

Tightbeam

July 2022



Eavesdropping
by Jose Sanchez

Tightbeam 334

July 2022

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

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

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Editorial

A Tribute to Our Writers

Tightbeam began as the N3F Letterzine, a zine filled with letters from members. Over the decades since its foundation, Tightbeam's purpose has varied. We are now the N3F Review Zine, reviewing (almost) all topics of interest to our fellow fen. I must say *almost all* because reviews of books have been spun off into a much larger zine, *The N3F Review of Books Incorporating Prose Bono*. We are not quite complete yet. We still lack costuming/cosplay reviews, and our coverage of American comics has been limited.

Nonetheless, our scope of coverage is truly broad, thanks to all our wonderful writers. I here pay tribute to four of them.

Jon Swartz has given us a regular monthly SerCon column, a bio-bibliography of SF writers. He is also my co-editor, finding and correcting the vast number of typographic and grammatical errors that slip by my careless eye. Cedar Sanderson's Gourmet Bureau column *Eat This While You Read That* appears monthly with descriptions of an author and wonderful photographs of her cooking. The column has drawn much notice elsewhere in fanzine review columns. Jessi Silver is the superb reviewer of anime videos. We only publish a small fraction of the reviews that she writes. Last, but decidedly not least, Will Mayo continues to give us reviews of areas we otherwise would never visit: Song! Stage! Verse! Cartoons! Comics! Radio! To these four, our fellow Neffers, we should all be most grateful.

Letters of Comment

Dear George and Jon:

I have the May issue of Tightbeam, no. 332, and time for a fast letter.

My loc...I do not watch much television, but I do see online criticisms of the heroes/main characters. He's so stereotypical, she's too smart, he's unbelievably busy/smart/kind/moral/etc., she's got all the right answers, and so much more. Again, I have to ask, are heroes a thing of the past, or at its heart, is it envy at the heart of those criticisms? I will admit some characters are a little unrealistic, but these criticisms are totally subjective, and there is no way to determine which criticism is correct or realistic in itself.

One of the reasons I am late with this is that I have been so busy. I have edited/copyedited more stories for Dreamforge, and my next project, which keeps getting pushed back is a big historical book for Amazing Stores. More as I get to work on it, which I hope is soon.

Great bio of Don Wollheim, one of the greatest of us. He helped set the ways of both fandom and prodom, for there was no even unofficial rule book back then. I hope to have an editorial career a tenth as busy as Wollheim's was.

Yvonne and I have been retired from conrunning for about ten years now, but we have acted as advisors for small events. We recently came out of retirement just a little bit to help sell the vendors' tables at Anime North, the big anime event coming up next month. It's been a long time since I ran a dealers' room, but it is good to know you can still do it. Yvonne has been the main worker on this project, since we were given a complex spreadsheet to work from, and as

an accountant, she has been quite used to sending out letters and follow-ups, and doing some accounts receivable. We will close the room in a few days, and it looks like we are almost completely sold out. And, right back into retirement we go.

Time to shut down, and send out. See you with the next issue.
Yours, Lloyd Penney

Editors:

I am enjoying the latest issue of Tightbeam.

The mystery Nimoy show is IN SEARCH OF (1976). Nimoy was the on screen host of the show which explored all sorts of mysteries, science, UFOs and such. It would easily fit in on any of the Discovery shows today.

Eric Jamborsky

Hi George & Jon;

Just got the latest Tightbeam; #333, and read thru it while recuperating from a few hours of chopping brush, sawing stumps and stubs, picking up loose branches and random rocks in an effort to reclaim some more of the lawn area where I had a bunch of trees chopped down a year and a half ago.

It was an interesting issue, altho I thot most of the reviews were on the too-short side. On Will Mayo's comments about Alley Oop the comic strip: it is still going, but altho the art is still excellent the stories are slow, dumb and boring. It is offered on the GoComics web page, but I understand that very few newspapers actually carry it any more. Manuscript Press is in the process of reprinting classic Alley Oop strips from the 1930s and the 1980s as affordable trade paperbackbacks. I recommend them highly.

Incidentally, the rock and roll song Alley Oop was done by the Hollywood Argyles. It hit #1 on the hit parade in 1960. The Hollywood Argyles were a studio band specifically created to record that song by record producer Gary Paxton, who sang lead on the record. Paxton pushed the band to record another novelty tune but it went nowhere, and since all the members of the Argyles had steady jobs working for other groups and singers they disbanded immediately thereafter.

The CBS Radio Mystery 'Hour' was actually the CBS Mystery Theater. The program is very well remembered and is one of the most collected and requested OTRadio dramas by modern fans of classic radio. Sellers and sites that feature classic radio generally report that it is the third, fourth, or fifth most popular show requested and downloaded/collected. (The Shadow, Jack Benny, and The Lone Ranger generally vie for the top three slots). The program was on the air for over eight years, turning out 1399 original episodes, and the program was resurrected at the turn of the new century with the original shows being offered again by National Public Radio stations. I thot it was an excellent program always featuring top notch acting, and the stories themselves were generally pretty good. I recall some real clunkers in the mix, but they were not the norm, fortunately.

