

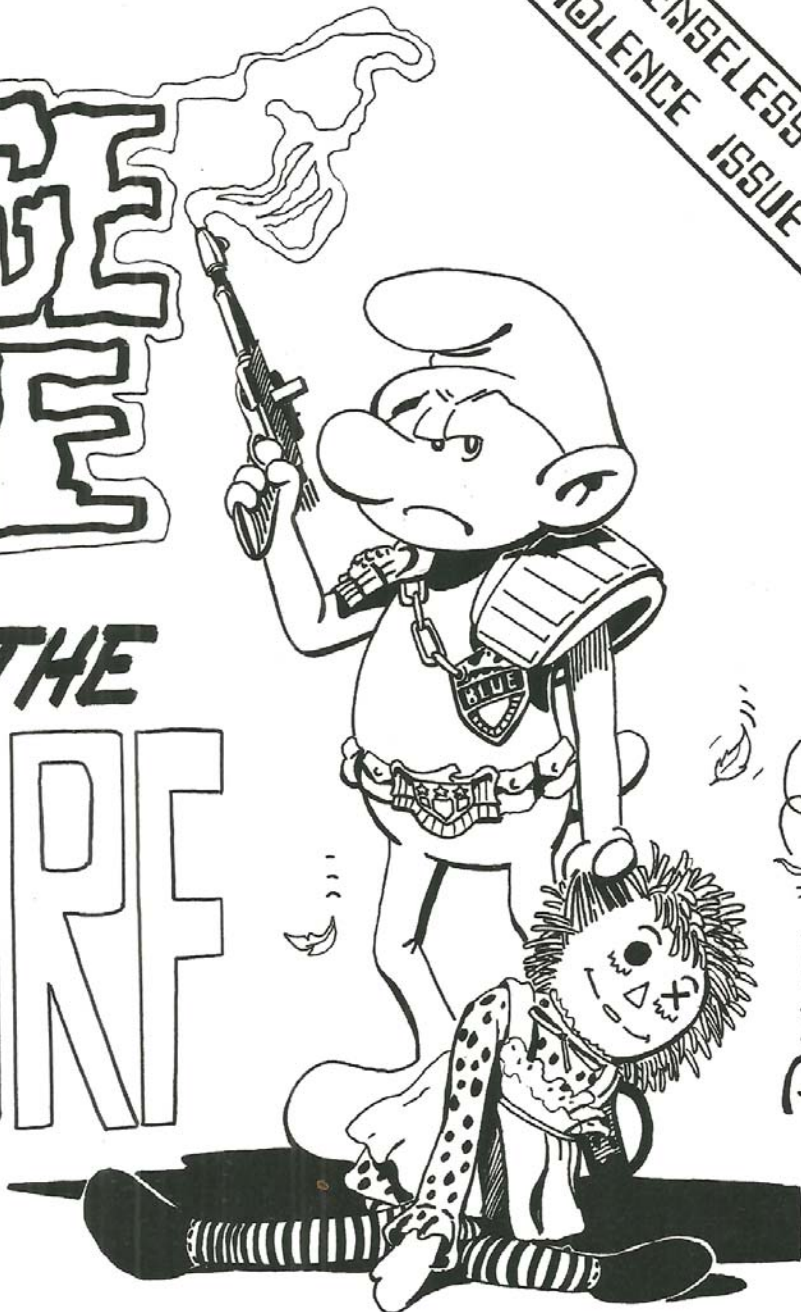
# Fadeaway 56

SENSELESS  
VIOLENCE ISSUE

# JUDGE BLUE

HE IS THE

# SMURF



P&S

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*FADEAWAY #56* is a fanzine devoted to science fiction and related fields of interest, and is produced by **Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd., Oxford, MA 01540-2035, email [fabficbks@aol.com](mailto:fabficbks@aol.com)**. Copies are available for a letter of comment, or a print fanzine in trade, or by subscription at a cost of \$25.00 for six issues. Letters of comment are much preferred. Any person who has not previously received a copy of this fanzine may receive a sample copy of the current issue for free by sending me your name and address. Publication is (in theory anyway) bi-monthly. This is the September-October 2018 issue

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THE COVER THIS ISSUE is an old bit of art from Dan Carroll. In times back when I was running my science fiction book store, this illo was turned into a mini-poster that was sold at the store. The *2000AD* weekly British comic and the Judge Dredd comic book were very popular at the time. I was going to follow up the illo's appearance as the cover this time round with some long involved comments about why I no longer read the Judge Dredd comic book stories, but I've decided to cut my comments short.

The long story short is that the Judge Dredd series, which was once one of the most interesting and innovative comic series being published anywhere, isn't any more. In the early days of the series, and for quite a long time thereafter, the stories dealt with a bizarre future world where an atomic war had rendered most of planet Earth uninhabitable except for freak mutations and bizarre radiation spawned monsters. The human survivors of the war were all huddled into a megacity that stretched along the east coast from what used to be Maine down to what was left of Florida. Narrow, and densely populated, 400 million people were squeezed into this hugely built up metropolis, totally dependent on bio-growth food. Most work was done by robots or fully automatic factories. The over crowding and deprivation created a high tension environment where violent crime ran rampant.

The government was under control of the Judges Corps, uniformed officers who dealt with crime directly and handed out punishments on the spot, up to and including death. In the early years the Judges were constantly referred to as tough, but fair. Stories involved the strange and the fantastic and were often darkly humorous. Bizarre and innovative crimes were spotlighted, including such things as body sharking, a super-sweet non-calorie candy that was more addictive than heroin, an 'arms racket' featuring criminals who sell human left hand arms, futsie, and more. Judge Dredd, a top officer in the Judge Corps faced a variety of fantastic cases that were clever, well written, and always interesting.

But over the years things changed. The stories became more violent and more focused on neo-fascist themes. The judges stopped being fair and human, becoming brutal and vicious instead. The philosophy of protecting and serving the city citizens was replaced with the concept that every citizen was a perp, that everyone, young or old had some kind of crime to hide, that since every citizen was already guilty of some kind of crime that it was the mission of the Judges to ferret out these crimes and administer draconian punishments far in excess of anything a rational civilization would consider reasonable. Add in newer writers such as Garth Ennis whose plot focus was on unrelenting violence and gross-out gore, and you had a formula that was guaranteed to turn this particular reader off the series.

Nowadays the Judges routinely subvert any attempts at restoring democracy, while most organized religions and Christianity in particular are outlawed. Each Chief Judge who heads the Judge Corps is an absolute dictator, and is almost impossible to remove, even in cases where the Chief Judge is clearly senile, insane, corrupt, or all three at once.

As a natural outcome of these policies, most new buildings constructed in Mega City One are more iso-cells to house the ever growing ranks of lawbreakers. Judge Dredd and his entire comic series have become the lasting symbol of ruthless, vindictive police state authoritarianism. For me it's thanks, but no thanks. A comic series that portrays malicious fascism in action is not the kind of "entertainment" I want to read. So for me, it's so long forever to Judge Dredd.

But I still like Dan's cover illo for *Fadeaway* this issue. And yes, I still have some copies of the poster for sale if anybody is interested.

# *The Hugo Award Finalists*



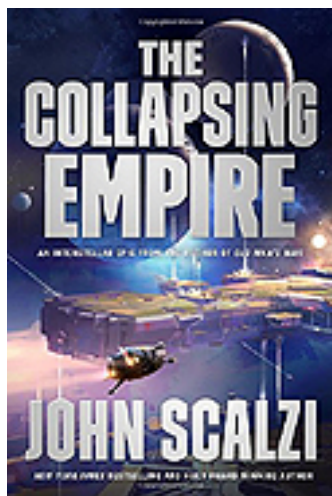
by

Tom Feller

This year marks one of the few times I was able to read all the finalists in the fiction category prior to the voting deadline and the first time under the current rules. It helped that my science fiction book club read two of the novel finalists before the announcements was made and that none of the novels were 800 pages long.

## **Best Novel**

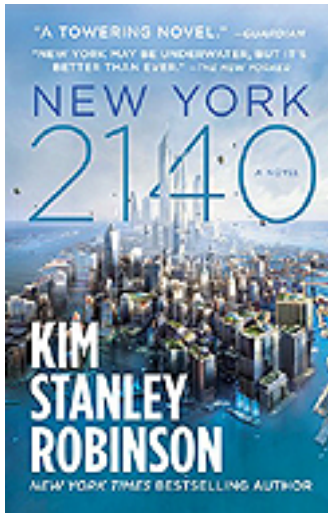
I felt that this was the most competitive category this year in the sense that I liked all six finalists.



### **The Collapsing Empire by John Scalzi—**

Note: I had previously reviewed this book in *Tightbeam* #282. Set in the 36th Century, humanity has spread out to the stars after discovering the “Flow”, a way to travel faster than light through natural river-like passages between almost 50 stars. Humans in those star systems live in an empire called the Interdependency. Unfortunately, the Flow is not eternal, and one scientist has discovered that it is on the verge of collapse. To add to the crisis, there is only one Earth-like planet in the empire, and they have long since lost contact with the Earth itself. The rest of the human race live either in space habitats or on planets that require domes, and they need interstellar trade to survive. The main characters are Cardenia, the recently crowned empress, Kiva, the scion of an important merchant family, Ghreni, the scion of another important merchant family and one of the principal villains, and Marce, a young scientist. Some reviewers have compared it to *Dune*, but the prose is not up to Herbert’s level and lacks the epic feel of the *Dune* books. Furthermore, Scalzi uses the F-word more frequently than I like. Otherwise, this book was a lot of fun to read, but be warned: this is the

first book in a series, and it ends on a cliff hanger. I ranked it number two, and the other voters agreed with me and ranked it number two as well.



### **New York 2140 by Kim Stanley Robinson—**

Almost every day, I check a web site produced by the National Oceanographic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) that tells me the level of the Cumberland River. While our house did not flood during the 2010 Nashville flood, we did have to evacuate, so my wife and I keep an eye on it. In 2140, the NOAA still exists, and a character in this novel also checks a NOAA web site, but one that tells him the tide levels in lower Manhattan. By this time, the sea levels have risen to the point that part of the island is underwater, even during low tide, and the city resembles Venice. High tides reach as far north as 46th Street and buildings are linked by sky bridges. Denver has become the financial center of the world and the largest city in the United States, which still exists.

All the point-of-view characters live in the MetLife Tower, an actual building on Madison Square owned by a co-op in 2140. None of the apartments have their own kitchens, and all the residents eat in one community dining room. Not only does the building have its own dock, but it also has a boathouse where some of the residents keep their boats. The person who checks the tide level every day is Vlade, the building superintendent. Since the lower floors and basement are permanently under the water level, he is responsible for the building's integrity. He is an expert diver and his ex-wife is the owner of a salvage tug. Vlade allows two 12-year-old homeless boys, Stefan and Roberto, to live in the building so long as they stay out of sight. Neither is in school, but they have picked up some book learning. Using an inflatable boat, they have adventures as scavengers. "Mutt and Jeff" are two computer programmers living in a tent in the building's farming level, where the residents grow fresh vegetables, but they are kidnapped in the opening chapter. The detective assigned to their case is Inspector Gen Octaviasdottir, a large African-American woman, who also lives in the building. Franklin is a financial trader specializing in day trading properties in the "inter-tidal" zone, which land between the low and high tides. He has been quite successful and owns his own hydrofoil. Amelia Black is an Internet video star with 32 million subscribers. She specializes in shows about endangered species that need assistance migrating to safe environments. She is known for losing her clothing during her adventures and owns her own zeppelin. Her travels enable to the reader to learn about other parts of the world in this time period. Charlotte Armstrong is president of the co-op and a lawyer for a non-government organization known as the Householders Union which advocates for homeowners. Her ex-husband is chairman of the Federal Reserve, which still exists in 2140. The U.S. Congress also still exists, and Charlotte runs for it.

A hurricane that takes place toward the end of the story advances the plot, although it has ex deus machina feel, and there are frequent info dumps. The author does not want us to miss any information that supports his argument that global warming is real and the main culprit is capitalism. These passages slow down the story, of course, which is unfortunate because Robinson's description of life in this time and place is fascinating and, in some ways, optimistic. I'm not sure that the last quality was the author's intention. My ranking was number three, but the other voters disagreed and ranked it number six.



