

The Stf Amateur
Or: *Amateur Stf*
September 2023

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The Explosion Containment Umbrella #11

Aug. 1, 2023

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.

Comments on eAPA #231

In *Wild Ideas* #37, **Henry Grynstenn** took a look back at four issues from the last three years—having recently reached a three-year milestone. He revisits the contents of #1, 2, 8, and 33, which focused on “The God of Memes,” “Did the Old Master Exist?,” “The Wizard of Mozart,” and “Sycophantic Robots and Superbrats.” Congratulations on the three years of uninterrupted publication.

But first: Mailing comments! Your remark to William McCabe made me chuckle: “I can reveal to you that hardly anything that the Assistant claimed was true.” I also appreciated your quip that “they had a lot of brown in interior design in the ’70s.” A friend of mine strongly believes that “The secret theme of every ’70s movie is the material shittiness of the ’70s.” He frequently documents examples of that on Twitter, now unfortunately called X.

While I didn’t read *Wild Ideas* #1 when it first came out—I wasn’t yet a cheery eAPAn—I shall have to seek it out. I was frustrated when the term “meme” entered common parlance. Before that, it actually had a meaning, I think initially offered in Richard Dawkins’s *The Selfish Gene*. Similar to the phoneme, the smallest sound unit in speech, or morpheme, the smallest meaningful portion of a word, “meme” has come to mean a self-replicating piece of information. It might be the smallest unit of an idea, the germ of an idea, or root of an idea.

When we turn our thoughts to the smallest subunit of God—or, perhaps, the purpose of God—I think it’s fascinating that the modern concept is that God exists to comfort. I don’t believe that to be true. This might be just opinion, but I think God exists to create. God just makes stuff, out of the sheer joy of it. If we are indeed creations of God, then, our purpose is also to create, to make stuff, to produce beauty and meaning—and love. That’s the source of the joy, the embrace of the chaotic results of persistent (I almost said consistent, which it isn’t) creation. You make something. You see what happens. You see people

pick it up or put it down. You see what they get out of it. And you love them for it, as well as your creation.

I suppose, then, that culture could be God, if God only exists at the behest of humans. But I’m prone to think—again, only opinion—that God is the creative impulse, the divine idea. Having recently read Fredric Brown’s “Answer,” (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #66) I shall also have to check out Brian Aldiss’s “Oh, For a Closer Brush with God.”

Your revisiting your consideration of Johannes Vermeer using a camera obscura to paint reminded me of recently watching the documentary *Whaam! Blam! Roy Lichtenstein and the Art of Appropriation* (2022). James L. Hussey and Jesse Finley Reed’s movie considers whether Lichtenstein appropriated and built on the work of the comic book artists he swiped from, including Hy Eisman and Russ Heath, using them as source material and inspiration—or ripped them off, copying their work.



—William Rotsler

Despite a surprisingly sympathetic voice from Bill Griffith, I finished the film considering him a visual

plagiarist rather than an artist in his own right. That his work is considered fine art and worth millions is ludicrous when one considers that the creativity of others (on which he built his art) was considered garbage worth many, many fewer dollars. What it came down to was Lichtenstein's use of technology—in his case, a projector, his own camera obscura.

If Lichtenstein drew new work inspired by his reference material, projected that, and painted it, I consider him a painter. But some of his work is so close to the original panels that I'm suspicious he merely projected the reference material and painted that in larger form. That is still painting, I suppose, but it's much less creative and demands more rigorous recognition of his sources.

In Vermeer's case, he was painting from life, not another artist's work (though those who believe in God might protest), so I'm less concerned about his use of technology—and still consider him a great painter.

Incidentally, there is a camera obscura in Santa Monica, near where I live. The Santa Monica Camera Obscura is located in the Camera Obscura Art Lab, a community art center on Ocean Avenue. The camera might have been constructed by then-Santa Monica mayor Robert F. Jones around 1898. It was given to the city in 1907 and has been in its current location since 1955. Since moving here in 2009, I've only been there twice. Perhaps it's time to return. It's certainly worth including in *The Los Angeles County Fanac Guide*. (T&T #74)

I found your return to the creative relationships of siblings—and women artists occasionally operating under the auspices of men relatives—fascinating. I must learn more about Artistic Siblings Syndrome. May researchers continue to learn more about whom exactly contributed to—or created—what!

Your commentary on how “digitalization doesn't only affect mental abilities and make them worse, but mechanical abilities as well” struck home hard with me. I want to write. I don't want to write prompts for a generative AI. I also want to read, see, and listen to what other people have created—not what a generative AI has produced. I recently discussed this with a colleague at work, exploring the importance of the provenance of intellectual property, clear labeling of what was created using a generative AI tool—and which—and various scenarios in which human-created artwork was given primacy over AI-produced artifacts, or vice versa. It's not difficult to think of a future in which we have to pay for the human made, and inexpensive mass culture is produced by generative AI. That takes me back to thinking about Lichtenstein, above. I'm not sure I like that future.

William McCabe's *Living Inside Number 9* updated eAPAns on challenges he's facing accessing healthcare. May you soon be able to prove your identity to access the medicine you require! File under technological determinism, perhaps. The United Kingdom might have a smartphone penetration of 78.9 percent, but that clearly means that not everyone has a smartphone. A handful of years ago, 74 percent of people in England had a drivers license. Again, not everybody. In fact, there's racial disparity. 76 percent of white people had a drivers license, while only 53 percent of black people did. Public systems need to be designed to reach everybody, not just the young, the wealthy, the educated, or the otherwise well situated. I empathize with you.

I can also empathize with your deadline pressures when you're also responsible for the local history society's newsletter. Most of the time, my apae deadlines don't align, but the last week or weekend of the month means I'll have to hustle on *ECU* for eAPA, as well as two Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society clubzines, *De Profundis* and *Menace of the LASFS*. *Menace* I can let slide usually—very few people receive it, and there's no formal time sensitivity. Today, I'll send this off well before the deadline, but still on the day of the deadline. I'm sorry to hear you have a high-maintenance contributor; that doesn't make it any easier. Besides, editors gonna edit.

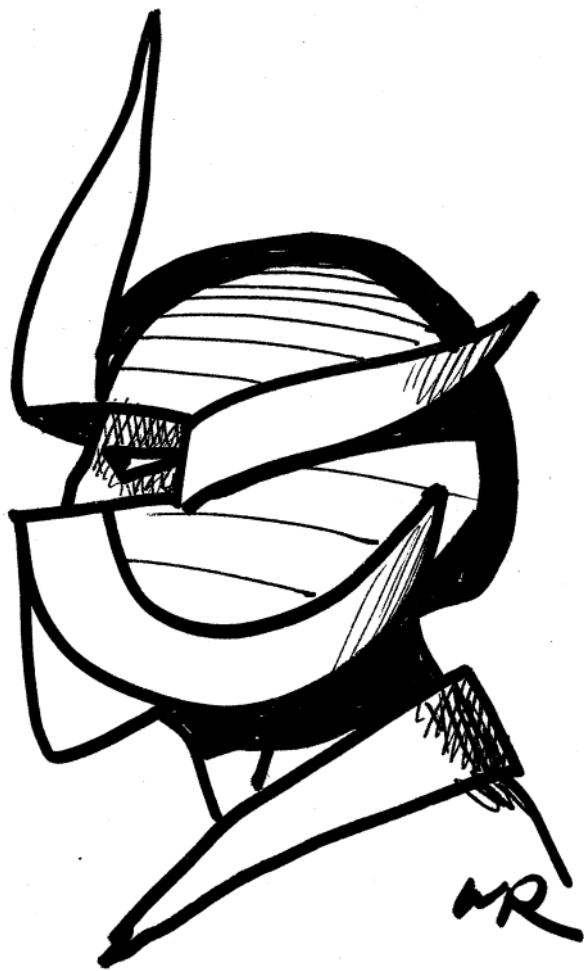
Lucky for us, the Alan Parsons Project's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* is available on YouTube (<https://tinyurl.com/Parsons-Poe>). So is Peter Hammill's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (<https://tinyurl.com/Hammill-Usher>). I'm not sure how I could possibly have missed previous references to the Parsons record, but thank you both for bringing them to my attention! I'm listening to Parsons's Poe as we speak, so to speak.

Your fanzine might have gotten cut off at some point. It seems to end mid-sentence!

And in *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #211, **Garth Spencer**, our triumphant Canadian Unity Fan Fund recently returned home from Pemmi-Con, remarked on some recent learning experiences. I've already responded to a portion of that in a letter of comment to *The Obdurate Eye* in response to #29, so I shall reprint some of that here:

“Your recent conrunning experience is disheartening. Sounds like the group wants to hold a relaxacon if folks take umbrage at the suggestion of meetings, agendas, tasks, and responsibilities. Fen, like any volunteers, can be fickle and picky, and the resulting contributions can vary widely. Sounds like you chose to follow the right path, perhaps heeding your honest inclination!”

My son, attending college in Tokyo, has been experiencing some of the adult mysteries you and McCabe discuss. Having had to find his own apartment, furnish it, and pay his own utility bills for the first time in his life, he's ~~suffering~~ experiencing a crash course in money management. Lesson one: Don't spend your rent and utilities money on food; you always need to cover your housing and other bills. Lesson two: Let your parents know about new ongoing expenses; don't presume we expect the money we're providing to cover known expenses to also somehow magically address unknown expenses. I don't mean to be glib. I am thankful he's going through this now rather than later.



—William Rotsler

You and McCabe might be on to something. As translation costs decrease, I think we can certainly expect more non-English writing to be made available in English. I also think you might be right about the number of fen living in specific countries or speaking and reading specific languages.

Fantastic Television: *Travelers*

These episode reports are drawn from an email round robin involving several other members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. We watch two episodes a week and share our thoughts. Previous episode reports have appeared in *T&T* #61-68, 70-71, and 75; *Brass Hat Mind* #3; and *Faculae & Filigree* #20-21. All should be available on *eFanzines* (<https://efanzines.com>)

S2E10: “21C”

As we near the end of the second season, the pace is picking up a little bit again, especially after the slightly slower, perhaps interstitial Episode 9. For the most part, the action and story development in this episode falls along two lines.

There's a narrative thread focusing on Marcy as she attempts to regain her lost memories—including time before and after the traveler arrived—by submerging herself in a cold-water bath, almost a form of sensory deprivation tank. Apparently, cold water immersion therapy can be applied to help prevent dementia, and this year, researchers published a paper titled “Short-Term Head-Out Whole-Body Cold-Water Immersion Facilitates Positive Affect and Increases Interaction between Large-Scale Brain Networks.” So there might be something to the science at play. The second thread concentrates on the team's efforts to protect a child named Anna, who's destined to become a future president—one beneficial to the future.

While the second storyline is interesting—particularly in terms of Grant helping the life of a child after losing his own in the previous episode—it's mostly a shoot-'em-up involving some kind of dampener that keeps the Director from intervening. Rick Hall and Luca join the team in their efforts to save the girl—at first abducting her with Trevor's former teammate—and seem to be collaborating without much friction or hostility. There is some playful jousting on Hall's part. At least he isn't trying to take over the team again. (Yet.)

The first storyline is where the meat of the episode is, however. Throughout the episode, we're exposed to the various memories Marcy is exposed to, or rediscovers, aided by the cold-water immersion. At times, the memories seem to be jumbled, conflating past, present, future, but the overall outcome is threefold:

1. Marcy realizes just how much she loves David, and she has loved him longer than we might have thought previously—in multiple guises. That outcome was hoped for and perhaps expected.

2. Viewers also learn that Marcy wasn't always developmental disabled before she became a host. She worked as an orderly at a healthcare facility before undergoing a treatment at the hands of the germophobic technology magnate (!!!)—perhaps before he went into seclusion? After? We don't know. We do know that David met her almost immediately after she was dumped in an alleyway following the ill-fated procedure. I particularly appreciated this sequence, as another orderly encouraged a colleague to treat patients with respect. This revelation was unexpected.
3. We also learn that the before-or-after magnate has enlisted another traveler to try to recreate the technology used to record travelers' memories in order to imprint hosts. That traveler, a resident of the healthcare facility, as well as an assistant, remarks that he invented the Director's first such technology. The magnate is trying to re-engineer the program himself, and Marcy was as a failed attempt to do so. This revelation was also unexpected.

Throughout the episode, 4 p.m. is an especially important time. It's the deadline for saving the life of the girl destined to become president. And it's the time Marcy asked Carly to stop by her home. Carly arrives late because of the shoot-'em-up, quickly followed by David, just in time to save Marcy's life after flatlining.

At the end of the episode, after kissing David, Marcy sees some schematics drawn with chalk on the sidewalk. David indicates the artwork was done by a homeless man, and Marcy expresses strong interest in tracking him down. Is he our inventor-traveler from the healthcare facility? Future episodes will tell.

S2E11: "Simon"

This episode continues to hurtle toward the end of the season, drawing on some hints from previous episodes as it suggests that the season will end focusing on either the CRT interrogator-magnate Vincent's correction by the Director—or his posing additional challenges for the team and the grand plan.

Loose threads that are reconnected to the current storyline include the fundraising event at which Vincent met Kat—discussed in a previous episode and somewhat speculated to be a ruse. It is at that event that he (as expected, as Vincent) meets Kat, almost meets Grant, and discovers the artwork of a patient under treatment at the healthcare facility, a paranoid schizophrenic who thinks he's a visitor from the future, sent to the past to save the world. Vincent bids on all of that artist's artwork and works his way into

the facility as a donor, ostensibly to aid in the artist's—Simon's—therapy, but also to do work of his own, as revealed in the previous episode. Simon is indeed a traveler, the fourth to arrive.

It is helpful that Marcy's memories recently returned. She's able to recognize and remember the homeless artist alluded to at the end of the previous episode—it is indeed Simon—and she and the team recognize Vincent in his artwork. She also remembers seeing Vincent in the healthcare facility where she experienced her brain injury, as well. One emotional moment occurs when the team releases Simon back to the street after he assisted tracking down Vincent, and he says he's glad that the procedures they undertook in room 21C (I hadn't connected the room number with the episode title last time; I thought it just meant the 21st century.) had helped her, and that perhaps he'd return to normal eventually, as well. Sadly, he was released from the facility and became homeless when Vincent decided their efforts to recreate the traveler program were fruitless and withdrew funding from the facility.

Simon helps the team learn how Vincent's been monitoring others in the program. He'd added additional layers to the Internet to augment the dark Web, surveilling others undetected. They're unable to locate Vincent, but they intercept a mobile phone call and are able to locate the woman who placed that call: Vincent's therapist, our second loose end reconnected. Grant and Carly approach her to help track down Vincent, encouraging her to keep a canceled therapy appointment, but their efforts to confront him don't work out. At the end of the episode, they find the therapist's comm link, extracted from her neck, and receive a message to meet Vincent at specific coordinates to resolve the situation.

In another thread, Jeff comes home drunk one evening, waking Carly. They end up fighting when he tries to get frisky with her, and she defends herself physically. Were it not for Philip's reaching out to her at a specific point in time, singing to her like he sometimes plays music for her, she might have very well killed Jeff. That leads Carly to speculate that Philip had perhaps known what might have happened to her—or to Jeff—in the future had he not interrupted, and we witness another indication that Philip might have feelings for her, or at least be looking out for her well being generally. She tells him that Jeff will most likely not remember what happened.

Only time will tell.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #76

Aug. 2, 2023

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.

Fun with Fanzines (cont.)

Last Friday, I returned to Marty Cantor's apartment around 9 a.m. to pick up a rental van from a nearby U-Haul. Parking the van in front of Cantor's apartment building, I joined Nick Smith and Tom Hubbard, a former coworker of Smith's and a friend through the board game group. Smith and Hubbard moved boxes out of Cantor's apartment to the sidewalk, where I loaded them onto a rented utility dolly to move to the van. Loading the van took much less time than expected, and Smith and I were on our way to Riverside around noon.



Smith and Hubbard, tired and sweaty after hucking boxes

The drive to the university, which is just more than 60 miles away, also went more smoothly than expected. While I drove with reasonable caution, the van handled well and traffic was moderate. We benefited from a reverse commute in both directions. On the way there, traffic heading into Los Angeles was more active, and when we returned later in the afternoon, traffic leaving the city was heavier.