I enjoyed Jon's write-up of RAWLowndes. It is unfortunate that more detail is not known about his life. Most of the older fans who knew him personally and could help unravel what stories he wrote (or contributed to), which magazines he edited, and where his fan writings appeared are mostly gone now. He also wrote western stories and detective fiction in an effort to

supplement his income beginning sometime in the 1940s. My understanding is that a lot of his later western stories in the 1950s were written for the Columbia western pulps he was editing. The publisher didn't care, and the word rates were so low (half a cent per word and sometimes less than that) that very few established western fiction writers would even bother sending anything around.

I always thought that he was the owner and publisher of the entire Health Knowledge line of mags. They depended very heavily on public domain reprints, and the distribution was extremely spotty. During my time living in Nashville, before, during, and well after my time in the military, I never saw a single issue of any of his mags from that period on any newsstand. I have since managed to acquire some when I buy collections for my book selling business. I found most of the issues interesting with good story mixes, but they reeked of cheap production values, with abbreviated page counts, wide margins, royalty free illos and other cost cutting measures clearly in evidence. Despite that, I think they could have lasted longer if he had managed to take care of the crummy distribution problems.

I read Ms Sanderson's recipe for chili with interest. It's been awhile since I made chili myself, so maybe I will give this a try, altho with beans instead of pasta. I am one of those people firmly opposed to mixing pasta in any form with chili at all. Also this is a recipe that doesn't involve a lot of elaborate preparation so I feel I can handle it.

So far as military grub, I always found the food we got in mess halls was generally excellent. I always found almost everything in C-Rations to be generally awful. There were a few exceptions, but not very many (it's hard to mess up a tin of peanut butter, for example). I never had MREs; they were after my time, but people tell me they are pretty good.

This was a quick-read issue, and I enjoyed it. Keep up the good work.

---Bob Jennings
fabficbks@aol.com

Thanks, George, Jon, John,

Nice to be included in Origin. And I take great interest in Lloyd Penny's comment that the Superman comic strip's Metropolis was modeled on Toronto. Feedback like that is always welcome.

More to come.
Will

Anime

Yurei Deco
by Jessi Silver

Episode Summary: On Tom Sawyer Island, love is a ruling force. Or at least that's the ideal – as people interact with one-another, the love they share with one-another and/or put out into the world is converted into points, which can then be used to upgrade one's user experience and



enhance one's "Deco" (both the tool used to virtually interact and the outward-facing appearance one has). Berry and her friends are somewhat less inclined to buy into the utopian message that the authorities are selling; what interests them more are stories related to a mysterious figure known as "Phantom Zero" whose actions cause havoc within the Deco system.

Berry's Deco has been acting-up, but this turns out to give her an advantage; with her malfunctioning right eye, she can perceive cloaked items – and people. She discovers a piece of odd origami stuck to a pole, and soon after encounters a mysterious person who she assumes to be Phantom Zero. After a lot of running around and a couple of confrontations, this mysterious individual draws Berry into a completely separate, truly virtual (?) world where they're both soon pursued by formations that have the ability to destroy pieces of their Deco. After being forced onto a rooftop, a floating figure descends into view – the real Phantom Zero.

Impressions: As our society continues to stumble ever further along the timeline, the twisting, turning forward movement of technology and social media has provided a wealth of potential inspiration for storytelling. From *Serial Experiments Lain* to *Dennou Coil* to some of the better "trapped in a video game" anime, these stories provide insight into social interactions through the lens of the types of online interactions we currently have access to. *Yurei Deco* seems to continue in this vein, from its earliest moments presenting some interesting theses on the general trajectory of how the life cycle of technology tends to unfold.

I recently listened to an episode of the podcast "You're Wrong About" focused on the evolution of how we use email. What was once a very idealized technology that had the potential to facilitate connections and communication in an easy way has since transformed into a way for people to be constantly connected, in some cases almost against their will. It would take a lot of privilege for someone to completely disengage from email as a communication tool, because it's so ingrained in how many of us work and interact with one-another despite how burdensome it is.

The virtual world of *Tom Sawyer Island* seems to have undergone a similar life cycle; as Berry and her friends are in class, being indoctrinated into the "official" and incredibly idealized vision of what the Deco system and love points were meant to facilitate, it becomes almost immediately clear that the points are extremely transactional. The pursuit of love points encourages people to behave a certain (likely false, at least at times) way when interacting with one-another, all for the promise of prettier avatars and more complete access to virtual spaces. It's an obvious form of governmental control which, judging by all the evidence we have at this point, seems to have ingrained itself in the way that social media often does – bit-by-bit, in ways that we barely notice them happening. Chilling.

Living in the world that we do, lately I've been thinking a lot about "how in the world did we get to this low point?" The answer is really just that liberties disappear incrementally when we decide to compromise with people who are trying to take them away rather than call them out for who and what they are. Those types of people are well-versed in playing the long game and utilizing deception in order to achieve their goals, and human beings in general are very good at then adjusting to and normalizing bad situations for the sake of their own sanity. But there are always those who are working toward the expansion of freedoms – "phantoms" doing their

work through the tools of disobedience and subterfuge. I suspect this story is set to travel that route, and I hope it's able to go the distance.



Entering a mysterious new world.

