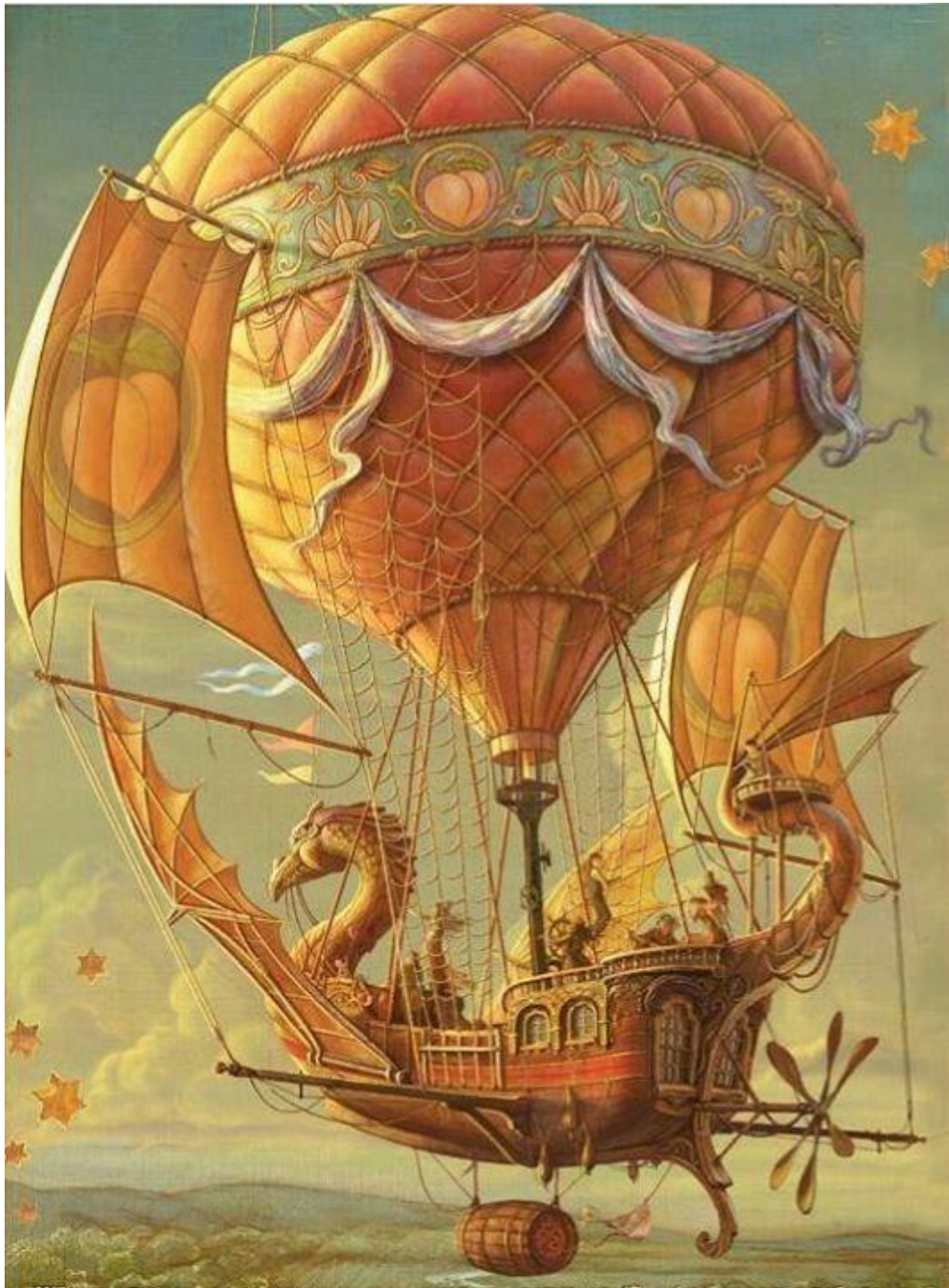


Fadeaway #65



FADEAWAY #65 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**. 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-November 2021 issue

THE BEST LAID PLANS & ETC. Dept. Yeah, despite my earnest determination and tuff talk last issue about getting on the ball and turning this fanzine out on a regular, or even more than regular schedule, somewhere along the line the ball bounced in a different direction, and here I am, late again. Actually, very late again.

In this particular case it was not a matter of procrastination so much as stern reality rearing its tentacled head and forcing me to abandon work on this fanzine, and almost all fanac of every kind, to concentrate on my mail order book/comic/video/game selling business.

As mentioned elsewhere, tis an ill wind that blows nobody good, and since March 2020, when The COVID-19 Plague began stalking the land, my mail order sales business went into high gear. In fact, it went into super overdrive.

I've been in the retail business most of my life, and one of the things you learn in the retail biz is that when a fad comes along, a peaking of public interest in some product, some item, some genre, some group of related items, you need to jump on that trend as quickly as possible. You need to jump on that roaring tiger's back and ride him as fast and as hard as you can, and if the red hot sales tiger begins to cool and slow down, you jump off, grab him by the scruff of the neck, and help carry him along until the sales fad finally expires and your sales tiger drops dead, preferably without leaving you stuck with a lot of dead stock.

Along the way you promote, advertise, display, restock, build prominent displays and do everything in your power to call the public's attention to the fact that you have plenty of this red hot merchandise in stock right now and that you are going to keep it in stock as long as the public wants it. That's called merchandising, and in my years in the retail biz I have noticed that some store businesses, some outlets, certain individuals have a knack for that sort of thing, and can turn on the proverbial dime to meet the public's shifting callow attention span almost instantly to maximize sales and profits. Unfortunately most retailers cannot. They simply don't understand the concept, or even if they recognize a sudden peaking of interest in something, they can't react fast enuf to keep up with the changing tide.

I learned my retail merchandising tricks working for a large mass market retail chain, and, without bragging, I will say I was very good at it. So good I was promoted to department manager in less than seven months with the company, and then placed in charge of a store division (accounting for close to half of the stores sales) shortly after that. I would have happily continued on with that company, probably rising within the ranks if I had not encountered a store manager, my immediate superior, who was a genuine drop the net looney-tunes jerk with a sadistic streak to go along with that. My new wife and I decided after putting up with that for close to two years to cut ties with that company and do something else.

