

another prefigured in its own way the rise of dark tourism characterized as it is by visits to crime scenes and haunted stomping grounds and yet another tale in this collection reminded me of all the many ways to go mad as the last tale in the volume, titled "Mrs. God", brought to mind Freud's characterization of some places—houses and towns and even graveyards—that possess the ability to haunt people with what he called an "uncanny" emotion all too familiar to those who reside there and those who visit these haunts. I would recommend this book to anybody that wants to be taken away for a day or a night or perhaps even a month to read as I spent reading it. It is time well spent.

STICK FIGURE OPERA: 99 100-Word Prose Poems by Howie Good. This is a superb book of 99 100-word prose poems containing everything from street fighting drunks to black holes colliding with galaxies to the 19th Century sculptor August Rodin to that old beat philosopher William S. Burroughs (who just can't seem to get rid of his hat) to Death itself. Here are just a few lines from Mr. Good's prose poem "Mr. Death": "Now a bride and groom were standing on a platform with blindfolds in place. 'I feel like we're in the apocalypse,' I whispered. 'We kinda are', you answered." What follows can only be called uncanny. I suggest that you log onto your retailer and order this book. It is a gem.

EDGAR ALLAN POE: MOURNFUL AND NEVERENDING REMEMBRANCE by Kenneth Silverman. This is another remarkable read, one regarding the life of one Edgar Allan Poe. A man orphaned in infancy, raised in a straitlaced family and then abandoning its comforts, he devoted the majority of his life to literature (a disreputable career in his foster father's eyes). Too, he will perhaps be most remembered as one of the most death-haunted writers in a death-haunted time in my country's history, spending his life crafting poems and stories on the very edge of life and death. (Indeed, an early poem he created in his life, "Al Aaraaf", gave new life to the borderland between heaven and hell.) Romantically and sexually conflicted and spending most of his years lashing out at better known and more financially secure writers, he then died a long, slow death after his wife Virginia passed away (a slow suicide, as his translator Charles Baudelaire put it, Baudelaire himself being no stranger to the troubles of the mind and heart), but his work remains, A horror story here. A mystery well told there. A poem over there. Yes, we will long cherish the memory of dear Mr. Poe. That is for sure.





Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 247

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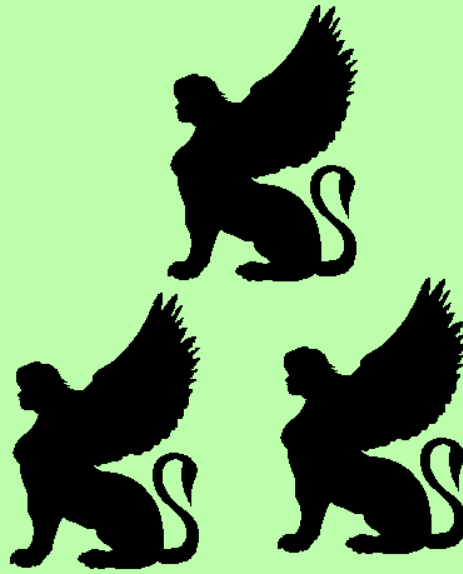
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Comments:

Jose Sanchez: Cover: Gotta love it! I still remember, away back in 1966, when I first saw Star Trek's *Enterprise*, how stunning the design was. My very first glimpse confused me. What is this? What are all these...things? Then it clicked, and I fell in love.

(The same story is told, apocryphally, of the Central American and Caribbean Indians who first saw Spanish sailing ships. It is said that they couldn't "see them." Some rather dingbattish theories have held that they couldn't see the ships at all, and thought they were just clouds. A slightly more nuanced idea is that they couldn't *grok* what they were seeing. And this is true, even for us, today! Go and visit a sailing ship, and, without training, all you'll see is a weird tangle of cordage. Where does this line go? Try to follow it with your eyes; you'll quickly get lost. But you certainly comprehend the basics: mast, sails, hull. I think this is closer to the truth of the First Encounter of native Americans with European sailing ships.)

John Thiel: I think we are, in fact, progressing, but (as I've said before) like the frog in the well. Three steps forward...and two back. Specifically re information, the net, and social media, I'm heartened that Facebook is taking very careful steps to rein in the worst abuses



of unlimited free speech. They're trying to walk the tightrope between oppression/suppression, which nearly everyone agrees is bad, and rampant trollyery, the expression of hatred for its own sake, deliberate deception, paid disinformation, foreign agitprop, and other ills we pretty much all agree are bad. No path forward can ever satisfy everyone, but I honestly believe that, overall and on average, human society is ahead of where it was when I was a youngster (and dirt was new!)

re the N3F specifically, it lasted a good long time as a Postal Correspondence Club, and it's a little sad to see that change to an Internet Correspondence Club. The advantage in technology is pretty remarkable. For historians, it's much easier to keep an archive of fanzines, without having to dig back through old storage boxes. For creators, it's so much easier to find really cool clip art. For discussion mavens, it's infinitely easier to look up factual references.

Gerald Heyder's "Perfidia's Rainbow" echoes, just a little, what I said, just above. Things are scary...but there's hope, and love and light are still within our reach.

Jeffrey Redmond's "Draft Dodgers" is a wicked little summary of the difficulties of raising an army...and, really, it remains true to this very day. The American Revolution, the American Civil War, and (worldwide) the World Wars, all saw people making conscious and deliberate efforts to remain uninvolved. Right now, in Syria, a great many refugees, staggering and stumbling into Turkey, are dodging military service, unwilling to do what the leadership (loyalist and rebel alike) demand of them.

Will Mayo: "Who the hell wants to be ordinary?" Grin! Not a one of us, here, I'll trow. It is said that, if you're sensitive, the world hurts you, and if you're not, the world bores you. I'm willing to wager that none of us, here, spend much time being bored! And, yes, if the world hurts...it also **fascinates!** There are just so many incredible sensations, experiences, and encounters -- "I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings." Especially in an information age, where we can read so very widely diverse a collection of material, see art, listen to music, and meet in frank discussion with our peers. Bored? I don't have time for it!