### **Provenance by Ann Leckie—**

Fortunately for the characters, this novel, while set in the same universe as the Hugo-winning Ancillary Justice and its sequels, takes place outside the Radch empire which is now in the middle of a civil war. Although there is a Radch ambassador from the empire to an alien species called the Geck, she is not a major character. Rather it is set

mostly on and around Hwae, a minor independent planet, and on the space station Tyr Siilas, a center for illegal trade. The protagonist is a woman named Ingray Aughskold who is the adopted daughter of a major politician. The plot is driven by a scheme Ingray concocts to secure an advantage over her brother Danache, also adopted, with whom she is in competition to inherit the family fortune and political standing. Her scheme is to take all her money and break a thief named Pahlad Budrakim out of an “inescapable” prison planet with the hope that the thief will lead her to some stolen artifacts of historical importance. Nothing goes as she planned, of course. A character is murdered, for instance, but the mystery portion of the story was rather mediocre. Some reviewers even called this book a “cozy”, but as a general rule, I don’t like cozies, especially second rate ones like this one. On the other hand, I found Hwae to be a very interesting place to visit, the Geck a unique alien species, and Ingray a likable character in the tradition of good-natured teenagers who make stupid decisions that come out all right in the end. This novel can be read without reading the Imperial Radch trilogy and may even be a better introduction to the series than Ancillary Justice, the first book in the trilogy. It is certainly kinder and gentler in tone, and there are no data dumps like the ones that slow down New York 2140. My ranking was number six, but the other voters disagreed again and ranked it number three.

### **Raven Stratagem by Yoon Ha Lee—**

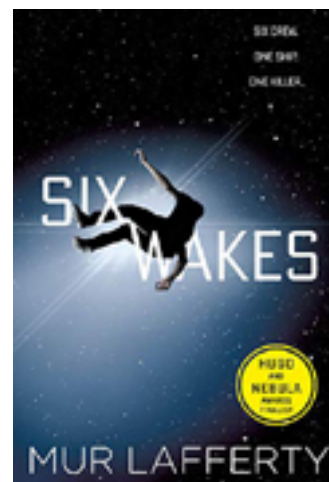
I don’t normally re-read the first novel in a trilogy before reading the second, but I found *The Ninefox Gambit*, one of last year’s finalists, so challenging in both the writing style and the world-building that I decided to make an exception. I’m glad I did, because I got a lot more out of it the second time. I think I missed half of the real story just trying to figure out what was happening in this world, especially with its calendar mathematics and temporal physics. The author’s attitude was that the reader could either sink or swim. The *Machineries of Empire* series is set so far in the future that no one remembers us and in an interstellar empire known as the Hexarchate, in which the ruling class consists of six factions. They are the Rahal, the legislators; the Vidona, the torturers; the Andan, the culture police; the Nirai, the mathematics and scientists; the Shuos, the spies and bureaucrats; and the Kel, the military. Democracy is considered a heresy.

Kel Chervis, an infantry captain and a member of an ethnic minority, appears to be possessed by the personality and memories of Shuos Jedao, a brilliant, but insane, general who has been dead for four centuries. Unlike the first novel, Chervis/Jedao is not the point-of-view character, because that would reveal an important plot twist that does not take place until the end of the new novel. Instead, the POV characters include Lieutenant Colonel Kel Brezan, who opposes Jedao, General Kel Khiruev, whose task force is commandeered by Jedao, and Shuos Mikodez, the leader of the Shuos faction and possibly the most interesting of the three. The new novel begins immediately after the end of the first, and much of the plot is driven by an invasion by the Hafn, aliens from outside the Hexarchate. My ranking was number four, and the other voters ranked it number five.



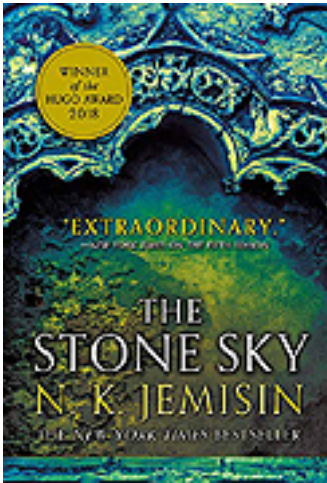
### **Six Wakes by Mur Lafferty--**

The first thing that struck me when I first opened this book was the similarity to Asimov’s Robot novels and short story collections, although instead of stating the laws of robotics, it states the laws regarding cloning. By the 23th Century, the science of cloning advanced to the point where the practice became feasible for human beings, and laws had to be established to prevent abuse. Also like Asimov’s stories, the characters work around, bend, and break the laws. The main story is set on the Dormire, an interstellar sleeper ship en route to the planet Artemis in the Tau Ceti system in the 25th Century with flashback chapters to



establish the back stories of the main characters. Those chapters are not filler but become essential to the story. The ship has a six person crew with about 2,000 people (non-clones) in cryogenic hibernation and digital copies of the personalities and memories, called “mind-maps”, of about 500 clones. The ship travels at sub-light speeds so it is projected to take about 600 years to reach its destination, and the crew are expected to clone themselves during the voyage. They are all former criminals who agreed to take on this mission in lieu of a prison sentence or execution. If they and their passengers arrive safely, they will be pardoned.

The plot is structured as a murder mystery. Twenty-four years into the mission, they all wake up after having been cloned simultaneously and their memories restored from mind-maps taken from the day before they left on their mission. Their most current mind-maps have been erased as well as all their mission logs and personal journals. An artificial intelligence, called IAN, is supposed to actually runs the ship, but it has been disabled. The old bodies of four of them show that they were murdered, one is in a coma from a blow to the head, and the last committed suicide by hanging himself. The six crew members are Katrina, the captain, Wolfgang, the first mate and chief of security, Hiro, the pilot/navigator, Joanna, ship’s doctor, Paul, chief engineer, and Maria, cook, janitor, and chief bottle washer. I found it to be a very fast read, and it may possibly be the best novel about cloning that I have ever read. I felt that this was the best of the six finalists, but the other voters only ranked it number four.



### **The Stone Sky by N.K. Jemisin—**

This is the author’s third novel in her Broken Earth trilogy, which are set more than 40,000 years in the future when the Earth has become geologically unstable with frequent volcanoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis, and the moon’s orbit has been changed to one that is very eccentric. During a “Season”, the seismic disturbances are especially intense and can destroy whole civilizations and ruin all the advances made since the previous “season”. The third novel begins immediately after the end of the second book, *The Obelisk Gate*, and two of the point-of-view characters return. They are Essun and Nassun, her daughter. After being separated since the beginning of the first book, *The Fifth Season*, their story lines finally come together toward the end of the new book. About two years have passed, and both characters are orogenes, people who have some sort of psychic connection with the Earth. After staying in one spot for most of the second book, both characters are on the move in the

third one. Essun is traveling with the former inhabitants of Castrima who have had to abandon their village after being destroyed in an invasion attempt. Nassun is traveling with her protector Schaffa, who also has a history with Essun, toward the ancient city of Corepoint with the aim of putting an end to the world as they know it.

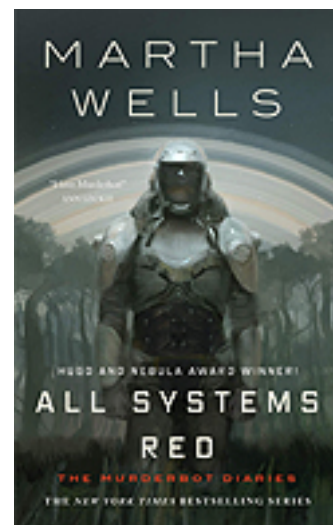
There is also a new point-of-view character, Houwha, an artificial person who was “decanted” rather than born. He lives in the city of Syl Anagist about 40,000 years before Essun was born. Syl Anagist is highly advanced, and its energy needs are so great that they are close to finishing a project to tap the Earth’s core itself to supply their needs. Houwha and his fellow “tuners” are an integral part of the project. However, this project backfires disastrously, not only destroying Syl Anagist but also causing the geologically instability and the change to the moon’s orbit.

I considered *The Fifth Season* to be one of the top three novels of that year, but I was very disappointed in *The Obelisk Gate*, because it felt like the characters, especially Essun, were in a holding pattern and much of the writing felt padded. I am glad to report that she returns to the level of the first novel and pulls off a satisfying conclusion to the trilogy. My ranking was number five because it felt the category was more competitive this year. However, the other voters **awarded it the Hugo**, making this the first time that all three books in a trilogy have won the award.

## Novella

### **All Systems Red by Martha Wells—**

The unnamed narrator of this story, a cyborg of the type called a “secunit”, calls itself a “murderbot”, because it malfunctioned on a previous mission and killed the people it was supposed to protect. Supposedly it has been repaired and is now serving as security for an eight person scientific expedition on a newly discovered planet. Somehow it has disabled its “governor module”, which would have required it to obey all human orders, and developed free will, a personality, a conscience, and shyness toward humans. However, it has no gender, because none of its organic parts include the ones that determine sex. In its free time, the cyborg watches adventure videos, which give it a limited knowledge of human psychology although it claims to dislike humans. All these are secrets the cyborg has kept from the humans it protects and from the corporation which owns it. The plot is driven by a conspiracy to kill all members of the expedition so that they will not discover a secret about the planet, and the cyborg has to reveal its secrets to protect them. By the end of the story, it becomes a person, although still quite different from a human. This story felt rather old fashioned, and the cyborg’s narration is actually quite humorous at times. The cyborg is a very well developed character, but the humans are mostly underdeveloped, except for Dr. Mensah, the expedition’s leader. This is the first installment in the author’s Murderbot Diaries series, but it stands by itself. My ranking was number two, but the others voters liked it even more and **made it the winner**.



### **And Then There were (N-One) by Sarah Pinsker—**

As the title indicates, this is a murder mystery and it takes place on an island that is trapped by a storm. However, that is where all similarities with the Agatha Christie story ends. This is a multi-universe story using the premise that anytime someone makes a decision, a whole new universe is created. A physicist named Sarah Pinsker in one universe, not ours, discovers multiple universes and how to travel between them, so she invites about 200 other Sarah Pinskers in other universes to Sarahcon. It takes place on a small island off the coast of Nova Scotia. Our universe is represented by the author herself and she brings her Nebula Award, which she won for “Our Lady of the Open Road” in 2016. Unfortunately, one of the other Sarahs uses it as a murder weapon. The point-of-view Sarah is an insurance investigator living in Seattle with her partner Mabel. Since she is the closest thing they have to a detective, the burden of solving the mystery falls on her shoulders. The solution to the mystery is very satisfying, and I found it to be an excellent whodunit. The science fiction aspect is very intriguing. After all, who hasn’t thought what might have happened if they had taken different paths? My ranking was number three, and the other voters ranked it number two.

### **Binti: Home by Nnedi Okarafor—**

This story is a sequel to Binti, which won both the Hugo and Nebula Awards in 2015. It takes place about a year later, and the title character is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder because of the events that took place in the earlier story. She has spent that year on another planet halfway across the galaxy from Earth studying mathematics at Oomza University, the galaxy’s leading university where the vast majority of students and teachers are members of other species, and undergoing therapy with a human psychology. Her only friend is Okwu, a member of a jelly fish-like species called the Meduse. Accompanied by Okwu, Binti returns to her home in Namibia on Earth, where she has to deal with her family. They are not estranged, but Binti’s relationship with her family is a complicated one, and she learns some family secrets. The author has a beautiful style, but be warned that this story has a cliff hanger ending that sets up another story. My ranking was number five, and the other voters ranked it number four.

### **The Black Tides of Heaven by JY Yang—**

This story is meant to be an introduction to the author's Tensorate fantasy series, which some reviewers are calling "silkpunk", because of the Chinese-Singaporean author's use of far eastern sources for worldbuilding. The magic system, called "The Slack" (presumably because "The Force" was already taken), is based on mastering gravity, kinetic energy, thermal energy, electromagnetism, and biochemistry. Mokoya and Akeha are fraternal twins and children of the empress, known as the Protector, of the land known as the Protectorate. As babies they are given to a monastery, but when Mokoya develops clairvoyant powers, they are taken back. Both come to realize that their mother is evil, so Akeha runs away and joins a resistance movement called "The Machinists".

Early on I found the author's use of the pronouns "they" and "them" to refer to one person confusing at times, but eventually learned that there was a purpose to the usage. People in this world declare their genders at some point, usually as teenagers, which are later confirmed, although the author does not describe the confirmation process. The characters then undergo the physical process of puberty. When they are seventeen, Mokoya declares herself to be female and Akeha declares himself male. One of their nephews declares himself male at the age of three, which is unusual but not unheard of, and Yongcheow, a minor character who becomes Akeha's lover, never declares his or her gender, also unusual but not unheard of. I thought this was the best novella, but the other voters strongly disagreed and ranked it number five.