Pros: This episode goes all in on its peculiar and charming visual style, with character designs that are pleasantly outside the norm and work well to convey the types of virtual enhancements the characters use. It's almost unavoidable to compare this series to *Kaiba* – a series that also uses its character designs to make a point, and which feels like a natural inspiration considering its pedigree. It's one of the reasons why I appreciate Science SARU as an entity (despite the issues it seems to

share with the anime industry in general) even when, like this case, Masaaki Yuasa isn't directly involved – it seems to be a studio that invites visual creativity in an environment that doesn't necessarily otherwise encourage it.

I also just like anime that seems to be conveying a political message. Even if the follow-through ends up being incomplete and/or flawed in some way. I think it's a good reminder that art at its best can be a way of presenting complicated ideas in an entertaining and thoughtful way.

Cons: I enjoyed this episode a lot, but that in itself can sometimes be a problem – my expectations were high ahead of time and they're even higher now. This is barely a criticism, however; I really just wanted to find something to put here because I think there are always imperfections to be found and yet my positive feelings really overrode any I may have had.

Content Warnings: Some extremely mild body horror. Dissemination of propaganda.

Would I Watch More? – This series was already high on my list prior to the season and nothing has really changed in that regard. I enjoy original stories and creative visuals and this appears to have both. I'm excited to watch more.

Phantom of the Idol

By Jessi Silver



Episode Summary: Yuya Niyodo is one half of the male idol group ZINGS, though the effort he brings to the table is probably more around 5%. As an attractive man who got into the industry in order to make “easy money,” the fact that his manager, fans, and group member Yoshino expect him to put in some effort is making Yuya rethink his choices.

As he sits on the cusp of being fired, he notices a young woman sitting next to him on a bench. But this isn't just any young woman – her name is Asahi Mogami, a famous idol who died a year ago in a tragic accident. As a ghost she can no longer perform for her adoring fans, but perhaps with the help of Yuya, who has a very alive body, Asahi can relive her performing days one last time. When Asahi's influence causes Yuya and ZINGS to have their most successful performance to date, Yuya invites Asahi to keep their arrangement in place indefinitely.



Yuya is absolutely not enthusiastic about being an idol.

Impressions: While I think that many jobs in this world can be adequately taught and learned, there are just some that rely heavily on personality and temperament, and being a performance artist is one of them. I used to play the flute – I was in a concert band at my high school and also did solo competitions for a while, and no matter how much I built my skills and practiced my music, I never, ever got over the anxiety and dread of being up in front of an audience. My teacher scolded me, saying it was because I didn't practice enough, but now that I'm much older I realize that it

just takes a certain mindset to deal with those nerves that I'll likely never have, and that's fine.

What's not fine is assuming that the performance industry, which does to some extent rely on attractiveness in addition to skill, is a way toward making easy money. Yet, this is an assumption I see repeated all over the place almost all the time. While we might not necessarily agree that "Instagram famous" people really deserve their fame and fortune, the reality is that cultivating that kind of image is a lot of work in-and-of-itself (it's just not the kind of work that society tends to respect for various reasons I won't go into here). In any case, while the idol industry itself is an ethical mud pit, you'd have to be a real tool bag to seriously claim that being an idol is easy work.



The juxtaposition between Yuya's jerkiness and Asahi's devotion to her work as an idol serves this episode well, providing a lot of conflict and humor while also proving the point that embodying a fantasy for other people requires the right mindset and a devotion to the job. While I think it's harmful to assume that an idol should be "on" all the time (they're real people who should be allowed to live their real lives), it's also harmful to assume it's a job that anyone could

do, because it minimizes the emotional labor that goes into it.

Anyway, this episode was a lot of fun; like many series with one main gag like this I wonder about the longevity of the joke. However, if Yuya shows some character development over time and manages to become less of a jerk, I think this could be a really pleasant, fun series. It's tough to be a ghost, especially when you thrive off of public adoration.

Pros: I like that there's some focus on ZINGERS' fans throughout the episode. Yuya, despite having no personality, has still managed to garner a small group of admirers, and their reaction to the transformation in his attitude is definitely a high point in the episode. I also think it's very true-to-life in that, to quote the folks over at Discotek Media from one of their recent presentations, "ever anime is someone's favorite" and so it must be the same with every idol (even the very weird ones).

Cons: There's a long segment after the credits involving those very same fans, and while it's fun to spend some time with them I think the segment goes on for much too long.

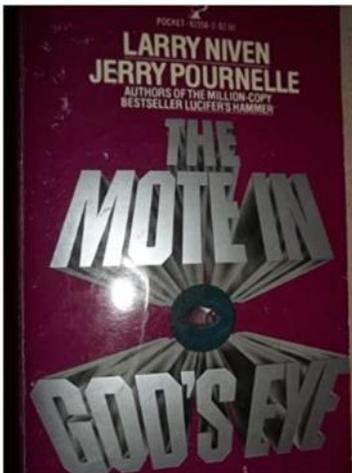
The idol performances are portrayed using very below-average CG. Not the worst, but definitely not very pleasant to look at. Because this is sort of a parody series I suppose the performances aren't necessarily meant to be the focal points of the episodes.

Content Warnings: Brief description of a fatal car accident.