We reached UC-Riverside a little later than we'd initially estimated. There, we met up with Phoenix Alexander, Jay Kay and Doris Klein Librarian for Science Fiction and Fantasy for UCR's Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy. I unloaded

the van, and Alexander helped us wheel the boxes onto a loading dock behind the library to later move onto carts to transport into the library.



Smith, Alexander, and I finished unloading the van around 2 p.m. After a brief conversation with Alexander about various sf, archive, club, and other topics, Smith and I headed off campus for lunch to a nearby shopping center, Canyon Crest Towne Center.

Marisa's Italian Deli was closed and vacant—perhaps a victim of the pandemic—but there was a Subway nearby, and we both enjoyed sandwiches while talking about *Fantasy Book*, fanzines, and other matters. After lunch, we stopped by the British Emporium, a British import shop. I'd hoped that they might stock *Doctor Who* magazine like Ye Olde King's Head does in Santa Monica (They do not.), and Smith acquired some chutney about which he was quite enthusiastic.

The drive home was also uneventful, benefiting from a reverse commute mid-afternoon, as well. Once back in North Hollywood, I attended to some additional items at Cantor's home before heading back to Culver City, where I arrived around 6 p.m.

It was a long day—8 a.m. to 6 p.m. door to door—but definitely not as physically challenging or difficult as it might have been. I'd expected noodle-limp arms and exhaustion by the end of the day. Hubbard's help loading the van was appreciated.

All in all, we donated more than 50 boxes of fannish materials from Cantor's collection. The core collection filled 30 Bankers Boxes, and there were an additional 24 boxes of apae and other materials. While Cantor's gift to Eaton isn't as large as Fred Patten's collection (834 boxes, reports Lee Gold), it's still a noteworthy acquisition. I'll return this Sunday to sort and file two additional boxes of fanzines—and anything else Smith has found since—which we'll ship to Eaton rather than transport.



From the Reading Pile: Short Stories

In recent days, I've read several excellent prozines, a couple received from Chris Korczak, Bookseller (*T&T* #72), and one from among Marty Cantor's effects. The December 1983 edition of *Analogue* includes an excellent novella by Timothy Zahn, "Cascade Point." The story focuses on a spaceship that uses a Colloton Drive, navigating via a series of cascade points at which glimpses of alternate timelines and realities are offered. One of the passengers on the ship is undergoing an experimental psychiatric treatment, attracting the attention and affection of one of the crew members.

Because of some unexpected cargo, the ship's navigation is thrown off, not just in this reality, but

into another. How the crew develops a solution to return is inventive and interesting—and the story balances speculative science with strong characterization and relationships.

Spider Robinson offers "Involuntary Man's Laughter," a fun Callahan's Place tale focusing on a pair of professionals who "cheer people up for a living," a challenging client who exhibits a Tourette Syndrome-like condition, Callahan's Riddle Night, and how all convene to overcome the client's situation. Robinson's riddles are fun in their own right, and there are sf references aplenty in the piece, including mentions of Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light* and its exploration of Aspects and Attributes, as well as riddles based on sf author names.

"Critical Path" by Arlan Keith Andrews Sr. is told in part via email messages and considers the impact and limitations of an automated manuscript screening and selection system. Its storyline resonates with modern-day concerns about plagiarism and AI content detectors—as well as other automated screening processes such as those for resume filtering and college applications.

And Steve Benson's "An Empty Gift" is a surprisingly wonderful Christmas story considering the post-apocalyptic remains of society, orphaned children, abandoned military vehicles, and hope.

While I skipped the Larry Niven serial, part three of four, for now, other editorial content in the issue was also notable. Arthur C. Clarke's guest editorial "Beyond the Global Village" is an interesting look at the globalizing effects of telephony, radio, and satellite communications; information pollution and starvation; and the potential for the global village to become the global family. We could imagine that the Internet might have accelerated that transition!

Dana Lombardy's "On Gaming" column reviews *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective*, 1982's Best Fantasy Game—and one of my wife's favorite games. It's great fun to read contemporaneous reviews of older games (and movies, for that matter), and this was no exception.

"The Reference Library," Tom Easton's book reviews, and the Brass Tacks letter column were also worth reading.

Zahn also features in the October 1991 issue of *Analogue* with his novella "Guilt by Association." One of his Soulfinder stories, it's set in Los Angeles, which lends an additional aspect of interest. The gist of the piece—or series of stories—is that the souls and memories of the dead can be stored and temporarily hosted by other, living human beings. In this novella, it's done so a dead man can serve as a witness in a

court trial. While in his host body, he goes for a walk during a break in proceedings, a murder is committed, and the story unfolds as a mystery: Who committed the murder? Who can be held accountable? It's an intriguing concept and an excellent story. I'm mostly familiar with Zahn's name because of *Star Wars* tie-in novels. This and "Cascade Point" suggest he's an author worth exploring otherwise—or regardless.

"Red Alert" by Jerry Oltion resonated slightly with Jack Dann and Jack C. Haldeman II's *Echoes of Thunder* (*Snow Poster City* #10) in that the protagonists are Native American. The island of Manhattan is not in Indian territory, and its residents are constructing missile silos disguised as apartment blocks in Central Park. The Native American armed forces respond in kind.

And Kent Patterson's "Barely Decent" tells the tale of a lingerie designer targeted by an evangelical minister who's retooled "tiny computerized factories" used to "spin cheap plastic optical fibers" to weave more conservative clothing. Patterson's story is a clever take on nanotechnology-like science, the social aspects of religion, and fashion design, as well as the agency of women. This was a very fun read.

Tom Easton's "The Reference Library" is an even better read than that in the above edition, touching on titles by Howard Waldrop, Rudy Rucker, Mike Resnick, and Fritz Leiber. The lettercol, "Brass Tacks," wraps up the issue.

That brings us to the April 1982 edition of *Asimov's*. While the above prozines included a mixture of longer and shorter stories, this issue features 12 short stories and a letter column including a missive from Los Angeleno Clarica Dee Labuscher. (Does anyone know her?) Isaac Asimov's editorial, "Don't You Believe?" examines the line between science and pseudoscience, using telepathy as an informal case study.

Somtow Sucharitkul's "Aquila the God" is set in a Roman empire, circa AD 100, specifically Terra Nova in what is now the United States, and its region Lacotia. Roman explorers encounter an advanced civilization, are imprisoned in tipis and mistaken for gods, and try to pull one over on the locals by predicting a solar eclipse. Rescued by multiversal travelers, the protagonists are now free to continue on to explore the lands of the Olmecs. It's a rambunctious, rollicking, delightful surprise of a story incorporating alternate history, linguistics, and ancient American history.

"SFs and Fs on Fifty-Fifth Street" by Martin Gardner is a brief, riddle-oriented story that builds upon the sale of *Asimov's* back issues. I'll revisit the piece; its solution eluded me.

Barry N. Malzberg contributed "Coursing," which focuses on a spaceship's AI, the self-proclaimed King of the Universe, and how love conquers all. In this story's case, the paradox at the end also eludes me. "Parasites of Passion," by Brian Aldiss, concentrates on the *Bug Vic Barron* television show in southern California, Frankenstein's monster and his bride, animals ranging outside their habitat because of global warming, and how love conquers all. It's not the Aldiss I'm used to, but I like it!



—William Rotsler

"Isle Be Seeing You" by F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre features Bernadette Beetroot, who is not a parody of Ferdinand Feghoot (see below) but of Benedict Breadfruit. The one-page piece might merely be the setup for a pun, but it's a fun one. John M. Ford's "Amy, at the Bottom of the Stairs" reconsiders the death of Amy Dudley, the first wife of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, favorite of Elizabeth I of England. The presence of a time traveler offers the opportunity to consider the impact of clandestine liaisons, their discovery's potential impact on history, and predestination.

Hugh Brous's "Up, Up, & Away" focuses on the dreams of a mail carrier and makes the distinction between flying and walking. "Miles to Go Before I Sleep" by Julie Stevens touches on social groups positioned for and against technology, healthcare and medicine, and urban centers in what seems to be post-apocalyptic Utah. How do you rebuild society if not every citizen wants to rebuild?

"In the Wings" by George Alec Effinger (whose

Maureen Birnbaum writings are a delight) blurs the lines between author, characters, fiction, life experiences, and acting. It's a brief, bizarre piece. Robert F. Young's "Darkspace" speculates about endo-psychology, which might be the study of dreams to combat debilitating fears. The line between dream and reality blurs in this story, as does the line between life and death.

In the spirit of MacIntyre's submission above, Grendel Briarton offers the one-page "Through Time & Space with Ferdinand Feghoot XIV." It also sets up a fun pun. And Sydney J. Van Scyoc's "The Teaching" considers the importance of listening to the land, as well as its flora and fauna—rather than disrupting ecosystems. This was one of the best stories in the issue.

All three issues were well worth reading, though I found the *Asimov's* edition offered more bang for the buck. Issues without serials—one was also included in the October 1991 *Analog*—tend to provide more staying power, and the wide range of stories (and new wave appeal) in the *Asimov's* led to a very compelling reading experience.

Comments on APA-L #3030

In *Leeway* dated for July 27, 2023, **Lee Gold** included some standing rules of the LASFS pertaining to the running of Loscon. Thank you for helping address Garth Spencer's remarks concerning Loscon's relationship with the LASFS, its membership, and board in *T&T* #73. It's clear to me that the club does not run the con, though a con committee winning a bid might be composed largely of club members.

I will share your feedback on the cover to #3029 with its artist, Rev. Ivan Stang. I emailed Gavin Claypool to ask how to best arrange book donations. I'll let folks know what he says in response. What I currently know is that Claypool checks donated titles against the library collection to determine what books should be added to the library rather than sold. And the sale books are currently stored in Nick Smith's storage unit.

We don't have air conditioning, and it's not that common in the part of town we live in, just five miles from the ocean. We have a ceiling fan in our bedroom that's been a blessing recently, and a ceiling fan in our media room that doesn't work. We have a couple of small fans we use when we really need the help. In my home office, a finished garage attachment, I have neither AC nor a fan, though I could bring one. On most days, opening both windows to get a cross breeze has been sufficient. In the winter, we tend to heat our home at 68 during waking hours when we're

present, and at 60 otherwise.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1554 opened with reportage on Pemmi-Con, the recent North American Science Fiction Convention, from which *eller C.D.* Carson has returned. Hertz also informed *ellers* of the death of Bill Laubenheimer, who was recognized during Hatchings and Dispatchings at the July 20 LASFS meeting. I wonder whether Carson had a hand in the Rotsler Award exhibit. I'm sure we'll find out. I enjoyed your humorous song lyrics sent to Pemmi-Con. Thank you for writing the song of greeting. I shall send your cover art feedback to Joe Pearson.

In *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #45, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** updated *ellers* on her recent reading of *Beyond*, presumed to be *Beyond Fantasy Fiction*, a prozine published between 1953-1955. I have but one issue of *Beyond* cataloged in my home library currently, the July 1953 issue. What do you think of the stories you've been reading?

I applaud you requesting that any funds raised go to the building fund. At a recent board meeting (*De Profundis* #588), board members remarked that we currently have about \$790,000 in the fund and need at least \$1.2 million for the kind of property we're looking for. That gap is larger than I'd expected—and indicates our need to raise capital.

TwoMorrows Publishing's magazines, including *Alter Ego*, *Back Issue*, *The Jack Kirby Collector*, *Retro Fan*, and others are all excellent. I've been purchasing those named except for the Kirby magazine for some time and can't keep up with reading them myself!

While you're welcome to give the researcher my contact information, I'm afraid I wouldn't be very helpful other than to recommend he talk to Jon D. Swartz, John L. Coker III, and others involved in First Fandom. I'd also share the opportunity with folks on the *fmzfen* and *trufen* mailing lists. Actually, that seems pretty helpful, so do feel free to introduce him to me. Other *ellers* might also be interested in participating.

And **Joe Zeff's** *Toony Loons* #723 recommended the 2021 animated *The Addams Family 2*. How did Charles Addams character designs and artwork translate in the computer animation? I'm glad to hear your stamina has improved. May you now be properly deflated, good sir.

Natter: Friendly Fanac

All of my various apazines are now available in a monthly bundlezine titled *The Stf Amateur*. If you'd like to receive it in addition to *T&T* in APA-L, let me know, and I'll add you to the distribution list. It'll also be available on *eFanzines* online.

Apparently not. William Gibson's novel *Agency* posits a near-future (now past) in which Trump was not elected and Brexit didn't occur. In part, that's because he was writing it before the election—Brexit occurred before he finished the manuscript. Regardless, the Quayle opportunism might be slightly inscrutable for readers not much younger than I am—though at the time would have resonated with *Asimov's* readership given its timeliness.

Also of note is Connie Willis's guest editorial, "The Women SF Doesn't See." She challenges the notion that women didn't write sf before the 1960s, commenting briefly on several who did: C.L. Moore, Zenna Henderson, Shirley Jackson, Margaret St. Clair, Mildred Clingerman, Judith Merrill, and Kit Reed, as well as others.

I picked up the February 1986 issue of *F&SF* because of G.P. Lendino's facial expression-rich Maureen Birnbaum cover and George Alec Effinger's story "Maureen Birnbaum at the Earth's Core." (I referred to Effinger's Birnbaum stories in *T&T* #76.) Effinger doesn't disappoint. The author juxtaposes an Edgar Rice Burroughs pastiche with the entirely entertaining character of Maureen "Muffy" Birnbaum, a "spunky prep school graduate" who shares a personal update with her friend Bitsy Spiegelman via audio cassette recording.

Attempting to return to Mars and Prince Van, she finds herself in the hollow Earth, where she encounters a group of ape-like men who recognize her as a priestess. She escapes with the assistance of a crime-fighting scientist piloting an atomic subterranean, only to find further adventures. The send up is somewhat shallow—like Birnbaum and her friend—but the jape works. Always an enjoyable read.

Jennifer Black's "Memories of Gwynneth" takes a turn toward the serious with a story about a woman from the city (a self-proclaimed townie) who becomes a fishwoman in a rural community. Having received the professional memories of her predecessor—shades of Timothy Zahn's Soulfinder stories (*T&T* #76)—she also experiences other, more personal memories and must navigate the town-country divide, work relationships, and success at her trade, as well as the water channels, barge, and locks.

The story also mentions an "extinct Cymran culture," surviving "ancient dwellings," and "delfins"—intelligent dolphins, perhaps, who help herd her catch of fish. The story offers multiple elements that would be worth returning to.

Oddly enough, Jennifer Black is a pen name used by British writer Michael G. Coney, who also wrote using the name Majkl Kouni. I found that slightly

ironic given Willis's guest editorial in *Asimov's*. This is a case of a man writing as a woman. In any event, this story is listed under Coney's short fiction on ISFDB, not as part of a series, so it looks as though there weren't additional stories in this world.

"We Call Them Flowers" by Lynn Marron is another intriguing story. Set in the future, it focuses on the fashion of embedding alien crystals under one's skin to grow an organically artistic outgrowth from your body, like jewelry or a tattoo. A woman scheduled to marry someone from the upper class seeks a second and then a third such implant, leading to unexpected results.

And Larry Eisenberg's "Me and My Shadow" explores a new method by which someone can record their potential future behavior, watching it via 3D projection, in order to better understand their motivations and actions. A scientist utilizes the process in order to understand what might be inhibiting his achieving a breakthrough in his research, leading to surprising and somewhat disappointing—to him—outcomes.