John Polsell's prose-poem about the moon and the night is inspiring, a little haunting, and certainly evocative of our love-hate-fear relationship with the hours of darkness. The night is the realm of murderers and thieves...and of poets and lovers. And cats.

re the product placement, that actually is a very nice hoodie!

Will Mayo: again! I love the parable of a man entombed by his own collection of books. There is a real-life analogy, as no few Jewish scholars have died when their bookshelves collapsed and the heavy volumes of the Torah fell upon them. This was the death of pianist and composer Charles Valentin Alkan, a man who lived a life nearly as reclusive as the figure in your parable.

I think I need to obtain the biography of Edward Gorey which you reviewed! I've been a Gorey fan forever and a day. I got to see an

exhibition of his original artwork at a library once, and was fascinated. He was a genius, of the "mad" variety, and his madness was subtle and gentle, and ever so inspiring.

I will **definitely** seek out "The Improbable Adventures of Sherlock Holmes!" I'm a Holmesian true and blue, and I adore knock-offs and pastiches dearly. (In one of my books I have some characters go for a sail aboard the **Matilda Briggs**, the ship alluded to in reference to the Giant Rat of Sumatra.) I've read all of Derleth's "Solar Pons" stories (superb!), and I read the crossover fan-fic where Raffles meets Holmes (not a very good book, I'm sorry to say.)

Samuel Lubell: Welcome to N'APA! May your sojourn here be long, happy, gratifying, rewarding, challenging, and fun! Your bio is that of a Trufan, and anyone who reads 100-150 books a year is a champion in my tablet of values! (It **stuns** me to hear that the average American reads one book a year. Between you and me, the law of averages means around 300 Americans don't read any books at all!)

re the pandemic, aye, these are challenging times, and not all of us (alas) are displaying the best in judgement or wisdom. At least **most** of us are being cautious, keeping away from crowds, wearing masks when shopping, and staying at home for the most part.

George Phillis: A listing of all published board wargames? Wow! That's gotter be an **immense** list! Ah, how I loved the old AH/SPI era!

I'm impressed at how you are working on many diverse projects all at the same time -- and running the N3F -- and having political activities -- AND having a real life! Your energy for life exceeds mine by an astonishing margin!

Westerns

SF and Fantasy are still my favorite genres, but I am also fond of other "niche" genres, such as Mystery and The Western. I recently read Zane Grey's **Union Pacific** which was quite a bit of fun. It suffered, just a bit, from "stupid plotting," i.e., to move the plot forward, the author had his protagonist make a stupid decision, one (in my opinion) very much out-of-character for him. It wasn't "true" to the character, and appeared very much a plot-contrivance. Memo to all the writers among us: don't do that.

A friend pointed me to Max Brand, and I read his novel **The Untamed**. Interesting, and fun, definitely a page-turner, filled with interesting characters doing and saying interesting things. Alas, that's taken to excess, and the book deteriorates into "Western Fantasy." Dan Barry (not the protagonist, but, rather, a force of nature other characters encounter) is just too damn "Mary Sue" to be worth a hang. He's the best gunman ever, and he rides the best horse ever, and he keeps a wolf loping alongside, and -- Well, pfah. Mary Sue.

I'm about halfway through **Way of the Lawless**, another Max Brand offering, and it's less over-the-top. It's about middling in the "realism" spectrum, still a bit too much for real and honest "gritty" realism, but not outrageously fantastic. (Think of the movie **Silverado**, which is somewhat of a Western Fantasy, but not too offensively so.)

Another thing about Westerns... I have read a few (I'll spare you the titles and authors' names) which were **set** in the 1870's Old West, but where the characters **behaved** as if they were in the 21st Century, in a large urban context. As much as the sexism of the era gallas, it is "fantasy" to write a novel about a woman gunslinger, or a woman lawyer, or a woman cowhand. (A woman as ranch owner,

however, is valid to the historical epoch!) The soi-disant "Westerns" I'm thinking of were rife with free love and open, freewheeling sex -- and not in a railroad gambling hell's brothel. The anachronism of some of these books is garish and painfully absurd.

(I confess to arrant hypocrisy here, as I adore swords-and-sorcery fantasy stories with women warriors, something just as wrong as women gunfighters on the frontier.)

(And, yes, certainly, women fought with guns, such as defending a blockhouse against Indian attack or when a grizzly gets too aggressive. But women didn't walk down main street with pistols to call out a foe in a pistol duel. Then again, by and large, men mostly didn't either. the OK Corral was a very rare sort of event. And, yeah, Calamity Jane and Annie Oakley were real...but they were more "celebrities" than gunfighters.)

(And doggone it, I can't tell you how many gosh darn times my fingers have typed out "funfighters!" Sheesh!)

The West and I

I am **from** the west, but not very much **of** it. My great-great-grandpaw came 'round Cape Horn on a clipper ship, in time for the Gold Rush. He sold whisky to the miners and made a fair pile. His son, my great-granddad, was the first "Anglo" baby born in Old Town San Diego. He grew up to a stagecoach driver and reprobate, and liked to ride his hoss down main street, drunk as a skunk, shooting out the streetlights with his horn-handled .45.

(I should have inherited that gun from my paw, but my uncle, damn him, looted my father's rancho when news of his death came round, and stole a lot of things that weren't his. That's my family.)

I grew up on a cattle ranch, and from a young age I was riding, shooting, and doing incredibly dangerous things with dynamite. I've

drilled, tamped, and blown, and why I am still alive, only God could tell you.

I grew up familiar with hard work -- and for that reason, the instant the option became available to me, I skedaddled to the big city, got an education in math and a job in computers, and have been working while sitting down all the years of my life. I know what hard work is, and, to be honest, pard, I want nothing to do with it.