Would I Watch More? – This is definitely more on the “maybe” pile, though I definitely don't feel like my time was wasted with this episode. It's fun, but with a central gag that I'm not sure has a lot of longevity.

Books

The Joke That Made The Novel by Will Mayo



It's been more than forty years but I can still remember a certain conversation in a certain novel that I admire still. The novel in question was *The Mote In God's Eye* and was written by Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven and was set in a galaxy ruled by a theocratic aristocracy of the kind to which our world seems to be headed. And the conversation took place aboard a spaceship in which one crew member, a marquis, looks out his viewfinder and says something like the following -

By God's belly button, what strange sight is this!"

The captain behind him says, Behave yourself! I will not have you take the Lord's name in vain."

The marquis then turns around, smiling, and asks, What's the matter, Captain? Doesn't God have a belly button?"

The captain kept quiet then because the marquis was a member of this aristocracy but he was not happy about this, no, not at all.

Movies

Will Mayo Reviews The Beguiled

There's some Clint Eastwood movie, little known today, that lives on in my memory. Called *The Beguiled*, it concerns a wounded Civil War soldier who seeks shelter with a strange group of women in the woods. At first, they take to him kindly, treat him gently. But, at the end, fearing that he will give away their secrets, they become the death of him. If only because of its haunting music that lurks in the background and the way this strange sorority of females hover over this man of war, I think this deserves a special place in horror classics.

Will Mayo Reviews The Texas Chainsaw Massacre

At times, too, I think of that decades-old motion picture show, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, in which a wayward group of travelers is massacred by a family of cannibals out in the woods including one, old Leatherface, who wears a mask made out of the face of one of his victims and wields a fierce chainsaw. The movie draws off centuries-old myths, dating back to the Old World, concerning cannibalism, primitive rites and things that lurk in the woods and Leatherface is its supreme avatar. He uses his saw as a weapon of a savage kind of democracy and murders abled and disabled, black and white equally all around. Before the family retreats back to its cabin and the secrets held within. It is a night of gruesome horror and this is one fine picture show.

Will Mayo Reviews Night Of The Living Dead

And there was that movie of decades ago, Night Of The Living Dead, whereby the creator, George Romero, takes an age-old Voodoo myth and transforms it into a modern horror movie. When the dead take the living, and when it is further revealed that they hunger for brains (a unique turn here!), it is all that the viewer can do to remain in her seat as zombies roam the night. True. There have been several remakes since then but the moviegoer could do no worse than to familiarize herself with the original. It remains a classic.

SerCon

Wilson Tucker Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian



Arthur Wilson (Bob) Tucker was born November 23, 1914, in Deer Creek, Illinois, and died October 6, 2006, in St. Petersburg, Florida. An orphan, he was educated at Normal High School, Normal, Illinois. He married Mary Joestine in 1937, and they had two children before divorcing in 1942. He then married Fern Delores Brooks in 1953. He and Fern, who died in June of 2006, had three children together.

Never a full-time writer, Tucker worked as a motion picture projectionist, electrician, reporter, and editor while writing his science fiction (SF) and mystery stories part-time.

Fan Activity

Tucker was an early SF fan, once saying that he had liked SF since he learned to read.

He stayed active in fandom his entire life, publishing several fanzines of his own: The Planetoid, 1932; The Bloomington News Letter/Science Fiction Newsletter, D'Journal, and Le Zombie, 1938-1975; Fantasy and Weird Fiction, 1938-1939; Yearbook of Science, Fanewscard, and Fanzine Yearbook, all three during 1941-1948.

In 1966 he published the first edition of his Neo-Fan's Guide to SF Fandom. It would appear in several editions over the years.

Tucker was president of the National Fantasy Fan Federation in 1942-1943, and founded the fabled SPWSSTFM (Society for the Prevention of Wire Staples in Scientifiction Magazines). Known in fandom as Bob Tucker, other fannish names he was known by included Hoy Ping Pong, Tuck, Boob Tucker, and Sanford Vaid.

He is arguably the most influential figure in the history of SF fandom, being active for nearly eight decades.

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

He was Fan Guest of Honor at the Worldcon in 1967.

He received a Hugo (Fan Writer) in 1969 (1970), a John W. Campbell, Jr. Memorial Award in 1975 (1976), and a Skylark Award in 1986.

Tucker was profiled in the August 1954 issue of New Worlds, and interviewed in Speaking of Science Fiction: The Paul Walker Interviews (1978). The Really Incomplete Bob Tucker, a one-shot fanzine containing some of his fanzine writings from the years 1942 through 1971 -- with an introduction by Robert Bloch -- was published in 1974 to help raise money to send Tucker to the 1975 Worldcon in Australia.

In 1979 The Tucker Transfer, a one-shot fanzine edited by Gail Burnick (Mrs. George R. R. Martin at the time), was issued to help send Tucker to Brighton, England for the 1979 Worldcon.

Tucker was interviewed in issue #7 of Lan's Lantern (1977) and issue #46 of this fanzine (dated November, 1997) was "A Bob Tucker Special," with the entire contents devoted to Tucker's life and work.