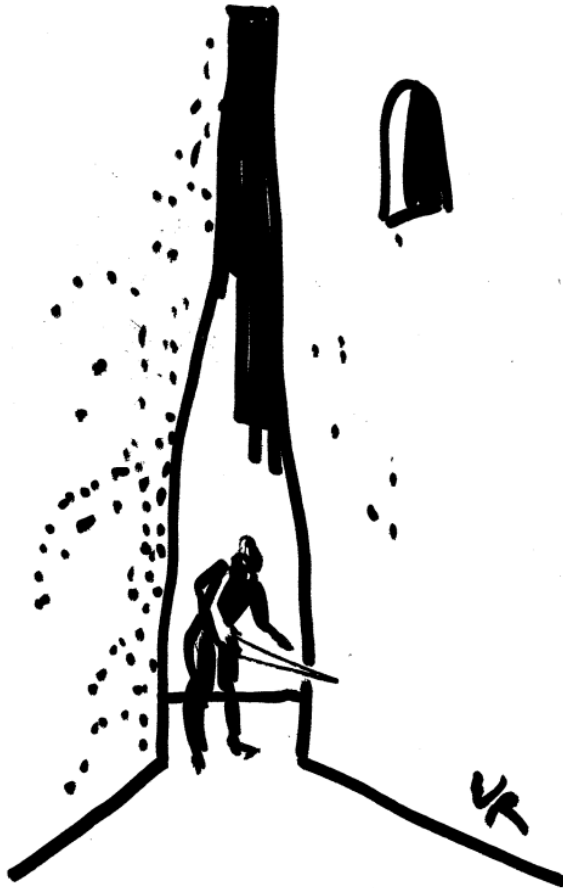
Lest you think I only read older prozines and stories—which is largely true—I've also been reading the July/August 2023 issue of *Analog*. Featuring a beautiful cover by 123RF, the edition includes Rosemary Claire Smith's book review column, "The Reference Library." In the roundup of recent titles, Smith recommends Bear Manor Media's *Extraordinary Visions: Stories Inspired by Jules Verne*; Joelle Presby's *The Debar Snake Launcher*, which sounds intriguing; and Lavie Tidhar's *Neom*, which I recently read. (*T&T* #57) I'll have to pay more attention to the book reviews!

Ryan Hunke's short story "A Synthetic's Field Notes on Speed Dating and Birds" considers a decommissioned military android who's looking for companionship. It reminded me slightly of Sandra McDonald's "Sex Apocalypse Robot" (*T&T* #66), which also concentrated on human-robot relationships and the loneliness of automatons.

And David Ebenbach's short story "Everybody Needs a Conditions Box" takes a look at an artificial intelligence-controlled city, but upon its first activation, not once the city is up and running. It's an interesting take, detailing not the full consciousness, awareness, and expertise of such an intelligent system, but the uncertainty and tentative first steps. The AI isn't sure the city is such a good idea; it's floating on the clouds of Venus.

The programmer's conditions box is intended to comfort the fledgling AI city, to offer it instructions to follow should certain catastrophic conditions arise. It's

an interesting approach to scenario planning and problem solving. And it seems to do the trick, allowing the newly started up AI to emerge to the city as a whole and begin to explore its new environment.



—William Rotsler

Fantastic Television: *Travelers* S2E12: “001”

What a rollicking final episode for this season! At the end of the previous episode, Grant received a message from his wife, who’d been abducted by Vincent, indicating that Grant needed to show up at a specific set of coordinates alone if he ever wanted to see her alive again. Other team members have also had loved ones or friends abducted: Jeff, Grace, the skeezy attorney, and David.

Vincent’s therapist, abducted last episode, is enlisted to interview each of the abductees, to gather information about when they first noticed that their loved ones had changed, to plant the seeds of doubt about their true identities—and in Grace’s case, to learn more about her as a traveler.

His request to the travelers as ransom is that they record an admission to being a traveler. The FBI and

other intelligence agencies are already suspicious of the travelers, monitoring their communication on the dark Web, and surmising that they’re some sort of a terrorist group. That makes investigating Vincent using the bureau’s resources challenging for Grant, as well as his supervisor’s efforts to keep the travelers program under wraps once news begins to leak.

Each team member records their admission, planning to release the recordings in such a way that Philip also releases a virus that will delete the recordings so they’re not widely distributed. It’s a way Vincent can think their admissions are public, while controlling the damage.

Working again with Vincent, Simon, also an abductee, struggles to complete a mind-transference device, ostensibly for Vincent to help him become better again. He succeeds, solving a coolant issue, and the end of the episode suggests what the outcome of that work was.

The therapist is released, the abductees are released—and picked up by the team of travelers. None of their loved ones want anything to do with them. Vincent seems dead or asleep before he’s put in front of a computer monitor and overwritten with a new traveler. And the therapist, who’d talked to her daughter while leaving Vincent’s home, is revealed to be Vincent himself in a new body as she picks up his—now her—son in a park.

That’s the end of the episode—and the season. This episode originally aired Dec. 18, 2017, with the next season premiering Dec. 14, 2018, almost a year later to the day. With each season only lasting a couple of months, a lot happened in Season 2—and ended up somewhere quite different from what I’d expected. Vincent remains a threat, the travelers have been outed, and they still need to help avoid the future catastrophe. That won’t be any easier with Vincent free to form a faction of his own and their identities made public.

Maybe the world will end after all.

Comments on APA-L #3031

While I haven’t yet learned how to print covers with full bleed to the edge of the paper—I’m not sure I can—I think I’ve figured out how to make the required margin smaller, at least. I think Ulrika O’Brien’s cover for this distribution and Kurt Erichsen’s cover last dist’n turned out pretty well.

In *Leeway* dated for Aug. 3, **Lee Gold** updated ellers on the gold medallion trees in Santa Monica. While I’ve been appreciating the jacaranda trees in recent weeks, I haven’t yet gone to look at the gold medallion trees like I did last year.

What a thoughtful gesture to send Carole Parker

the collection of Bill Laubenheimer's songs. I also thank you for responding to Sean Cleary's Facebook query about *Star Wars*-related filk songs. At last week's LASFS meeting, Nick Smith indicated that Cleary has contacted him, as well. May Cleary find the songs for which he's looking!

Your memories about yard work at the Hill made me chuckle. *Fancylopedia 3*'s LASFS clubhouse information indicates that we met at the Hill from June 1967 to October 1968, but doesn't specify its location. Does anyone remember where the Hill was? I'd like to include it in *The LA County Fanac Guide* as a historical location.

Barbara Gratz Harmon's *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #46 waxed eloquent about a living wage, the current strikes, and the supermoons this month. I knew there was a full moon last week, but I hadn't been aware it was a supermoon. I'll have to pay more attention later this month. I'll be sure to share your feedback with cover artist Kurt Erichsen. His relaunched fanzine *Endeavor* is quite impressive. Both #15 (<https://amzn.to/3DOPSYU>) and #16 (<https://amzn.to/44YDpci>) are still available.

It sounds like you have options to consider in terms of fanzines and related papers. I don't know a lot about radio broadcasting archives, but several organizations that seem promising include the American Archive of Public Broadcasting (<https://americanarchive.org>), UC-Santa Barbara's American Radio Archives (<https://www.library.ucsb.edu/special-collections/american-radio-archives>), and the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (<https://www.iasa-web.org/category/links-categories/broadcast-archives>), which might offer other options. For any physical equipment, I'd reach out to the Southern California Antique Radio Society (<https://www.antiqueradios.org>). Otherwise, between First Fandom and the sf collections at Eaton and the University of Iowa, these options feel good. At least you're not starting from scratch.

In *Vanamonde* #1555, **John Hertz** celebrated Tony Bennett. Among Marty Cantor's effects were several magic-related volumes. I plan to contact the Academy of Magical Arts to see if they'd like them for the library. During a recent work event with British magician Martin Rees (<https://magicmanmartin.com>), he made the distinction between magic as something magicians do and magic as something experienced by the audience. Paraphrasing, he said that what magicians do are just tricks. What people experience is the actual magic.

Among the stamps in Cantor's belongings, which David Schlosser and I will share, were multiple envelopes of Non-Machinable Surcharge stamps,

which I'd never encountered. There were also some two-ounce stamps, which I'd also not seen previously.

Nola Frame-Gray has currently paused APA-L distributions until she gets some vision challenges sorted out. She's also asked me not to email her PDF editions for now because they're too hard to read. I hope she's able to rejoin us soon!

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #21 is a double issue of sorts because he emailed me his fanzine last week—without an attachment. Rather than sending me two issues, he chose to expand the issue he'd prepared, leading to a bumper number.

Mitchell updated ellers on several frustrating legal cases at work. Some of those cases—and clients—sound quite challenging! I'll be sure to share your feedback with cover artist Kurt Erichsen.

In *Toony Loons* #724, **Joe Zeff** updated ellers on storms, spiders, thumb drives, and healthcare. I'll be sure to share your feedback with Erichsen, as well. I mail hard copies of the dist'n an artist's work graces with the weekly mailing, and I email PDFs with any commentary. Otherwise, the logistics are too onerous (there isn't always commentary, and ellers might respond to multiple distn's), and this fits into my workflow—I email comment copies as I'm writing my apzine for the next distribution.

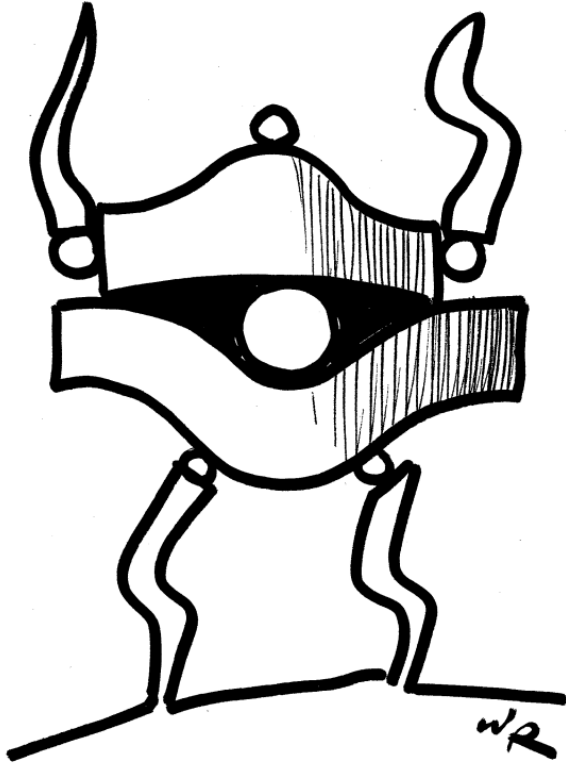
And welcome back to **C.D. Carson** with *Always Going Home* #39. A belated happy birthday! Your time with Ed Wilson on Lake Winnipeg sounds fortuitous and lovely. I enjoyed your commentary on Diana Paxson's *Brisingamen*. I'm currently reading Lee Gold's *Valhalla: Absent Without Leave*, which seems to resonate lightly with Paxson's book.

I've been looking forward to your reports on Pemmi-Con and have seen some online commentary and complaints, but without full reports. Your static display plans sound glorious, even if they didn't come to fruition fully given attendance and the need to tinker further. I applaud your efforts and look forward to hearing more about the con should you choose to offer additional comment. (I.e., were you always working your booths and displays, or did you get to check out any of the programming or other activities?)

"The Bestselling Science Fiction Books of All Time" (*Book Riot*, Aug. 8, 2023): *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, 1984 by George Orwell, *Dune* by Frank Herbert, *Foundation* by Isaac Asimov, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Robert A. Heinlein, 2001: *A Space Odyssey* by Arthur C. Clarke, *The Martian* by Andy Weir, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, ...

another is an interesting mix of plant and crystal. The involvement of uplifted chimps and dolphins is also particularly enjoyable.

As a mystery, the novel is excellent. The sf elements are satisfying enough, but the mystery itself is also compelling and well constructed. While featuring intriguing speculative science—the Uplift itself and the exploration of a sun—the political and social aspects of the book are also well presented. I'll have to explore more of the Uplift Universe. It feels like I'm arriving late at a very fun party.



—William Rotsler

On the LASFAPA Deities

In *Wurlitzer*, our apa's Apocrypha lists Marty Cantor as a **deity** in recognition of his serving as Little Tin God of LASFAPA for #9-64 and #275-555—almost 340 issues and more than 28 years. I wrote about Cantor's death in *F&F* #20 and profiled him as a patron saint of the LASFS in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #48—and will let that brief fannish biography stand.

What I will add now is that LASFAPA and other apae were very well represented in Cantor's collection, which I've been sorting and filing for donation to UC-Riverside's Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #74-77) He had kept most, if not all of the LASFAPA distributions and mailings he'd been involved in, retaining multiples of the mailings he'd overseen.

I deduplicated those back issues to donate one set to Eaton, and David Schlosser can receive the remainder, if he'd like it. While we have a full scanned set of APA-L, we have not yet undertaken scanning of LASFAPA, and digital copies are not available. We might want to explore how to best achieve such an effort. (In APA-L's case, Karl Lembke [*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #34] undertook the project.)

Among Cantor's materials were also APA-L distributions—natch—and mailings of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, Minneapa, and AZAPA (which was new to me), as well as at least one mailing of Shadow-FAPA.

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

Congo (1995)

After the success of 1993's *Jurassic Park*, movie makers turned to other Michael Crichton novels that hadn't yet been adapted for film. While several Crichton-based movies were made in the 1970s—*The Andromeda Strain*, *Pursuit* (based on the pseudonymous *Binary* by John Lange), and *The Terminal Man*—the 1990s brought audiences *Disclosure*, *Rising Sun*, two *Jurassic Park* movies, *Sphere...* and *Congo*.

While many of Crichton's novels are medical thrillers or non-genre, much of his techno-thriller work is borderline sf if not sf proper. *Congo* qualifies as sf. I'm currently less than halfway through the 1980 novel, but so far, the book suggests that the movie is a decent adaptation, and the book goes a little more into the scientific ideas than the movie is able to.

The gist of the movie is that an expedition funded by a satellite telecommunications company is looking for a previous, lost expedition that had been looking for semiconductive diamonds that can be used in laser optics. Their destination, the lost city of Zinj, a legendary site that also inspired H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*. The expedition is joined by an academic who hopes to return a mountain gorilla named Amy to the wild.

Amy has learned sign language, and using a VR-like gestural glove developed by the academic, her signs can be translated into synthesized speech. The expedition finds the lost city, long rumored to be King Solomon's African diamond mines, and they are protected by a lost race of gorilla-chimpanzee-human hybrids trained to guard the mines.

Satellite communication technology allows the expedition to communicate with its home office, and near the end of the movie, an employee of the telecommunications firm fires a laser into space, destroying a satellite.

It's a relatively enjoyable movie, though the 1990s special effects are largely practical, using gorilla suits. The film might qualify as alternate history given the King Solomon connection, and the idea of a lost race of guards is fascinating. The movie also includes a couple of fun casting aspects, featuring Tim Curry as a greedy explorer, Bruce Campbell in a small role, and *The Matrix*'s Joe Pantoliano in an uncredited part.



—William Rotsler

***Purani Haveli* (1989)**

Included in the relatively new Mondo Macabro box set *Bollywood Horror*, this Indian musical horror is kind of amazing, but not as mind blowing as Nobuhiko Obayashi's *House*. The movie's title can be translated as *The Old Mansion*, and the Ramsay Brothers' film focuses on a group of "young" people hanging out in an old abandoned home.

One of the young women attracts the attention of an older family member, her uncle by marriage, as a possible spouse in order to gain better access to her father's estate. There's a monster in the house, as well as threatening statues reminiscent of suits of armor. A group of hired thugs threaten the young people, who eventually make their way to the dungeon.

The movie as a whole is largely forgettable. The plot is awkward, the acting—and casting—unconvincing, and the special effects passable. But the

movie is worth seeing because of the Bollywood-style musical numbers, which incorporate widespread dancing and singing, if low-budget costuming.

Two musical numbers stand out. In one, 32 minutes in, the characters are at some kind of outdoor party or cookout, and individual characters address another in song while everyone else stands still. In another, about an hour and 17 minutes into the film, several of the "young" people dance exuberantly in brightly colored clothes, the song radically out of place in terms of tenor and tone for the movie. Even the hired thugs dance uncharacteristically.

I find the Ramsay Brothers, a family of Bollywood filmmakers—seven brothers—related to F.U. Ramsay, fascinating. They strike me as an Indian Shaw Brothers, in a way. The Ramsay Brothers made more than 30 horror movies, as well as other films, including a children's movie and a TV show. I look forward to reading Shamy Dasgupta's book, *Don't Disturb the Dead: The Story of the Ramsay Brothers* (HarperCollins India, 2017).

***William Shatner's Star Trek Memories* (1995)**

The National Fantasy Fan Federation's Video Bureau screened this video documentary online in early August. Initially released on home video, a shorter version was also aired on CBS as *Star Trek: A Captain's Log* to promote *Star Trek Generations*.

In the documentary, host William Shatner discusses his 25 years working on *Star Trek*. The video also includes interviews with other cast and crew members, incorporating a healthy number of scenes from the television show—which is really what makes the program worth watching.