### **Down Among the Sticks and Bones by Seanan McGuire—**

The premise of the author's Hugo-winning novella *Every Heart a Doorway* is that our world has many portals to other worlds, be they rabbit holes, looking glasses, wardrobes, or something else. In this prequel to that story, the portal is located in a trunk left by the grandmother of two 12 year old identical twin girls. The girls are Jacqueline, aka Jack, who is a polite, quiet, clean, always well dressed, girly-girl, and Jillian, aka Jill, who is an adventurous, thrill seeking, tom-boy. Their selfish parents, Chester and Serena, conceived them for the wrong reasons: Chester because he thought they would advance his career and Serena because she thought they would enhance her social status. About a quarter of the way into the story, the girls discover the portal, which is a long, winding stairway that takes them to a door which opens into another world called the Moors where there are vampires, werewolves, gargoyles, and other things that go bump in the night. Jill becomes the adopted daughter of a vampire, known as the Master, and Jack becomes the apprentice of Dr. Bleak, a mad scientist. They grow apart only to be reluctantly re-united at the end. The descriptions are very atmospheric, the characters are well developed, and the author smoothly expresses her opinions on parental expectations, relations between sisters, and personal development. It is a good, solid story. My ranking was number four, and the other voters ranked it number three.

### **River of Teeth by Sarah Gailey—**

In 1909, according to the author, a Louisiana congressman seriously suggested the United States import hippopotami to Louisiana and raise them for meat and transportation. This is an alternate history that imagines what might have been the result, although it is set a little bit earlier in the 1890s. The main character is Winslow Remington Houndstooth, a former hippo rancher and now a mercenary, who accepts a contract to clear feral hippos out of a marshy lake formed by a dam in the Mississippi River. He assembles a team to assist him, but he is opposed by a man named Travers who likes things the way they are. Houndstooth and Travers have a history, and the former's motivation is driven more by the need for revenge than for the money. Unfortunately, the author really does not do a whole lot with the premise of this story. For instance, if the Mississippi River is dammed up, how does this affect New Orleans? The story felt like a novelization of a screenplay with the assumption that the actors would flesh out the characters rather than the text. Furthermore, it felt like a revenge-plot Western that was simply re-written for a science fiction market with hippos substituting for horses. One reviewer compared it to *The Magnificent Seven*, another to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, and yet another to the movie versions of *Maverick* and *The Wild, Wild West*. I would compare it to one of the second rate *Magnificent Seven* sequels. My ranking was number six, and this time the other voters agreed with me and ranked it number six as well.



## Novelette

This was the category in which my rankings most closely matched the other voters. The only difference was that our rankings for “Children of Thorns, Children of Water” and “Extracurricular Activities” were reversed.

### **Children of Thorns, Children of Water by Aliette de Bodard—**

I am not familiar with the author’s Dominion of the Fallen series, which I understand is an alternate history fantasy, and the author may have assumed that anyone reading this story has already read the first novel in the series. It is set in a Paris that is still recovering from a magic war. The city is ruled by “houses” headed by fallen angels, and the two main characters, Thuan and Kim, are really dragons in human form from the underwater Kingdom of the Seine. They infiltrate House Hawthorne with the intention of becoming spies. Unfortunately, a mysterious force invades the house and kidnaps Kim, so Thuan has to rescue her without revealing who he really is. Although I struggled with understanding what was going on, I found this story to be an entertaining read. However, it did not give me any reason to seek out any of the other stories in the series. My ranking was number four, and the other voters ranked it number five.

### **Extracurricular Activities by Yoon Ha Lee—**

On the other hand, I had already read two books in the author’s Machineries of Empire series and even reviewed the second one earlier. Consequently, I had no trouble getting up to speed, especially since the main character, Shuos Jedao, was also one of the main characters in those two novels. It is set several centuries before the events of those novels, when Jedao was still alive but before he became a general of the Heptarchate. He is assigned to head a special-ops mission to infiltrate another empire called the Gwa-an and rescue the crew of a spy ship that had been captured them. The captain of the spy-ship is an old friend of Jedao’s. This story has more humor than the two novels combined, but requires that you have at least read the first one. It really doesn’t stand on its own and is really only useful for a fan of the series to learn more about Jedao’s back story. My ranking was number five, and the other voters ranked it number four.

### **The Secret Life of Bots by Suzanne Palmer—**

From a stylistic standpoint, this story reminded me of “The Brave Little Toaster” by Thomas Disch. Instead of household appliances, many of the characters are robots and artificial intelligences ranging from “The Ship” to “Multi-Bot 9”, aka “Bot 9”, the hero. There are also human characters who are the ship’s crew. The ship has



recently been taken out of mothballs and refurbished, and the skeleton crew has been assigned what is essentially a suicide mission during a war with aliens. Bot 9 is an old general purpose robot that has also been taken out of storage and given the assignment of tracking down and capturing an alien vermin known as a “ratbug” that has infested the ship and has become a nuisance. Obviously this is a low priority mission for both the ship and the crew, but Bot 9 tackles it with enthusiasm, cheerfulness, and earnestness. Its conversations with the newer, more advanced, robots are quite humorous, and the overall tone is very sweet. My ranking was number one, and, for the first time in several years, the other voters awarded the Hugo to my first choice.

#### **A Series of Steaks by Vina Jie-Min Prasad—**

In the future, 3-D printers, according to this story, will have advanced to the point where they will be able to produce organic products. Helena makes a living using a “bioprinter” to manufacture fake beef for unscrupulous restaurant owners in Nanjing, China. She had previously been a medical researcher, but was unjustly blamed for a scandal involving transplant organs. When she is blackmailed into producing 200 fake individualized t-bone steaks for a high profile catering event, she has to scramble to satisfy the blackmailer and avoid the law. It is quite humorous and entertaining. My ranking was number three and the other voters agreed with me.

#### **Small Changes of Long Periods of Time by K.M. Szpara—**

Finley is transitioning from female to male when he is bitten by a vampire named Andreas and turned into one. Vampirism is legal in this world so long as the vampire obtains consent. However, Finley did not give consent, and the transition to becoming a vampire complicates his gender transition. It is supposed to be funny, but really did not work for me. Warning: The sexual content is high, but I do not consider it pornographic. My ranking was number six as was the other voters.

#### **Wind will Rove by Sarah Pinsker—**

When a generation starship loses all its historical records and Earth literature, including artistic and culture videos and recordings, because of sabotage, extraordinary measures have to be taken to maintain a connection with Earth history and culture. The people on this ship use music to maintain that connection, although there are dissenters. One character, Nelson, has a “who cares about Earth history and culture?” attitude. Another character, Harriet, takes the position that songs should be handed down exactly as they were originally played and sung. Rosie, who plays the fiddle in a band that also includes guitarists, mandolinists, and banjo players, takes the middle position that is OK to modify existing songs, so long as the changes are documented, and also to create original ones. There is not a whole lot of action, but a lot of thought has been put into this story. My ranking was number two and, once again, the other voters agreed with me.

## **Short Story**

#### **Carnival Nine by Caroline M. Yoachim—**

Zee is a wind-up toy who lives with her father in a closet in “the maker’s house”. When a carnival train of more wind-up toys visit, she falls in love with a boy wind-up toy named Vale who works as a carnies. They have a child, Mattan, by picking out parts which are then assembled by “the maker”. Unfortunately, Mattan has a serious disability for a wind-up toy, a weak mainspring. Zee elects to leave Vale and the carnival and return to her father’s house to care for Mattan. As a general rule, I don’t like stories consisting of heavy-handed metaphors, but this one was so well written that it won me over. My ranking was number one, but the other voters ranked it number five.

#### **Clearly Lettered in a Mostly Steady Hand by Fran Wilde—**

There is not much of a story here, because it consists mostly of descriptions of exhibits in a freak show written in second person. The writing style is good, but it just did not work for me as a story. My ranking was number six, and the other voters agreed with me.

### **Fandom for Robots by Vina Jie-Min Prasad—**

Computron is a robot created in an alternate 1954. Because he is obsolete, he now resides in the “Simak Robotics Museum”. Although he is sentient, he supposedly has no emotions. However, he becomes a fan on an anime TV series, so he begins to write fan fiction, specifically slash, and engage on-line with other fans of the series. For Computron, participation in anime fandom is a means by which he becomes a person. It is a lovely story. My ranking was number two, and the other voters agreed with me again.

### **The Martian Obelisk by Linda Nagata—**

The human race is dying in this short story after a series of natural disasters, pandemics, wars, and terrorist attacks. Space travel has ceased. The year is not specified, but some reviewers think it is set in the late 21st Century. The main character, architect Susannah Li-Langford, has, for the past 17 years, been involved in a project to remotely build an obelisk on Mars from materials and artificially intelligent machines left over from one of the five failed colonies. It is to be a memorial to humanity after we are all gone. Then something happens on Mars that forces her to reconsider the project. This is another good story about what it means to be human. My ranking was number three, and once again the other voters agreed with me.

### **Sun, Moon, Dust by Ursula Vernon—**

Allpa is a potato farmer who inherits a magic sword from his adventuress grandmother, but he has no interest in heroic adventures. It is a nice story but nothing special. My ranking was number five, and the other voters ranked it number four.

### **Welcome to your Authentic Indian Experience by Rebecca Roanhorse—**

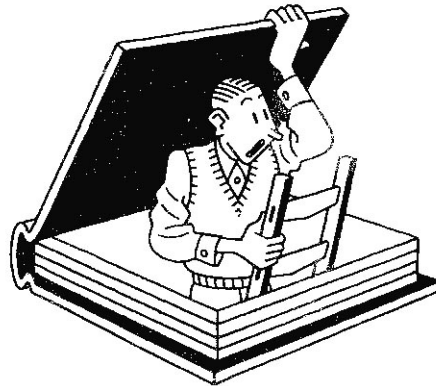
Jesse Turnblatt works as a tour guide for a virtual reality company called Vision Quest for which he dresses up as a stereotypical American Indian shaman and talks like Tonto in The Lone Ranger. Most of the customers are European-Americans so that is what they expect. Jesse’s attitude is that although the job is demeaning to a Native American, it does provide a paycheck. It is written in second person, and there is a lot of detail, but it did not leave much of an impression on me. My ranking was number four, but the other voters must have seen more in it and **gave it the Hugo**.



# BOOKS & things

by

Bob Jennings



## **Against Three Lands; by George Phillies; \$14.95 Trade Paperback, or \$3.99 in ebook format**

One of the problems with reviewing books is that the authors of said books often read the reviews. Sometimes this is not a problem, but other times it is, particularly when I am asked to review books written by friends or acquaintances. I have been reviewing books for decades. My reviews have appeared in fanzines, in newsletters, on websites, even in newspapers and magazines that have paid me to do the reviews. I always warn the people I know in advance, that in lieu of a generous bribe of some kind, I will be doing an honest and objective review of their work, including critical commentary and some plot/character analysis.

Invariably the other person tells me they are fine with this; that they welcome my opinions and ideas. But sometimes after they read the review they are not so cordial. Friendships have sometimes crumbled, or been so fractured that it takes years for the rift that my honesty has caused to heal back up. Sometimes the friendship never completely recovers.

However that is not going to be a problem with this book. I've known George Phillies for many years. He is a retired professor of physics, and a long time player and designer of strategy war games. He has written a number of books about war games and the development of effective war games that have remained in print for years and which continue to sell on a regular basis. His scientific specialties are polymer dynamics and statistical mechanics. He has lectures on both physics and games design posted on YouTube.

He also writes fantasy and science fiction. He most often writes shorter fantasy adventure fiction. He's been doing it for quite a while, and in



recent years he has been devoted a lot more time to creating longer fiction, which leads us to his latest novel length effort: “Against Three Lands”.

“Against Three Lands” is a hefty novel, 330 pages long, set in a make-believe world more or less within a late medieval time frame where various different cultures are clashing.

This is a novel of military and economic confrontation. Any connection with the fantasy genre is gossamer thin. The book clearly falls into the alternate-history genre, except instead of dealing with real-life history the author has created various cultures sorta-kinda based on real world nations and peoples, with some significant differences. Readers who are expecting to find magic, or dragons, or any other mythical beings or events will be sorely disappointed, because they are not here.

What is here is an adventure about a grinding conflict of cultures and what might happen if people from one culture were maneuvered into a situation where their knowledge of different military tactics and their individual fighting skills might tip the balance of power.

Our protagonists come from Clan MacDonald, one of the ‘northern lands’ known as the Hundred Isles; a grouping of islands and interconnected land masses where clans and family fiefdoms have been informally aligned and engaged in border skirmishes just short of all out war with each other for centuries. This region has been conquered and is now under the control of an emperor who lives far away, and who spends his time these days in gracious living, effecting great public works, underwriting grand artistic endeavors that will reflect glory on him and his reign. The barons, clan lords, and tribal chiefs under him vie for his approval and hope to become part of the Solar Council, his official inner circle. Similarities to King Louis XIV the French Sun King, or even to Augustus Caesar might be noted, except the All Conquering Grand Generalissimo Emperor does not really enter into this tale except as a potent power that the characters in the story don’t want to disturb.