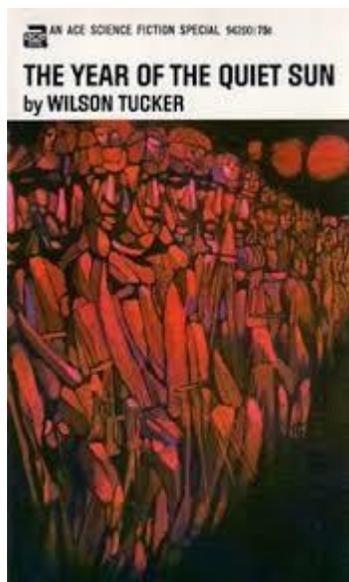
He won fandom's Big Heart Award in 1962, and was inducted into the First Fandom Hall of Fame in 1985.

SF Books

Prison Planet, published as Space Trails, The Magazine of the Future, Vol. 1., No. 1, Summer 1947. [Tucker's story was the entire issue]

The City in the Sea. NY: Rinehart, 1951.

The Long, Loud Silence. NY: Rinehart, 1952. [Revised/updated edition published by Lancer Books, 1970]



The Time Masters. NY: Rinehart, 1953.

Wild Talent. NY: Rinehart, 1954. [Paperback edition retitled Man from Tomorrow]

Time Bomb. NY: Rinehart, 1955. [Paperback edition retitled Tomorrow Plus X]

The Lincoln Hunters. NY: Rinehart, 1958.

To the Tombaugh Station. NY: Ace, 1960. [Half of an Ace Double (D-479), bound with Poul Anderson's Earthman, Go Home]

The Year of the Quiet Sun. NY: Ace. 1970.

Ice and Iron. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974.

Resurrection Days. NY: Timescape, 1981.

Mystery Novels

The Chinese Doll. NY: Rinehart, 1946.

To Keep or Kill. NY: Rinehart, 1947.

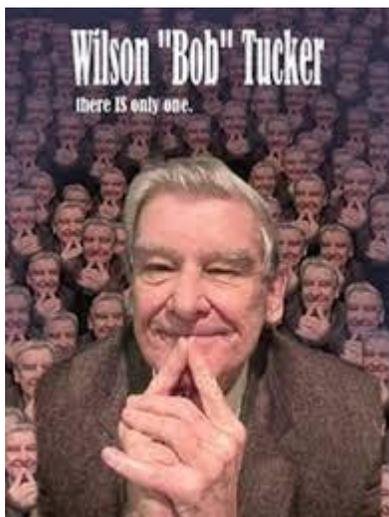
The Dove. NY: Rinehart, 1948.

The Stalking Man. NY: Rinehart, 1949.

Red Herring. NY: Rinehart, 1951. [Originally published as a Star Weekly Complete Novel (Toronto, Canada) on Saturday, June 9, 1951]

The Man in My Grave. NY: Rinehart, 1956.

The Hired Target. NY: Ace, 1957. [Half of an Ace Double (D-241), bound with Harry Whittington's One Deadly Dawn]



Last Stop. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963.

A Procession of the Damned. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965.

The Warlock. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967.

This Witch. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971.

Short Fiction

Tucker's first published short story, "Interstellar Way-Station,"

appeared in the May, 1941 issue of *Super Science Stories*.

During his lifetime he published over two dozen stories in the leading SF magazines of the time, including *Astounding* (later *Analog*), *Fantastic Worlds*, *Future Fiction*, *Galaxy*, *If*, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Other Worlds*, *Planet Stories*, *Science Fiction Quarterly*, and *Universe*.

Ten of his stories were collected in *The Science-Fiction Subtreasury* (1954); and nine of his stories appeared in *The Best of Wilson Tucker* (1982).

Tucker also had a story, "Dick and Jane Go To Mars," accepted for publication in *Last Dangerous Visions*; but this anthology was never published.

Tuckerisms

Several of Tucker's mystery novels had SF elements. For example, in his first published novel, *The Chinese Doll*, Tucker mentioned not only SF fandom and fanzines but also began his practice of naming fictional characters after SF personalities. This practice became known as "Tuckerisms" in fandom.

Artwork in Tucker's Books

Tucker was lucky in the artwork for his books. Among those who illustrated his book covers/dust jackets were such accomplished artists as Herman Bischoff (*Lion* paperback of *To Keep or Kill*), Richard Powers (*The City in the Sea*, *Tomorrow Plus X* and *The Long Loud Silence*), Gene Szafran (*Lancer* paperback of *The Time Masters*), Ed Emsh (*Galaxy* novel of *The City in the Sea*), Ben Feder (*The Lincoln Hunters* and *The Man in My Grave*), Leo & Dianne Dillon (*Ace* paperbacks of *The Lincoln Hunters* and *The Year of the Quiet Sun*), Robert Maguire (*Lion* Library edition of *To Keep or Kill*), and George Salter (*Mercury* Mystery edition of *The Stalking Man*).

Some Conclusions

After Tucker's death in 2006, lifelong SF fan Erle Korshak wrote a letter to *Locus Magazine* in which he stated that he considered Tucker to be one of the three most important SF fans who ever lived (along with Forrest J Ackerman and Jack Darrow). In 2001, members of *The Dawn Patrol* -- a gathering of SF, space, and aviation enthusiasts from throughout the United States and Canada -- held a "Tucker Tribute" in honor of Bob and his wife. The February, 2004 issue of *SF Commentary* 79 was a tribute to Tucker's seven decades as a fan and pro.