Something else was being a salesman for the Proctor & Gamble company for a few years, after which I decided I really didn't like the life of a traveling salesman, and that I really, really wanted to own my own store selling science fiction and comics, which led me to creating Fabulous Fiction Books in Worcester, MA, which ran with many ups and downs for twenty-two years. During that time it was the largest science fiction book store in the New England region.

All this background is to let you know I recognized a paradigm shift in my mail order book biz almost as soon as it happened. I started selling tons of book, games, comic, and movie videos. My sales volume more than tripled, and I was literally on the go from early in the morning until late at night, pulling, packing mailing orders, and doing whatever I could to list as much additional material as I could.

All this hyper activity did not leave me much spare time to anything. Some weeks there was no spare time at all. My cherished two hours per night of reading time vanished, as did most of my efforts to listen to

OTRadio, or play role playing games, or watch old movies, or so much of anything except concentrate on the mail order book business.

That means I also didn't have time for fanzines, or letter writing, or any other kind of fanac. I was able to keep up my membership in SFPA, albeit on a highly abbreviated level. (One mailing I only had a paltry four pager in). *Fadeaway* was one of the fan activities that got pushed to the back burner.

The tidal wave of sales has ebbed as we enter the fall of 2021. Sales of books, games, videos have fallen back almost to pre-Plague levels.

The comic book side of the biz, on the other hand, continues to thrive. This is no doubt due to the fact that almost all the comic book conventions have been cancelled this year and for most of next year as well, while a considerable number of comic book stores have either gone out of business, or are in desperate straits since being banned from allowing more than a handful of customers into their stores at a time.

As I have mentioned before, I have a lot of back issue comics in my warehouse inventory, close on to half a million, to be somewhat more specific. With the push on back issue comics continuing right along, I am currently devoting a lot of time to restacking the warehouse to make room for more tables and boxes that I lay out with long boxes of comics and then list them for sale. This is strenuous work that takes up a lot of time, but in the past season I have managed to make a lot of display room and my back issue inventory posted for sale has gone up from 38,000 back issues to 57,000, and more will come. Obviously all those comics will not sell unless I pull and list them, and that's what I've been doing, every day. Almost every day I manage to list another fifty or a hundred issues.

But, things have settled down again and I am easing back into the old habits, and I hope to be able to put *Fadeaway* out on a regular basis again. The cover illustration this time around is an old public domain image I snagged off the internet. A well known fan artist had sent along a cover illustration for me which would have appeared this issue, had I actually been able to put this issue out on time, instead of being more than a year late. The artist got tired of waiting and placed that illustration elsewhere. I can't say that I blame him for that. I like the picture I managed to find on the internet, and it matches my mood right now. High flying fantasy, breezing away to adventure and renewing my involvement with the world of fandom.

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I DID

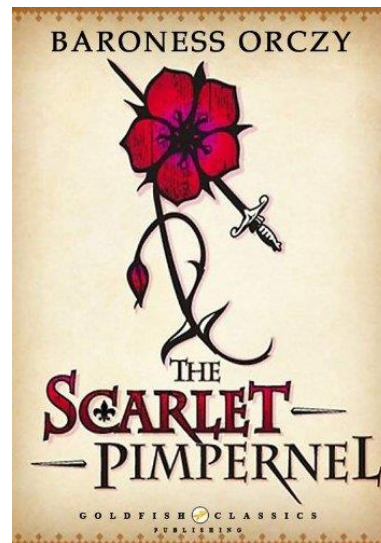
When the sales blast began to slow down was to try and make some time for reading books and magazines again. While it is true that I've been able to keep up with the new comic books I buy each month (since reading a comic doesn't take up much time, and I can polish off a few before bedtime), I really wanted that two hours each night back that I primarily devoted to reading books.

I decided to make a conscious effort to do some reading, and to make sure that I would do it; I ordered three books thru the town library, so I would have to read the material and get it back within the specific loan period. I decided to read the first three books in the *Scarlet Pimpernel* series by the Baroness Emmuska Orczy.

This was prompted by a belated attempt to listen to the *Scarlet Pimpernel* radio series, a program I remember listening to as a teenager in the 1950s. At the time I thought the stories were pretty skimpy, with an over abundance of incidental and bridging music, plus sponsor messages. When I tried to listen to the series now, I found the situation even more convoluted than I had originally thought. The stories are very short, and usually not particularly interesting. More than half of each program is filled with music plus the opening and closings setups.

The radio program was developed by Harry Alan Towers for his Towers of London production company and was sold to British radio and also to NBC for their 1953-54 season. When I heard it, the series had been resold to Mutual a few years later and was part of their Wednesday Night drama presentation.

The radio show is a strict, scene by scene retelling of the first novel in the series, but, with the character of Marguerite, wife of Sir Percy Blakeney, the *Scarlet Pimpernel*, downplayed. Later the show moved on to adapting the short stories in the series.



The Scarlet Pimpernel began as a play, and the original novel was a retelling of the play. The play was a very successful production in London premiering in 1905 and running over 20000 performances. It was resurrected many times over the years, including being performed in many foreign countries.

The original novel is basically a love story, with some interesting action added centering on Marguerite, virtually estranged wife of Sir Percy Blakeney, a wealthy English fop and slow-thinking favorite of society, who is in really the dashing Scarlet Pimpernel, head of a league of Englishmen determined to rescue worthy French citizens unjustly targeted by the Reign of Terror of the 1790s. The story is well written with an excellent balance between the romance, the heroine's mental anguish and her progression to the realization that her husband is not the witless court fool the world sees him as, but is indeed a man worthy of her love and trust. As the story unfolds she must travel deep into France to save both her husband and her beloved younger brother from the clutches of Citizen Chauvelin, ruthless agent of the radical government. The action is fast and well developed with suspenseful twists and turns before reaching its conclusion.

The authoress wrote sixteen other books dealing with the Scarlet Pimpernel character, not even remotely in chronological order, some of which deal with his ancestors, and descendents, and including several friends of his family as well. However, chronically the second book in the series is "Sir Percy Leads the band" which was written in 1936.



This is a fast moving adventure about the efforts to rescue a family of nobles and their aged retainers right after the execution of French King Louis XVI in 1793. The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel is imperiled by the actions and attitudes of an obstinate, hotheaded young member whose dedication to the cause is less than enthusiastic, and whose emotions are further compromised by his unrequited love for the daughter of the aristo family the League seeks to rescue. The young lady's brother is a brutal snob, while she is quietly courted by the region's doctor, a commoner and thus automatically judged unworthy of the family's approval. There are other characters, and another love triangle that endangers the entire League as well, seriously complicating their rescue efforts. Sorting all the sub-plots out and rounding out an extensive set of character actions generates an engaging and exciting adventures novel, one that moves along very rapidly. The Pimpernel's lady love Marguerite does not appear in this story at all.