The interviews are loosely organized to focus on primary cast members, focusing on their characteristics and back stories, as well as the relationships between crew members—and what made *Star Trek* work well. The documentary also touches on key storylines and episodes, including "The Corbomite Maneuver."

Several vignettes stood out as particularly interesting. James Doohan recounts the various accents they tested before settling on his character being Scottish. There's a montage of DeForest Kelley's character, Dr. McCoy, saying, "He's dead, Jim," in different ways. And Nichelle Nichols remembers the encouragement of Martin Luther King Jr. to stay on the show as Uhura because the character inspired young and old Black people alike—but also portrayed a Black person, a woman, in a professional role requiring expertise and skill (which some whites still need to see).

While not entirely a need to see, it's an enjoyable artifact from the days of video tape. You should be able to find the documentary available online, even on YouTube, though copies are occasionally taken down because of copyright concerns.

Comments on LASFAPA #558

While I am honored to be bestowed my second Stevie, I don't think I earned it. I only contributed four pages to this mailing.

In *Fool's Mate* #561, **David Schlosser** mentioned going to Winnipeg. I presume it was for Pemmi-Con and look forward to your reportage in the next mailing! I have set aside the Langdon Chart, which was among Marty Cantor's belongings. Would you like it? Should we donate it to Eaton with the key? Should I take possession of it?

While I did find the stamps Cantor used for apae mailings—which I plan to share with you 50/50—and at least one box of 8-10 reams or partial reams of paper of various colors (currently in the back seat of my wife's car)—which I can also share with you—we have not found LASFAPA account records yet. Talking with Nick Smith, it sounds like it might be problematic to access money from Cantor's accounts to share, even if we do find the records. We might have to consider anything we'd previously provided a moderate loss individually and continue funding our new accounts with you from scratch as we have so far.

The stamps I can mail you, and we can decide whether it makes sense to ship or relay four or five reams or partial reams of paper. I'd like to share as much with you as possible, logistics willing.

A few days ago, I watched the final episode of *Travelers*, and your question "How do you know this will make things better?" is valid and directly addressed by one of the characters. I've added you to the distribution list for *De Profundis* and *Menace of the LASFS*. You're right that scans of materials might also need to have optical character recognition (OCR) applied to them. Most of our scanned APA-L dist'ns aren't searchable, but over time, I hope to OCR them all. It's not a priority, however.

It was fun to think of you changing planes at LAX because for a time, we were in the same city. Regardless, it wasn't *that* much fun. The cameos you mention in *The Flash* make the movie sound well worth seeing. When I recently renewed my membership in the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films (the folks behind the Saturn Awards), I realized that for a higher membership fee, they offer free screenings of the movies under consideration... in Westwood. Saturday and Sunday

mornings—the screenings are usually held at 10:30 a.m. at the Landmark there—traffic is light, so it takes maybe 15 minutes for me to get there from Culver City. So in late July, I went to my first two screenings: *The Beasts* and *Insidious: The Red Door*. My wife and I returned for *Between Two Worlds* in early August.

Alva Svoboda's *That Flagon Last Night* #250 commented on his recent reading. Based on your commentary, I've ordered Ray Nayler's *A Mountain in the Sea* and Ann Leckie's *Translation State* from the Science Fiction Book Club (<https://sfbc.com>), which still exists, after a fashion. I look forward to reading them and recently enjoyed Brian Aldiss's short story "Parasites of Passion" in the April 1982 edition of *Asimov's (T&T #76)*. I hope you enjoyed your time in the Sierras.

In *Thyme Enough for Lunch*, **Alan Winston** remarked on exercising. I haven't been exercising much lately and recently resumed doing so in the backyard most mornings before work, alternating light weights and bodyweight exercises. So far I've been keeping to four days a week, but my initial weights were too heavy and I needed time to recover. So I'm now using lighter weights, which is fine. I'll perhaps work back up to using the heavier weights, which aren't that heavy at 10 pounds. For now, the five-pound weights are better.

I'm sorry you received concerned feedback on a corrective tone while calling dance. My wife occasionally studies improvisational theater with the daughter of Paul Sills, and she's told me that sometimes people take umbrage at her intervening or advising—similarly perceived as sternly—as the instructor during an improvisation. I think your consideration of the feedback is appropriate, but it might come down to whether someone is open to instruction or direction, or whether they truly believe that a dance can be done any old way.

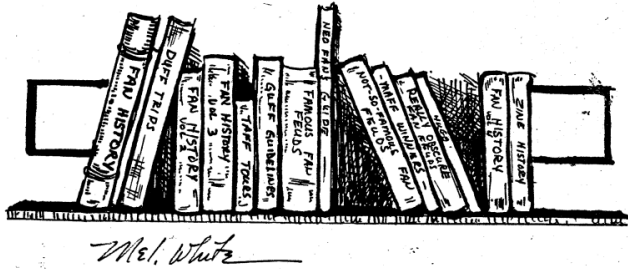
You're right that most people call *Shangri L'Affaires Shaggy*, but the title of the fanzine is the whole enchilada. I checked back issues on Fanac, and *Fancylopedia 3* indicates that *Shangri L'Affaires* was "frequently known by its nickname *Shaggy*." We might all know that, but not everyone will. If I refer to it in the future, I reserve the option to use either name, depending on the context.

Your remark on my use of the acronym CRT made me chuckle. I did not mean Critical Race Theory, but cathode-ray tube, which the display monitor might not even have had—it was just big and boxy, like older televisions and computer monitors.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #78

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From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Congo by Michael Crichton (Avon, 2004)

Having recently seen the 1995 movie adaptation (*Faculae & Filigree* #22) of Crichton's 1980 novel, I picked up the book almost immediately to see how consistent they were. I'd forgotten how good his techno-thrillers can be!

This book, while published as a mainstream novel by a mainstream author, is clearly science fiction—just as the movie is. The movie is a decent adaptation, and the book is able to go into the scientific ideas more than the movie is able to.

The gist of the book—like the movie—is that an expedition funded by a satellite telecommunications company is looking for a previous, lost expedition that had been looking for semiconductive diamonds that can be used in laser optics. Their destination is the lost city of Zinj, a legendary site that also inspired H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (which might also be worth rereading!).

The expedition is joined by an academic who hopes to return a mountain gorilla named Amy to the wild. Amy has learned sign language and considers other gorillas who can't sign to be stupid. The expedition finds the lost city, long rumored to be King Solomon's African diamond mines, and they are protected by a lost race of gorilla-chimpanzee-human hybrids trained to guard the mines.

Similar to the movie, the book might qualify as alternate history given the King Solomon connection, and the idea of a lost race of guards is fascinating. I was glad that the book was able to spend more time on that aspect, better detailing the ruins of the city, its

ceremonial artwork and statuary, and how the expedition members learn just what the guards are.

Another speculative technological aspect less strongly addressed in the movie is the use of computer modeling to determine optimal routing in order to reach their goal before a rival expedition. The expedition leader enters a number of variables and possible routes, as well as details from the ever-changing geopolitical situation in Africa, and the computer indicates a route's likelihood of success, related risks, and other characteristics to help the group determine the best way to get where they're going as quickly and safely as possible.

The novel ends quite quickly once the climax is reached, and there's very little falling action or resolution. But it works and doesn't feel rushed or like a cop out at all. A good read, and well paired with the movie for comparison. Crichton is an author worth reconsidering if you haven't read him recently.

Portions of this book review appeared in slightly different form in F&F #22.

From the Reading Pile: Fanzine Reviews

Crypt of Cthulhu #13 (Lammas, 2019)

Inspired by reading a friend's new apazine for the Esoteric Order of Dagon (see below), an H.P. Lovecraft-related apa run by S.T. Joshi, I needed to satisfy a yen for Lovecraftiana this week. So I searched the piles and shelves for related works and came across this wonderful squarebound fanzine that I hadn't read yet.

Edited by Robert M. Price and featuring a full-cover cover by Price and Robert H. Knox, the 66-page issue published by Necronomicon Press mixes short fiction and nonfiction, focusing on Lovecraft and related writers. The fiction includes Gary Myers's "The Voyage of King Hellabolis" and Darrell Schweitzer's "The Last Horror out of Arkham," a reprint from 1977. Frank Coffman and Frederick J. Mayer contributed weird poetry.

While both stories are excellent and identify authors to follow up on—I'd already come across Schweitzer—it's the nonfiction that really pulled me in. Will Murray considers Clark Ashton Smith's Mars-related stories for various magazines, commenting on correspondence from Forrest J Ackerman requesting that Smith's stories be more science fictional.

Timothy Burrell's "The Pelton Mythos" examines the provenance and publication history of Fred L. Pelton, who compiled mythic histories building on and divergent from those of Lovecraft and August Derleth. This is why I love Lovecraft fanzines. I now need to seek out *The Sussex Manuscript* and *A Guide*

to the *Cthulhu Cult* now that I've read about them.

"First and Final Estimates: August Derleth Looks at *Weird Tales*" by John D. Haefele surveys Derleth's writing about the magazine over time, as well as the publication's end days. This article includes another LASFS connection: Francis T. Laney was going to publish some *Weird Tales* promotional material in *The Acolyte* but informed the editors he'd do so instead in "a different fanzine named *Shangri L'Affaires*." Charles Burbee edited *Shaggy* at the time, but Laney appears as a contributor. While I've downloaded contemporaneous issues from Fanac, I've yet to find the material described.

Other content in the issue focuses on a vanity license plate and reactions it inspires, Lovecraft's prose poem "Memory," speculative sources for Lovecraft's "The Doom That Came to Sarnath," an interview with journalist and weird author Peter Cannon, and additional material.

The book reviews identify additional sources worth tracking down, including work by Will Murray, Ramsey Campbell, and James Wade. The letter column attracted missives from Myers and Schweitzer, both otherwise represented in the issue.

It's funny; in my letter of comment to my friend in response to his EOD apazine, I said, "It seems odd to me that HPL-related fandom and other sf and fantasy fandom don't rub shoulders more often; they're so clearly aligned." This issue indicates clear adjacency, if not overlap, as well as a LASFS relationship that might be worth exploring further.

You can learn more about current Necronomicon Press offerings at <https://necropress.squarespace.com>, and *Crypt of Cthulhu* #114 was published last year, available from Amazon at <https://amzn.to/3OWrdDn>.

***The New Faig Collector* #1 (August 2023)**

Editor Mick Taylor recently rejoined the apa Esoteric Order of Dagon after a hiatus of some length. Knowing he was about to do so, I was thrilled silly to receive *The New Faig Collector* #1 via email. While I'm familiar with the work of H.P. Lovecraft and related authors, S.T. Joshi, and apae generally, I've never, ever dabbled in the dark art that is the Esoteric Order. (I didn't even include it in my apae directory *Blue Moon Special*, an oversight indeed.) So I appreciated the opportunity to experience Taylor's involvement vicariously.

In part, the issue recounts his introduction to Lovecraft while on an archaeological dig in South Africa. That reminded me of my Lovecraftian encounters while in Mexico City last summer. (*T&T* #27 and *Faculae & Filigree* #14). He also discusses the connection between weird fiction and esoteric

orders such as the Ordo Templi Orientis, which Taylor has spent time with. And he intends his apazine to focus on the writing of Ken Faig Jr., author of *Lovecraftian People and Places* and other works.

Taylor summarizes *Nyctalops* #6, a 1972 fanzine including Faig content and references, and showcases a local zine of sorts, *SE Taylor Street Cat News*, which he found pinned to a neighborhood lamp post. He held off on mailing comments for next ish.

As a first issue, it's a fine apazine, and a good example of the sort of discussion and information to be found in EOD. I'd welcome receiving future such publications—this one gave me plenty to seek out and explore, as well as an unexpected LASFS tie in! (And it inspired me to seek out related work immediately—see above.) Mick Taylor, 2945 SE Taylor St., Portland, OR 97214.

This review was sent in slightly different form to Taylor and NFC as a letter of comment.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews *Mystics in Bali*

This week's Tuesday movie was the 1981 Indonesian supernatural horror film *Mystics in Bali*, directed by

Tjut Djalil and based on Putra Mada's novel *Leák Ngakak*. While there are moments of visual brilliance—occasionally occluded by poor special effects—the movie isn't very good.

Mystics in Bali details the exploration of black magic by a female American anthropologist, who becomes the student of a Balinese witch. Even though the anthropologist considers her course of study completed—undertaken in order to write a book—she remains in the thrall of her instructor, undertaking her bidding to help the witch achieve youth through the consumption of blood and to regain the power necessary to overcome her local opposition.

Drawing on elements of Southeast Asian folklore and Balinese mythology, the movie portrays the witch as a Leyak, and the American student takes the form of a penanggalan. Both Leyak and penanggalan can be portrayed as flying heads with their entrails and other innards dangling below. The footage of the head detaching from the student's body, as well as her movement through space, is quite interesting, represented using film overlay as well as modeling and wire.

One scene involving the penanggalan is quite shocking. The detached head devours an about-to-be-born infant while between the legs of the mother. That and a scene in which the anthropologist's Indonesian boyfriend closely studies a supernatural tattoo on the inside of her thigh while she wears a bikini offers some awkward near-erotic moments that aren't entirely appropriate.

Other than the witch, played by Sofia W.D., the acting is pretty wooden and disappointing. The physicality and presence—the gestures!—of W.D. and perhaps Debby Cynthia Dewi, who played the witch once consuming blood returns her youth, is impressive and dramatic. But the female protagonist—played by a German named Ilona Agathe Bastian who'd never acted before—and her Indonesian boyfriend Mahendra, played by Yos Santo, is unconvincing and devoid of any strength or chemistry. Bastian was a tourist visiting Bali when she was selected by the wife of a producer for casting.

According to IMDb, “the pretty, dark-haired student from Germany was merely on vacation when one day, on the beach, she was approached by the producer's wife and asked if she was interested in extending her stay in Indonesia to appear in a film. Ilona said yes and wrote cinema history.

“Unfortunately, the part of Cathy Kean remained her first and only film role. Shortly after filming wrapped, ... Bastian returned to Germany. It's unknown what became of her and what she's doing today... ” Regardless, it was somewhat refreshing to

see a female actor with underarm hair in a motion picture. That led my friend to remark that the actress must not be American.

Despite the movie's flaws, *Mystics in Bali* is reportedly the most successful Indonesian feature film. The movie was supposedly produced for foreign markets and doesn't include some of the more traditional elements of Indonesian cinema, such as musical numbers and dance.

Slightly reminiscent of *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, the movie's portrayal of black magic is intriguing, and I'd like to learn more about Leyak and penanggalan. I'd also like to learn more about Indonesian cinema—for local and overseas audiences.

Comments on APA-L #3032

Thank you, **C.D. Carson**, for sharing some of the sights and sites of Pemmi-Con with your photographic cover! I presume that's one picture, but I suppose it could be two.

In *Leeway* dated for Aug. 10, **Lee Gold** updated us on the state of local gold medallion trees. I still haven't made the time to take the trip. I have shared your feedback with cover artist Ulrika O'Brien. I emailed you Garth Spencer's email addresses Aug. 4, and you responded that day thanking me for them. I'll resend so they're at the top of your inbox! Given the time delays between writing, mailing, and reading, you might very well already have them.

Thank you for the advice on interlibrary shipment. Nick Smith was planning to discuss options with UC-Riverside, and taking materials to UCLA would certainly be preferable. Pickup in North Hollywood would be even better! I'll let Smith know about your experience.

Most of the time, my wife and I order stamps from the USPS online, but the Culver City downtown branch sells stamps at the counter. When I stop by weekly on Fridays to mail APA-L and check my P.O. Box, which I don't really use for zine or fannish correspondence any more, I usually interact with the same counter clerk, who's always writing in a notebook. I recently asked him what he was working on. He's writing an epic fantasy novel “because I can't seem to write anything short.” Eventually, I'll give him information about the LASFS and APA-L.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1556 opened with a haiku. When I emailed the PDF version of APA-L to select editors last week, I included a haiku in the email.

The weekly apa
winging its way through the air
Comment hooks galore

If I keep that practice up, I'll try to include them here, as well, for other ellers.