In addition to the honors and awards he received, he should also be remembered as one of the Charter Members of our club, the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F/NFFF) in 1941.

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Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were consulted, including Wikipedia and Fancyclopedia 3.

Song

Will Mayo Reviews Bobby Gentry's Ode To Billy Joe

This is a song that I first heard nearly fifty years ago and also one that haunts me to this day. It is, in part, a story of a young boy's suicide by way of jumping off the Tallahatchie Bridge down south but it is also, in part, the violence that underlies everyday country living as they oh-so casually relate this incident to one another ("Won't you pass the peas, please?" Mama says). Oh, and the singer and composer of this song, Bobby Gentry, is also another source of mystery as she disappeared from the spotlight years ago. Between the chords of this song, old ghosts in the South rise as it is further related that "Papa caught a virus and died" and "Mama hasn't been right since." In all my life, I know nothing like it. It is a song to haunt the senses. You cannot listen to it and remain untouched.

Will Mayo Reviews The Grateful Dead's My Brother Esau

Another song that fans of fantasy literature might be interested in is Bob Weir of The Grateful Dead's "My Brother Esau." Tying together the Biblical story about the rivalry between two brothers and current religious beliefs about the apocalypse and the end of civilizations, it paints a vivid picture that the listener can see as well as hear. Listen to Bob as he sings, "Sometimes at night I dream of that hairy man" and take it from there. It's a song that can still be heard today and is worth the time involved.

Will Mayo Reviews Uriah Heep's Lady In Black

Perhaps few songs are as evocative as the band Uriah Heep's song "Lady In Black" in which the lead singer sings of a mysterious woman dressed all in black - god or saint, he does not say - who appears before a man with destruction all around. The man asks for horses for his battle but

the lady refuses, saying that "battle gives but does not end." Yet she says that she'll be with him always before she disappears into the midwinter darkness. And with the "Aaaah-Aaaah" sound from the band's chants, the song ends.

But the image, so like some medieval painting, brought forth by the music, bringing forth ideas of the supernatural, stays with the listener long afterwards. Leading him to pause in wonderment for many days hence. It's a song any lover of the fantastic can admire.

Will Mayo Reviews Lana del Rey's Gods And Monsters

Perhaps no song of the current era calls forth the fantastic like Lana del Rey's Gods And Monsters. With lines like "God and I don't get along" and "life imitates art," it brings to the listener's mind images of fallen angels and monsters out of some just-unearthed mythology. I suggest a listen is due now.

Will Mayo Reviews Dave Matthews's Gravedigger

Perhaps no song in recent memory calls forth that eerie feeling of the Reaper as Dave Matthews's song Gravedigger, dedicated as it is to his own personal gravedigger. With such lines as "We all fall down" and "You should never have to bury your own babies" while including the roll call of the dead, Dave shows that, come what may, when the departure date nears, he is ready. The listener would be well advised to heed his advice.

Will Mayo Reviews Ghost's Little Sunshine

Perhaps no song conjures up deals with the Devil like the Swedish heavy metal band Ghost's "Little Sunshine." When Tobias Forge, the lead singer, with his headdress resembling that of an anti-Pope and his band in ghostly Star Wars-like costumes, belt out lines like, "When you fall out in the middle of the night" and "Even when you're dead and gone," the listener feels a shiver rush up his spine and knows that the deal is near completion. Tune in to a video station near you. It's the sensation of this particular millennium.

Stage

Will Mayo Reviews Sophocles' Oedipus Rex

Perhaps the ancient Greek play, Oedipus Rex, by Sophocles, is the world's oldest time travel story whereby a traveling man murders a blind man, then marries the queen of a mighty kingdom. When he discovers that the man he has murdered is, in fact, his father and that he has married his mother, he destroys his sight and thus becomes the blind man he has killed.

Thus resolving more than one time travel paradox. Still readable thousands of years later. Readers may be interested.

Verse

Will Mayo Reviews Edgar Allan Poe's Ulalume

Perhaps the poem of Poe's that most grabs me is not his Raven poem nor his Annabel Lee but is instead his Ulalume whereby the narrator journeys with his soul in a haunted woodland in an "immemorable year" and at the end of his long trek finds himself at the tomb of his Ulalume whom he had buried one year previously. And he is given to know what peace the dead must experience - indeed, to know it and to envy it - in their tombs, walled off as they are from such a hellish planet. With its constant repetition of "l" and "u" sounds, this poem comes across as an eerie mourning sound. Somewhat similar to that heard at old fashioned Irish wake where women are paid to attend and to cry out at the presence of the dead. A dying way of life.

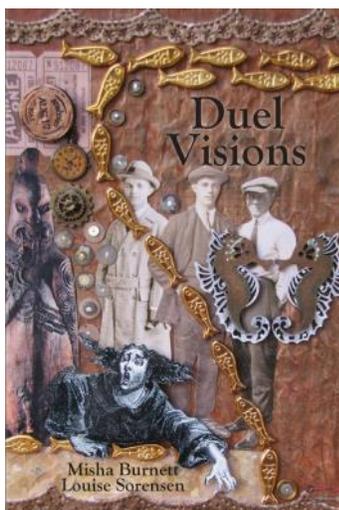
Food of Famous Writers

Cuban Sandwiches and Sushi
with Misha Burnett and Louise Sorenson
Cooking by Cedar Sanderson

Buckle in, folks! This is going to be a long one! Also, these are less recipes, and more techniques which you can use to make many, many delicious variations on a theme.