The third book, chronologically, is "The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel", a collection of short stories originally published in 1919. Some of these stories are very clever and feature strong plots built around the main operating tactic of the hero, namely his ability to adopt all kinds of disguises that effectively fool anybody, including his arch enemy Citizen Chauvelin, who knows his secret identity, and has the power and the motivation to hound Blakeney to the ends of the earth. On the other hand, while some of these stories were quite interesting, I found most of them to be trivial indeed, with almost no story development and mostly presenting a cookie-cutter type plot with the names and locations changed slightly for different situations.

The Baroness Orczy was born in Hungary, but her family fled the country, settling first in Paris, then moving permanently to England. The young Baroness hoped for a career in art, and she was a good artist. She met her future husband, a fellow artist, but the couple soon discovered that the life of working artists was not necessarily a prosperous one.

She turned her attention to translating books into English to make extra money, then started selling short stories to various magazines, where she discovered her real talent was in writing. She wrote plays, racy historical novels, mainstream character studies, but mostly she wrote adventure and detective stories.

The Scarlet Pimpernel was not only series character Orcez created. She turned out a lot of detective short stories, particularly featuring The Old Man In the Corner, who figures out how crimes were committed primarily by using logical deductions, and Lady Molly of Scotland Yard, a female detective whose distinctly

feminine viewpoint is able to solve crimes because the male officers overlook or refuse to accept certain pertinent details.

But it was the Scarlet Pimpernel that made her famous, and wealthy. Baroness Orczy may not have been the first writer to create the secret identity persona for her hero, a character whose behavior is completely different from that of the heroic protagonist, but she gets the credit for it, and for introducing many of the theme's offshoots. In addition to the concept of the hero having a secret identity, she also created the band of dedicated followers who worked with the hero, a secret headquarters, a persistent and fiendish arch enemy, a signature weapon, and a unique calling card or mark left behind after each successful adventure. Those same themes were liberally borrowed by any number of popular media characters that came afterward. Everyone from Zorro to pretty much every costumed comic book hero every published followed directly in the footsteps of the Scarlet Pimpernel, and it was all created first by the Baroness Emmuska Orczy.

For all of her life the Baroness Orczy was a firm believer in the superiority of the aristocracy, a firm believer in British imperialism, and a firm believer that military actions could solve almost any foreign political situation. Asked one time what she thought of her long running Scarlet Pimpernel character she replied that it had certainly provided her and her husband with a very comfortable living.

While there is undoubted appeal in the daring adventures of the Pimpernel, and the people he rescues are generally worthy and innocent of any serious crime, anyone familiar with history will have a tough time keeping up with all this activity.

I don't think there are many who would condone the brutality, the massacres, or the horrendous death count that piled up during the French Reign of Terror from 1792-1796, but at the same time, consistent historical opinion has been that the behavior of the French nobility created the conditions that sparked the revolution and the harsh over reactions that followed could have been prevented with reasonable intelligent leadership.

Readers familiar with history would also recall that England was soon at war with the French nation, a series of wars that began while it was still officially a Monarchy, and continuing onward when it became a Republic, and beyond. England stayed at war with France for over twenty years, when the Republic gave rise to Napoleon Bonaparte, who became Emperor. All those worthy French aristos the Pimpernel rescued would surely have found themselves uncomfortable living as exiles in an England engaged in a bitter war with France, a war whose goal was to crush the French Republic, then later to depose Napoleon Bonaparte, and to somehow restore the Bourbon monarchy.

The stories of the valiant hero and his band of followers risking all to save innocent victims from death at the hands of an unjust government rampaging out of control continue to have strong appeal even to this very day. Numerous movies and TV series have been based on those stories, but for me, three books have been enough. I enjoyed reading these three books, but I have no great desire to read any more.

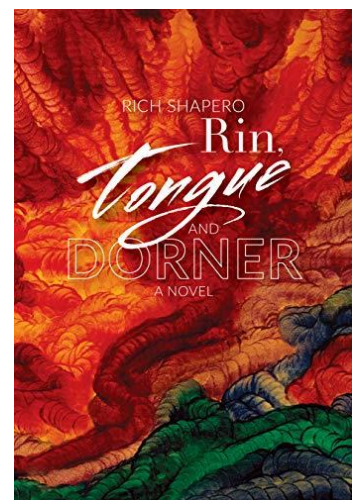
THE NEXT READING EFFORT was considerably less satisfying.

"Rin, Tongue, and Dörner" by Rich Shapero was displayed on the half shelf at the library devoted to newly arrived SF/fantasy. This book was originally published in August of 2018, which might give you an idea of how often my town library bothers to acquire any new SF/fantasy material.

This novel is one of the worst books I have ever attempted to read. I usually try to give a book about a hundred pages before I decide to give it up as a bad case, but I barely made it thru forty pages of this clunker. It's not that the writing itself was particularly bad, altho it is certainly not well written by any means, it's that the basic concept is absolutely bat-shit unbelievable and also that the concept is completely unworkable even if you did accept the set-up.

I am a firm believer in Buying The Bit; giving the author the benefit of the basic premise, letting the writer develop his concept and seeing how he does with his original idea, however unusual it might be. But in this case the basic set of premises is so ridiculous that nobody (except the author himself) could possibly accept it.

This is what the author himself says about the plot in a fake-review he posted on the Amazon sales site—"In a dystopian future, the planet [earth] has frozen over and humanity is left to live in domed



colonies. Their survival is reliant on "optimum temperature", which requires people to avoid excess heating of the domes by controlling their heat output by avoiding strong emotions. Dorner is a planner in his community and strives to be a model citizen. However, he is a haunted man with a past. At night the voices come to him, tempting him, torturing him. But soon the voices begin to haunt his days and women begin to react strangely to Dorner. He seeks help from a brilliant doctor named Rin, who believes his tortured nights are a result of repression. However, it soon becomes apparent that there is more going on and his torture is more than repression. His torture is the result of Tongue. Who or what is Tongue? What does Tongue want and why is she torturing Dorner? This leads Rin and Dormer on the adventure of a life time."

