's still very rude.

Your mention of the selective attention test reminded me of a similar video, *Whodunnit?* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNF9ONEOLA>) I'm sure you weren't engaging in any practices or behaviors to discourage being seen or recognized, but if you were, job well done, I suppose!

While your theory about grey aliens being perceived as ghosts or the dead is intriguing, how do you account for reptilian aliens? Do they merely embody another form human beings find threatening or frightening: the snake or dragon? It also intrigues me that common elements of alien abductions might signal other common human fears: abduction, loss of bodily autonomy, isolation, medical procedures, surveillance, and distrust or judgment (which might contribute to the paranoia abductees sometimes experience).

In his mailing comments, Gryninsten interspersed actual brief responses with machine-generated "AI Comments." I must admit to not reading the AI-generated material, though I am interested in what you have to say. Until we can train generative AI on our own writing—to replicate our writing style and perspectives—that might remain the case. Like you, I appreciate other eApan's sharing health updates and personal news. If we know each other as friends and care about each other, such experiences are part of our shared fannish lives. So keep the news coming, if you want to share such news!

William McCabe's *Living Inside Number 9* suggests he might be publishing more in the near future. Huzzah! The new project sounds challenging—and like a potential hassle—but you seem game and interested in learning new tools to figure it out. There might be a couple of pages missing in your fanzine; the text might not be complete.

Your discussion of early science fiction and alternate history reminded me of a recent panel at the local *Doctor Who* convention Gallifrey One. If you'd like to read my con report on the alternate history panel, it's in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #104 and will be included in the March issue of *The Sf Amateur*. You also mention the Jack the Ripper. I call your attention to *Journey Planet* #78 (<https://efanzines.com/JourneyPlanet/JourneyPlanet78.pdf>), which is a fascinating, wide-ranging consideration of that historical figure.

In the United States, video tapes and DVDs are usually preceded by an FBI warning card. On video tapes, which I still watch, they're the first thing you see. I don't remember if they're as immediately present on DVDs.



In *Intermission* #141, **Ahrvid Engholm** updated eAPAn's on his viewing of *Oppenheimer*, winter and New Year's Eve, cross-country skiing, SpaceX launches, and the Russo-Ukrainian War. During our honeymoon, my wife and I visited Los Alamos, N.M. It's one of the most bizarre cities I've ever been in. Reportedly claiming more PhDs per capita than any other city in the United States, it's kind of a no place place. Very sterile seeming.

Two notable locations we visited included the Black Hole, the Los Alamos Laboratory salvage yard, and the Los Alamos History Museum. The former was an astounding array of research lab castoffs and has been covered quite well by *Wired*. (<https://www.wired.com/1995/04/the-black-hole-of-los-alamos>) The latter offers a relatively solid look at the history of the area, including the Manhattan Project, but when we were there in 2008, somehow neglected the potential risks and impact of nuclear energy or weaponry. The only token nod they made to such concerns was a visitor participation exhibit in which you could write your thoughts on a three-by-five card to put into a shoe box. The museum was pretty well white washed of any anti-nuke awareness or sentiment. I appreciated your expansive commentary on *Oppenheimer*, as well as the connection between Los Alamos and *Astounding*.

That you progressed to consider H.G. Wells's *The World Set Free* and its portrayal of atomic bombs was very welcome. Your healthy excerpts suggest that the book is worth reading, as are most by Wells. Your recommended playlist of related songs also merits exploration. Thank you for the listening suggestions! The song by Johnny Bode was a definite delight, profanity aside.

While you might have run out of material from the Stockholm Royal Library, your roundup of Atomic Age toys and other assorted media coverage made for delightful reading. Winston Churchill was also cited

during the alternate history panel mentioned above. I might have to spend more time with his writing!

I also read and enjoyed your discussion of Thor Modeen. World cinema—non-English cinema—has a lot to offer, and I'll see what's available of his work domestically.

H.P. Lovecraft might have written 10 letters a day, but that doesn't seem to be that many in the time before television and the Internet. Even with reading and radio to draw your attention and time, correspondence was much more common, and it's a natural outgrowth of amateur press associations (or vice versa). Personally, I'm trying to write just 12 letters of comment to fanzines a month. It'll ensure I read more fanzines, and it's a fun form of fanac in addition to apahacking and pubbing. I was inspired by voting in the recent Faan Awards. And Corflu is occurring this weekend! I was so excited about the con that I actually dialed into its Zoom channel last weekend by mistake. Thank you for your thoughtful response to my comments about discrimination and inclusion.

Fainzine #3 again utilized generative AI to pub its ish. While I didn't read it fully, I got a kick out of its resonance with *Intermission* #141's topics and other fannish themes. **Ahrvid Enholm** still resides therein.

In *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #218, **Garth Spencer** asked whether Ahrvid Enholm planned to anthologize his holiday stories. I'd certainly welcome a collection of them, even excluding the works of others. Thank you for recommending *The Edmonton Science Fiction & Comic Arts Society's Guide to Science Fiction and Fandom*. I believe I bought a copy of that from you to support CUFF. It doesn't appear to be available online, so perhaps I should prioritize scanning it!