When I reached out to Misha, who I know well, to ask him for a book and a dish for ETWYRT, I was curious to see what he'd come up with. He's a fascinating writer – you've met him before on these pages, with the deliciously creepy goblin poem that came from an Odd Prompt. To my surprise, he came back and asked if I would do a post for both him and his coauthor. Of course! I've done that before. But what I hadn't done before was two separate but equal dishes for those authors, so this is fun and different!

First! The book is *Duel Visions* by Misha Burnett and Louise Sorenson, and surprising no one who has read the goblin poem, it's a grim and macabre collection of ten stories. Designed to terrorize the reader and heighten their senses, it's perhaps suitable that a book which will make you glad to be alive when you finish it, should go with that most necessary of living chores, eating. Both dishes are a delight to the senses, and while you might not choose to make them at the same time, you also might! Especially if you have teenagers to feed...



Misha asked for Cuban Sandwiches, and Louise for sushi. Since I have wanted to make the former for some time, and the latter is a common meal at our house, this was a fun pairing. The new with the familiar, and the kids would get involved, too. Sushi does not necessarily involve raw fish, and it is a kinetic meal to prepare, perfect for kids who want to get handsy with their food.



To begin, you want to make pulled pork. This is not a difficult process, and I'm going to elide over it, because I'll admit I have bags on hand in the freezer for quick and easy meals on demand. Usually, I season this with barbecue sauce for pulled pork sandwiches, but for the Cuban sandwiches you could toss it with a bit of cumin, chili powder, garlic, and some finely chopped fresh cilantro (this is optional for those who abhor the stuff). And if you want to make your own bread for the sandwiches, get that started. Or, if you're like me this last week and not up to it, grab some hearty hoagie rolls.



For the sushi, start the rice. I use a short grain sushi rice, but we have successfully done sushi with arborio as well. Medium or long-grain rice, jasmine, or basmati, will not work. You need rice grains that stay a bit sticky when they are cooked, so they can be structurally sound when building onigiri (rice balls) and sushi rolls. We use a ratio of one cup dry rice to 1 1/2 cups water, and we use a rice cooker. Once the rice is cooked, transfer it to a wooden bowl (this is actually important, as it helps suck up any excess moisture, but the kids say they do it in any old bowl with success, so you can manage without it!) and fold in a mixture of 1 tbsp rice wine vinegar and 1 tsp sugar gently (increase this according to how many cups of uncooked rice you used. You'll get about 3 rolls per cup of rice). You don't want to break or mush up the rice, just coat it in the seasoning.

Lay out a sheet of nori on a bamboo mat, if you have one. If not, a sheet of plastic wrap or waxed paper works fine. You'll see my hands (photography by the Jr. Mad Scientist) and note that I use the nori itself for rolling. The only thing you must do is moisten the nori. We keep a bowl of water handy and dip our fingertips in, then 'fingerpaint' the water onto the dry seaweed paper sheet. Obviously, there's a lot of handwashing before this point! Because we also use our hands to put the rice on the nori. It's sticky, so wetting your fingers keeps too much of the rice from clinging to you and not your rolling paper. Once your rice is leveled out, not too much, not too little, you can lay out the filling bits. We use tons of things for this. Whatever is in the fridge, really. The mainstays the Jr. Mad Scientist (our in-house sushi chef) insists on are carrots, cucumbers, avocado, cream cheese, salad shrimp, and fake crab (I like real crabmeat, and buy a tin of it for this very purpose). You could do this with fruit and cream cheese – we have, and it's tasty! Most of the time we're making California rolls.

Filling going in. Almost ready to roll! Roll with a gentle, firm, continuous pressure. You are pushing all the sticky rice together and giving the structure the adhesion to stand up to the cutting. Keep rolling after you have come to the end. This compresses it all. Compression is a theme in this post...

The bamboo mat is handy for rolling because it keeps a constant, even pressure on your roll. I opted to work without it so I could show what was going on to the camera. Cut your roll in half, then into equal pieces. The children, being barbarians, will eat a roll whole, like a burrito. I prefer the chopstick method, myself!



I ate my sushi roll with some soy for dipping, and pickled ginger and kim-chiee on the side. I'm not a big fan of wasabi, and most US wasabi is just colored horseradish, anyway. The real stuff is nicer.

On to the sandwich! You know, both of these are sandwiches, sort of? Portable lunch-type food, easy to eat on the go and light meals. Well, the Cuban sandwiches are not so light!

You'll need:

- Hearty rolls, or a baguette-style loaf
- Pulled pork
- Bread and butter pickle slices
- Deli sliced ham (I suppose you could do it with just ham slices, but nice thin ones!)
- Mustard
- Sliced cheese (we used provolone, it was what we had on hand)

You will also need:

Two cast-iron skilletts, or one and a regular skillet for the bottom

A weight (I used to keep a foil-wrapped brick in the kitchen for making gyro meat, I wonder where that went? Can of tomatoes worked well)

Filled sandwich with maybe a bit too much in there!