We are asked to believe that somehow the new ice age has reached all the way to the equator, that even tho humanity lives in a series of super-scientific self-contained floating cities to protect them from the ice and bitter cold, that somehow the inhabitants have to avoid any excess heat caused by human sexual urges because it could destroy the city. Really, that's the basic premise.

The hero is trying to repress his sexual desires and even thots of sex, despite being so handsome and irresistible that women he doesn't even know try to lure and tempt him even in chance encounters. There are specific details about his sexual fantasies, mostly related as remembered dreams, and he is deeply worried about this possibly affecting the delicate temperature balance of life in the dome.

Yeah, right. In an ice age that threatens the domed cities, these people never heard of air conditioning, or for that matter, windows, or even doors that they could just open to let the cold air in and use fans to move the "overheated" air out. The idea that the living conditions and temperature controls inside the domed city are so delicate that a few people getting the hots with their sexual fantasies or (God forbid) wet dreams could wreck the ecosystem of the entire city is absolutely unbelievable at any level.

As far as I got with the story the protagonist was deep into thots of sexual fantasies and deep guilt, aided and abetted by "Rin" purportedly the most brilliant doctor in the city whose advice about his repressed desires is gobbly-gook designed to let the author go into more detail about his private sexual fantasies. Nothing makes any sense at all, and I was happy to abandon any efforts to push on beyond page 40.

I have since learned that the author is a wealthy tech/computer venture capitalist who self published this book, plus eight other novels as well. Unable to sell very many of them, he resorted to handing them out free at business gatherings, sending out free copies to libraries (which is apparently where my town library got its copy), and even handing them out for free on a busy Chicago street corner.

My advice is that even if somebody offers you a free copy of this novel, don't take it. I deeply regret bothering to read even forty pages of this thing. Those were precious moments of my life squandered on this travesty that I will never be able to get back again. Do not waste a single second of your life trying to read this piece of garbage.



RADIO DAZE

During the long year and many additional months the world has been dealing with the COVID-19 Plague, I've been busy, but I have managed to make room for listing to some OTRadio programs, usually a show or two per day, often enjoyed at mealtimes. During this period I have mostly been listening to comedy programs, because with the world locked in a grim cycle of disease and death, augmented by the long lasting political insanity endured by the USA, and to a lesser extent, the rest of the world, it seemed that I sure did need something to liven things up a bit, and thankfully, there were plenty of great OTRadio comedy shows to draw from. Nothing shakes the mood of dismal despair off like a solid Jack Benny, or Our Miss Brooks, or Fibber McGee & Molly or Ozzie & Harriet radio program.

Now that the world is in somewhat better order, and my mail order book biz has slowed back to something resembling the old normal, I find I have a lot more time to devote to reading, listening, and viewing things for my entertainment.

I have been recently binge listening to a whole series of programs produced by the Canadian Broadcasting System during the 1990s and early 2000s titled The Mystery Project.

Despite the moribund condition of American network radio dramatic and variety programming, the Canadians kept doing quality radio drama, adventure, and comedy with no great interruptions for many years, and "The Mystery Project" was one of their longest running and more interesting efforts.

The golden apex of modern Canadian radio production came during the early 1980s when they produced "Nightfall", a top quality anthology supernatural/horror series featuring mostly original stories with all Canadian actors and production, but created with the idea that the series could be sold to American radio stations as well as being run in Canada. "Nightfall" produced 100 episodes between 1980 and June 1983, and the whole package was quickly sold as a syndicated series to many stations in the United States and elsewhere (how many I don't know, but it was a long time favorite of US Public radio stations).

Some of those horror stories were extremely intense, to the point where a number of listeners and radio station owners complained, and some stations, including the venerable PBS station in Boston, WGBH, dropped the series before the end of the run.

Those interested in more info about the history and background of this series can learn a great deal by accessing a fan website--- thenightfallproject.org Audio copies of this series on both tape, cassette, MP3 and Wave format can be found in many places, including the Internet Archive and most dealers in OTRadio shows, altho the CBC has never officially released any of those shows commercially.

"Nightfall" was followed up by "Vanishing Point" another anthology series which ran from 1984 to 1986, primarily devoted to science fiction themes, altho horror, fantasy, detective, and even comedy stories appeared. This was a very good but sometimes uneven series that was also syndicated but did not receive the extensive distribution that "Nightfall" enjoyed.

"Vanishing Pont" reran episodes constantly on a completely irregular basis, but they eventually produced 100 original shows. All of them are available thru most OTRadio dealers and from the Internet Archive, among other places.

One of the longest running series the CBC created was "The Mystery Project" which ran from 1992 thru 2002, and featured a detective or interested person as the hero for a specific number of episodes (usually 9 or 13), followed by a different series with a different type of detective or central character. Detectives who were especially popular were sometimes brought back for encores running an addition four to seven extra episodes.

Some of the characters went much longer. The first hero in the series; Midnight Cab ran 39 episodes, and so did Peggy Delaney, while Clean Sweep ran 30. There were adaptations of some Sherlock Holmes and Raymond Chandler stories, but generally the series concentrated on original material.

The half-hour long series ran on CBC Radio One every Saturday nite, usually at 6:30 (later for the Maritimes), then was repeated on 3:30 PM the following Monday on "The Roundup", and may have been rebroadcast again on a different CBC service.

Generally speaking the stories all played fair with the listeners, giving them a chance to solve the crime of the week along with the protagonist, altho there were notable and sometimes aggravating exceptions to that unofficial rule.

I was originally attracted to the series when a friend in my OTRadio club passed on a few cassettes of Canadian shows, including one just labeled "Becker". This turned out to be House Detective Becker, one of the detectives whose adventures ran as part of The Mystery Project. I found one of those shows to be pretty good and the other one less so.

Flash forward a year and The Plague has struck. A different friend recently passed along some MP3 series of programs that he thot I might be interested in, including a bunch of British and South African shows



Sherlock Holmes solves pop culture's greatest mysteries.

that really didn't hold much fascination for me. But that group that also included some MP3s of The Mystery Project, including, all 13 episodes of Hotel Detective Becker.

So one night recently, I decided to listen to a couple of those shows. Nine episodes later, and half an hour past my usual bed time, I knew I was hooked on the character, and I decided that if the rest of the series was as interesting as Becker was, I was going to be hooked on the whole Mystery Project run.