They

No, not the hellishly haunting story by Robert Heinlein, but the sex-indeterminate third-person pronoun. I read a novel where an important character might have been a man...and might have been a woman. It was the author's intent not to tell the reader. So the author used "They."

I found this **incredibly** jarring, and it pretty much ruined the book for me, at least those pages. "They came into sight. They were getting closer. They reached for their pistol..." UGH! That's just tooth-gratingly ugly! There may be technical literary justification for it -- it may not be grammatically incorrect -- but when it comes to writing a story, for heaven's sake, **never do this!**

(I asked around in my various writing groups, and the consensus was universal: this is an ugly way to write a scene.)

Is Truth a Weakness or a Strength?

I don't want to get too awfully partisan here, although I can't see any way to avoid it entirely.

Suppose one group of Americans simply threw away "truth" as a philosophical good, and openly embraced Orwellian fabulism. Suppose another group of Americans stuck to their guns and maintained faith in Platonic/Aristotelian/Aquinian/Cartesian truth. Is there a marked advantage either way?

Those who adhere to traditional morals would seem to favor truth. "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness," saith the Lord, and that ought to settle the matter. Those who hold by conventional wisdom -- "The Truth Shall Out" -- "Hard Truths Can Be Dealt With But Lies Will Destroy Your Soul" -- favor truth. Those who favor scientific philosophy will favor truth, as will most jurists: science and the law are both deeply engaged in **finding out** the truth. "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty: That Is All Ye Know On Earth, and All Ye Need To Know."

Arrayed against this is the Orwellian/Hitlerian advantage of lying, and lying on a large scale. You can't fool all of the people all of the time, but you can fool enough of the people, enough of the time, to win some very important victories. History is written by the winners. If people believe a man is evil, there is little the man can do to repair his reputation and honor. Mudslinging works a depressingly large amount of the time. "Fake It Till You Make It," we are advised by a handful of self-help books and lifestyle advisors. Swiftboating.

The Truth-Teller, seeing a nasty and unfair advantage to be had by spreading whoppers, refrains. The Liar lets fly. In a "Free Market," in a Darwinian struggle, doesn't the Liar come out ahead?

Does the Liar come out ahead? In a life-and-death struggle between good and evil, do the ends justify the means? Winston Churchill said that, in war, "Truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." Is this an adage of general moral value?

I can only close with a rough paraphrase of Abraham Lincoln: "As I would not be lied to, so I would not be a liar." ("As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master," one of the greatest quotes regarding reciprocal morality in our language.)

Ye Murthered
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Comments on the last issue:

Cover: A fine piece of Jose Sanchez work. The N3F is blessed in that we have not one but two fine artists, Jose Sanchez and Angela K Scott. The image here is in traditional fannish black and white, entirely appropriate for space war and harkening back to a period when zines were produced with hectograph, the much maligned spirit master, mimeograph, and the fannish holy of holies, the Gestetner. Only with spirit master or Gestetner was color possible.

Synergy: As always, John, you have beautiful color artwork. With respect to paper copies of our zines other than TNFF, the core issue is that someone would need to print, collate, and mail them. Interesting account of ancient fan feuds and the fen who inhabited them. Thanks for reviewing some of the zines in lastish. ("last issue" in fanspeak). Perhaps we need a new dictionary of slang from fen.

What are the two draft dodger photos? The one on the left could have escaped from Bat Men of Africa. Historical note read as history; many of the characters did not even have names. Congratulations on having an APazine with contributors, including some poetry.

Archive Midwinter: Jefferson, I agree we could use more writers here. That is true for all our N3F activities. More writers and activists would make the N3F a better club.

Sympathies on being furloughed. The furlough from retirement involves becoming deceased, which I would like to avoid if at all possible.

The Contents of a Good Life #12 Will, you have an interesting collection of material here. I have a large house with a number of collections in it, but unlike the Man with Many Reads I keep things in good order. You give interesting reviews of an eclectic collection of books. I'd entirely forgotten about the snake handling beliefs of some Americans.

Samizdat – An amusing pun in your title, Sam(uel) is Dat and the Russian underground newsletters. Sorry

that your hopes for Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine were dashed. The magazine, happily, continues to this day. Your multiple services to fandom are most appreciated. Please consider contributed volunteer time to the N3F. Your writings are already much appreciated, at least by me. The book reviews are of material very different from what I usually find for The N3F Review of Books. That's good.

Ye Murthered Master Mage: I have done the second proofreading pass on the physics text, and am much of the way through inserting the command codes that create points for an index. The plague is unfortunate, but it has not disrupted my life especially. At some point this summer, perhaps in two months or less, the physics text will actually be finished.

As an aside, I am writing it as a rejoinder to the truly bad freshman mechanics courses I have seen being taught in certain places. If it doesn't use calculus, it is not real physics.

With respect to novel writing, the cover for Adara #2 will be done sooner and not later. Fantastic Schools #1 is now out on Amazon in paperback and ebook form. It sells much better than my novels do. There are a stack of reviews on Amazon; my Practical Exercise is well-received.

Of my novels, in the last two months I have written 7000 words of Adara, around 16000 words of Indian Summer, and a few thousand words elsewhere. My main focus has indeed been the Physics text.

New Closer of which you have read some on Invasion Now:

"Hello, listeners," Abe said. "It seems there was White House news...it didn't reach us at first...For the Armed Forces. All leaves are cancelled. Return to your duty station. If you are remote, please report to your nearest Military Base of any service. The Washington Record reports that the Armed Forces have been brought to Defense Condition One, with the qualifier we are not at war with any nation on Earth..."

"Interesting," Michael said, "Washington seems to have gotten off the mark rather quickly on this."

"Perhaps this was not the first landing," Victoria said. "More seriously. Michael, are you all right? You seemed to have taken this rather calmly."