Assemble your sandwiches. Split the bread down the length of it. Apply a schmear of mustard to each side. Put a slice(s) of cheese on each side. In between the cheese, put the pulled pork, pickles, and ham. You don't want to overfill this sandwich, as the next step becomes a lot messier and more difficult if you do (learn from my mistakes...). Heat a skillet to medium heat. Not too hot, because you want to get the sandwich warm to the center without blackening the bread. Lay the sandwich down in the pan, then set the second pan on top, with a weight on that pan.

Photographing this was not successful.

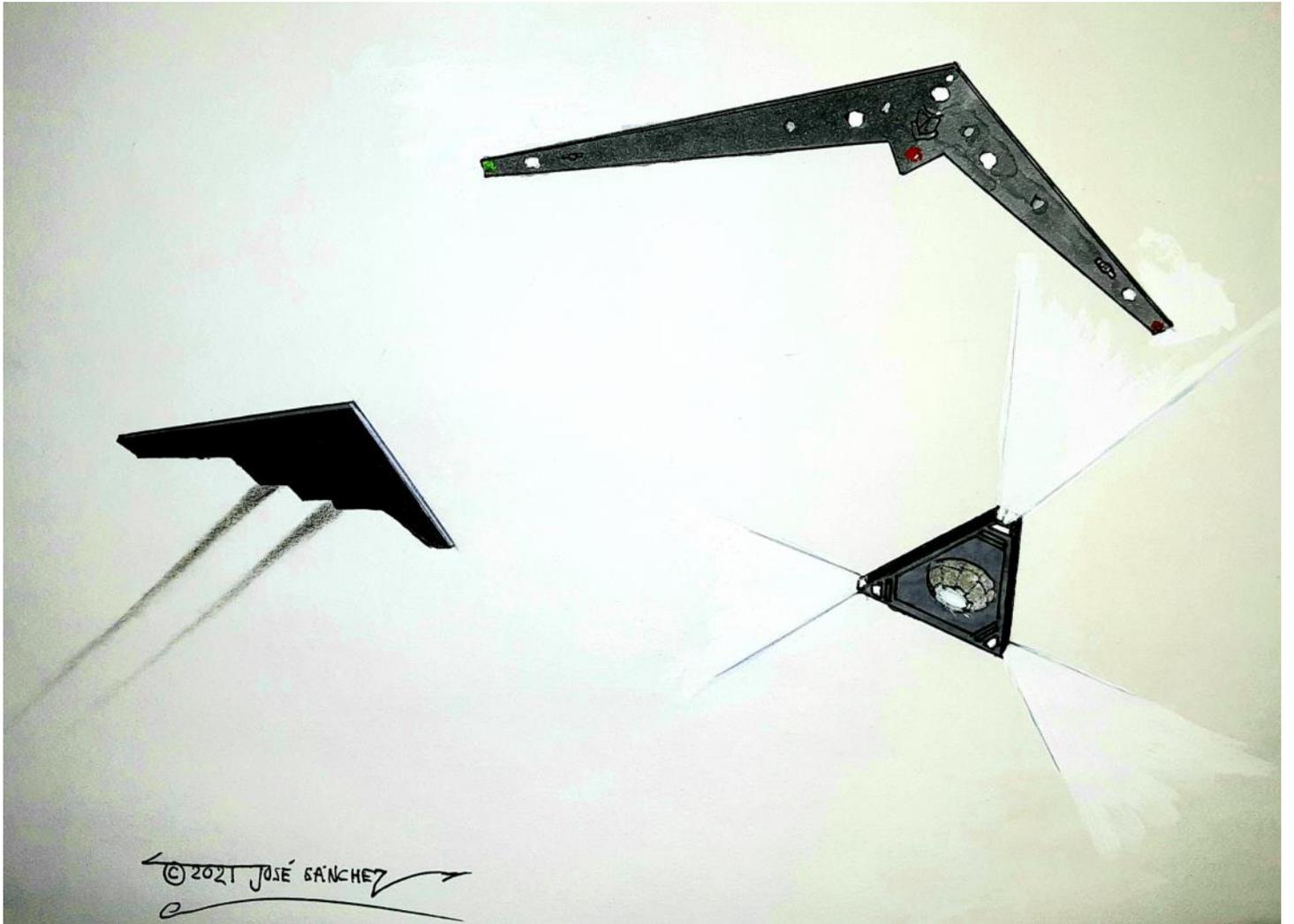


Cook the sandwich under pressure for a couple of minutes, then turn it over and weight it back down to cook another 2-3 minutes. You really want the sandwich to compress and heat gently through to get all your flavors going here!

The result? A meal that will make you glad to be alive and enjoying it! We did the big sushi prep on a different day than the sandwiches, so what you see above is **coffwaytoopretty** not my handiwork. However, a couple of pieces of sushi was a nice cool accompaniment to the warm, rich sandwiches!

Layers of flavors!

I am already contemplating variations on the Cuban sandwich. I like the pressed sandwich style of cooking, and it's less greasy than my grilled cheese. So yum.



Flight by José Sánchez