Becker deals with the adventures of a hotel detective. Becker works at The Queen Of the Rockies, a grand world class luxury hotel perched near the top of the Rocky Mountains. The year is 1923, and the hotel attracts lots of wealthy, important vacation guests, as well as eccentrics, nature lovers and sportsmen with plenty of money to spare. The guest list also include a fair share of professional gamblers, con men, swindlers and thieves. Murders occur, but just as often other crimes are in the forefront of the adventures. The story plots range from generally excellent to a few that were very hum-drum and entirely predictable.

Becker, (his first name may have been mentioned, but I don't remember noted it), is a man in his late twenties who used to be a local guide, but he lost his fiancée on a trip in the backwoods, and is now a recovering alcoholic, an easy going guy who has the ability to deal with hotel problems and crooks in a discrete manner. He is helped by the lone RCMP constable located at the small town at the base of the mountain. The town's economy largely depends on supplying the hotel and catering to their guests who want to hunt or explore the wilderness.

The hotel is managed by a stuffed shirt whose main concern is the dignity and reputation of the hotel, not with any righting of wrongs or catching criminals or anything else that might involve the hotel in scandal. There are assorted interesting secondary characters, some of which change as the series progresses.

This was one of the series which was meant to end after nine programs but was extended due to the popularity of the character with the listening audience.

While all of these shows are quite listenable I have to point out some problems that the producers should have resolved. For one thing, a lot of the male characters sound too much alike. The production tries to make up for this by having some of them adopt accents or affected manners of speaking, but this is a problem that the creators of the series should have spotted immediately and corrected. This particular problem does not occur with any of the other series in the Mystery Project that I have listened to, and it should not have occurred with this one either.

The other problem is the music. In an effort to give the series an air of historical authenticity the background music is jazz, but alas, it is not the hot traditional Dixieland style jazz that was all the rage in 1923, or even a mix of Broadway and vaudeville pop tunes that was also popular during that period in time. No, somebody has come up with what they think jazz in 1923 *should* have sounded like, which turns out to be a lot more modern and not particularly relevant in any way to the 1920s. And frankly, that background music is often played too damn loud. This is a problem I have with some of the other hero series in the Project, but it is particularly aggravating here.

That said, I thoroughly enjoyed Becker, and he got me hooked on the other heroes of the Mystery Project. Unfortunately not all the characters of series caught my interest. Peggy Delaney was part of the first run of The Mystery Project. She is a syndicated columnist for a large metropolitan newspaper. She is a divorced mother whose near-teen age daughter is living with her ex and his new wife on the other side of the country. She has a drinking problem that she is half-heartedly trying to cope with, and her best friend is a gay man who runs an industrial cleaning service. The programs all deal with trendy, up to the minute social issues, and the soap opera background comprises at least half of each program.

This is one of those efforts that try to make newspaper work a lot more interesting and adventurous than it really is. This peculiar theme is particularly common in detective fiction, and was a cliché long before Clark Kent ever went to work for the *Daily Planet*. The implication is that reporters and columnists can make the news instead of just writing about it. Real newspaper people snort in derision at this idea, but it hasn't stopped the flow of books, movies, and electronic media from latching onto the concept and attempting to run with it.

Unfortunately the Peggy Delaney stories are social commentary and not detective stories in any way. Even when there is a crime of some sort involved, the story deals with the mind set of the perpetrator, the background events that caused him or her to go astray and the role society played in the whole mess. This stuff along with the heavy soap opera elements may be interesting to some people (after all, the series ran 39 episodes), but not to me. I listened to four shows and decided that was enuf for me. If I had started The Mystery Project programs with the stories about Ms. Delaney I would never have bothered with the rest of it.

Fortunately I next encountered “The Investigations of Quintin Nickles”. This is a series set in Toronto during the 1890s. Quintin Nickles is an experienced police detective who formally worked for Scotland Yard. He has immigrated from England to Canada because he stepped on too many toes back home doing his job, including intruding into the investigations of other officers and other departments. He finds many of the same problems in Ontario, namely a stratified social structure where the politicians and the police deliberately try to shield the wealthy and the social elite from being involved in any scandal even when they happen to be involved in crimes either directly or obliquely.

He is assisted in his adventures by Abigail LaFrier, who is a female doctor in Toronto, a rarity for the time period. She is outspoken and modern and sometimes volunteers to aid his investigations, but is more often drawn into the new police problem when the crime touches on her professional medical sphere. They met in the first episode where there is a murder on the train both are taking to the city. Abby slowly becomes Quinton’s love interest, altho he originally had no intention of becoming emotionally involved and tries to deny the fact that he is falling in love with her.

The third member of the group, also introduced in the first adventure, is Daniel Wellington, a writer of stories and sensational news articles who sees in Quintin Nickles an opportunity to turn the detective’s escapades into sellable manuscripts, and at the same time make both Nickles and himself famous. Nickles of course, wants no publicity at all, especially in his line of work. Wellington is impulsive and usually handles the heavy physical action in the stories.

Even tho Toronto in the 1890s is a bustling city with multiple thousands of residents, the frontier is never far away, and many of the tales deal with crimes in lumber camps, gold mines, river boats, or farms adjacent to and directly related to the central city. This series often has touches of humor thruout the adventures, a quality that the other heroes of The Mystery Project generally lack.

The Quintin Nickles series was written by John Richard Wright and was supposed to end after 13 episodes, but was brought back for additional stories. This was the very last series broadcast as part of The Mystery Project. 23 episodes were written and recorded, but only 20 were actually broadcast. The other three have never been aired, or released, which I find aggravating.

Except for the first of the revival episodes (adventure #14) all of these stores were clever, well written and make excellent listening. Adventure 14 works with a plot device so stupid nobody could believe it, namely that Quintin’s love Abby is on trial for murder, and he, being out of the country on Crown Business, never even heard about it until the final days of the trail.

My only other complaint is that in most of the stories there is a small aside where Quintin daydreams about something that happened back in London during his days with Scotland Yard, which sometimes has a bearing on the current investigation, but just as often doesn’t. It’s an unnecessary waste of four or five minutes that could and should have been spend expanding the ongoing plotline.