The UFO Checklist



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



ANYWHERE MAN, BOOK TWO (\$2.00 postpaid from Rob Cooley, 7128 Munsee Ln., Indianapolis, IN 46260) Rob Cooley's Anywhere man encounters the mind-boggling evil of MINDSCARE as the lines between real and imaginary cross in an exciting sf saga!



CAPFAN #1 (\$3.00 postpaid from Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195) The first issue of Rob Imes' zine devoted to Captain America, offers many thought-provoking articles by Rob, including "Captain America and the American Dream" and "Hydra Cap Was Actually Good!". The editor offers an overview of the great hero's adventures, and his thoughts on the way changing political and social trends have affected the stories.



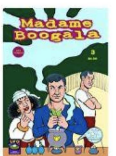
FANZINE ONE (\$4.00 postpaid from Tom Fellrath, Phoenix Publications, 8031 Griswold Drive, New Albany, OH 43054, or PayPal/Venmo to @tdfellrath) Tom Fellrath says "part of the fun of being a fan is in sharing one's passions," and then he does just that. In this true fanzine, we see representations of art by such notable talents as Art Spiegelman, Arthur Adams, Bill Willingham, Marcel Deneuve, Steve Steiner, and more.



HEROES NOW: THE HEROES RETURN (Order on Amazon: \$4.99, available at <https://tinyurl.com/heroesnow4>) Tom Fellrath's thrilling superhero team returns, as the Patriots – Jeff, Parkour, and Fuse, attempt to save an American scientist in Syria only to find her reluctant to be rescued! Are her loyalties divided? - and what is her strange relationship with a powerful otherworldly being? Tony Lorenz illustrates. Also including artwork by Keith Newsome, David Tryzenski, Tom Ahearn, Bob Hall, and more!

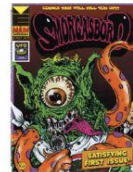


THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY #9 (\$10 US to Joe Carrales, Carrales Studios Productions, PO Box 1274, Premont, TX 78375-1274 (Canada inquire for prices), or PayPal to jecarrales@yahoo.com) Once again the question is posed: "Can two mailroom heroes save the day?" Beginning with a gorgeous color cover by Don Simpson, Joe Carralles III answers in dramatic fashion! Mari and Niko parachute into enemy territory to battle the evil Druid and Organization Orko. "It's what we do in defense of liberty! Make it mean something!"



MADAME BOOGALA #3 (\$6.50 ppd. to Larry Johnson, 31 Greenbrook Road, Hyde Park, MA 02136, or PayPal LewBrown1@verizon.net) The incredible saga of Madame Boogala and her son Goomar, of the "Magic People," con-

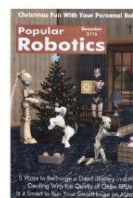
tinues in a beautifully illustrated full color comic from Larry Johnson. A young man shows up at the Madame's magic shoppe claiming to be the "Son of Goomar!" Is all as it seems? The excitement builds as demons invade from a dark and sinister otherworld!



SMORGASBOARD #1 (\$4.50 postpaid from Jim Main, Main Enterprises, 130 Wellsville Ave., New Milford, CT 06776, or, PayPal to: jmain44@aol.com) Jim Main returns to the UFO with a vengeance, and a hilarious new title SMORGASBOARD! Beginning with an eye-popping Floyd Sumner front cover, the book offers such zany features as "I Am a Spaceman" by Jack Bertram, and Simon Mackie's "When Anki Met the Beatles." Included: the wacky stylings of Kel Crum, Alan Groening, John Lambert, Larned Justin, and more!



THE STF AMATEUR NOVEMBER 2023 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230, or, PayPal to kalel@well.com or @Hrow . Outside US rates inquire via email. Free PDF Available @ <https://efanzines.com/HR/index.htm>). Heath Row's fascinating sf/comics/fantasy/commentary zine features a wealth of material. This issue details Heath's trip to Tokyo and reviews AQUAMAN, JOKER, and classic cinema (ATTACK OF THE GIANT LEECHES!). Also: con reports, a stunning cover by Alan White, and more!



THE STF AMATEUR DECEMBER 2023 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row) Heath Row travels to Portugal with an absorbing account of the journey and the culture that he encounters, then goes in depth with movie reviews, apa commentary, and more. Cover by Tiffanie Gray.



STINGER OPS #4 (\$2.00 postpaid from Rob Cooley) Rob Cooley delivers, with two action packed sf stories featuring such memorable characters as Z'oni Moons ("a man who dances to his own beat") and Bubbles McFarland, who finds himself in an epic battle with Frankie, the Robot Robber. Exciting fantasy entertainment!



STRANGE TIMES #4 (Available only from Amazon: \$9.99, available at <https://tinyurl.com/strangetimes4>) The theme is "The Road Back," and many of the finest creators in the alternative press contribute stories of life's pain, and the battle to overcome. Among the contributors: Chuck Bunker, Keith Newsome, Matt Levin, Joseph Morris, Ryan Holgeron, and many more. A beautifully produced, stunning book in full color!