Hertz also shares additional information about Beverley Driver Eddy and the Ritchie Boys. I've shared your feedback with cover artist Kurt Erichsen. Thank you for pointing out Marc Schirmeister's National Fantasy Fan Federation connection. I've now read his piece in *The Reluctant Famulous* #122 courtesy of eFanzines, and it's a wonderful story that takes him—starting as a young teenager—through comic books, comics fanzines, *Weird Science* (*Snow Poster Township* #6), the public library, Ray Bradbury, and assorted paperbacks to find fandom several years later thanks to Ted White and *Amazing Stories*, and a fellow Neffer he met at a used bookstore. I love stories like that.

In *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #47, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** reported on recent COVID-19 variants. Be careful out there. I'll look at Marty Cantor's apartment floors the next time I stop by to pick up remaining back issues and collation materials for APA-L and LASFAPA, but outside of his living room, I think much of the apartment is carpeted. At least I think the bedroom and library are.

Thank you for mentioning Jon D. Swartz. You reminded me to email him. I might be writing a history of *If* magazine for its forthcoming relaunch (<https://worldsofifmagazine.com>), and I intended to ask him whether he'd kept a file on it. Email sent.

Joe Zeff's *Toony Loons* #725 indicated that Marcia didn't qualify for Ozempic. LASFAPAns Alan Winston and Janice Morningstar are both currently taking Ozempic, so if anyone needs information about what it's like, they might be helpful sources.

Your description of *Carmageddon* reminded me slightly of *Car Wars*. As the realities of my son's tuition and living expenses in Tokyo become more real, we've begun economizing. I've started canceling online, app, magazine, and streaming subscriptions, and with the expected rate increases for Disney+ and Hulu, it looks like we'll be canceling streaming television services, as well.

It's kind of amazing how many "little" \$9-\$10/month subscriptions one can have, just hiding in your spending. Last week, I canceled Apple Music, which I've been using as long as there's been an iPod or the old iTunes store. It'd previously been my most-used music service, but since Apple discontinued the iPod—thinking people should get an iPhone instead, which I will not do—and my iPod's battery swelled, making it hazardous to charge, I've canceled Apple Music and started listening to a portable CD or tape player at bedtime instead of the iPod.

There's still a bunch of music remaining in my

Apple Music, so I don't think the cancellation has fully kicked in yet. This week, I made a smart playlist of songs that haven't been played yet, so I can listen to the unheard until whatever songs I don't actually own disappear. We'll see whether everything just disappears, or if it remains and irritates me by reminding me I can't play it.

I don't expect to miss Apple Music. I'll continue to subscribe to Spotify because I use it to listen to music with friends most Wednesdays, and I have plenty of records, CDs, and tapes to listen to. Some more arrived today, my final record mail order: music by Frank Zappa and The Residents. Now to listen to what I own and buy no more. So far in the new smart playlist, I've heard:

- AAA, "With You"—from the anime *Inuyasha*
- ABBA, "Dancing Queen"
- Dream Theater, "Hollow Years"
- Richard Wagner, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, "Morgenlich leuchtend"
- Tessa Violet, "Bored"
- Bad Religion, "What Tomorrow Brings"
- The Residents, "Herman"
- Voivod, "Blower"
- Anthrax, "Sects"
- Quiet Riot, "Slick Black Cadillac (Live)"
- Pixies, "All I Think About Now"

Not bad for listening to music on shuffle! (Your mileage might vary. I appreciate music other ellers might not, as well as some I know you do.)

THIS IS THE
END? NO
MORE SILLY
FANZINE?



—William Rotsler

Emulators & Engines #6

Aug. 21, 2023

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.

The Phoenix and Fates & Fortunes

Since late last year, I've been enjoying the relatively newly domestically available British comics weekly, *The Phoenix*. (*Brass Hat Mind* #2) In recent issues, the editors have introduced a new (to me) feature under the heading Fates & Fortunes—"Pick your path and decide your fortune...!"

First appearing in #579 (Feb. 4, 2023), the Choose Your Own Adventure- and gamebook-like feature offers a story featuring the fantasy character Fawn, "The Last Silver Unicorn." After a one-page description of how to play the game, the story unfolds in a two-page spread oriented like a centerfold. Readers read short passages, making choices at the bottom of each, and proceeding to the next passage indicated by various icons or fate stones. Based on the decisions a reader makes, they might earn fortune coins, which indicate relative levels of success or accomplishment.

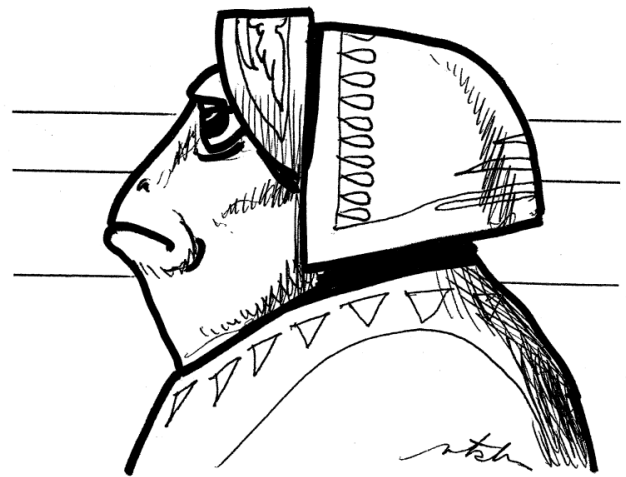
In this first story, written by Jonathan Barrett and Robert Deas, and illustrated by Deas, Fawn—who also appears in a comic in the magazine—sets out to help the last silver unicorn, encountering poachers and a Witch Hunter, called on to use her powers as an Earth Whisperer to evade capture, protect the unicorn, and help it rejoin its herd.

Given the real estate available, albeit three pages, the story is relatively short, the choices somewhat limited, and chances of success unlikely—two of three endings end in failure or uncertainty. But it's wonderful to see a modern, mainstream example of gamebook-like adventure. Many of *The Phoenix's* standing features and characters are also available in graphic novel or young adult book form. We'll see if this leads to a British resurgence of gamebooks.

Issue #584 (March 11, 2023) features a Fates & Fortune piece titled "Skeleton Shenanigans" written by Barrett and drawn by Armin Roshdi and Paul Duffield. In this somewhat cartoony and funny adventure, a party of heroes has reached the Obsidian Tower, where they go up against the Necromancer and his undead minions. The reader plays the part of one

of those minions, a skeletal farmer. It's a clever turnabout, even if it's very much in the style of traditional fantasy roleplaying.

"The End of the World as We Knew It," written by Barrett and drawn by Luke Hyde and Duffield, appeared in #588 (April 8, 2023). You are a teenage survivor of a zombie apocalypse in search of the Eden Project, the "last bastion of civilization." Issue #590 (April 22, 2023) includes "Jungle Jeopardy," written by Barrett and drawn by Roshdi and Duffield. Readers take on the role of a child playing a board game with their rival. The story combines gameplay mechanics—including the use of cards—with more straightforward adventure narrative as though the board game were real.



—William Rotsler

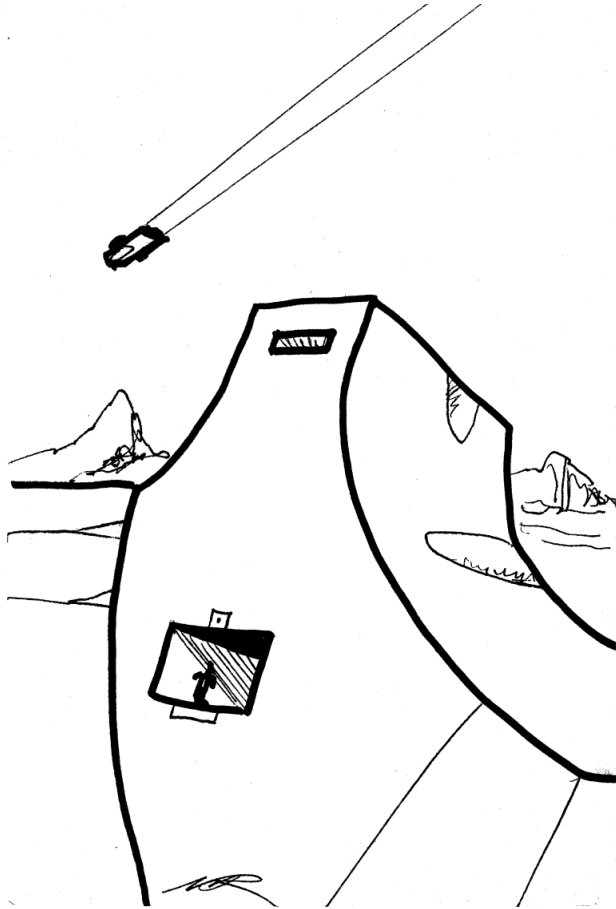
May 8, 2023's #592 includes "The Case of the Titanium Falcon," written by Barrett and illustrated by Roshdi. A private investigator based in Space Francisco tries to retrieve the falcon, "the key to finding the remains of a long-lost alien civilisation," in the space colony. The adventure portrays an intriguing blend of noir detective fiction and sf.

"A Night at the Yokai Party" by Barrett, Siobhan McKenna, and Duffield appeared in #595 (May 27, 2023). Streamlining the introductory page, editors make the feature more story oriented and less focused on the gameplay elements. You're an 8-year-old yokai expert who hopes to infiltrate a yokai party in your neighborhood.

June 10, 2023's #597 features "The Princess Rescuer" by Barrett, Chris Hazeldine, and Duffield. Introduced by the Teller—first appearing in #595—the occasional feature now sends readers on "adventures across realities" from a realm called the Inbetween. In this story, Princess Passionfruit seeks to rescue Princess Vanilla, who's "locked in a tower guarded by

a fearsome dragon.”

And “It Is One of Us” by Barrett, Roshdi, and Duffield appeared in #598 (June 17, 2023). In a *Paranoia*-like tale, Janitor9496 sets out to find a shapeshifter who killed Scientist1551 on Space Station CocoAlpha.



—William Rotsler

Apparently, it’s not a new feature, perhaps dating back to as early as 2018. I’ve asked the editors when the first *Fates & Fortunes* appeared. Regardless, *Fates & Fortunes* is a bright spot in what’s already a relatively fun weekly anthology aimed at young readers. I can already imagine a generation of British—and some American—children growing up with *Fates & Fortunes*, as well as where these comic and text adventures might take them in terms of further reading, roleplaying games, and other interests.

On the *ElfQuest* Adventure Game

Inspired by a recent Humble Bundle of assorted *ElfQuest* comic books and collections, I finally spent some time with the *ElfQuest Adventure Game*, which was designed by Layman Kingsford and produced as the result of a Kickstarter. The game can be played by

as few as one player, which appeals to me, though my experience was less than stellar in my first play.

Inspired by the long-running sf-fantasy comic books by Wendy and Richard Pini, and including materials that feature Wendy’s artwork, the game lays out a number of adventures that can be undertaken by *ElfQuest* characters such as Cutter, Skywise, Moonshade, Pike, and others.

The game provides five scenarios—Forest Life, Madcoil!, Neighboring Humans, Troll Caverns, and the Burning Waste—as well as tasks that can be undertaken in Father Tree Holt. Even with one player, you control four characters at a time, which proved challenging to me, not yet knowing how to use their ability or “hand” cards.

Over the course of the scenarios, the Original Quest characters seek to reclaim the lost Palace of the High Ones, straight out of the pages of the comic books. You can advance characters through growth stages as the game progresses, and the mechanics are mostly a combination of card activation (hand management) along with the management and spending of attribute cubes.

While I was drawn to the *ElfQuest* connection and the materials resonate strongly with the work of the Pinis, I’ve not yet picked up on the hand management and attribute cube aspects of the mechanics sufficiently to say I enjoyed the game. We’ll see if I find the scenarios compelling enough to play again.

Regardless, the game did inspire me to return to the earliest *ElfQuest* comic books, which make for wonderful reading. There was also an *ElfQuest* roleplaying game published by Chaosium in 1984 that might be more rewarding in terms of what I’d seek from an *ElfQuest*-related game.

That roleplaying game was designed using Chaosium’s Basic Role-Playing system, which grew out of *RuneQuest*. BRP also provided the underpinnings of games including *Call of Cthulhu* and *Stormbringer*. Similar to my experience with other licensed or tie-in games, I’m curious whether the *ElfQuest* setting is compelling enough for gaming even if you don’t play one of the main characters.

At the least, it’s a good reason to return to the comic books, which are glorious indeed.

On Gamebooks: Lone Wolf Book 1—*Flight from the Dark*

In early August, I returned to Lone Wolf, having come across a 1984 Sparrow edition of Joe Dever and Gary Chalk’s *Flight from the Dark*, the first book. Lone Wolf has been experiencing a bit of a resurgence in recent years, as Holmgard Press reissues definitive editions of the gamebooks. Every one of the 32 books

will return to print by 2025, according to the press's Web site. (<https://shop-magnamund.com/collections/definitive-editions>)

While the series holds some nostalgic value for me—though Lone Wolf was not my first gamebook experience—I must admit that I'm more interested in the original works than redesigned new editions “drawing on the best artwork from across the years.” Chalk's original artwork is excellent and adequately captures the spirit of the series.

In one evening, I played the gamebook through once, dying five times before I was finally able to defeat a formidable Gourgaz in combat and able to proceed. The first time I died, I backed up one decision to see what would have happened had I decided not to fight—I died immediately anyway! Once I defeated the Gourgaz, the remainder of the path to the city was relatively straight and somewhat safe, and subsequent combats, few in number, weren't as deadly.

The awesome thing about gamebooks, however, is that once you've played through one, there are all still all sorts of paths you didn't take. Because there are other Lone Wolf and similar gamebooks I'd rather spend time playing and exploring, rather than replay the gamebook to follow other paths, I just read through the rest of the book to make sure I had a sense of paths not taken—and saw all of the illustrations. Even that was an enjoyable experience.

A gamebook purist might suggest that my approach was cheating. I backed up and made a different decision. I replayed a combat—though challenging—until I defeated the enemy. (Six attempts!) And I read the rest of the book without playing through it.

That's OK. There are other gamebooks to explore!

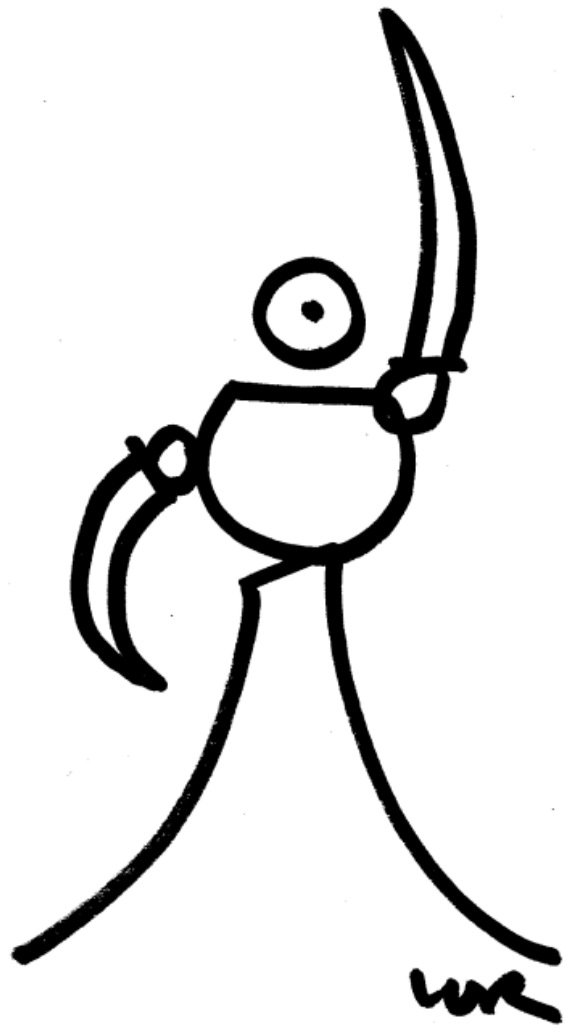
Comments on *Alarums & Excursions* #573

In *Tantivy* dated for July 2, 2023, **Lee Gold** mentions a Superman comic book story about postage stamps. It might be “The Secret of the Superman Stamp!” written by Edmond Hamilton, penciled by Curt Swan, and inked by George Klein, from *Superman* #153 (May 1962). In that piece, the mayor of Rangoon, Burma, wants to use a photograph of Superman on a commemorative stamp. That story was based on “The Superman Stamp” from *Superman* #91 (August 1954). The 1962 story was later collected in *Showcase Presents: Superman* Vol. 3 (2007).