"I was definitely not all right while that tank was shooting at us. If it had had a decent traverse rate on

its turret, or a gunner faster on the trigger, we would be toast. Burnt toast. And if we don't reach those bends ahead before the tank gets to the intersection, we may still be burnt toast. However, I was not terrified when I descended on Parker's Crossing. We knew the town was destroyed. The people on the ground, the humans, were obviously dead. The folks with the strange tank were surely the guilty parties. They left bodies on the ground—they must have routed. My main hazard was surviving locals who panicked and used me for target practice. I was not sure that the deaders in green were aliens, but they were something very strange."

"You're a very cold-blooded man. Do you have Vulcan relatives?" Victoria asked.

"Unlikely," he answered. "I'm sorry that this offends you."

"Michael, dear, you're not at all offensive," Victoria said. "You are remarkably kind and considerate and thoughtful. When you went downhill toward the town you moved from SF author to 'the sort of man I like', the sort I almost never meet."

"You carefully don't talk about your past employer," Michael said. "So consider your future employer...everyone on Earth has now heard of us and our books. That's seven billion new customers. What was wrong in the past?"

"They tended to be type super-alphas with severe testosterone poisoning," she responded, "and even ten years ago fresh out of college I thought they were jackasses. Telling me how great they were in bed was also not at all a selling point."

"Excellent point," Michael answered. "And that's a T intersection coming up, I think. Which way?"

"Left, and expect a better road."

"Oh, good. And as you can reach my travel kit, please break out for me a can of diet soda and a box of chocolate chip cookies," Michael asked. "Can in the forward cupholder, please. You're welcome to take something for yourself."

"You know, we just ate." Victoria shook her head.

"When there is no time to eat, then it is most important to feast," Michael countered. "That's from my Klangor the Barbarian series. Klangor himself said it, so it must be true. Also, look at the clock. It's after noon."

"We took that long?" she wondered. "Breakfast, packing for the first hike in the woods, two hikes through the woods, your television show, and packing afterwards."

"The Brigadier was really getting antsy toward the end of packing," Michael said, "not that I blame him."

"That was him motivating people," Victoria answered. "If he were actually worried, he'd turn completely calm."

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Those dump trucks appear to be blocking the road, Michael said. At least the ground to both sides is for once flat and open.

Michael, Dear, I believe we are driving into an ambush position. The road stops vehicles, and people with rifles, one or both sides, shoot the aliens when they dismount.

Mister President, the jets went in, but they didn't come out again.

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Adara's first day of classes. It could have gone better:

Much of a week later, I reached the first day of classes. Dorrance Academy is on an eight-day cycle. For unclear reasons, days at Dorrance are at the long end of day-lengths found in the Timeless Realm. No, I do not know why a full day, sunrise to sunrise, is a very different length in some places than others. On the other hand the Pelnir Sea has four moons, not the more common one or two moons, so day or night you can perhaps watch a moon rise or set. The day length is why the Academy was built here: A student can stay up late studying, and still get a full night's sleep. Classes are on Fourday, Sixday, and Eightday. Supposedly the three day gap is to let students go home and have their laundry done. I can't quite imagine anyone passing the Dorrance entrance exams and not knowing the simple housekeeping spells that clean your clothing, but the founders seem to have been more than a bit strange, or seriously ignorant of basic magic.

The classroom for Fundamentals of Magic was large and well-lit. One entire wall was a single pane of glass...or something equally transparent. The windows in the buildings occupied by the Construction faculty were reputedly all made of single sheets of diamond; I couldn't tell what this one was made of. The walls were heavily warded; the class included demonstrations during the lectures. I'd arrived early and sat toward the back of the room,

counting heads as people entered. This lecture section was primarily for people interested in Construction or General Magic; I spotted three people from the General Magic table in Miller's Refectory. They each stared when they saw me; so did several of their friends.

By and by, the lecturer entered. "I am Serene Master Aduriel," he announced. "You may address me as 'Serene Master'. I have been teaching this course for more than fifteen thousand years. Passing through this room have been future Serene Masters, High Patriarchs, Lord Justiciars, Magnates, Revered Healers,...not to mention many fine students who returned to their Houses as magnificent decorations due to the teaching of Dorrance." That last phrase, I'd been told by Master Courtenay, referred to students whose chief expertise would lie in the collection of Gentleman's C's, the formation of friendships leading to house alliances and trading arrangements, and various improper acts supported by tampering with unaging spells. To those people I'd be polite; friendships between houses might eventually blossom.

"Our lecture today is on whitening spells. A whitening spell makes something white. First, I'll show a gesture magic spell that can only be cast well off-campus, say the wards, for summoning a white-out, a blizzard. Then I'll do spells that can be cast here, a dance magic spell for whitening diamonds, a gesture magic spell for whitening flour, a pattern magic spell for whitening paper, a wand magic spell for bleaching clothing or hair, and a sand magic spell for summoning the iron out of granite." As he spoke, his words appeared on the chalkboard behind him. Someone had created a very good voice-to-text incantor, or the words were written in advance, and were now waiting to be summoned.

"That's what you need to know from this lecture. I've given you a list of processes, and a path for attaining each of them. We now recess for an hour-tenth."

I leaned back in my seat. Perhaps two-thirds of the students did not quite run for the exits. Most of the rest exited more gracefully.

"Adara?" The speaker was one of the other first-year people from the Master Courtenay's general magic table. He'd been carefully watching me at lunch, not said anything. "I know we haven't known each other for long, but this year would you like to share relaxing our unaging spells?" He sounded quite sure of himself.

OK, that was certainly not a question I expected to hear, not that directly, not this early in the term. The main point was not relaxing the unaging spells, but what you did afterward. "Not interested, thanks," I managed. "Nothing against you in particular, but you heard what Master Courtenay said about doing that."

"He's so old-fashioned. The rest of the first-year people are doing it. Why aren't you?" He tried fast-talking me into agreeing with him. "With two people it's safe. And a lot of fun."

"I said 'no'. It's not something wrong with you, but I'm not interested, thanks. Go find someone else. It can be done." I was trying to stay polite, but it was about to get challenging. He got up, not saying another word, turned his back, and walked away. The whole first-year group, I wondered? Really? Were they all that dumb? I tested my wards. They weren't quite called, but they were entirely ready.