“Clean Sweep”, one of the longest running series in the Project is set in rural Nova Scotia, in a small town hard hit by a down turn in the economy. The principle characters are Ben and Bonnie Marsden. Bonnie, fired as a financial officer at the town’s credit union, now runs a home cleaning service, consisting of herself and occasionally another local woman to help out. Ben Marsden lost his job with the parks department in the latest government “economy move” after he helped out the political campaign of a friend, who lost, and now makes a living as a general handyman and freelance contractor to whoever needs help around the region. Their



eldest son works the oil fields over in Calgary during the season and sends some money home to help the family thru the hard times. Bonnie Marsden is the primary investigator in the stories.

Law enforcement officers know that there is plenty of crime in rural America, and apparently there is plenty of crime in rural Canada too. There is poaching, drugs, thieving, moon-shining, and con games, along with a steady array of vindictive local jealousies, unfaithful spouses, vandalism, and murder. Altho this series primarily deals with all the other crimes, murder raises its ugly head more often than one might expect from the setting.

The local RCMP corporal sometimes discusses his cases with Bonnie, due to her past help, but what he really wants is to have the area settle down so that he can just help direct bewildered tourists or maybe aid the game warden with the occasional deer-jacking case, instead of having to run down criminals that are often his friends, and fill out the tons O' paperwork that goes with those cases.

This is a complex series that relies on the protagonist's powers of observation as well as making connections between neighbors, traditions, and little things that just don't quite add up to the picture presented by the crime of the week. As with almost all of the programs in the Mystery Project series, the acting is superb and so are the sound effects. The background music for this group of adventures is subdued and appropriate to the situations.

This is a series I binge listened to steadily over a weekend plus two more days and when I polished off the last of the 30 programs I really wished there were more of them. The author of most of the episodes was Al Silver, who won a prestigious Canadian fiction award while he was also writing "Clean Sweep."

The series was supposed to end after 17 episodes, but the series was extended due to listener response. Unfortunately almost all the renewed stories were written by a different author, and they tend to concentrate on socially relevant themes, with some mystery elements added in an attempt to stay true to the original format. So we have stories in which a black man is being racially harassed, a smear rumor campaign against Bonnie, a son that suddenly decides he is bi-sexual and the problems that produces, plus more of the same. There are a few hard hitting genuine crime/mystery adventures in the last lot, but generally these later stories decided to preach to the audience instead of following the formula that has made it a success to begin with.

"Clean Sweep" was produced in Halifax by Bill Howell, the guiding genius behind the entire Mystery Project and a lot of other post 1960s Canadian radio material. The CBC encouraged other locations to contribute their own programs to the series, but most of the shows came out of Halifax, Montreal, or Calgary, metropolitan centers that had sufficient local writing and acting talent to meet the needs of the Project.

A series that came out of Calgary was "Bailey's Way", about the adventures of a rookie female constable on the Calgary police force. She wants to be a detective, and she has the instincts for that work, but altho the police force says it encourages initiative and determination, in reality the system is rigid and does not encourage innovation or officers at any level stepping outside their assigned perimeters.

Tannis Bailey does not follow all the police procedures, and when a crime happens that she has contact with, or information about, she tries to dig out more information on her own. She and police detective Ray Donaldson are former lovers, even tho he is officially a married man with a marriage that is in serious trouble. He sometimes offers help, but mostly he tells her to mind her own business, and not to get involved in situations that are both dangerous and unpredictable.

Naturally she ignores that advice, so there is plenty of action in most of these tales. Ms Bailey is often in trouble with her immediate superiors in the department, including getting suspended, getting personally yanked off cases that are not part of her routine, all while trying to deal with a drinking problem, and routinely stepping on the toes of other people in other departments when she walks into their spheres of influence.

This is a well done series with solid character development for the central protagonist and her small circle of friends, but the writer, Gordon Pengilly, does not let the details of her life override the crime and detective elements of each story. Bailey's Way originally lasted 8 episodes, but was revived for an additional five adventures, with episode 9 being mostly a recap and a slight expansion on the story that had aired as number 8 in the series.

I really enjoyed the escapades of Constable Bailey and I wish there had been more produced.

Not all the series in the Mystery Project have been good listening, but most were. Some such as "Fallaway Ridge" only ran a few episodes simply because the background setup wouldn't support a more extensive crime/detective story platform. A few just weren't very good, for example "Recipe For Murder", about a wannabe cook who gets involved in mysteries so simple and so unbelievably dumb that I had trouble

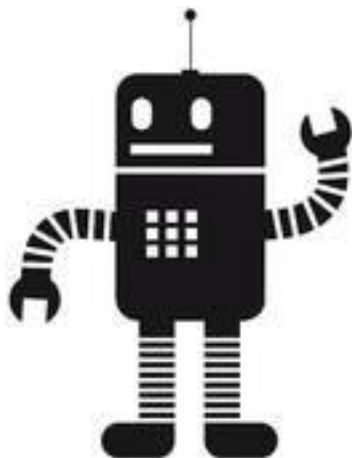
sitting thru two episodes before giving up on the whole concept. Another short run series was “Albert’s Father” about a stereotypical over protective Jewish father living with his TV newsman son, getting involved in his breaking news stories. These weren’t detective adventures, and they weren’t even good human interest material either.

I haven’t managed to get to all the characters in the Mystery Project either. Next up, “The Old Guy”, and I have still not heard a single episode of “Midnight Cab”, the stories that kicked off the Project, or “Flynn”, but I’ll get to them.

Anyone interested in hearing good modern radio drama, mystery stories well written, well acted, with good clear sound effects and effective production, should check out The Mystery Project. In an exception to the usual CBC policy, many of these shows were offered direct to consumers as audio CDs during the early years of this new century, but they are no longer available and I cannot even find out how many CDs were offered or what the original price was. However all of The Mystery Project radio shows can be purchased these days from assorted sellers of OTRadio programs in MP3 format at very reasonable prices.

Or, you could just check the series out and either listen on-line, or download as many episodes as you want for free by going to this web address--- <https://oldradioprograms.us/Mystery%20Project%20CBC.htm> Please note that not all series and not all programs in each series are offered here, but there are enuf there for you to listen to for a long time.