I had forgotten you play *Toon!* I'll have to dig out my materials and reacquaint myself with the system. I've been considering shorter-form episodic roleplaying recently, either drawing on cartoons, serials, or television shows. I haven't read any Anita

Blake books but recognize the author's name, Laurel K. Hamilton—something to explore, perhaps.

Patrick Riley's *Sinister Things* #318 includes remarks to Michael Cule about a Session Zero document. I take a similar approach, offering multiple adventure hooks for players to choose from, but if they decline to choose what's offered, sometimes you have to wing it and bring something back up later. Your comment to Jim Vassilakos about socializing reminds me to return to A&E #572 to see what I missed.



—William Rotsler

The Seedling #27 from **Mark Nemeth** offers a glorious map to the setting in progress, as well as site descriptions. There's a wealth of ideas and options here! I appreciated the music references to Concrete Blonde (another reason to return to #572) and the Crash Test Dummies' “Superman's Song.”

In **Jerry Stratton's** *The Bibylon Free Press* for August 2023, he reviewed Kenneth Robeson's *The Iron Skull*, Philip Francis Nowlan's *Armageddon 2419 A.D.*, and Robert E. Howard's *The Lost Valley of Iskander*—all noted for future reading. I haven't read that particular Robeson, but in 2021, I did read *The Glass Mountain*, another Avenger novel. While I enjoyed it, I prefer Doc Savage.

The Silent Temple #22 by **Dylan Capel** mentioned *Knave*, *Frontier Scum*, and *Over the Edge*. I participated in the Kickstarter for *Knave's* second edition and just downloaded the most recent draft version. I look forward to exploring it.

Thank you, **John Redden** for sending the box of A&E, as mentioned in *Reddened Stars* #32643.8bit. Now that I'm done organizing, sorting, and filing Marty Cantor's fanzine collection for UC-Riverside's Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #74-77), I can turn my attention to processing materials to donate to the University of Iowa—including yours—and DePaul University.

Like **Doc Cross**, as mentioned in the Sacramento Air Fryer edition of *Oops, Wrong Planet!*, I, too, have recently seen *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* (T&T #74)—as well as *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*. I found all three to be wonderful. The Indiana Jones movie was a wonderful continuation of the series.

Lisa Padol's mention of *Gumshoe* in *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #382 reminded me that I haven't checked it out yet. I like the concept of the finding of core clues not blocking story progress and wonder how that might resonate with Riley's approach to adventure hooks and narrative options.

In *PumSpeak* #115, **Paul Holman** mentioned *Blades in the Dark*. I thought I'd seen that game come up in solo RPG discussions, but I might be mistaken. Apparently Parts Per Million offers an *Alone in the Dark* guide to solo play, so that might be why it's ringing a bell.

Thank you, **Joshua Kronengold** (*Random Access* #286), for reading my play reports! I occasionally debate including them. Lee Grixit's game, which I've been unable to join recently, seems to offer an active pantheon, and player characters often offend or otherwise attract the attention of various gods. Grixit's also relatively liberal in his application of divine effects—such as Gebun Dallons' eventual transformation into a rabbit-like humanoid. At least two of the characters, including Dallons, are followers of the Green Father, and I've not yet entirely figured out just what's going on in terms of the gods and aspects of the gods—at least not enough to roleplay a cleric as well as I'd like to. The god I know might not

be the god another character knows. That seems reasonable, actually.

Kudos to **Craig Kamber** for “put[ting] something out there” with *Craig Cornered*. Having just seen *The Last Voyage of the Demeter*, I quite enjoyed your table of sea captain motivations.

Peter C. Hildreth's *Aragarth's Musings* mentioned several games of interest to me, given recent thinking of media-style episodic gameplay. Your *Casablanca*, *The League of Extraordinary Heroes*, and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* games sound intriguing.

Since reading a story in a 1985 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, I've been watching episodes of the original *Adam-12*, which I'd never seen. I quite like the format of the half-hour drama and think the program—though focusing on police—might led itself to roleplaying, either using d20 Modern or perhaps with a supernatural aspect using *The Dresden Files* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. It could also work with *Kids on Bikes* or *Tales from the Loop* for more of a *Stranger Things*-like approach. Going down that path could even open up *Conspiracy X* or *Men in Black*, though in the end it could even just draw on *Call of Cthulhu* or *Trail of Cthulhu*. Regardless, consider it Adam-13, perhaps.

Strategicon's Gateway is coming up Labor Day weekend, and I think my wife will be out of town to visit her mother. Tempting, but I don't think that gives me enough time to whip something up—10 days!

While I missed the previous discussion of Lee Gold seeking the return of her gaming materials' copyright as mentioned by **Spike Y Jones** in *Mermecolion at a Picnic* #443, there is precedent for such things. John Fogerty recently regained ownership of the Creedence Clearwater Revival back catalog, Kate Bush retained her rights the entire time, and Taylor Swift is rerecording her work to assert new copyright—while other musicians are seeking to sell their back catalogs for the windfall it can bring.

Apparently, after 35 years, authors have some leeway to sever a copyright grant. Reportedly, part of Fantasy Games Unlimited's appeal was that its games were copyrighted in the designers' names—that might not be true?—though there was a legal skirmish with the creators of *Villains & Vigilantes*. Given that *Lands of Adventure* came out in 1983 and *Vikings* in 1989, we're practically outside the 35-year timeframe, so it might be worthwhile seeking a return of copyright—or renegotiating terms.

There might also be an opportunity to rewrite the material removing any copyrighted intellectual property, but any approach should certainly involve a qualified attorney. Does the financial upside outweigh the associated legal costs?

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #79

Aug. 24, 2023

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.

Week-Old Haiku

Last week's APA-L preparation, printing, and collation occurred during a National Fantasy Fan Federation Tape Bureau online event at which several neffers listened to two episodes of *Suspense*: "Donovan's Brain, Part 1" (May 18, 1944) and "Donovan's Brain, Part 2" (May 25, 1944), both adapting Curt Siodmak's 1942 novel, which was later adapted as a movie in 1953.

So I ended up doing some other work on my laptop before moving on to the physical collation and preparation of mailed distributions. That led to the emailed PDF copies going out before the mailings were prepared, which is anomalous—usually that follows the hard copy preparation. And *that* resulted in last week's impromptu email haiku to PDF recipients:

Usually, I
prepare the print copies for
mailing before this.

Natter: The Busyness Business

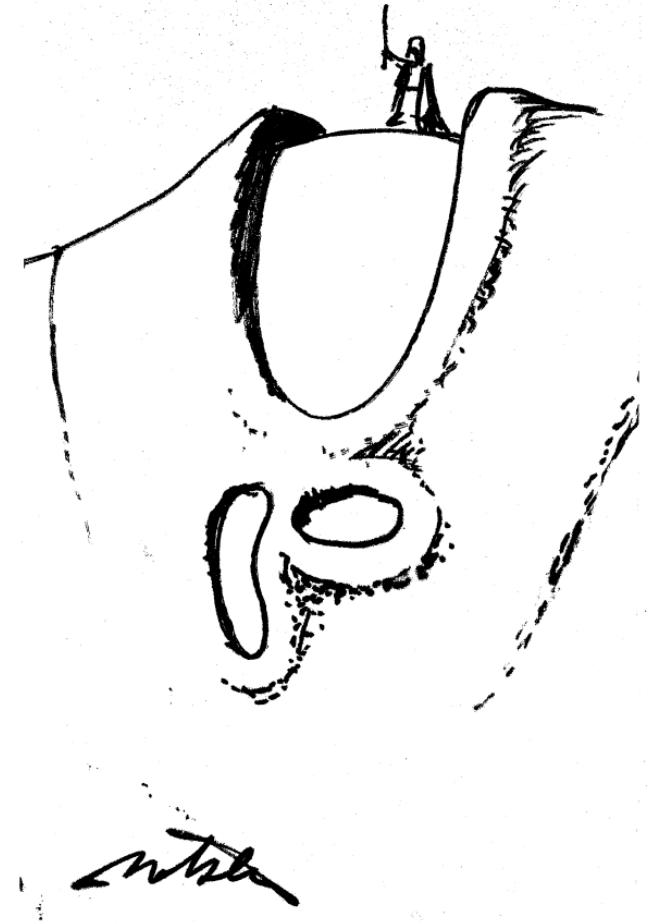
This has been a particularly active couple of weeks at work and with personal family business, as well as in fanac. In addition to APA-L this week, I've been sorting through back issues, auction items, and apa preparation materials to share with LASFAPA's David Schlosser; finishing work on a Loscon 48 review for *SF² Concatenation* (<http://www.concatenation.org>); completing the delayed August issue of *Menace of the LASFS*—and otherwise pressed for time.

Initially, I thought I might take a bye this week, but because most everyone showed up, I can hardly do that now, can I? I should be able to get two pages, even if they're mostly comments.

Comments on APA-L #3033

In *Leeway* dated for Aug. 17, 2023, **Lee Gold** updated ellers on vaccinations newly covered by Medicare. You raised an interesting question about the LASFS' Standing Rule I. As scribe of the LASFS and editor of *De Profundis*, I submit approved Condensed Cream of

Menace weekly to the club's Webmistress for publication on the Web site and publish *De Profundis* monthly.



—William Rotsler

De Profundis is sent to every LASFS member who wants to receive it. I email PDF copies to every member on the roster who's provided an email address, and I mailed a letter to the remainder announcing the relaunch of *De Prof*, indicating that members could provide an email address or request that it be mailed physically. I also email copies of *De Prof* to other people who request it, including people who might consider themselves members but don't show up on the roster. So far, one member receives *De Prof* physically in the mail. It's usually included with his APA-L distribution and sometimes mails a little late if I forget to print it right away. (As occurred this month.)

I'm not sure that *De Prof* is the most effective way to reach members in advance of a vote, given its monthly publication and incomplete reach. (Some people have opted not to receive it; that's not the same as opting out of all official LASFS communications.) *De Prof* is also more of an unofficial publication,

though it has the blessing of the board of directors, if not oversight. I'm also not sure who's responsible for sending such notice. Regardless, some combination of email, a Facebook post, and other communication to offline LASFSans seems necessary if the club truly wants to include everyone. Might be a question to bring up to the board!



—William Rotsler

Thank you for the *Star Wars* filk song references! Thank you, also, for the help identifying the location of the Hill. I'll include that in *The Los Angeles County Fanac Guide*. Do you mail *Xenofilkia* as a letter, or as a flat? Given the postage cited, I'd guess letter.

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #22 indicated that he recently reread Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. I, too, recently reread it—*T&T* #41—and I really enjoyed returning to the novel. Your office reorganization efforts sound fun and functional. I enjoyed seeing the pictures on Facebook!

Now that the rains are past us and we're back to David Lynch's proverbial "beautiful blue skies and golden sunshine all along the way," I belatedly hope that everyone fared well during the storms! Lee Gold

and I exchanged emails closer to the rain, and my family fared pretty well in Culver City. It rained, but not overly hard—just for a couple of days. I got up in the middle of the night one night to go into our yard with umbrella and flashlight to ensure the gutters and downspouts were clear—and that there was adequate drainage. The water sounds outside our bedroom window were intense!

We certainly benefit from some excellent cover artists and their work. I've been enjoying the recent full-color covers, which have been particularly wonderful.

In *Vanamonde* #1557, **John Hertz** announced that he'll again host Classics of SF book discussions at Loscon 49—huzzah! I won't be able to participate in Loscon this year, but I look forward to learning the selected titles, so I can read the books regardless. I've shared your cover feedback with Ulrika O'Brien. Among Marty Cantor's belongings, I found a fanzine that he had mailed her in 2008—somehow misaddressed, so the item was returned to him. Cantor held on to that returned mail for 15 years, and I shall soon mail it to her again. Personally, I find that kind of fun. I imagine she'll be surprised.

Joe Zeff's *Toony Loons* #726 updated ellers on health concerns, as well as the Oct. 14 annular eclipse of the sun. Serendipitously, my wife Caitlin has been making homemade ice cream in our ice cream maker in recent weeks, too. She made a batch of mint ice cream using fresh mint, as well as a batch of strawberry ice cream using... you got it: strawberries. It's quite a treat. May you enjoy your single-serving ice cream maker!

And in *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #48, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** updated ellers on the strike pickets at Disney. Your mention of PBS' *The Human Footprint* reminded me that I want to watch the American Experience documentary *Casa Susanna*. The program focuses on a resort home for transgender women and cross-dressing men in the Catskills. Of potential interest to fen is that Donald Wollheim's daughter Betsy Wollheim appears in the film to talk about her father's experience as a cross-dresser. (<https://tinyurl.com/Casa-SusannaNYT>)

I appreciated the additional context on full-bleed printing. It's good to know that it's an unreasonable expectation to print to the edge of the paper. A relief, even!

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #80

Aug. 28, 2023

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.

Last Week's Senru

So many deadlines
Self-imposed and otherwise
Fanac is a gift

On 1970s Television and *The Incredible Hulk*

The September 2023 issue of *Remind* magazine, a nostalgia-oriented periodical that's a little more pop culture-related—and recent in its focus—than *Reminisce*, which folded late last year, featured 1970s Fall TV: The Hits & the Flops on its cover. The cover didn't sport any genre series, and the primary article ("Those Were the Days: A Look Back at Fall TV Previews of the 1970s") didn't call out any sf or fantasy programs.

But when you turn to "The Lineup" and its reprints of *TV Guide* Fall TV Preview issue prime time grids, it becomes clear that there was some pretty decent sf and fantasy on the small screen in the 1970s. I was born in the early '70s, so I didn't really become fully aware of all that television had to offer until the late 1970s, but many of the notable shows are familiar to me. Not all of the following programs premiered in the fall that decade, but here's a sampling of what was available in prime time:

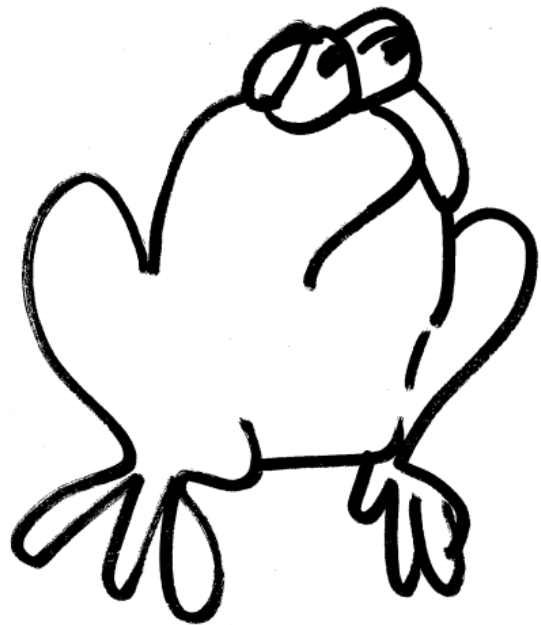
The witchcraft-oriented situation comedy *Bewitched* aired on ABC at 8:30 p.m. Thursdays in 1970, moving to 8 p.m. Wednesdays in 1971. *The Immortal*, which focused on a never-aging race-car driver, debuted on ABC at 10 p.m. Thursdays in 1970. And sf-adjacent espionage series *Mission: Impossible* (T&T #18) aired on CBS at 7:30 p.m. Saturdays in 1970, moving to 10 p.m. for 1971-1972.

Anthology *Night Gallery*, hosted and written by Rod Serling, aired on NBC at 10 p.m. Wednesdays in 1971, moving to 10 p.m. Sundays in 1972.

Supernatural anthology *Ghost Story* premiered on NBC at 9 p.m. Fridays in 1972. Paranormal thriller *The Sixth Sense* debuted on ABC at 10 p.m. Saturdays that fall, as well.

In the fall of 1973, *The Magician* premiered on NBC at 9 p.m. Tuesdays. While the program wasn't a

fantasy, it's notable for casting of Bill Bixby, who was an amateur magician, well-known magicians guests, and the show's eventual location at the Academy of Magical Arts' Magic Castle.