At the end of the appointed five minutes, Serene Master Aduriel reappeared, followed by a half dozen students. He waited while they took their seats. "Are there questions yet?" he asked.

I waved. He nodded, raising his eyebrows. "Where is your office," I asked, "what are your consulting hours, and where if anywhere did you segregate books in the library to match your lectures?"

"Did your parents tell you to ask those?" he answered. I shook my head. "Those are the best questions a smart student should ask. As it happens, that's the start of my lecture. You could have stepped out during recess, you know." That last bit was phrased as a question.

"I already knew I wanted to be here," I answered politely. "Those questions I learned at Barlow Prep." Triskittenion Hall had tutors, but many things are learned better in a large class. That's why I attended Barlow.

"Barlow. Far Northwest. He was a student of mine, you know," the Serene Master said. "Absolutely brilliant." Barlow Prep had been founded almost six thousand years ago.

"Honor to his name," I whispered.

The Serene Master nodded. Honor indeed, he mouthed. "In any event," he said, "the screen displays my office and the hours at which I may be approached for questions. For reasons you should try

to figure out, I have *not* set aside books in the library for you.” I made a note to myself. Why didn’t he? The library has a reserved book hall. He said we should try to figure it out...that was a hint. The question will be on the exam. Of course, some of my fellow students would need to be whacked cross-side the head with a clue-by-four before they noticed.

With that, the Serene Master launched into his lecture. Barlow had good teachers, but Aduriel was amazing. Of course, I thought, if he’s been doing this for thousands of years, he’s had more than enough time to perfect his lectures. For the first gesture magic spell, he showed the full score, not just the basic hand gestures but the accompaniments and finger adjusts. The hall had a large cleared area. For the dance spell we were walked through the spell, several times. Two of the guys at the front of the class were called on to demonstrate on real black grade diamonds. One succeeded. One needed two tries; on his first try the diamond burst into flames. I was really interested in the paper whitening spell. The pattern was seven filled hexagons, of which I knew six. The seventh I’d never seen before. I checked carefully to be sure I’d copied it exactly. Finally he reached the sand magic spell. He had little bags of colored sand, which he put down in an intricate pattern while chanting a very basic incantation. The last bit of sand went down. He clapped once. He had on his desk a small block of ruddy granite. Suddenly it was pale yellow. Some of the sand in the pattern wasn’t there any more. Weird. I’ve never heard of anything even vaguely like that.

The basic thoughts appeared again on the display screen.

“And that is enough for today,” he said. “Class dismissed.” He then pointed at me. “If you have a moment?” I nodded.

We waited for everyone else to leave. “Aren’t you the young lady who fought the golem?” he asked.

“Yes, Serene Master,” I answered. That seemed to have gotten around in a hurry.

“Are you sure you’re recovered? I do record these lectures if you need to sleep things off,” he said.

“That’s very kind of you. Burns on the wrists were most of it.” My wrists were both swathed in enchanted silk, mostly so that if someone grabbed them I wouldn’t feel the pressure. “Waking up for

lectures, a few days ago, would have been bad, no, challenging.”

“Challenging. A fine word. You know, most of your fellow students would not have survived that ambush. A secret to successful spellcraft is to avoid unneeded challenges.” He smiled.

“Yes! Thanks for the advice,” I said. “I’ll try to follow it.” I remembered to bow before I withdrew.

A half-hour later was the course on Estate Management. It looked mostly to be very basic accounting practices. The course description, such as it was, came with a warning: *The Gentleman’s C is not available for this course. Passage of this course is mandatory for a degree.*

I followed my usual practice at Barlow Academy and sat toward the rear. Instructors are often happy to see students sitting closer and closer to them. They are sometimes less happy with people who try to fade from sight.

Precisely on time, the Lecturer arrived. He was a tall, thin man with an unconventional heavy beard. “I am Master Accountant Hartpence,” he announced. “Welcome to the mandatory course on Estate Management. Even if you are leaving here as an ornament to your House, you need to be able to read ledgers and manage accounts, lest you end up like House Crummell.” I had been warned about them. Once upon a time, that House had the not brilliant idea of using unmen servants to manage business operations. Unmen are as smart as real people, after all. Actually, the folks who were placed in charge of the Crummell accounts were absolutely brilliant. They invented scams never before seen by man. Of course, they finally got caught, so they were fed to a hrordrin, slowly, but House Crummell was reduced to its unalienable acres, and huge debts. I can contrast with home. House Triskittenion trades with unmen. We sometimes employ them as skilled labor, mostly in fine construction. We very much do not use them as servants. “Your textbook, which you should read carefully, covers financial records. We will discuss those, but we also discuss more practical issues in estate management. I’ll put a sample ledger page up on the screen. What do you see odd about it? You have five minutes to make a list.”

Several of my less bright classmates tried to borrow paper and lead pencil from neighbors. I was the only person in my row, so I could lean back and look at the display without being disturbed by neighbors. Was there anything on that ledger, I thought, that was

not a mite odd? I was way too young to be trusted with the House accounts, but I'd done a month apprenticeship with our Master of the Coins, not enough to learn how to do it, but enough to learn what I needed to learn someday. After five minutes, I'd covered a page with notes. I'd only spotted two points where unmen were skimming accounts, but I was sure there were more.

Master Accountant Hartpence collected our pages and sorted them into stacks. "I see, he said, that some of you have never been near your house finances, some of you know what a ledger is, and some of your Houses have done a good job of preparing you. Those of you in the last group may be in trouble here. Some words may be subtly different than the usages you were taught." Hartpence then launched into word definitions, most of which I recognized, and some of which I didn't. Even writing very quickly, I mostly only took down the words themselves, not all of their definitions. OK, that's why we have a library.