There are other radio programs offered at this site as well, but check out The Mystery Project first. For a complete log of the series, with dates, go to this site: http://www.old-time.com/otrlogs2/cbcmys_gl.log.txt



THE ADVENTURE OF THE STORY THAT ‘HAD MERIT’

I don’t write

much fiction, but on rare and infrequent occasions I manage to turn out a story. The stories I write generally run fifteen to eighteen thousand words of length, which I realize is an inconvenient word count for the modern world. Most magazines and internet sites that publish fiction want stories that are ten thousand words or less, with works that are less than eight thousand words being their golden mean. None the less, my rare pieces of fiction are long because that’s how many words it takes to tell the stories properly, at least in my opinion, and I’m the guy who wrote them.

So I was a bit startled while scanning the *Locus* web page last year to notice that the Distant Shore Publishing Company, publisher of an internet magazine and assorted books was specifically looking for novelettes, up to 22,000 words in length to run in their upcoming anthology. Gee, what luck, I just happened to have a 17,000 word fantasy adventure that I liked a lot. In fact, I thot it was one of the best pieces of fiction I had ever written, which doesn’t say a lot considering how few pieces of fiction I’d actually written, but still, here was an opportunity to maybe get my thrilling opus actually published.

I had never heard of Distant Shore or anything they had published, but even if their magazine and anthologies were primarily launched into the world of digital ones and zeroes on the world wide web, if my tale was accepted, somebody else besides me would get a chance to read it, I might get some feedback, and there was actual cash money being paid for stories they accepted, funds well above the courtesy pittance fan oriented webzines habitually offer.

I made sure the novelette was properly formatted, shot it off via email to the editors at Distant Shore Publishing, then prepared to wait. I am familiar with the inordinate wait times modern fiction writers have to suffer thru in order to get their material even glanced at by assistant readers to the assistant editors, so I didn’t expect any immediate response.

Flash forward about two weeks and an email appeared in my AOL Mailbox from the Austin Macauley Publishers, saying they were looking over my novel, that it had apparently passed the first hurdle of readers separating the dross from the pearls, and they would get back to me real soon. That was certainly encouraging, altho I wondered how they could possibly have mistaken my 17,000 word novelette for a full length novel. Perhaps it was a standard form letter, similar to the standard rejection slips most publications send along when they bounce a submission. I also wondered what had happened to Distant Shore, but perhaps Distant Shore was a subsidiary of Austin Macauley. I noted that Austin Macauley had five separate offices, including two in the

United States, one in London, and one in Sharjaah (which, I learned, on checking, is in The United Arab Emirates).

Three more weeks go by, and I get a new notice in my mailbox again saying my novel had been approved for publication, that the editors and publisher believe that the story “has merit” and they want to publish it, and enclosed with this email is a standard contact I can look over, have my lawyer look over, sign, and get back to them as soon as possible.

I dunno about other people in the world, or those of you who might be reading these words right now, but I have to say that the thrill of having a professional publisher say your work of fiction has real merit and that they want to publish it is an emotion so intense and special that I would not hesitate to describe the experience as Unique, with stars, capital letters and accompanying by exhilarating heart palpitations. I’ve sold articles, reviews, interviews, and personal accounts to magazines and newspapers before, but that was absolutely nothing like the sheer joy that came from realizing that a professional company has accepted your work of fiction and was prepared to publish it.

Naturally I rushed onward to read the contact, which was several pages long, and relatively simple, altho coached in legal terms. Everything seemed straight forward and agreeable until I came down to page 6, whereupon there was most of a page devoted to “shared expenses”. It seems, according to Austin Macauley, that because of the very high cost of publishing these days, authors were being asked to provide a share of the costs necessary to getting their material published.

This came with a list of the assorted expenses, which were not cheap by any means. To have my story properly formatted and prepared for sale as an internet entity the price was \$200.00. To have it come out as a trade paperback, the price was \$800.00. If I wanted it to come out as a hardback, the price was \$2,000.00. There were other options and other combinations available as well.

The editors were happy to inform me that these prices represented a solid reduction over their usual fees due to the difficult economic times the nation was currently undergoing, and they were proud to announce that they had increased the author’s share of royalties, up to 25% of each item sold in each different format.

Gosh arooney Sandy, I may be pretty damn dumb but I can certainly recognize a blatant swindle when I see it. You will be pleased to note that I did not explode and write the editor a sarcastic nasty-gram. I was very polite in turning down their offer and suggesting that they were perpetrating a con game.

Remarkably, a month afterwards, I got yet another letter from their editor urging me to reconsider, and telling me once again how they felt my story “had merit”; that they really wanted to publish it, and that their co-pay fees were really among the lowest in the industry.

I didn’t bother to reply to that email.

At this point I am sure some of you reading this will wonder why I didn’t send my tale along to one of the professional magazines and see what their editors thot of it. Well, I did. Unfortunately the number of professional magazines publishing fantasy is very small, and most of them, including the recently reactivated *Realms of Fantasy* do not accept longer fiction.

That basically left *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Sometime back during the recent revolving door of different editors I sent my story along, and after a couple of months, got it back with a nice letter from the then-editor saying s/he liked the writing, liked the characters, liked the story development, but really did not like the primary plot theme of the adventure. Oh well. A personal letter from an editor is a nice thing to receive, but not as nice as a short printed acceptance slip along with a check signed by the company treasurer.

Of course there is also the question of why don’t I just send it along to one of the amateur or semi-amateur fan-operated magazines now functioning. There used to be a lot of those around, but it seems to me that in relatively recent years the number of mags that are willing to print amateur and semi-pro works has shrunk. In the past I have send along some stories to George Phillis, who puts out an excellent fiction mag for amateurs and semi-pros titled *Eldritch Science* several times each year, and in the past I have also send along some shorter fiction to John Thiel who has published *Pablo Lennis* for well over twenty years.

The problem with that course of action is that, altho the mags and others platforms devoted to running amateur fiction do not retain the rights to the material, the new reality is that professional publishers of every kind will no longer accept any work of fiction that has been previously published in any format in any venue whatsoever, whether it is a semi-pro/little literary mag, an internet venture, a strictly amateur fanzine, or even if

it was run in your grammar school/high school/church newsletter. If the material has been published anywhere, anytime, in any format whatsoever, no professional publisher will touch it.

To me this seems stupid as hell, but that is the primary reason I have not sent my story along to other mags or published it here the pages of my own fanzine. I really do think this is a story that is sellable, one that could and should be published in a professional venue, and I don't want to endanger the chances of it appearing professionally somewhere by running it in my own zine or somebody else's semi-pro-platform. So here it sits, still.

So, if anyone out there knows of any professional magazines or anthologies in preparation that accept longer fantasy adventure stories, please let me know. I've got a 17,000 word story I think they could use.