—William Rotsler

1974 was a very good year for fen. *The Six Million Dollar Man* premiered on ABC at 8:30 p.m. Fridays. *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* debuted on that network at 10 p.m. that same day. And movie tie-in *Planet of the Apes* premiered on CBS at 8 p.m. Friday. That night in 1974 must have been glorious, if one stayed home. While the latter two programs didn't last until the next fall, *Six Million Dollar Man* continued, moving to 8 p.m. Sundays for 1975-1977.

H.G. Wells-inspired *The Invisible Man*, starring *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*'s David McCallum, premiered on NBC at 8 p.m. Mondays in 1975.

The Six Million Dollar Man spin-off *The Bionic Woman*, based on Martin Caidin's 1972 novel *Cyborg*, debuted on ABC at 8 p.m. Wednesdays in 1976, moving to NBC at 8 p.m. Saturdays in 1977. *Gemini*

Man premiered on NBC at 8 p.m. Thursdays. The third TV series based on H.G. Wells's novel *The Invisible Man*, the show was a replacement for 1975's program with that title—with a smaller budget.

The Man from Atlantis, featuring an underwater superhero, debuted on NBC at 9 p.m. Thursdays in 1977. *New Adventures of Wonder Woman* aired on CBS at 8 p.m. Fridays, maintaining that time slot in 1978. And *Logan's Run*—another TV show based on a movie—premiered on CBS at 9 p.m. Fridays. Another good night for genre TV!

Battlestar Galactica premiered on ABC at 8 p.m. Mondays in 1978. *Happy Days* spin-off sitcom *Mork & Mindy* debuted on ABC at 8 p.m. Thursdays, moving to that time slot Sundays in 1979. And *Project U.F.O.*, loosely based on Project Blue Book, aired on NBC at 8 p.m. Thursdays.

Finally, in 1979, *The Incredible Hulk* aired on CBS at 8 p.m. Fridays. The Frankenstein-oriented sitcom *Struck by Lightning* premiered on CBS at 8:30 p.m. Wednesdays. And *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* debuted on NBC at 8 p.m. Thursdays.

Several genre programs were included in *Remind's* "The 1970s Hall of Shame." *Holmes and Yoyo*, which aired from September to December 1976, featured a police officer paired with a lifelike robot. *Struck by Lightning* was described as a "gimmicky comedy" and aired from September-October 1979—lasting only three of its 11 episodes. And *The Man from Atlantis* aired from September 1977 to July 1978.

Over the decade, at least three of the above programs received cover treatments by *TV Guide*. The Jan. 29, 1977, edition featured Wonder Woman on the cover and included a story titled "From the Pages of Comic Books..." The article by Bill Davidson remarks on ABC's preponderance of "comic-strip shows." "[S]urreptitious reading of comic strips by adults has long been accepted as a forgivable part of the American cultural tradition," he writes.

The piece considers the program's comic book origins, mentioning Charles Moulton's 1942 conception and suggesting that Warner Communications' acquisition of its publisher led to the idea for the show. Davidson also recounts the show's 1974 pilot starring Cathy Lee Crosby before offering a brief profile of Lynda Carter.

The June 10, 1978, edition included the cover line "UFOs on TV: Flying in the Face of Logic" and a wonderful painting by John Berkey. The article "They Fly in the Face of Logic" recounts several contemporary UFO sightings and comments on societal interest in the phenomenon. Writer Dick Russell highlights NBC's *Project U.F.O.* as "television's first attempt to dramatize the issue in

some sort of authentic fashion." Created by Jack Webb, the program's producer was William Coleman, who led the Blue Book project in the early 1960s.

Russell covers UFOs' mysterious intrigue and conspiratorial backdrop, as well as "serious scientific conjecture," detailing the efforts and opinions of multiple astronomers—and sf authors, including Isaac Asimov. "While he spins a good yarn, Asimov maintains a stance of unyielding skepticism about the little green men from Mars."

Moving on to larger green men, the July 28, 1979, issue sported the Hulk on its cover, featuring the article "If the Phone Rings at Midnight, It Must Be Bill Bixby." Largely a profile of Bixby and his work ethic, Bill O'Hallaren's piece also discusses resistance to camping up the show and overacting by Lou Ferrigno. Each episode had a budget of \$650,000, and creator and executive producer Ken Johnson indicated that they usually went \$60,000-\$70,000 over budget. They also allowed an extra \$2,500 for guest actors.

Inspired by the *Remind* features and subsequent reading, I watched two episodes of *The Incredible Hulk*, which I remember fondly. The pilot episode of the series first aired Nov 4, 1977. The two-hour (with commercials) movie details the origin of the TV Hulk, departing somewhat from the comic book backstory. Naming the hero David Bruce Banner—and calling him David on the show—avoided the often alliterative naming employed by Stan Lee and his writers.

Instead of being exposed to gamma radiation during the test explosion of a bomb, Banner is a research scientist trying to discover the source of people's untapped strength, often exhibited during times of crisis. He discovers a genetic predisposition toward such strength and realizes it's heightened during sunspot activity, which increases gamma radiation. He then exposes himself to such radiation.

His research is driven by his grief for his wife, who died in a car accident. He'd been unable to save her. Rather than remembering *The Incredible Hulk* as a superhero program, I remember it feeling quite sad and lonely. The Hulk makes a relatively late appearance in the pilot. Lou Ferrigno is wonderful, and the transformation scenes were ably done for the time using green lighting, visual overlays, and practical effects.

Jack Colvin's role as reporter Jack McGee is introduced in this first episode, setting up his recurring presence in the program as Banner goes on the lam, concerned he'll hurt someone as the Hulk. Joe Harnell's "The Lonely Man Theme" is utilized throughout, as well as at the end, which depicts Bixby's Banner walking alone with a duffel bag into the distance—my dominant memory of the program.

I also watched the first episode of the second season, “Married,” which originally aired Sept. 22, 1978. It, too, was a two-hour movie, and concentrates on Banner’s arrival in Hawaii to locate another researcher who specializes in hypnosis. She’s sick with a progressive illness and doesn’t expect to live long. They work together, Banner helping her fight her sickness, and her helping him find ways, through hypnosis, to contain his anger—and the beast inside.

After a series of ups and downs, including a silly but delightfully destructive scene following a pickup at a coastal bar called Swingers, the two fall in love and are married. Given that Banner’s work and initial transformation were driven by grief for his first wife, I was surprised the writers would have him marry again so soon, but perhaps they felt a need for a more sympathetic backstory to offset the wanton destruction—though amidst heroism—brought by Ferrigno’s Hulk.

Regardless, even with the wonderful Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde-like action sequences and Frankenstein-like aspects of the Hulk (including approaching a young girl at the edge of a lake), *The Incredible Hulk* is really a TV show about grief, loss, loneliness, and anger management—not a superhero program.

I also read the first five issues of the black-and-white magazine *The Rampaging Hulk* (January-October 1977), which was on the newsstand leading up to and at the time of the show’s airing, later explicitly indicating the connection.

The magazine, while not subject to the Comics Code Authority, doesn’t stray too far from the comic books. In fact, according to John Warner’s editorial in #1, the magazine fits in between the first run of the Hulk comic and his return in *Tales to Astonish* #50.

Each of these issues has a main story focusing on the Hulk and a back-up story featuring Bloodstone. The Hulk pieces are written by Doug Moench, Jim Starlin, and John Warner; and drawn by Alfredo Alcalá, Alex Nino, Keith Pollard, Walt Simonson, and Starlin. After recounting the Hulk’s origin, the storyline concentrates on Gargoyle and the shape-changing Krylorians, with subsequent issues featuring guest appearances by the X-Men and the Sub-Mariner.

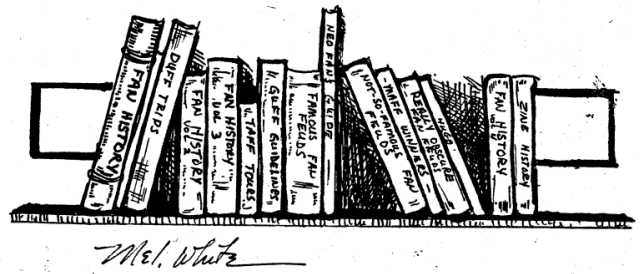
The main story in #4 leans a bit toward the outre as the Hulk is summoned to a sorcerous realm by the mage Chen K’an, who needs his help retrieving the Star of Catalax to save the world—or destroy it. This piece could have been a story in *Savage Sword of Conan*, featuring Conan instead of the Hulk.

Given that the TV show hadn’t aired yet when these issues were published, there’s no mention of the program, and the stories are not at all consistent with

its tenor or tone.

The back-up stories are slightly more interesting. They focus on the hero Bloodstone, written by Warner and drawn by Bob Brown, John Buscema, Sal Buscema, Val Mayerik, Rudy Nebres, and Bob Wiacek. The pulp magazine-styled hero faces Goram (“some 40-foot refugee from a Harryhausen film”) and the Cthulhu-like Ulluxy’l Kwan Tae Sin as elder gods—and the Conspiracy—try to reclaim scattered pieces of the Bloodgem.

While still superhero fare, Bloodstone is more along the lines of Doc Savage, the Shadow, or the Spider—and might be due for a comeback. I’d read the magazine just for the back-up stories alone.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath by H.P. Lovecraft (Del Rey, 1983)

Inspired by reading *Crypt of Cthulhu* and *The New Faig Collector* (T&T #78), I recently returned to Lovecraft’s fiction. This Ballantine paperback featuring a cover by Michael Whelan—the cover art with which I was first introduced to Lovecraft—collects six stories.

“The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath” had been completed in 1927 but remained unpublished until Arkham House’s *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* in 1943. The novella details Randolph Carter’s search for a majestic city and is part of Lovecraft’s Dream Cycle. The novella was adapted as a comic book by Ablaze in 2022. (*Faculae & Filigree* #17)

“Celephais,” a related story, was first published in *The Rainbow* in 1922, its first professional appearance in the May 1934 edition of *Marvel Tales*. Celephais is a city created by Lovecraft’s character Kuranus. Both appear in “Dream-Quest,” and the story makes for a pleasant endnote to the novella.

While not explicitly part of the Dream Cycle according to ISFDb, “The Silver Key” also features Randolph Carter. First appearing in the January 1929 *Weird Tales*, the story tells the tale of a time-traveling Carter who utilizes a silver key first given to him as a child. “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (*Weird Tales*, July 1934), co-written with E. Hoffmann Price,

continues that story, still focusing on Carter.

“The White Ship,” part of the Dream Cycle, was first published in the March 1927 *Weird Tales*. The brief piece details a ghostly ship that hovers above the water when there’s a full moon—and where it transports the narrator.

To round out the Dream Cycle somewhat, “The Strange High House in the Mist” first appeared in the October 1931 *Weird Tales*. The house and its visions are a tempting lure to the young men of Kingsport.

Sometimes while reading Lovecraft, I am struck more by the mood and sensibility of his writing than I am by his actual narration and storytelling. Some of the pieces blend together, occasionally, forming an overall oeuvre that I quite enjoy even if a specific story doesn’t stand out.

Regardless, this volume is a good introduction to the Dream Cycle, and I enjoyed returning to Kadath after reading the comic adaptation.

The Shadow Over Innsmouth and Other Stories of Horror by H.P. Lovecraft (Scholastic, 1971)

Yes, this paperback Lovecraft collection was published by Scholastic, the publisher of children’s books and purveyor of school book clubs. It’s a bit of an odd choice but might make sense given the existence of *Weird Worlds*, Scholastic’s sf and horror magazine in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Accompanied by Margaret Ronan’s editorial commentary addressing rock ‘n’ roll music, horror movies, Edgar Allan Poe, Harry Houdini, science science fiction, *The Necronomicon*, and Lovecraft’s childhood, the book collects seven stories.

“The Colour out of Space” was first published in the September 1927 *Amazing Stories* and definitely qualifies as sf in my book. It’s one of Lovecraft’s best stories, recently adapted as a movie starring Nicolas Cage. “The Outsider,” first appearing in *Weird Tales* (April 1926), is a relatively Poe-like tale considering the emergence of an isolated individual.

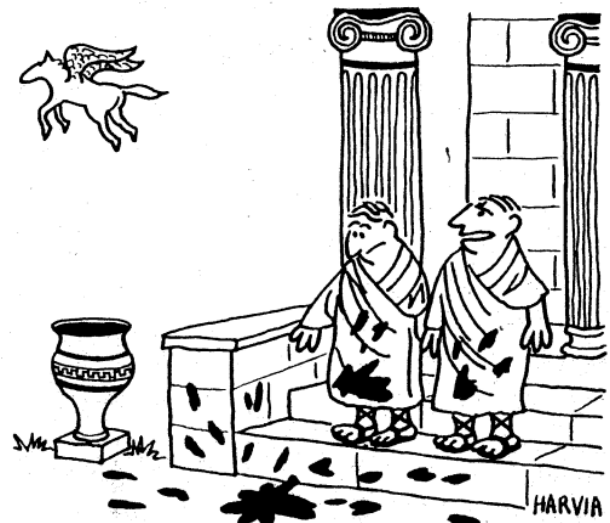
“Imprisoned with the Pharaohs” was ghost written by Lovecraft for Houdini and published in the May-July 1924 issue of *Weird Tales*. For the most part, it’s an adventure and escape story set in Egypt, though Lovecraft works in some world-crumbling eldritch horror that could possibly be chalked up to claustrophobia (which Houdini didn’t suffer) or sensory deprivation-driven hallucination.

“The Transition of Juan Romero” first appeared in Arkham House’s *Marginalia* in 1944. Written in 1919, the short story considers the mysterious disappearance of a Mexican miner. Ronan describes “In the Walls of Eryx” (written with a teenage fan named Kenneth Sterling for the October 1939 edition of *Weird Tales*)

as “the only out-and-out science-fiction story ever written by Howard Lovecraft.” Set on Venus, it involves aliens and a mysterious invisible maze that proves quite formidable.

Initially published in the January 1925 edition of *Weird Tales*, “The Festival” is about an archaic holiday festival held in Kingsport (Kingsport, again!)—almost a Christmas story—and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” is one of Lovecraft’s best. A 1936 novella, it’s one of my favorite stories. If you haven’t ever read it, you should.

I was surprised by this Scholastic oddity. Rather than a dumbed-down collection for younger readers, it’s a relatively wide-ranging introduction to Lovecraft’s work. The inclusion of “In the Walls of Eryx” and “Imprisoned with the Pharaohs” was particularly insightful and welcome.



I wish Pegasus would stop flying over this way.

From the Reading Pile: Short Stories

A couple of weeks ago, I read the December 1985 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. Richard Cowper’s short story, “A Matter of No Great Significance,” retells the story of Jesus’s birth featuring three aliens stranded on Earth: Caspar, Melchior, and Bal Hazard. They assist in the child’s birth, utilizing medical techniques not known at the time, interfering willfully with an alien life-pattern and flouting the Universal Law—to paraphrase Cowper. Spoilers, I know, but once you read the names, you pretty much guess it’s a retelling of the biblical Magi. Still a fun seasonal read, even now.

“Fear of Flying” by Hal Hill might bring to mind a novel by Erica Jong. Instead, it’s a clever tale about salesmanship, faith, and the power of human

belief—as well as the survival of several airplane passengers. Thomas Wylde’s “Magic Cookies” might be the best story in the edition, reminding me of Richard Bachman’s *Thinner* and offering a dark take on baked goods and weight loss. Recommended!

Joe L. Hensley’s story “Savant” is also quite good. The resident of a mental health facility can predict the deaths of other residents. An alcoholic and pill-popping doctor blamed for a recent death deepens their friendship, learning she’s able to do even more.

I also read all but one of the “novelets.” Stan Dryer’s “Our Extraterrestrial Visitors” offers “some notes from the Pride family archives.” They tell the story of communication with an alien race, the arrival of the Casparians, and confusion over who heads a household: the staff, or the wealthy family living there. The upper-crust nature of the narrative makes for some humorous moments.

“The Sword and the Stone” by Jane Yolen is an excellent retelling of the Arthurian legend. In the end, Merlin had more of a hand in the situation than most tellings suggest, and Arthur is left a little uncertain whether he truly is the rightful king. One excellent sentence: “Looking backward was an old man’s drug.” I haven’t read a lot of Yolen, but her name is familiar. Any recommendations?