My third class was General Magic-Construction. It looked to be dull. Perhaps it would become more interesting when we advanced. Master Gilbert's first lecture set a very low level for a Gentleman's C. There are spells for creating large quantities of simple goods? I know that. He then listed several types of magic that are commonly used in Construction. I'd used four of them in working for my House, and had heard of the other two. OK, I needed to look at the last two. On the bright side, more or less everyone came back into the lecture hall after the recess. After all, this subject taught you about doing things that would make money for you. The rest of Master Gilbert's lecture was taught at a modestly higher level. I very much had to look at the types of magic I hadn't used.

In History and Ethics, I started out on the worst possible foot. Serene Master Brennan had given us something short to read and had us identify the improper acts. He called out names and handed back papers. From my point of view in the back of the room, I could see he had been thorough about making comments. At least at first, many of them were positive. "Best in class! You caught both the false invoices. Very observant!" For people not in the front row, he'd fold over the paper, hand it to someone in front, and let my fellow students pass the papers back. His stack of papers waiting to be returned got thinner and thinner, my name not being called. He seemed to have handed back all of them. Where were my results?

He paused. "Oh, wait." He reached into his carryall. I'd written my answers on House white paper, distinctly brighter than the norm. That had to be mine, rolled up and tied. He picked it up, glared at me, and used a weak breeze spell to waft it over everyone's heads until it reached me. "I wouldn't," he said, "want any of you to have your thinking corrupted by reading that piece of trash!" He wasn't quite shouting. "Triskittenion. Your paper. It's a piece of perverted garbage! How dare you propose what you said! I won't have you in this class! Out! Out!"

"Sir," I said calmly, "this is a mandatory class, for which I paid full tuition. I am entitled to be here." Somewhat later it occurred to me that taking a course from a Serene Master who hated you was a bad idea.

"I am giving you a recorded grade of pass with full credit. I am entitled to do that, and have! You have passed this course, so you are not entitled to be here. Get out immediately! Get out, or I shall summon the lictors and have you flogged!"

Some of my fellow students were looking for a way to hide. Several of the smarter ones were dropping extra items into their bookbags, preparing to run for a door in case the Serene Master started throwing spells in my direction. I stood and bowed, formally, the bow of a landheir to someone whose rank you do not know. "I hear and obey," I managed. I fumbled only slightly in dropping items helter-skelter into my carryall, scooped up my cloak, and headed rapidly for an exit.

"Faster!" he screamed. "Faster!"

NOTES FROM A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY #22



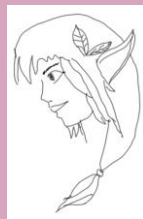
July 2020

For N'APA 247

Lorien Rivendell

(Lauren Clough)

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Natter

I'm working on this with "Dr. Who" from the 1960's streaming in the background. These episodes are new to me. I'm struck by how bad it is, the acting, the effects, the costumes - but it's not as if I'm paying too close attention to it, so it doesn't really matter. Still, watching the daleks trying to take over the world is much more appealing than what is really going on in the world today.

John Thiel's discussion of the N'APA setup had me thinking of the way it used to be, back in the days of paper. When I was a member back in the 1990's, we could write our zines on whatever we wanted (word processor, typewriter, lined paper), print it out, and then take it to a copy shop for bulk printing (at least, I always took it to a copy shop because it was less expensive than printing at home). We could also choose a cool colored paper for our zines. If I recall correctly, **Jefferson Swycaffer** has always used green paper, which has extended to his electronic zine today. I suddenly had the bright idea to see if I could change the background color in Google Docs and after a quick Google, I was able to. I'm hoping I picked a light enough color that the text is still readable without being annoying.

I recall also that there were a few rules. One was a minimum participation, something like at least 1 page every other publication. Another was there was a cap on membership to keep the zine from growing too large. I don't recall the exact membership cap, but we never came close to that when I was active.

I, for one, much prefer N3F being electronic. Zines aren't necessarily easier to read, but they are easier to store. I can organize them in Google Drive rather than stacks of paper copies everywhere. I think we have the potential to integrate actual science and technology with science fiction, though, and offer more electronic participation. There was discussion at one time about electronic Round Robins, for instance, but as far as I know, these still rely on the snail mail system and are constantly getting lost or stuck at someone's home.

I've been fortunate to remain employed where so many around me had to be furloughed when the state shut down. It has been difficult for the individuals in the group home where I work, though, as they would like to be able to go out to their favorite restaurants and resume their normal lives. Their day programs have adapted and now use technology to meet with the individuals via Zoom to stay in touch. This means so much to the individuals.

My knitting group, after a few weeks apart, also found Zoom to be an excellent way to meet during our regularly scheduled library meeting time. In recent weeks, we have been meeting in a local park when weather permits, where we can keep our distance but still chat. This is something to look forward to each week.

Comments on N'APA 244, 245, & 246

Synergy, John Thiel: Re: a roster: do you mean a roster of N'APA? I was looking through some old issues (from 2015, so not *that* old) and noted that there was a roster of sorts with the first contribution and last contribution (up to the current issue). For example, my entry might look something like: Lauren, Notes, first contribution 219, latest contribution 247. Is that something like what you had in mind? I've noted that I participated the entirety of 2018 (go me) and only half of 2019. I think it's probably par for the course for some of us to participate on and off. // From my reading and watching, it seems science fiction relies on physical space travel while fantasy is more into magical or spiritual means of travel or relating to the world. The lines are blurred, of course, and I suppose we could debate exactly what constitutes SF and what constitutes F and whether they can ever be a blend. // We, as a society, seem to be

advancing technologically. However, it seems not everyone is advancing at the same rate as far as attitude and forward thinking. In fact, some people seem to be sliding backward.