The MacDonald coastal villages are being mauled by pirate attacks; raiders who steal whatever pitiful amounts of coinage and valuables might be found among its peoples and temples, then slaughter every inhabitant, except for the young women and teenage girls, who are spirited away. Meanwhile taxes and tariffs needed to support the government, and also to support the One MacDonald, the clan leader, who is off at the imperial court hoping to become one of the Emperor’s inner circle, have fallen off sharply. Trading ships and the occasional traveler bring word that the large peaceful land to the south, part of the Lunarian Empire, is being attacked by two different kinds of barbarians, and these barbarians seem to be making real progress against the Lunarian armies.

Young Angus Valentine MacDonald, the seventh child and fourth son of the One MacDonald, too far down the line of children to have any hope to inheriting any leadership position in the clan, is ordered by his father to take a trip with some companions and bodyguards into South Mercia to see what is going on.

The Merican realm is ancient, set in its ways, built on centuries of tradition and corruption, where family ties and bribery fill the government and all its many departments with self-centered individuals intent on bettering their lot in life by accumulating as much wealth as possible, and who have little concern for the duties they are supposed to be performing. They believe their civilization, their armies, their navy, are absolutely invincible.

The invading barbarians, the Trell (called “the skirt people” because the men wear kilts), and the Langwadoorans (dubbed the Blue Robes because their leaders and religious priests, who apparently hold equal rank with their political leaders, wear heavy blue robes) are conquering coastal cities, establishing significant beachheads and are systematically moving inward pushing the remnants of defeated Mercian armies and a flood of refugees ahead of them.

Angus and his companions are disguised as commercial traders, and carry some trade goods. Among their number are representatives of the Craik House, the major trading power in the MacDonald lands, also Nancy Juliet, a landless, clanless fighting swordswoman operating as a paid freelance attached to Craik House, along with Brian Galahad, an older man, but an expert weapons and fighting skill specialist who teaches swordsmanship.

They find troubles aplenty in the land of the Mercians, including repeated assassination attempts made against Angus, and by a freak circumstance (which I will not spoil here) become involved in helping the Mercians battle the invading Krell armies. This might well be considered treason, since the northern lands Emperor is rumored to be preparing a land war that will conquer and annex a significant portion of the Mercian territory that borders his own realm.

There is considerably description of the military and naval tactics used in the wars. There is an entire class of novels that focus on alternate history by examining what-ifs of military department. I confess that I generally find those types of stories to be uninteresting, but a lot of people do enjoy them, and George Phillies, author of this novel, is one of those people. A considerable part of the actual story plot deals with military matters; the tactics used by the invaders, the effects or non-effects of the Mercian armies, and the efforts of the MacDonald group to change those tactics. Battles are described. Battle training is described. Scouting expeditions and skirmishes are described, all in detail with background descriptions and the thots of the protagonists as they engage in these actions. It was more than I wanted or was interested in, but people who enjoy military related fiction with undoubtedly be delighted with the detailed descriptions.

Meanwhile the central theme of the novel, exploration and information gathering, moves along at a steady but rather leisurely pace against the backdrop of the widening barbarian invasions and the largely ineffectual Mercian response to the threat.

What makes this novel stand out is the incredible depth of characterization and the meticulous amount of detail given to all the people involved or encountered in the journey, including customs, economics, and historic background. All the major characters and even the minor ones are fully rounded out and given the type of depth and humanizing character development you simply will not find in the overwhelming majority of genre or historical novels. There is an incredible richness of detail that fleshes out the entire society and every part of the societies along with the people the protagonists interact with at every level. This is a remarkable fluid and detailed writing style very few writers can manage.

Yet for all of that, this novel reads like Book One of an ongoing multi-part series. I don't think I'm giving away any real plot secrets by revealing that at the end of the story Angus finds a successful marriage, and several other characters are rewarded for their adventuring efforts. Despite the author's meticulous attention to detail, a vast number of problems and questions raised here are not dealt with, let alone being resolved.

The barbarian invasions are not quelled, and the motives of most of the invaders have not been discovered. Even the pirate raids on the MacDonald coastal villages have not been stopped. No one knows why the pirates kidnap all the young women and girls and kill everybody else, and the multi-layered economic developments revealed so adroitly in the center sections of the novel have not been exploited or even explored. Clearly, there is a lot more here that needs to be addressed, and clearly, another novel (at least) is in the offing to actually bring the many loose story threads presented here to some kind of successful (or, perhaps, not so happily successful) conclusion.

As well written as the journey and the individual adventures the party members encounter were, I also felt that the story lacked a strong central plot theme that the reader could glom onto and care about thru the course of the novel. It turns out that those various assassination attempts against young Angus Valentine MacDonald are very important, yet neither Angus nor any of his party seems to realize what is happening until the very end of the book. You know, if armed gangs of ruffians and paid mercenaries were trying to murder me, I would be worried, and more than that, I would devote a lot of energy and time trying to figure out who was behind the attacks, and why. Yet thruout the adventure nobody, not even Angus himself, seems particularly upset at these occurrences, chalking them up to the dangers of travel in an unsettled foreign land. It doesn't ring true, and as I say, it misses the mark, since this could easily have been the core theme that the reader could have identified with and invested his emotional support with the beleaguered hero. As it stands, Angus is not himself a strong central hero of the adventure, nor is Nancy Juliet, for all her fighting prowess and assertiveness. Books this long need both a strong central protagonist, and a strong central plot thread that readers can identify with.

Despite these points, and the appearance of this long novel being an unfinished part of a greater whole, I thoroughly enjoyed the book. Yes, I personally found the battle strategy and details of military action to be a bit overdraw, but people who enjoy military related fiction will be fascinated. I also feel that a stronger central character more directly involved in the action who could draw on continued reader sympathies would have been preferable. But the story flows, the characters are all well developed, and more than that, the novel is peopled with interesting human beings set against a shifting cultural background that is rich with well thot out details; while the journey of investigation and the situations our party encountered always held my interest.

This is a book well worth reading, and at \$3.99 for the e-book version, available on Amazon.com and Smashwords (among other places), it won't cost a bundle to read it either. The novel also comes with an introduction by Chris Nuttall (which I suggest you skip), along with several extracts of two other novels at the end of the book. The first sampling is from another novel by George Phillies; the second extracts are from a

book by Chris Nuttall, who wrote the introduction. These pages bring the total length of the book up to 380 pages, a lot of wordage for \$3.99!

Let me also say something about the cover for this book. Ignore it. Completely. The old saw about people judging a book by its cover happens to be more true than not, and in this particular case “Against Three Lands” is saddled with an absolutely inferior cover illo that has nothing to do with the novel itself.

The illustration itself, in bright primary colors, makes it look as tho this is a children’s book, or perhaps a story for the young adult/pre-teen age market. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is hard to imagine why the author decided to use this piece of art for the cover of his novel. Maybe somebody was holding a loaded gun up against his head, or maybe he owed the artist a large gambling debt. I can’t think of any other reasons why something as completely inappropriate and misleading would be used as the cover pic of this volume. Ignore the cover. Buy the book, and read it. You will not be disappointed.

I recently watched “American Madness”, a Columbia movie directed by Frank Capra and released in 1932, the height of the Great Depression. It was a movie completely in tune with the times.

The plot deals with Thomas Dickson, a socially conscious banker and what happens when efforts by his board of directors, spooked by the bad economy, try to force him out as bank president and merge with a much larger bank. The situation is complicated when the bank is robbed in a night raid that also results in the death of the night watchman

Suspicion immediately falls on Matt Brown, an ex-convict Dickson hired who has risen to the position of Head Cashier. In reality Cyril Cluett, chief bank executive and known ladies man has run up a thirty thousand dollar gambling debt, a debt he can’t pay. The racketeers force him to reset the timer on the bank vault as a way to wipe out his debt. Cluett needs an alibi for the time the robbery will take place, and his frivolous flirtation with Dickson’s wife results in his taking her out that evening, then inviting her up to his apartment for a nightcap. Brown encounters the pair at Cluett’s apartment, and a scuffle ensues. Brown believes Phyllis Dickson is having an affair with Cluett and refuses to say where he was when the robbery took place in order to protect his boss from this revelation.

While the police interrogate Brown and break down his alibi of arriving home early, news of the bank robbery spreads. The loss of fifty thousand dollars becomes a hundred thousand, then a quarter million, then two million dollars, and as the rumor gains momentum, the word on the street is that every cent the bank had was cleaned out in the robbery, which causes a public panic.

The panic results in a run on the bank. Hundreds, then thousands of panicky depositors rush in to withdraw their money. The bank cash reserves are almost exhausted, and the head of the board of directors sees an opportunity to force Dickson out, or watch as the bank he has worked his entire life to develop is wiped out in the run.

This is a fast moving picture with enormous emotional impact. The cross threads of plot playing back and forth as the run on the bank unfolds heighten the tension and the emotional involvement of the viewer. It probably had even more impact when it was released in 1932 while the economy was in a tailspin,



unemployment figures were increasing daily, twenty-five percent of the nation's banks had failed, and even sound financial institutions were jittery.

The screenplay was written by Robert Riskin, one of many scripts he turned out for Frank Capra over their long mutual careers, but the only one that was completely original with Riskin. The plot was clearly inspired by the Gianniti brothers who has founded the Bank of America, and who specialized in making loans to, and supporting, small businessmen. They prided themselves on backing underdogs the big banks rejected. In 1930 A. P. Gianniti testifying before Congress, declared "The little fellow is the best customer that a bank can have, because he is with you. He starts out with you and stays to the end. Whereas the big fellow is only with you so long as he can get something out of you, and when he cannot, he is not for you anymore."

In 1929 the brothers had successfully fended off a hostile takeover, but the takeover attempt had triggered a run on their California bank. They were able to survive the run, thanks to the support of their long time customers. One of the "little fellows" supported by the Bank of America was Harry Cohn's barely-above-poverty-row film company Columbia Studios. Many people view this movie as an attempt to vindicate and support the policies of the Gianniti brothers to keep money circulating and keep faith with the business acumen of successful small business people.

The combination of Robert Riskin's writing skills with Frank Capra's directing skills was a strange merging of talents that should never have taken place. Riskin was an ultra-liberal Jewish Democrat, Capra was a conservative Italian-Catholic who boasted that he never voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt. Yet their talents and their viewpoints completely complimented each other. They became fast friends, with Riskin becoming Capra's favorite screen writer. Their collaborations made motion picture history.

Alan Swan was originally supposed to direct this movie, but he dropped out early, to be replaced with a second director who only lasted a couple of days. Cohn called in Capra to take charge of the entire production. Capra had the set completely redesigned to focus more of the story action within the bank and heighten the dramatic impact of the bank scenes. He changed the focus from the flirtatious romantic interplay and the bank robbery and concentrated on what those actions would mean to the primary characters, and to how that would affect the future of the bank that Dickson had devoted his entire life to preserving.

People on the scene as the movie was shooting were amazed at the sudden dramatic change in the story's impact. Previously the script had called for viewer involvement and character development, but under Capra's handling scenes crackled, personalities became human beings under enormous pressure, as tense shifts in mood and raw emotion flowed creating an electric tension in the plot movement. Sound man Edward Bernds later recollected: "I fully realized for the first time what directing really was. Scenes that had been dull became lively; performances that had been dead came alive." Many years later film historians would refer to this quality as "the Capra touch".

Nobody handled crowd scenes better than Frank Capra, and the most dramatic parts of the movie take place as the panic that creates the run on the bank develops. Hundreds of extras were employed along with dozens of different camera shots to create and play on the raw emotional fear and worry that transmits itself directly to the viewing audience.

All the actors in this film shine. Walter Huston as bank president Tom Dickson is outstanding. Huston came to Hollywood as the movies were changing from silents to sound. He had been a successful stage actor, but he found his real calling acting in films. Huston was born in 1884, so he was no spring chicken when he made this picture. He made forty-eight films all total, including "Dodsworth", "Rain", "The Devil and Daniel Webster". He played President Lincoln in D.W. Griffith's 1930 picture scripted by Stephen Vincent Benet, and won an academy award for his role in





“Treasure of the Sierra Madre”.

He is remembered as much for being the father of screen writer/director/producer John Huston as for his own accomplishments. When he accepted the Academy Award for his performance as the old prospector in “Treasure of the Sierra Madre” Houston said, “Many years ago.... Many, MANY years ago, I brought up a boy, and I said to him, ‘Son, if you ever become a writer, try to write a good part for your old man sometime.’ Well, by cracky, that’s what he did!”