And George Alex Effinger’s “The Bird of Time Bears Bitter Fruit” was later developed into a novel, *The Bird of Time*. It’s an inventive story that suggests that time travel doesn’t necessarily take you back to an objective, actual point in time, but merely takes you to a collective re-creation of what that point in time might have been like. It’s an interesting idea: The past existing as the sum of human memory or conception.

Finally, Algis Budrys’s “Books” review column considers several titles, discussing the role of politics in pop culture and the different goals of mainstream fiction and fantastic fiction, focusing on books that are well crafted but not necessarily excellent texts. “It’s the honest, workmanlike jobs that tell the most about what’s going on in a literature,” he writes.

One of the books under consideration is a younger Jefferson P. Swycaffer’s *Become the Hunted*, which I read in 2009. Budrys’s advice to Swycaffer might have been hard taken—though an honor to be reviewed!—but is well offered. Budrys offers Swycaffer three solid pointers. “Swycaffer is still at that beginning stage in which most writers are making up their stories out of other stories,” he wrote. Swycaffer probably progressed beyond that by now!

Fantastic Television: *Travelers*

S3E1: “Ilsa”

Roughly a year after the final episode of Season 2, this

episode returns viewers to the program almost immediately after the end of the previous episode. There are roughly three plot lines, with most of the action focusing on two of them in parallel.

The two main storylines are as follows: In one, the travelers remain in a safehouse, with other FBI agents and their loved ones. The episode opens with them in a car together, Carly holding her child, and the loved ones apparently having “forgotten” exactly what happened, to avoid such strong distrust. That’s kind of a convenient cop out. Their recoiling in horror from the travelers who saved them was one of the strongest images at the end of last season, and for that to be erased so quickly feels like an easy way out. Regardless, they’re being questioned by an FBI agent who’s also a traveler to see what they remember, and what additional damage control is needed.

In parallel, we have two adjacent storylines: Another FBI agent tracks down the director of the FBI in a ready room while he plans an action against the travelers. She’s interacted with the AI Director from the future, first through an AI device named Ilsa, but also in the voice of her dying mother. She wants to persuade the FBI director not to go through with the mission, indicating that it’s against the wishes of the Director. That doesn’t persuade him because he considers the travelers an enemy and momentarily considers that she might be one herself.

What she says about an experience the FBI director had at the deathbed of his child convinces him, however. The adjacent storyline—in which a group of soldiers surrounds the now-less-safe house, abducting Grace, weapons drawn—comes to a close. They stand down. Carly and Trevor had become aware of the incursion and mobilized the rest of the travelers to defend themselves and their loved ones, who decide not to avoid the windows. Kat, who had to lose her memories again—introducing more complicated ethics in the relationship between Grant and his spouse—explicitly states that she doesn’t believe Grant when he explains what had just happened: a trigger-happy rookie.

Along the way, Philip interacts with a new traveler who replaced Simon, the schizophrenic inventor. We’re not sure whether he’s still under the control of the reclusive magnate now in the body of the psychiatrist, but his comm link got fried after he almost got hit by a train—prompting the new download. When he experiences his first psychotic episode in his new body, he sees a friend from the future, not the magnate.

We’ll see whether the loved ones’ distrust remains or escalates—Jeff is taking things pretty hard—and

what the FBI director decides to do next. Also: Will Trevor and Grace hook up? She sure seems to want to.

Comments on APA-L #3034

Well, the cover illustration for that distribution seems to have been relatively popular. Not only did it also appear as the cover for *The Obdurate Eye* #30, cover artist Jose Sanchez tells me it was also used as the back cover for *Tightbeam* #347 and in the August 2023 issue of *CyberCozen*. “I’m always promoting my work extensively,” he wrote. While I don’t mind reprinting a cover illustration, for new work, in the future with Sanchez, I’ll ask if anyone else has already used it before asking if I can. Not that all of us even read *The Obdurate Eye*, *Tightbeam*, or *CyberCozen*, but one might! (And should.)

In *Leeway* dated for Aug. 24, **Lee Gold** commented on light pollution in Mar Vista. I enjoyed your discussion of the challenges in defining humanity. In somewhat recent issues of *Wild Ideas*, Henry Grynsten has explored similar topics. (<https://efanzines.com/WildIdeas>) Recommended reading. I’m glad Garth Spencer responded to you! I enjoyed the filk lyrics.

John Hertz’s *Vanamonde* #1558 shared an update on the *Voyager 2* mission. I think commonplace books generally include more than quotations, but other pieces of knowledge and thoughts—even letters and poems—to be referred to later, as well. The Rotsler volumes contained only quotations. Regardless, I think there should be more commonplace books, and that more people should keep them.

“Alternate history” seems to be in common usage, and even rates an entry in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. That entry states, “some writers and commentators prefer the designation ‘alternative history’ on grammatical grounds, some use the unelucidative Counterfactual, and others apply the term ‘uchronia.’” You might be one such writer or commentator, but I think “alternate history” is adequate for my use.

In *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #49, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** shared some cautionary tales about what has happened over time while we sit on this rock. Humanity will adapt, certainly, but will we be able to sufficiently adapt? Or are other courses of action perhaps better to pursue than mere adaptation—which seems the result of acceptance and ambivalence. I know that’s not what you’re advocating for, but I find it challenging to celebrate adaptation when there’s more we could do.

I’m mailing my copy of *Congo* to my mother. I’d lend you my copy otherwise, but I hope you enjoy it! I wouldn’t consider the book scary, but definitely a fun

adventure. I’m glad to read about your comeback. May the progress continue!

Matthew Mitchell’s *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #23 updated ellers on the impact of the recent storms on Mojave. Your shame clearing off your desk at work reminded me of my desk pre-pandemic. I might have written about this before, but before COVID-19, my desk at work was thoroughly cluttered with piles of papers, journals, and other material. I also had a low bookshelf that was full of reference and other books, with other materials stacked on top of it.

During the pandemic, the office staff boxed everything up for us to pick it up and take it home. I had so many boxes. Now that we’ve returned to the office, my desk is empty and uncluttered, with just a notebook, writing utensils, and other items on it so people recognize it as used. I do not plan to let stuff accumulate so much at work from now on. I need to be able to just walk away.

Your new office setup looks wonderful, and I think you made it work with what was on hand. I enjoyed seeing the pictures on Facebook as well as in your apazine. I don’t think I’ve ever had cinder block bookshelves. I’ve always bought premade or custom shelves from woodworking shops. At one unfinished furniture store in the Boston area, I must have gone back for four or five different sets of the same shelving unit. We still use them.

My Apple Music subscription is no longer active. Everything in my library from before is still visible, but it won’t play most of the songs. Instead, it shuffles through songs, not playing them, sometimes landing on a song it can play for some reason. I was curious whether I’d retain the songs and albums I’d purchased during the pre-streaming iTunes days, but it’s looking uncertain. Apparently, I can still play Charlie Parker’s “Salt Peanuts” and Anti-Flag’s “Emigre,” which is a step in the right direction. But I have to keep pressing Play. Thus might end 20 years of using iTunes and Apple Music. Your comment to Harmon about “resent” vs. “re-sent” made me chuckle.

And in *Toony Loons* #727, **Joe Zeff** updated ellers on his limp. I hope your knee appointment went well! Good luck sorting out your License Plate Toll and E-470—I’m guessing—account issues. There must be a way to get someone to help you unravel the incomplete account setup. If that is the service in question, the Web site indicates (303) 537-3470, (888) 946-3470, and customerservice@expresstoll.com. I’m sure you already know that.

Thank you for indicating my little poems are senru, not haiku! That distinction checks out, and I’ve amended the title for that section.

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #12

Sept. 1, 2023

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Comments on eAPA #232

In *Intermission* #134, **Ahrvid Engholm** informed apans of the newly minted Bertil Falk's Space Opera Prize. How does one donate to help fund the award? I'll have to check out his juvenalia, "A Trip in Space." The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society recognized the death of Hans Siden during the July 13, 2023, meeting. That's documented in the September 2023 issue of *De Profundis* (#589), available monthly upon request. I've added Club Cosmos to the distribution list for the next issue of *De Prof.*

I appreciated your remarks on Eurocon. "[I]t's no point in wasting too much on a conrep nowadays, since this artform has degenerated. A good conrep used to be a witty thing, a fannish reporter walking around making [humorous] observations, funny associations and even puns. Conreps today are mostly dry diaries, or even worse..." I'm currently writing a report on the 2022 Loscon for *SF² Concatenation* (<http://www.concatenation.org>), which will likely appear in January. The editor's feedback to my draft largely asked how many parallel program tracks were offered. I don't know if my review is witty or funny, but it's hopefully fannish and not overly dry. It's the first I've written not in apazines.

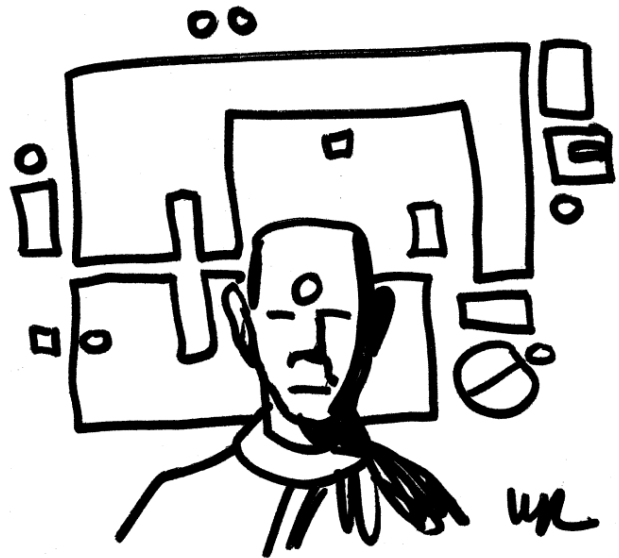
History Corner was also enjoyable, with its focus on Hugo Gernsback, *Focus*, AI, and other topics. The article "Put Space to Use" was particularly interesting. Isaac Asimov's appearance in *Superman* #355 is further detailed in the online article "When Isaac Asimov Became a Muck Monster Who Fought Superman!" (<https://tinyurl.com/Asimov-Superman>)

Henry Grynnssten's *Wild Ideas* #38 informed apans that his article "There Ain't No Such Thing as Superintelligence" was published in *Free Inquiry*. Kudos! Those interested can see my most recent book review in *New Media & Society* here:

Row, H. (2023). Book Review: Seen & Unseen: Technology, Social Media, and the Fight for Racial Justice. *New Media & Society*, 0(0).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231186407>

I haven't seen it in print yet and presume the volume and issue number will be updated. It's not as robust a piece of writing as Grynnssten's, but it's a good way to keep my hand in academic literature.

I cannot believe I misnamed Garth Spencer, Garth Spender in *ECU* #10! So much for my proofreading. Glad you were able to find fun in the gaffe, which made me chuckle today, as well. You're probably right: "[A]ll sleazy old men are just socially, romantically and sexually awkward..." That's part of what makes them sleazy! I'll have to read Philip Jose Farmer's *Night of Light* now.



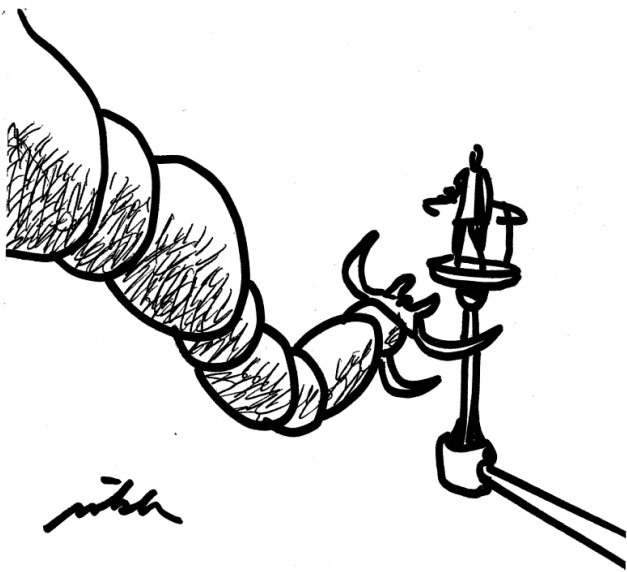
—William Rotsler

Your piece "The King the Actor" was an interesting consideration of leaders as celebrities, and celebrities as leaders. Both are certainly public figures, with the loss of relative anonymity that that brings, and increased opportunities for parasocial relationships among their fans and other citizens. That people on the national stage—regardless of the role they're playing—often dress consistently, perhaps in an attempt at personal branding, resonates with your contention that "it's remarkable how people look like they have the profession they have; they really live up to the image." It's not quite the same, but, for example, Michael Moore always dresses the same in public, so we have a sense of what Michael Moore looks like. So does Steven Tyler. If they dressed otherwise, or inconsistently, we might not have as strong a sense of who they are.

The section focusing on heads of state performing actual roles in stage dramas was particularly interesting. Perhaps, in some cases, every public appearance is a performance—even for you and me.

What costumes do we don when we leave home?
What roles do we play with our families, coworkers,
neighbors, and others?

In *Living Inside Number 9*, **William McCabe** commented on the general heat of this summer. It's especially warm where I live this week, and in late August, I went for an early afternoon walk around the neighborhood to enjoy the sun and warmth. That doesn't mean global warming isn't a horrible thing. I much prefer the cooler temperatures we usually have five miles from the Pacific Ocean. While I agree that the world is a complex system, I think that trying to do something is better than doing nothing. But we seem to be unwilling to address the big contributors, leaving citizens to focus on smaller, lower-impact efforts.



—William Rotsler

The concept of adaptation also came up recently in APA-L. While we will have to adapt to whatever occurs, I think we should also do everything we can so we have to adapt as little as possible. Passivity and adaptation might not lead to survival, while activity and adaptation might.

Remarks similar to those you cite on the Hugos and Nebulas are also made about the World Series, which is merely an American baseball sequence of games. I think it's a valid concern in terms of the sf awards.

Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #135 invoked the Swedish idea of jantelagen, which I was introduced to by a Swedish friend while working as a young journalist in the early 1990s. We often talked about how the idea that no one should ever try to be special might very well quell the entrepreneurial spirit in his home country and was very much the opposite of American sensibilities. Do you think jantelagen has

softened any in the last few decades? Thank you very much for your memorial to Ralph Lundsten, who deserves exploration!

Similarly, your remarks on *Breaking Point* make me want to see the movie, if not just for Lundsten's music. Apparently the negative has been located, and there was some online gossip of a possible Vinegar Syndrome release, perhaps with Bo Arne Vibenius' *Thriller*, even if an easter egg. I'll have to look further. I was unaware that Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson of Abba also composed music for softcore movies. I just recently started using Tor and will see if I can locate it.

Like your Eurocon report mentioned above, I also appreciated your Finncon report. As a member of the cons you participate in—rather than an attendee—perhaps you could bring some more of the fannishness you seek.

Your commentary on Hugo Gernsback's *Sexology* reminded me that many of the early publishers of sf magazines (or books) were magazine... publishing... people first—and sf people second, if at all. We can see that in Pulp Trader's (<http://www.philsp.com/pulptrader>) list of titles published by Curtis Books in England. First active in 1947, sf doesn't come into play until 1950. In 1954, Curtis switched to other fare, petering out after 1955.

While we celebrate Gernsback's sf contributions, maybe—and I'm only half serious—he was just a savvy publisher, catering to the tastes of the reading public.

I really did tell the Swedish American Institute's new leader about you and your knowledge of Swedish sf. Whether she'll reach out to you—or when—I don't know.

In *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #212, **Garth Spencer** (not Spender, sheesh) mentioned his forthcoming Pemmi-Con trip report. Did you wear the button I sent you at the con? (No offense taken if you didn't. You can wear it whenever and wherever you want to, if at all.) I still need to mail you your *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* Letterhack card.

Your use of the phrase “innocent of proofreading and copy-editing” made me chuckle. Your conclusion “that ‘God’ is whatever we direct worship to” resonates gently with Henry Grynnssten's writing. Perhaps worship is another form of public performance, assertion of self, or collective faith.

I, too, used to publish landscape-format apazines. eFanzines reminds me that *Snow Poster City* #1-6 (N'APA) and at least *Snow Poster Township* #1-2 (FAPA) were horizontally oriented. While I don't do that any more, it worked at the time, and I recommend it—even if printing for collation.