The Contents of a Good Life, Will Mayo: There's nothing wrong with one person being a lot of things, and perhaps it's time to dispense with labels entirely. Why should we have to be content with one definition of ourselves when we hold so many roles in life? // Re: your book choices: I agree. I like to choose the books I read and I no longer feel guilty if I don't finish a book because it's just not for me. Lately, I read less and watch series and movies more. What I watch doesn't require my full attention (most of the time) and if I find I do miss something interesting, I can go back and rewatch that segment (because I stream). // It sure seems that fiction and reality are merging during this time of pandemic and we seem to be part of a dystopian society. I get that people are anxious and/or bored and want to get out and live their ordinary lives. But we are now in a new normal that people can't or won't accept. I've always been a bit of a loner, so perhaps that's why I have been taking this better than a lot of people have been. Sure, I'm tired of wearing a mask out in public, but if I happen to be an asymptomatic carrier, I can rest assured that I'm not infecting others. Since I can sew, I've been making my own masks out of pretty fabric. I even made one out of fabric with planets on it. Since masks seem to be here to stay (for now anyway), I might as well be fashionable with them. // I haven't read it, but it sounds like *Song for a New Day* was prophetic. I found the book on Amazon, and apparently it was published in September 2019. Eerie.

Archive Midwinter, Jefferson Swycaffer: For years, I was convinced I was a reincarnated knight from the middle ages, perhaps even my own ancestor (though there's no evidence that anyone had been knighted save a coat of arms that allegedly belongs to the family). I wanted to become involved with the SCA so I could fight with swords. I attended an event put on by the SCA maybe 25 years ago, and some of the women participated in sword fights. Those swords were cardboard tubes left after all the wrapping paper has been used up (or that's what I assumed they were). Not very heavy, and all the fighting looked very fake and playful. Then again, movie fighting also looks fake, but very fancy, as backflips are a requirement. If I joined now, I'd want to wear the fancy dresses, and even peasant dresses look cool to me. // How do I visualize a year? I'm boring and visualize a calendar, because all my life I've been told that that is what a year is. However, I've also sort of visualized a year really starting in August, and I think that might have been influenced by academic calendars. In reality, why can't a year start whenever one wants it to? We shouldn't have to be locked into January first or our birthdays or the first day of school. You have an interesting take on a year. Winter does feel like a bottom of sorts. // I didn't know Amazon had a print-on-demand service. I must not have encountered a book that is on it. For the past several

years, I have preferred electronic books, and Kindle is the way to go. I'm hoping that platform doesn't die before I do, because I have accumulated enough books to last well past my natural lifespan. // I hope you are back to work soon.

Ye Murthered Master Mage, George Phillies: Whew! You certainly have enough writing projects to keep you busy for a while. // It's nice to get caught up in Adara's story. Congrats on having it accepted for an anthology. // And then getting caught up in the alien invasion.



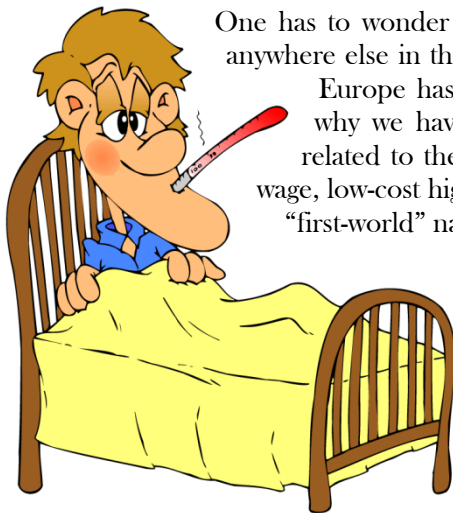
Everybody run! Jurassic Park is real!

Samizdat...

Written by Samuel Lubell

...Why the Pandemic is Hurting America the Most

I have been working from home since mid-March and leave my condo as infrequently as possible. I have not put gasoline in my car since the lockdown started. Last month I finally went to get a haircut, see an eye-doctor, and visit the dentist. But aside from those trips, the weekly journey to the grocery store, and the very occasional take-out meal, I have spent my life in my one bedroom condo. Even a dedicated introvert like me is beginning to find this tiresome. Yet many people think nothing of heading out to the beach, the pool, or a restaurant meal as if the pandemic has just disappeared, the way President Trump keeps pretending.



One has to wonder why the United States has so many more Covid-19 cases than almost anywhere else in the world and continues to suffer from the coronavirus long after most of Europe has largely contained and limited it. I suspect this is related to the reason why we have so many more school shootings and mass shootings generally. And related to the reason we do not have universal health insurance, a livable minimum wage, low-cost higher education, or so much else that is normal for nearly every other rich “first-world” nation except the United States.

I think it is because we value the individual, and the rights of the individual, much more than we do people as a group and the common good. So, when given a choice between right of individuals to own sub-machine guns and other weapons that have no purpose in hunting and the survival and welfare of children attending school, Americans give up and say there is nothing we can do. This is the same reaction many Americans have when asked to wear a mask for their own safety and the safety of the people around them. And, at a time when Florida has some of the highest Covid-19 infections on the

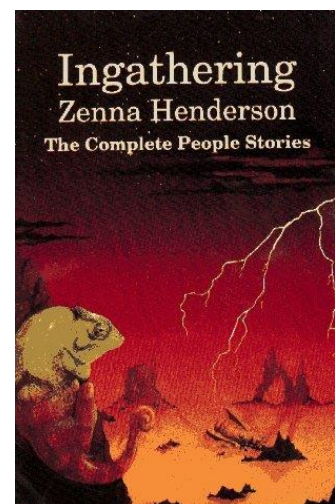
planet, Disney is opening up Disney World (although at least they are requiring everyone to wear masks).

As a result, some of the states that opened up early are looking into closing back down, which will just cause more Americans to see these rules as arbitrary and not worth obeying.

...Forgotten Author: Zenna Henderson

Zenna Henderson’s first published story, “Come on, Wagon!” in the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1951, displayed her most frequent themes of children and psychic powers. She is best known for her “The People” stories, written from the 1950s into the 1970s, which she collected into *Pilgrimage: The Book of the People* (1961) and *The People: No Different Flesh* (1966). These are stories of humanlike aliens with psychic powers who fled to Earth when their planet “The Home” was destroyed. Many of the stories dealt with attempts by isolated members of the People who crashed into Southwest America to get in touch with other groups. The People are Good with a capital G; it never occurs to them to use their powers to take over or hurt anyone. They just want to be left alone and have as little as possible to do with Outsiders.