“American Madness” was well received in small towns and cities, but it was criticized both because it painted bankers in a sympathetic light, and also because it dared to show a run on a bank. This movie was released while Herbert Hoover was president, and it would be well over a year later before Franklin Roosevelt declared a bank holiday and established Federal Deposit Insurance which guaranteed federal funds to protect every bank depositor’s money. Baltimore, Maryland, for example, had experienced several disastrous bank runs before this movie hit the theaters. The film’s run in Baltimore was very brief.

*The Stage* magazine gave this comment in their August, 1932 issue: “Now we have American Madness, produced by Columbia and Frank Capra, show the scenes of wild panic incident to a run on a big bank. Although it is frankly propaganda urging us to have faith in our poor, dear bank presidents, it is effective and occasionally exciting melodrama. Certainly Mr. Capra’s scenes of the rapidly growing mob in the bank are expertly handled and make grand pictures. Perhaps the story is improbable and the happy ending impossible, but whether you agree with President Walter Huston’s bank policy (“to stop hoarding and get business running again”) or with the depositors hammering on the cages for their cash, you feel that American Madness is a good show, and hokum only part of the time.”

It remains a very good show seventy-six years after it was released. It is an expertly crafted picture that features solid drama focusing on bygone events that, thankfully, are not part of the American business scene anymore. Anyone who has not seen this movie yet should certainly do so.

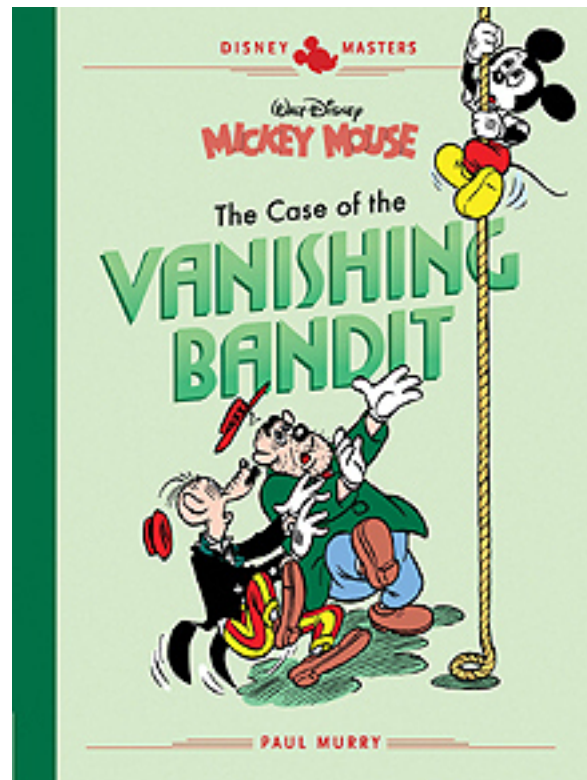
### **Mickey Mouse: The Case of the Vanishing Bandit; Fantagraphics Books; hardback; 180 pages; \$29.99**

For many of us who grew up in the 1950s, one of the best comic books on the stands was *Walt Disney’s Comics and Stories*. For a dime you got 52 pages of great material, including a Donald Duck lead story written and drawn by Carl Barks, strong secondary features like Bucky Bug, the Good Little Wolf, Li’l Hiawatha, Br’er Rabbit or some other Silly Sympathy character, and you also got a Mickey Mouse serial adventure at the back of the book. These serials were almost always mysteries involving some strange and unusual occurrences that Mickey and his friend Goofy had to confront and solve. There was always danger involved, and the bad guys were not usually Black Pete or the other known villains that had been introduced into the comic strip years before.

These stories were drawn by Paul Murry, who had a very distinct cartoon style that encompassed detail and background without cluttering up the panels with a lot of extra lines. His version of Mickey Mouse featured a strong, modern and mature Mickey, secure in the world, intelligent, steady, but brave and resourceful as ever.

For many of us, those Mickey Mouse serials were just as important as the Donald Duck leads each issue. As the years passed, many of the secondary features would be dropped as the page count went down to 36 pages, but the Mickey Mouse serials and the Donald Duck lead stories remained as the anchors for the magazine.

Now, decades later, Fantagraphics Books is reprinting many of those adventures. This particularly book is a hardback that reprints seven of those serials, all complete, with fully restored and digitized color, on thick



acid-free paper. Included is a biography of Paul Murry with some interesting background on the series and its creation.

Most of the adventures were written by Carl Fallberg, about which almost no information is offered here. Carl Fallberg was a talented cartoonist, but he was a better writer. He was involved with the Walt Disney Studios from 1935 thru the mid 1980s, and he wrote for the Disney comic line up until 1990. When Disney got out of the short theater cartoon business, he worked for Warner Brothers, and then for Hannah-Barbera.

He also wrote comic books for Dell/Gold Key/Western, including many other characters besides Mickey Mouse. He reintroduced the Phantom Blot to modern audiences in 1964 with a four chapter *WDC&S* Mickey Mouse serial. Originally a one story villain from the daily Mickey newspaper strip back in 1939, the Blot proved very popular with readers, getting his own comic book in 1964. Fallberg wrote all the issues of the *Phantom Blot* comic book. He also wrote many issues of *Super Goof*, which spun off the Phantom Blot title, as well as a bunch of Warner Brothers cartoon character comics.

He had a life-long fascination with narrow gauge railroads, and did a series of humorous cartoons for *Railroad Magazine* that were eventually collected into a book titled "Fiddletown & Copperopolis" that has recently been reprinted for a third time. His interest in railroading shows up in a number of his comic book stories, including the Mickey Mouse serials.

Paul Murry was very private person who did not want to associate with comic fans of any age, or even, apparently, with many of his contemporary comic and cartoon artists either. He started with the Disney studio in 1938, and was remembered by those people who encountered him as a guy who liked to play the harmonica rather than socialize much with his fellow illustrators. After he started doing comic strip and comic book artwork he moved away from the Disney headquarters and lived in a rural setting.

In 1951 he teamed up with another Disney creator, Dick Huemer to produce the newspaper comic strip Buck O'Rue, a humorous send-up of western movies and popular westerns clichés. The strip was very funny but it didn't quite last two years. During the same period the comic strip was running Murry continued to work in comic books.

He did other Disney comic book features, including Li'l Bad Wolf, Br'er Rabbit, Pluto, and Super Goof, even Donald Duck and Woody Woodpecker, but he is mainly know for handling the artwork on Mickey Mouse. The *WDC&S* Mouse serials were discontinued in 1973, replaced by an eight page Mickey story each issue. Murry was the artist for almost all of those. He continued doing the Mickey Mouse art up until 1984, with issue #510 of *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories*, the last Whitman issue, being his final comic book work.

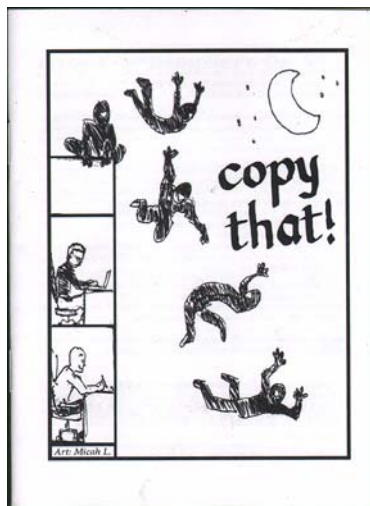
Fantagraphics has provided a valuable service in reprinting these fun stories. Anyone missing issues of the original *WDC&S* comic will find that this hardback volume costs far less than buying back issues in any condition of the original comic books,

Fantagraphics has previously published a Trade Paperback of the longest and probably most intriguing Murry Mickey Mouse serial, and they have another anthology volume of this series set for release near the end of the year. Having all these great adventures to read without having to go back and pull out the individual comic book issues is a real benefit, so I hope Fantagraphics will continue reprinting these serials going all the way thru to the end.

The price of \$29.99 is very affordable, and the book is being offered at a discount price on many internet book sites.

**COPY THAT #54** 4-1/4x4-1/2"; 28 pages of very small type; mostly monthly from D. Blake Werts; 12339 Chesley Dr.; Charlotte, SC 28277---available for The Usual

This is a mini-zine which happens to be a newszine devoted to mini-zines. For those not familiar with the term, mini-zines are physically small amateur publications (usually roughly 4x5" in size) devoted to comic strips or cartoons. These have been the new underground comics and the new frontier for cutting edge humor for a long time now. Circulations of mini-zines range from a few dozen to a thousand copies per issue, or more. The range of art and creativity is also very wide. There is some brilliant work being turned out in mini-zines, but then there are also some absolutely awful crudzines being offered out there as well.



Previously titled *Copy This*, it morphed into *Copy That* sometime recently when I wasn't looking. Under either title this is a fanzine that tries to keep up with what is happening in this sub-species of comic art creativity. In addition most issues provide one or two in-depth interviews with mini-zine creators. These interviews are almost always insightful, and cut straight to the quick of a creator's career, his art, and the subjects he deals with.

This issue features a long interview with Mical Liesenfeld, an artist I know absolutely nothing about. The interviewer is Billy McKay, a long time friend and fan of Liesenfeld. Perhaps it's just me but it seems the questions this time are somewhat softer and more concerned with surface trivia than usual. There are questions about current projects, ongoing projects, the inspiration for the ongoing projects, along with some effort to get background info about how the artist got involved in the mini-comics and fan scene. It seems this interview has more fawning admiration for the subject than one should reasonably expect from a typical *Copy That* issue. Still, I learned a lot about artist Liesenfeld, with a few pertinent pieces of artwork from his ongoing series Ninja Guy thrown in for good measure.

Random issues of *Copy That* sometimes come with a free insert, often a complete 8 page sample mini-portfolio of artwork from the person being interviewed that time. This is editor Werts' way of promoting both new and old artists whose work he feels deserve broader coverage.

This newest issue finishes up with some reviews of recent mini-comics and amateur press comic projects the editor has recently received.

The format is tight and well presented. Editor Werts has enduring enthusiasm for the mini-zine art form, and the people who create them. I really can't stress how interesting and informative this fanzine is. Anyone with even a trivial interest in the mini-comics scene or the world of amateur cartooning should definitely give be getting this mag.

### **AMAZING STORIES Fall 2018; \$5.99; 106 pages**

The long awaited revival of *Amazing Stories*, the world's first all science fiction magazine has taken place, and this is the new issue. Funded by a Kickstarter campaign that went right down to the wire before meeting its goal, the new print magazine follows on the heels of the electronic version of the title which has been running for a decade now.

No doubt I am a luddite hopelessly out of touch with modern reality, but I am partial to print magazines, and I distrust electronic ones, so I am glad to see a print version of *Amazing Stories* back, and I was an early contributor to the Kickstarter campaign.

It is probably too early to make any judgments about this newest incarnation. Obvious Good Points include the full size format, on slick paper as well, with lots of fiction and only a few non-fiction departments to cut into the page totals. The selection of fiction this issue is pretty good without being especially memorable. There is a wide variety of story types offered, and I assume that trend will continue with future numbers as well.

A point that bothered me is the use of a rather large type font thruout. A smaller type-font would have allowed for a lot more material to be printed in this issue. Perhaps budgetary restraints were in effect here, but I hope that in the future the total word count will increase significantly. I also thot the science and movie review columns this first new issue were rather elementary and pedestrian, but that may be just because the reviewers have to introduce themselves to the new audience. One thing that definitely can be improved is the interior artwork. All the cartoons are printed way too large and none of them are funny either. Still and all, an enjoyable reintroduction to the venerable title, and I look forward to seeing the future issues.



# READER REACTION



Jefferson P. Swycaffer; P.O. Box 15373; San Diego CA 92175 [abontides@gmail.com](mailto:abontides@gmail.com)

Re fanzine format, paper is slightly easier to read, and easier to comment on also; just grab a pen and make big x's and o's around the parts that warrant comments. Maybe if I had a smarter e-reader... But e-copies are just fine, ecologically sound, save \*you\* money, and, as you note, give you greater flexibility in terms of art inclusion. So, this is the future!

re guns, total agreement. I am woe that anything can ever be done about it, because of the anti-democratic nature of the U.S. Constitution. (18 percent of the population elects 50% of the Senate. In political science, we call this the tyranny of the minority.)

Fun interview with Brad Foster, kicking off with one heck of a mermaid splash! Lovely stuff! The spot-illos are also all great; I really love the two cats studying in the library! I still have a copy of Brad's poster of a VAST library, extending forever and ever, the one reproduced here in small size. Imagine it as a full poster! Wow! "Okay. So it was smut. But, it was happy smut!" Happy, humorous, respectful smut can be really good stuff: that was, if memory serves, the whole house style at Jabberwocky Graphix: sensitive and friendly porn. Those were good days!

Fun review of "Mystery of the Wax Museum." I can't cope with modern splatter horror, but old-style "thinking" horror movies are (barely) within my capability, and this'n looks like a peach!

rect Tom McGovern, I still say "plug[ged] nickel," and "plumb," too, as in "plumb tuckered!" These things happen when you grow up with Hopalong Cassidy!

Brad Foster extends a deep philosophical question when he says, "I'm not so sure people do not regard themselves as evil when they do evil things." It is a classical truism in fiction that "villains never believe they are villains," but is that really true? I think most of us, even really bad criminals, have enough of a conscience left to \*know\* we're doing bad things. The ones that are the scariest just go ahead and do it anyway. And the \*situation\* that is scariest is when we realize it could happen to us, if we were hungry or frightened enough.

Brad Foster's front cover is, as with all of his work, a masterpiece of \*detail.\* It's almost fractal: every detail has sub-detail, and on and on ad infinitum, rewarding attentive study.

His back cover too, is simply rich beyond rich with detail, and presents the same sort of mixture of intensity, from tightly cluttered regions to open and free regions, making, again, a kind of fractal artistic geometry.

///I remain cautiously optimistic that something can be done about military grade weapons in the hands of civilians. I truly think that the steady stream of school massacres has finally awakened a sense of conscience in a lot of people who previously didn't care about guns one way or the other. Time will tell, of course.

I think most people who do bad things know they are doing something wrong. Police officers relate that even hardened career criminals realize they are doing bad things to other people, they just care about themselves and their own well being more. "Hey, I didn't really mean to shoot down the bank guard, but he was going for the alarm button and I needed all that money, so I had to kill him. It was a matter of self preservation."

There is also a whole class of individual who knows perfectly well that their actions are illegal and wrong and harm other people, but they just don't care. It gives them a sense of satisfaction when they thwart authority, and the ultimate thrill is killing another human being. Some other people do bad things for a Cause, but even the people who are committing murder and mayhem for a Cause realize they are doing bad things; they just happen to believe the Cause is more important than the death and suffering they may be creating. Evil is apparently in the eye of the beholder. It's easy to rationalize when a person's self interest and core belief system are the only things they care about.///



**Ken Faig, Jr. carolfaig@comcast.net**

Many thanks for *Fadeaway* #55. I can appreciate your reasons for not wanting to rely 100% on someone else's electronic archive. Some folks seem to have the idea that electronic publication means "forever" availability, but I don't think that's by any means guaranteed. I wonder if an e-zine or a printed zine will have a better survival rate over the next say 50 or 100 years. The preservation issue also arises with family memorabilia. I guess a laptop or other electronic device with electronic photo albums takes less space than a traditional album of prints, but when the laptop or device fails, it fails. On the other hand, especially with many families now living separated by long distances, many traditional albums fall victim to home or apartment "clean outs," unless it is possible for a family member to do an on-site salvage beforehand.

It used to be that we were a very "saving" society--with all kinds of shops with used goods--but now all but the crème de la crème seems to have the dumpster as its ultimate repository. I have an antique rocker that belonged to a great-grandparent, but when we were downsizing an antiques dealer told me that there is such a

glut of rockers that they are virtually worthless. Most shops won't even take them as a donation and/or consignment.

That photo of the cat in the box struck me in this issue. Amazing how territorial cats are and how they love boxes as a kind of mini-territory they can stake out. I guess the domestic cat is a privileged critter compared with ferals--it's a harsh environment for the latter. But on the other hand such is our human predilection for self-predation that I almost wonder whether cats may not have the higher civilization.

As for guns, I am a flat-out advocate of repealing the Second Amendment. Our "armed up" society is pretty frightening, especially when you consider that everyone has a breaking point. It is far likelier that a household weapon will be used against a household member (including oneself) as opposed to being used against an intruder.



**Joy V. Smith** [pagadan@aol.com](mailto:pagadan@aol.com)

Thanks, Bob. As I told you I prefer reading print 'cause I spend too much time at the computer, but I must admit that all those color illos and photos are spectacular! And that was certainly an in-depth interview with Brad Foster--and I enjoyed his front and back covers. Interesting background on The Mystery of the Wax Museum too.

My sister was a Sax Rohmer fan back in the day so I read all his books, including the Sumuru books--in her opinion they aren't as good as the Fu Manchu books (interesting background about them)--and at least one bio. (Yes, Cay Van Ash wrote one.) She has since culled them all, but she still mutters: Fu Manchu was clean shaven! And she hates the Fu Manchu movies.

**John Thiel; 30 N. 19<sup>th</sup> St.; Lafayette, IN 47904**



Bob: Well, I can see I am going to have to send you a LoC on *Fadeaway* 55; I'm doing nothing else that earns me a copy except reviewing it when I receive it. And you don't list that among your methods of getting a copy. I still like zines on paper and like to get a few of them during a month; it pleases me to find a zine in my mailbox, and if I like I can show it around, which is damn difficult with something that's on the net. I like to feel and think that there's some activity going on groundside too. You might be interested that I have retained my copies of *Fadeaway* and have a large stack of them. Their size is equaled only by my stacks of *The Reluctant Famulus* and *Blue Moon Poetry*.

Your editorials certainly are getting controversial, if given that there are two sides to the matters mentioned. We have no firearms here, though I did meditate getting a rifle from the army surplus store for awhile. Then I decided I'd feel more like an individual without one. The teachers around here have solidly put down the idea of carrying weapons themselves. The students get searched and they don't usually have anything. The police stay armed...a couple of them were in my house at the behest of my nieces claiming that they had been robbed, and they were both packing forty-fives. (They pulled the guy off with his hands cuffed behind him but they never did get the money back.) Some fellow that was pow-wow on my porch also had a Smith & Wesson, but the people who come by here don't usually carry anything. I asked him if it contained dum-dum bullets and he said these had more serviceable heads than that, nothing like what the police carried but they'd do more than rounded heads. It lit up a conversation about rubber bullets. But like I say, nobody carries anything in the house. You may assume that I agree with your viewpoint about weaponry.

A respectably lengthy interview with Brad Foster. I had not been liking his art very well, but some of these shown with the interview struck me more than what I have been seeing in fanzines. He does interesting perspectives and backgrounds, with a highly modernistic touch that I like. I especially liked the one with the two felines in it, for the perspectives, the op-art-like one on 25, the complexity of the space scene on 29, the ETs trip on page 8, and the slam-bang Dada effect of the architecture on page 18.

Good look at the horror movies in the article on the wax museum too. I missed that one altogether, saw House of Wax instead, which didn't have as good a stock of actors.

Well, here's been looking at you and I hope to continue getting *Fadeaway* by mail.

///Actually, you are safely on the mailing list because you sent me trade copies of *Pablo Lennis*, but I certainly appreciate the letter of comment.

Dum-dums and hollow point bullets are banned by international agreements from being used in military combat, but most civilian police forces use hollow point ammo or some of the variations on the type. Hollow and Teflon point bullets expand on entry, and mushroom out causing considerable internal damage, often not penetrating beyond the object the bullet strikes. They are supposed to be more accurate, and they are supposed to minimize dangers to by-standers in a police confrontation, but perpetrators shot by police using those kinds of ammo often do not survive.

I remain cautiously optimistic that some kind of gun control will be enacted in the coming year. As I said in my editorial, the Florida high school massacre sparked outrage in a lot of people who previously hadn't been much interested in guns one way or the other.

Like many artists, Brad Foster has a variety of art styles he can call on beyond simple cartoon techniques. I'm glad you found pieces of his art you enjoyed in the variety of material offered as part of the interview. Clearly, as a winner of an impressive eight Hugo Awards for best fan artist, his art and humor resonated with quite a few different fans.

You absolutely should check out the original 1933 "House of Wax". Excellent, sharp DVD copies can be purchased for a small amount of money at many places, and versions (in different degrees of quality) are posted on many web sites. I believe there are a couple of versions currently offered on the YouTube web site if you want to check it out. It's an impressive movie with memorable acting and visual effects that effectively enhance the creepy outré feeling of the whole film. Really, check it out. You will not be disappointed.///



### **George Phillies; 48 Hancock Hill Dr.; Worcester, MA 01609**

That was an absolutely fabulous issue of *Fadeaway*! Keep up the fine work.

The interview with Brad Foster was extremely well done. How long did it take to finish? Do you know? I was particularly amused by the Arous Del-E bag; only a few readers will I suspect recognize the reference. Of particular merit was the description of meeting with the great artist and his very useful piece of advice about how you actually do great art. Implicit in the whole article was the notion that you become a great artist by drawing a lot. The reprint was definitely worth the space.

The Mystery of the Wax Museum? I was only marginally aware of two-color color motion pictures. The electronic *Fadeaway* captures these very well. As shown by Land's work on color vision, two colors fool the eye into giving a much wider range of colors than you might have expected to be possible, especially if you do not ask what is missing. Special effects in period were much more limited than they are now, but wonderful things were still done with them.

The space wheel? If the thing has a radius of 100' (30m), then  $a = w^2 r$  says that at one rotation a minute, meaning angular velocity = 0.1 radians/second, the internal acceleration (apparent gravity) would be  $0.3 \text{ m/s}^2$ , about 3% of a gravity, enough that things would fall to the floor. At one rotation every ten seconds, there would be an apparent one gee or so inside. There is a serious problem with making the wheel smaller, namely the coriolis forces on standing or sitting. If you stand up, your head is now travelling at the wrong speed relative to the floor, and you tend to fall over. You also become very dizzy.

With respect to rifles, it is surely true that with bombs and rockets and drones, folks with rifles would have no chance. Consider the Taliban. They only had crummy AK-47s with a minimal effective range, and against our military they lasted how long? 17 minutes? (OK, so far it is 17 years and counting, and they are currently winning.) But there are plenty of SF novel opportunities here. Worth considering as plot elements: Which side did you think the military would come down on, when they get a chance to carpet bomb or time-on-target their home towns?

The Taliban, of course, had one critical difficulty that Americans with guns would not. For the Taliban, the American support base was out of range. For radical left or right with guns, instead of shooting at soldiers, they can shoot at politicians and newspaper editorialists, and folks who disagree with them, not to mention -- a la Day of the Triffids -- drop sugar in gas tanks and sabotage ammunition production. This is a bad deal, and highly unlikely to happen, almost as unlikely as your Constitutional Amendment idea. If you want change in this direction, consider peaceful partition a la Czechoslovakia, with no requirement to partition along state line.

///The interview with Brad Foster actually took a long time to finish up. Blake Werts started the interview a few years ago, but there were interruptions. Then, thru a convoluted series of events I got involved and was able to convince Brad to actually finish it up. Running it in *Fadeaway* showcases the interview and the range of his art to a much wider audience.

The original two strip Technicolor process had a lot of problems when it was introduced in 1922. The much better 3-strip process came along in 1928, just in time for the Depression to hit. A flurry of movies, mostly cartoons and musicals used the full 3-strip process early on, but the cost factor was a major stumbling block, even when the Technicolor corporation lowered the price. It has always seemed odd to me that Warner Brothers would have used the already outdated 2-strip process for features such as "Mystery In the Wax Museum" and "Doctor X" in the early 1930s. The only reason I can come up with is that they wanted something more impressive than simple black and white, but they were too damn cheap to go for the full 3-strip Technicolor process. There is probably some kind of involved story behind the decision, but so far no film fan or historian has managed to unearth the full background facts.

Actually the Taliban has quite a large range of military weapons at their disposal, well beyond simple AK-47 style automatic rifles, including also a totally corrupt central government, a foreign enemy military force (that's the USA if you're counting) that has no real interest in being there and absolutely no plan of what to do if and when they happen to actually wipe the Taliban out, a native military force largely in sympathy with the religious and territorial aims of the Taliban (specifically--- Allahu Akbar! and All Foreigners Off Afghanistan Soil NOW!), plus porous borders with nearby neighboring countries that give them open sanctuary when the Taliban forces are losing and get chased off the field of battle.

However, the case is not relevant to the USA. Instruments that can be used as weapons of terrorism, including home-made bombs and poison gas are routinely outlawed by all nations, including the United States. Automatic weapons were outlawed in this country for decades, a sensible decision made when gangsters started using Thompson sub-machine guns to kill off their rivals (and innocent by-standers in the process). Military grade weapons and automatic weapons do not belong in the hands of civilians. The endless series of massacres and murders of innocent people, particularly students and children, demonstrate clearly how wrong the policy is to allow these kinds of firearms in the hands of civilians has been.