While the original books are long out of print, the New England Science Fiction Association (NESFA) collected The People stories into *Ingathering*:



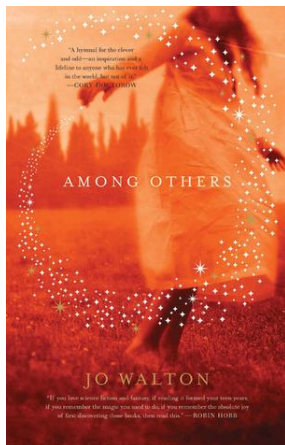
The Complete People Stories of Zenna Henderson (1995) and her non-People stories into *Believing: The Other Stories of Zenna Henderson* (2020). These are gentle stories, without much conflict (although a few stories do have some violence when ordinary rural Americans encounter the People before they learn to hide their abilities. Kudos to NESFA for making sure Zenna Henderson is only a *mostly* forgotten author.

...Mini-Reviews

***Blackout/All-Clear* by Connie Willis**

491 pages. Hardback. SF/time travel. These are two books but one story. These are long books and probably could have used some trimming (but there's no way she could have knocked it down to one volume.) This is a complex time travel novellas in which three historians travel back in time to WWII only to find that they are stuck there when their gateway home does not open. They grow concerned that somehow they have changed history and caused the future that sent them to no longer exist. The story jumps backward and forward and it is not always clear who is the viewpoint character of the chapter (and occasionally this is deliberate.) At least one character figures out they are time travelers too easily (I don't remember reading anything that would give him a clue.) Still, these are excellent novels that are very well researched.

***Among Others* by Jo Walton**



This is a wonderful story about growing up as a bookish child with science fiction as the only thing keeping you sane. The main character, a girl whose twin sister died, is sent to a boarding school where she eventually meets a science fiction reading club. And the book is full of her reactions to various authors and books, making the reader want to maintain a list (and one does exist online). At the same time, this is a fantasy story as Mori interacts with fairies, who occasionally have errands for her to do (one of which killed her sister) and fights off her mother's evil magic. Magic is low-key here, not showy. For instance, when Mori does a spell to meet people like her and she discovers the science fiction club, she fears that the spell caused the club to have come into existence in the past. At first I didn't like the ending, how it just seems to fade out, but now I think that was intentional, life doesn't really have endings until the big one.

This book holds up for a re-read for a book club. Many people in my club didn't like it because it was slow and the magic could just be coincidence. One even suggested an alternative reading in which Mori was crazy and the magic never happened -- except that her boyfriend saw the fairies too. I defended the book and still feel it is more than just a bibliography with occasional fairies.

***Feed* by Mira Gran.**

I had been avoiding reading *Feed* by Mira Grant (pen name of Seanan McGuire) because it had zombies and I don't like horror, even though everyone told me it was really a SF novel. I eventually broke down and read it. Wow!

And yes, it is really a sf novel about medical cures gone wrong, creating a virus that animates corpses (and infects others) in a way that mirrors movie zombies. But it is also about journalism, devotion to the truth, and politics (which continue even after the end of our world).

In *Feed*, most of the populace lives in fear with tons of security protocols and blood tests that still have most people afraid to go outside, gather in large groups, or do much of everything. Bloggers have become the most trusted news, due to the mainstream media originally not believing reports of zombies. *Feed* is about a team of bloggers -- a newsie, an Irwin (named for Steve Irwin, people who go out looking for thrills) and a

fiction-writer (who is also their techie) who win a chance to cover a presidential campaign only to discover a huge conspiracy and people dying all around.

Shaun and Georgia are great, realistic characters with a fabulous brother/sister relationship (basically each is the only person the other trusts) and a real dedication for telling the truth. The only character I found unrealistic is the Senator running for president who seems too good to be true (and to be fair Georgia comments on that).

Spinning Silver by Naomi Novik

This fantasy is a mix of Russian, Jewish, and other European folklore. Miryem, the daughter of a poor Jewish moneylender, who has become an accomplished moneylender and trader on her own, conducts a trade that earns her some money so boasts that she can turn silver into gold. The Staryk, from a parallel kingdom of winter, hear this and show up with some silver coins that they demand she turn into gold. A smith who wants to marry Miryem's cousin turns the silver into a ring that they sell to the Duke for more than enough gold to give to the Staryk.

Meanwhile, Wanda, whose father owes a debt to Miryem's father, has become Miryem's (and later her family's) servant and assistant. And the Duke uses the magical jewelry to help his daughter Irina marry the Tsar. But it turns out that Irina hates the Tsar, even before she learns that he is being controlled by a demon. And the lord of the Staryk, who steals Miryem away, has his own form of harsh treatment.

Following the different changes in PoV would be easier if the sections were labeled (especially the infrequent PoVs by characters other than the three main ones). That's really the only flaw I can think of for this book. Recommended for everyone who likes romantic fantasy, not just updated fairy tales.

...Letters of Comment

John Thiel - It sounds like you are expecting continuous linear progress instead of two steps forward and one step back. There's plenty of evidence that things are improving. *Look at Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* by Steven Pinker or *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World-and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*, by Hans Rosling

Gerald Heyder - Interesting poem.

Jeffrey Redmond - This is a sort of a story without any named characters and a setting that almost could be any war.

Will Mayo - This has very vivid descriptions and imagery. Your reading is impressively eclectic.

George Phillies - Thanks for all your help getting me set with N3F. Good luck with your writing projects. It sounds like you have enough to keep yourself busy for quite a while.

Note: All opinions and thoughts expressed in this publication are those of Samuel Lubell and not any employer, client, or membership organization.