People who are worried about the USA suddenly becoming a communist or a fascist state would do better to exercise their right to vote rather than stockpile weapons and cases of Campbell's soup. The percentage of people voting in most national and local elections is abysmal. More people becoming actively interested in government and getting their family and neighbors interested in exercising their basic rights as citizens by voting in every election will do more to thwart the instillation of a radical political dictatorship than anything else. I might also point out that despite well over a hundred and fifty years of shrill yammering by people on the extreme left and the extreme right who have always had their personal axes and manias to air, that the nation has still not become either a communist or fascist dictatorship, and likely never will.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths of innocent people being slaughtered by people using military grade and automatic firearms continues to sky rocket. The time to stop talking about this problem and do something about it is right now. I believe my suggestion to repeal and replace the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution is a reasonable solution to the problem. But whether you agree that it is the correct solution, or a viable solution, something needs to be done, and I am not along in believing that it needs to be done right now, not later.///



**John Purcell; 3744 Marielene Circle; College Station, TX 77845**

Robert, I am very glad to see your wonderful fanzine again. In fact, I really need to get back into the swing of writing letters of comment again. Sometimes the pressure of getting my TAFF Trip report written feels like a massively heavy load, so it becomes necessary to take breaks. Writing locs is definitely a good way to do that.



Obviously, the highlight of your 55th issue is the Brad Foster interview and all of the wonderful Foster artwork. This was a wonderful article, and I really appreciate your running it, so much so that I am going to write to D. Blake Werts and request a copy of *Copy This!* That sounds like a very worthy publication for somebody like me. In a little over a week it will be good to see Brad again at ArmadilloCon 40. This is really good timing because 2018 TAFF winner Johan Anglemark is visiting us at that time, so Johan will be in attendance as well. I am very much looking forward to the convention.

I also really enjoyed reading the article about "The Mystery of the Wax Museum" movie, which I believe I have seen a couple times over the years, quite possibly on TCM channel on cable television. It is not shown very often, but when it is I make a point to watch this movie because it is very entertaining. Nora Fiore's article is quite informative, too. Did she supply the images for the article, or did you find those online, Robert, to illustrate the article? No matter what, they were an excellent complement to the writing. Well done all around.

As usual, the letter column is full of excellent comments from readers, but I wish to return to your opening editorial to make two final comments. First off, I do not mind receiving *Fadeaway* as a PDF file via email: I can always print off a copy to read at my leisure and comment from there. I definitely agree about the cost efficiency of electronic fanzine production and distribution, but putting out a paper fanzine does give an editor/publisher a real sense of accomplishment when an issue is all done and in the mail. I do produce a paper fanzine - *Askew* - which is much smaller than my ezine, plus its mailing list is on the small size, too: only 75 names and addresses. Still, getting feedback is essential for a fan editor, and I can certainly feel for you, Robert. As long as you enjoy doing *Fadeaway* and have material to share, keep it up. As Mike Glicksohn once said, "If fandom isn't fun, it's futile." So very true.

The other comment I want to make is regarding the issue of gun control and gun violence in America. If we are lucky, enough citizens with common sense might be able to convince their congressional representatives do actually create reasonable and responsible regulations regarding gun ownership in this country. Personally, I would love to see this happen, but it will only happen if people keep hammering their congresspersons on the issue, and the NRA needs to be taken down a number of pegs. That organization is holding America hostage due to its money and political influence. Man, I just do not like Wayne LaPierre and his warped view of the 2nd Amendment. No question: this is a huge problem, and I really don't see any resolution happening in my lifetime, if ever.

Anyway, that's enough for now. Thank you so much for sending the issue, sir, and I look forward to receiving the next one in either my snail mail or email box. However it gets here, that works for me.



**Jerry Kaufman; PO Box 25075; Seattle, WA 98165**

Thanks for the new issue, and I'm glad to see my letter to you on issue #53 didn't disappear into the ether. That was one long interview with Brad Foster, but worth the space you gave it. Nice, also, to see all the unfamiliar examples of Brad's work in different genres. I would have liked information on the art, like where each piece first appeared, and what its purpose was. In that spirit, I can tell you that the large piece on page 18 was one of four covers for the LoneStarCon 3 Worldcon Progress Reports. Put all the covers together, and they made one large work. Each one was also more completed than the one preceding, with color, detail, and inking progressively added.

Nora Fiore's article on *Mystery of the Wax Museum* was quite interesting, and I could tell she's well-versed in film history. I've "liked" her page on Facebook, and plan to follow her writings. (I'll have to check TCM to see if they run the movie again this coming October.)

Several comments in the letter column caught my eye. Franz Zruch mentioned used book stores in downtown Cleveland, although not by name. I used to haunt one that was two stories tall and had sf paperbacks and "porn" (according to a clerk there) on the second floor, as well as many of the paperback Pogo comic collections (I think I bought every one they had). But I can't remember the name of the store, and Googling didn't help me. Does Franz remember?

In my own letter, I wrote about *The Night Ocean*, by Peter La Farge. I'm happy to say that it's out in paperback, and I found a copy at University Bookstore. In fact, I've read it, and recommend it as a very interesting thought experiment in the nature of truth. The narrator is a woman whose husband has committed suicide and who starts to investigate why. Charlie, the suicide, became obsessed with a mystery in HP Lovecraft's life. (The story is an alternate world, really.) In the book, a character has published a secret journal

by Lovecraft, detailing his sex life with boys, including Robert Barlow, whom he visited in Florida. After this becomes a huge scandal, the character reveals the journal was a hoax.

Charlie wants to know why this man wrote and published the hoax journal. Was he, perhaps, Barlow in actuality? Charlie's wife reads the journal, reads Charlie's interview with a man claiming to be Barlow and the book Charlie wrote - and the furor arising when Charlie's informant turns out to be yet another fraud. And she goes on to discover more. The twists and turns, and the intersections with what (I think) are real people and events, were what held my attention and gave me a sort of sense of wonder.

George Phillies talks about the use of a DC3 and Boeing 747s to simulate zero-g in movies. Not only movies have used a "vomit comet" for this, but I've seen a video by a band called OK-GO, for their song "Upside Down and Inside Out," shot entirely in zero-g in one of those planes.

Finally, I need to disagree with Dale Speirs about the N3F beginning as a welcoming committee for new fans. The original purpose was to be a national organization for all science fiction and weird fiction fans. I'll direct you and Dale to <http://fancyclopedia.org/n3f> if you want more information, but I'll point out that Damon Knight had a hand in its formation, just as he did for the Science Fiction Writers of America. He sure believed in "Unite or Fie!" (the title of the article in which he promoted the idea of a national fan group).

///I would have liked to have given more info about many of the art pieces run in the Brad Foster interview, but that would have been more complicated than you might think. On the other hand, almost all the art in the interview is posted on Brad's website, which often includes not only where the art originally appeared, but how/why/when and some background thots about how he created the art. You can spend a day or two just roaming around his website site map (I know I did!). I would also have liked to have run the three alien-space-ship-crash-on-robot-planet series all together, but the last piece, the robots repairing the little aliens' saucer was in full color and made a perfect bacover. The other two pieces are on facing pages.

The N3F club has long been thot of as a gate-way to the world of fandom because so many new people joined the club when they first discovered science fiction fandom and then went on to become more experienced and more involved fans. It has also been perceived as a self-serving waste of time by fan snobs and many who aren't necessarily snobs. I vividly remember a letter from Harry Warner scornfully dismissing the N3F as a "do nothing" organization. The club has plenty of activities that members can become involved with, or not, as they see fit. These days the club offers even more things for fans new and old to do, and I note that the bulk of the current membership is made up of people who have been around fandom for a number of years already.

The whole idea of a uniting organization that would be an umbrella over all of science fiction fandom seems pretty quaint and outdated today, but back in the 1940s when fans were few and far between the idea had more merit. The reality of course is that science fiction fandom is a hobby, and not a particularly important or influential hobby either. Despite the number of writers, editors, artists, critics, publishers, and more that have graduated out of fandom, the attitude of the pro world in general towards acti-fans has been mostly benign tolerance. It's nice to have a literary cheering section, but fans are not a segment of the readership that the professional worlds really pay a lot of serious attention to.

That book by Peter La Farge sounds truly bizarre. I'll have to see if I can get the local library to order in a copy.///



**Charles Rector** [crector@gmx.com](mailto:crector@gmx.com)

The worst aspect of Issue #54 was your failure to even so much as mention the Adventures of Fu Manchu TV show from the 1950's. Before I caught that show on You Tube, I had zero interest in Sax Rohmer and his creations. However, ever since catching that show and despite its manifest limitations, I have since then done a great deal of reading both about Rohmer as well as several of his works. I've also watched several of the Christopher Lee Fu Manchu movies as well as the Peggy Eaton Sumuru movie that you wrote about.

I see in #55 that you have come out against maintaining the 2nd Amendment's fundamental right of self-defense against criminal attack. If you go to <http://www.ncc-1776.org> in order to access L. Neil Smith's

consistently excellent webzine The Libertarian Enterprise, you will see T.D. Melrose's classic Definition of gun control: "Gun control is the idea that it's better to see a woman dead in an alley, strangled with her own pantyhose, than to see her with a gun in her hand." This leads to the question of just how many more people, especially women and female children, are you willing to see die because of your proposed restrictions on the fundamental right to keep and bear arms? Please don't try to evade the issue by claiming that your proposed restrictions won't make any difference in the number of innocent people who are killed by criminals. Every time you make it harder for innocent people to buy guns, you make it harder for them to defend themselves, resulting in an increase in the number of murders at the hands of evildoers.

Issue #55 was a real disappointment in that the bulk of the fanzine was taken up by something reprinted from another fanzine. Even worse, that reprint was not up to the standards of previous *Fadeaway* issues. If you can't write up something yourself or get someone else to do it, then it would have been better to just simply not publish this issue. And if maintaining a bimonthly schedule, leads to more twaddle like this, then perhaps it would be better to go to quarterly and in that way maintain *Fadeaway's* high standards of the past.

As for the publication method, I personally prefer the paper version, but as someone who does an electronic fanzine, I can see why you'd want to go that route.

///I didn't mention the Fu Manchu TV show or the other Fu Manchu movies except in passing because the article was about Sax Rohmer's Samuru character, not Fu Manchu. The comments about Fu Manchu were provided as background about the writer's career leading up to his development of the Samuru character.

You misread my comments concerning guns and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment in issue #55. My objection is to civilian ownership of military grade automatic weapons, which should not be in the hands of any civilian. Just as hand grenades, flame throwers, and land mines should be restricted exclusively to military ownership and military use, so also should be automatic firearms. I have no objection to civilian ownership of non-automatic non-military grade pistols and rifles in the hands of citizens for use in hunting or personal protection, and I said so in my editorial. I myself own rifles and pistols, and I used to do target shooting, but the never ending slaughter of innocents by individuals using automatic rapid fire weapons must stop, and replacing the current 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment with a revised one that clearly restricts the use of these military grade weapons while declaring the right of citizens to own other firearms seems to me the easiest way to deal with the situation. I also don't think a woman needs to carry around a machine gun to protect herself against unwarranted advances.

Sorry you were disappointed with the recent issue. I hope this new number will be more to your liking.///

**Steve Johnson; Anchorage Alaska**    [stevejzoo@gmail.com](mailto:stevejzoo@gmail.com)



*Fadeaway* 54 and 55 quite surprised me by the mere facts of their publication.

I had thought your N3F activities would absorb all the time and mental energy you might devote to editing and publishing any additional fanzines. *Fadeaway* is one of the few publications on [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com) that I always download and read. I look forward to

reading *Fadeaway* as long as you derive pleasure from the hobby.

Comments on issue 54:

The Dill Ovals story was somewhat over the top for me ... similar to scripts by Garrison Kellor late in the run of Prairie Home Companion, when the adventures of the Guy Noir ended with a minimal shaggy dog conclusion. Nonetheless, I am pleased your editorial included this venture into whimsy. I hope you are not insulted by a comparison to Garrison Kellor, whose sketches and writings I recall mainly with pleasure.

Libraries I have known and loved, etc. I've written in the past about the bookstores in my life, but not about the role of libraries, school, public, college and university. Public libraries have certainly changed dramatically in the sixty or so years since the librarian at the public library in Indiana, Pennsylvania—county seat of Indiana County in the state of Pennsylvania-- would not allow me to borrow the Wonderful Trip to the Mushroom Planet because it was too sophisticated for my age. I must have been eight years old. Or was I ten? The incident put me off public libraries for many years.

The public library in Anchorage, Alaska now provides thousands of science fiction and fantasy novels and comic books. There are no age restrictions, except on adults unaccompanied by kids entering the children's sections. Sixty years ago, providing some of these titles would have resulted in scandal and arrest under the obscenity laws of that decade.

In recent years, I notice that, at the Anchorage Public Library, the format for popular fiction and comics and music and video has shifted from paper to digital, primarily via the Hoopla Digital Library service. The digital formats I find quite acceptable, though I prefer to read e-comics on the screens of a desktop computer, rather than on a tablet. For books in epub format, I find acceptable the seven inch screen of my Samsung Nook. There can be no doubt that I enjoy being surrounded by books and magazines and papers, as I was in the libraries and archives where I worked for thirty eight years. There is no logical reason why I keep books I am unlikely to reread unless it is that I simply enjoy to be surrounded by evidence of books read and possessions acquired in decades past.

When Oregon State University Library, in Corvallis, hired me as a student assistant in 1968—I was a sophomore—my first day's task rather disillusioned me: Tearing up old cookbooks removed from the collection at the request of teachers in the Food Sciences Department. In the decades since then, as a professional librarian, I have personally discarded, or witnessed the discard, of dumpster loads of books and other library collections, either removed from the catalog and collection or received as unwanted gifts. Some few may wind up on book trucks for sale or giveaway. Most do not.

For example, who would want ten file cabinets of federal government documents in microfiche format? That case resonates with the theme of Double Fold, the discarding of existing collections—in the cases of Double Fold, paper newspaper collections discarded when the content became available using the new technology of microfilm. At University of Alaska Anchorage, a vast collection of congressional documents in microfiche format was deemed duplicative because the content was now available in an online product from the same company that produced the microfiche. So the microfiche went in the dumpster. The online product had many virtues, chiefly word search. But the online product also had an annual subscription cost. When the university endured its latest budget crisis, the subscription was dropped. By then, the bought and paid for microfiche were long in the municipal landfill. And librarians and researchers who wanted the government documents in any format—they were out of luck. Luck perhaps accrued to the inter-library loan librarians, who gained more work.

Dale's comment on reading Prince Valiant comic strips on microfilm at the library reminded me that my first use of microfilm was as a fourteen year old in search of newspaper comics from the nineteen thirties. The enormous microfilm readers at Indiana State Teachers College, later Indiana University of Pennsylvania, were the same model I encountered years later at Oregon State University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Contemporary microfilm and microfiche readers not only print on paper but also to files in tiff, jpg and pdf formats. To the fourteen year old reading newspapers on microfilm in the basement of a college library, these machines would have been something out of science fiction. To the twenty five year old graduate student in history, the digital microfilm reader would have represented nirvana.

Thank you for keeping me on the *Fadeaway* mailing list.

PS *Fadeaway* as a fanzine title reminds me of fanzines in ditto or hektograph format, which literally faded away, sometimes not long after publication.

Attached is a photograph I thought you might be able to use: library dumpster full of discarded books. I took the picture several years ago at the loading dock of the University of Alaska Anchorage Library. I was not involved in those discards. When I worked at the Wildlife Conservation Society Library, I discarded plenty, though some would say "not enough."



**Bill Plott; 190 Crestview Circle; Montevallo, AL 35115**  
([wiplott@aol.com](mailto:wiplott@aol.com))



I'm back. The surgery on my Birmingham Black Barons manuscript is done, paring the book from an astounding 216,000 words down to about 148,000. Now, on to other things, like commenting on *Fadeaway*, which is always a treat to find in the mailbox.

And the mailbox seems like a good place to start with comments on #54, the victim of the book problem. I totally understand the dilemma over print vs. electronic publishing. I print a dozen or so extra copies of my SFPA zine *Sporadic*, mainly for distribution to family members and friends. It costs about two bucks per copy for the envelopes and postage. That seems to be about the same for you, but I'm sure your costs are exponentially more expensive because of a much bigger mailing list.

Your solution is probably to do both. There are plenty of people, obviously, who are quite content with the online format. That's the way of the world today. As usual, I am out of step. I have a hard time sitting at the computer and reading long pieces. More often than not I will print out an article rather than read it on screen. If *Fadeaway* became a digital only presentation, I would likely scan it and print out what looked interesting. So, I'm obviously begging for a print version. I will be happy to pay the postage if that will help.

Dale Nelson's library journeys was interesting, to a point. Since I'm not familiar with any of those particular libraries, I found myself drifting away after a while.

On the other hand, your lengthy piece on Sax Rohmer's *Sumuru* was quite interesting. I always liked the *Fu Manchu* stories. In fact, when I downsized my library of SF and mysteries a couple of times over the years, one thing that I kept was my Sax Rohmer paperbacks, mostly battered Pyramid and Gold medal copies. Also a hardcover *Daughter of Fu Manchu* that I no doubt found in a used book store. I never read a *Sumuru* story, but I do have the Gold Medal *Sumuru* with the sexy uncredited cover. The coolest thing, though, is the back cover black and white photo of Rohmer in a silk robe and smoking a pipe. It fits the exotic nature of his stories. In digging out the book for this loc, I found an Ace paperback of a novel called *The Day the World Ended*. Its nice condition suggests it is unread.

As always, I appreciate the extraordinary detail you put into these pieces. They are really informative about not only the publishing history but also the lives of the authors. So much so that I willingly forego my desire for a modicum of information on your sources.

Moving on to #55, I enjoyed the Brad Foster interview(s). Since my return to fandom a few years ago, he is probably my favorite illustrator. What I really like most is the intricate detail of the robot pieces, like the

back cover. I don't know how he can pack so much into a picture, and I can't imagine how long it must take. A marvelous talent. You are lucky to have him as a regular contributor.

Nora Fiore has me intrigued with *The Mystery of the Wax Museum*. I may go online and look for a reasonably priced copy of it soon. Of course, I remember the Vincent Price version from the '50s. I believe I saw it as a 3-D film. I seem to recall a character shilling our front of the museum with what we called a rick-rack. That was a small paddle with a ball attached to a long rubber band. As the guy batted the ball it looked like it was coming right out of the screen.

Two excellent issues, Bob. I hope this belated loc gets me back in your good graces for future copies.



**Bill Burns billb@ftldesign.com**

Bob: Charles Rector just mentioned to me your comments on eFanzines hosting policies in *Fadeaway* #55, which I unaccountably missed when scanning that batch of new issues:

"Bill Burns who provides the excellent efanazines.com has been unfailingly generous with his time and efforts in posting lots of newly released fanzine issues on his website. However, of late he has been complaining about the work load involved, and would really prefer that regularly published fanzine titles maintain their own archive website that he can link to by posting just the cover of their recent issues."

The second sentence is absolutely not correct and misrepresents my position, which was the result of a discussion with the NFFF some time ago. To make it perfectly clear, I will state my position here.

The NFFF maintains its own website, and nominally has an archive of the fanzines it produces. They now publish six regular fanzines (as I understand it), with possibly more to come. They originally asked if I would host *Tightbeam* and *The National Fantasy Fan*, which I've been doing for a number of years now. More recently they added *Ionisphere* and *Origin*, which I also hosted.

When they proposed to add further titles, I suggested that as they have their own website, it would make my life easier if I could publish the new issue announcements and cover illo as at present, but link to the issues on their site instead of having to maintain a separate page at eFanzines.

I discussed this with John Thiel and George Phillies back in May, and they agreed that this was a reasonable position. Checking the NFFF site, I find that even after they agreed to this, two months ago now, no-one has bothered to update the fanzine archives there since early June, but the NFFF is quite happy to have me do the work and be their virtual webmaster.

Unfortunately, as new issues are not timely posted to the NFFF website, and are instead distributed by email, so there is nothing I can link to when a new issue comes out.

The idea that I've ever made a general statement that "regularly published fanzine titles [should] maintain their own archive website" is patently absurd. The whole purpose of eFanzines is to provide hosting for fanzine editors who \*don't\* have their own website - but not to act as unpaid webmaster for an organization that can't be bothered to do the work itself. The only comment I made about this was to the NFFF, and it was certainly not a general complaint.

I hope you'll continue to send every issue of *Fadeaway*, which I'm absolutely delighted to host, and I'd appreciate it if you could clarify this in your next issue. Feel free to publish the entirety of this email if you wish.

///Thanks for your email and a clarification of your efanazines policy. I am running your email in its entirety in this issue of *Fadeaway*. I note that since this letter was written the N3F website it back up and that links to the N3F zines are provided on your efanazines.com site.///



**William Breiding; 3507 N. Santa Rita Ave. -- #1; Tucson, AZ 85719**

I suppose I will be forever apologizing about the tardiness of my replies to *Fadeaway*. And I do extend many mea culpas, especially after your long absence. It was a delight to get the two recent issues.

During your abdication I happened to pub my own ish. One of your writers was very interesting to me so I emailed "extolleger" (i.e., Dale Nelson) and asked for his mailing address. There has ensued a leisurely (mostly because

I only haphazardly check my email) correspondence that has been quite gratifying. Dale is a scholar and a gentleman. I mean this quite literally. He is very much a gentle man and a gentleman, and his works on Lovecraft, Tolkien, and C. S. Lewis, etc., are well researched, well thought out and frequently infused with their own sense of the imagination. Dale's fiction is also exceptional.

He had a book published by Nodens Books in 2017 titled *Lady Stanhopes's Manuscript and Other Stories* that I highly recommend. His works are quiet, ambiguous explorations into the unexplained. If you have a taste for M. R. James, *The Inklings* (particularly Lewis), and Robert Aickman, I suggest you get a copy of his book. Dale is working on a companion volume to *Lady Stanhope*. I've read many of the pieces in manuscript and can say they are as good, and some better, than what has already been published by Nodens Books.

Dale's piece on Libraries in *Fadeaway* 54 shows another side of him, the engagingly warm and personal. It was well worth the wait! While you were on hiatus Dale and I conjectured as to what was going on (keeping fingers well crossed that it wasn't ill health). It was with happy relief when I got an email from Dale explaining that you were toiling away over at the N3F, editing *Tightbeam*. That caused me to check out a few issues on efanazines.com. They are beautifully done, and I wanted to thank you again for that fantastic write up you did there of the Rose Motel.

I did something with *Fadeaway* 55 that I had not done before. After reading Nora Fiore's snappily written piece about *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* ( a very engaging writer is Nora), that mentions the importance of color to the film, I had to see if the stills you lavishly illustrated the piece with could give me an indication of what she was talking about. Indeed they did, and it was quite gratifying.

While online I checked out the rest of the ish and was blown away by Brad Foster's use of color in some of his pieces. It also gave me the opportunity to magnify and study the three amazing pieces depicting the crash landing on the robot planet. I've always loved Brad's work, especially his larger, more ornate pieces. His sense of design is magnificent. The long interview with Brad was fascinating. It is always interesting to me to see into the minds of artists and writers, and in this interview Brad was very detailed in his replies! Thanks for that, and thanks to you, Brad, for all the thousands of beautiful pieces you donated to fanzines over the decades.

If you see fit to keep me on your mailing list I will probably always be extending apologies for late, or non response, but know that every issue is read and enjoyed, without exception. It's just that many times I have nothing to add to the conversation. I do appreciate your patience.

///As I mentioned in the last couple of editorials, one of the big advantages of getting *Fadeaway* in pixel format is that the color illos come thru in full color. My printer only does black and white, and I have no interest in investing in a color laser printer, so getting the PDF version offers a significant advantage. This time round more people decided to change from print to pixels, and I suspect the trend will continue in the future.

Your LOC guarantees you will be getting the fanzine issues in the immediate future.///



### **Ken Bausert; 2140 Erma Dr.; East Meadow, NY 11554-1120**

After all the great LOCs you've sent me over the years, I thought it was time I sent you one (sorry for the delay in getting this over to you). And, while yours are usually quite in-depth, I simply want to say how much I enjoyed *Fadeaway* #55 and, especially, the interview with Brad Foster (even if it was D. Blake Werts' initial effort that was responsible for it). I had not seen it in a previous issue of *Copy This!* and, if you had asked your readers to suggests topics for future issues, I would certainly have responded by asking for an interview with Brad. It was also enlightening to read the additional exchanges between you and Brad to close out that article.

I've been admiring Brad's work in your zine for quite some time, as well as others (Delaine Derry Green's *Not My Small Diary* comes to mind), and by reading your last issue, I learned so much more about the man than I could have hoped for. It was especially interesting to read about Brad's techniques, including his mastery of the air brush, and to learn of how he got into his profession. His recollection of Don Puchatz, and Don's honest appraisal of Brad's work, shows how much one person's valuable critique can make in another person's career.





DAN CARROLL---Front cover

Clip Art From The Internet---12, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27,  
29, 30, 31, 32