I RECEIVED PORTABLE STORAGE #6 RECENTLY

Portable Storage is a fanzine produced by William M. Breiding; who can be reached at Portablezine@gmail.com. This has to be one of the most impressive looking fanzines I have received in quite a while. It is a photo-offset trade paperback volume printed on book paper with a cardstock cover featuring full color wrap around cover art by Alan White. Inside there are 159 pages filled with articles by some of the brightest writers and thinkers in science fiction fandom today, discussing science fiction/fantasy and its meanings, influences and cultural impact.

I tell you, this publication is intimidating. After reading thru this fanzine I was tempted to give up publishing *Fadeaway* entirely. I mean, after experiencing something like *Portable Storage* who the hell would ever be interested in reading the drivel I turn out? Probably not many, that's for sure.

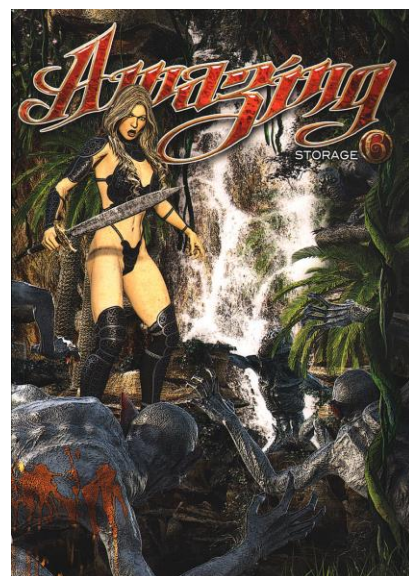
Despite its completely professional appearance, Mr. Breiding wants readers to know that this is still just a fanzine. To make sure you know that this is an honest to God genuine fanzine he has printed the images of three staples on the right hand side of most of the inside pages of this issue, harking back to olden days, you know, just like a real old school fanzine.

However I have to point out that the images of two of the staples he uses are actually box staples, not stationary staples. Box staples were used to hold the bottoms and sometimes the tops of cardboard boxes full of heavy merchandise being shipped to warehouse or retail locations. They have mostly been replaced in recent decades by the development of efficient and cheap packing tape that seals and protects better than those metal staples ever did. These days heavy gauge box stapling is still occasionally used in addition to sealing tape for heavy, bulky, high value items. I suppose box staples are an appropriate image for a 159 page long professionally printed trade paperback sized publication with cardstock covers and full color wraparound cover art.

Inside there are articles by people such as Fred Lerner discussing the impact, intentional or otherwise, of Jewish religious thought and world outlook on science fiction literature, contrasted with the Christian viewpoint. This is a very interesting piece of writing, but I think that even though a lot of SF fans and writers over the years have been Jewish, that the focus of most science fiction has been on either a bright interesting future developing and embracing possible advances in scientific progress, or grim dystopias caused by corrupt human beings misusing the advances made in scientific progress. Along with the occasional humor story tossed into the mix to liven things up.

One of the strongest articles in this issue was written by Jon Sommer who does an in depth fully detailed examination of George R. Stewart's groundbreaking novel "Earth Abides", about the collapse of civilization after a fast spreading disease kills off almost the entire human race. Jon delivers an exceptional piece of work that examines author Stewart's viewpoints and the novel's very carefully writing style, with a storytelling emphasis that cleverly demands the reader think about the multiple philosophical questions being posed even as the core story plot is unfolding.

Another outstanding article comes from Jim Jones who examines the concept of science fiction style Galactic empires, and relates the existence of a genuine modern day galactic style empire right here on planet



earth, specifically one set up by Standard Oil of California in Saudi Arabia, where the company established a monopoly during most of the 20th century to exploit and export the Saudi petroleum reserves. In the process the company created many island enclaves, midget colonies as it were, copies of Suburban America in the Arabian region. These communities were self contained oases of modern America, complete with ranch style homes, watered green lawns, golf courses, schools, bowling alleys, movie theaters, baseball games and everything else that would make the employees of the newly created Aramco Corporation and their families believe they were living the good life back in the USA, except, of course, they were in the middle east, where the desert, Bedouins,

He relates the real life lessons the petroleum company learned, lessons that science fiction authors should have learned, and ones that the United States with its long lasting 20th century program of benign interference in foreign affairs after the close of WWII finally learned, namely that the natives will eventually become jealous, they will become educated, and they will eventually take over. The locals want the good life too, and they are incited and inspired by observing that modern, almost futuristic, picturesque life in their local Galactic Empire, an empire established by an American oil company, in this case.

This is an article every SF writer and fan should read. Reality can be altered for a long time, but eventually reality cannot be denied.

Another exceptional piece is a long article by Andy Hooper detailing the evolution and development of the sercon fanzine over the past seventy years, with titles, examples, names and short explanations of why each one worked during its time frame. The fanzine list is long and impressive, and he discusses all of them.

Cheryl Cline examines one of Doc Smith's interplanetary epics not directly related to his more famous ongoing series: "The Spacehounds of IPC", and in the process exposes the clunkiness of Smith's dialog, his relentless emphasis on info dumps and action, his use of clichéd aliens and his near zero imagination when it came to projecting necessary future inventions that would be needed for space travel to work.

At the same time she also shows us that his heroes, both here and in his other novels, are based on his own self image as a person with many talents and abilities, and his attitude (held by most males in the early part of the 20th century) that in order to be functioning adult, you had to have lots of different skills so you could to handle the many different things life was going to throw at you, not just be a one man/one job kind of guy, and naturally that's why all his heroes are multi-talented too. She also demonstrates that the space-era jive and slang he uses is a direct offshoot development of the then current 1920's early 1930s American slang and the changing attitudes of women's roles in society. This is a really nice piece of writing that points out both the flaws and the enduring story telling power of Smith's stories, and why they still continue to grab reader interest decades after they were written.

There plenty of other interesting well written articles here, including Dale Nelson's long look at the contrasting yet similar themes in of King Lear and Tolkein's Lord of the Rings, Tom Jackson on what Libertarian thot in science fiction means (or at least, what it is supposed to be---modern Libertarian political and written thot has splintered and moved into many different realms over this new century); Doug Bell on side-kicks in comic books and elsewhere, and why they work and why they sometimes sure don't; Marc Schirmiester's cartoon feature on what it was like in ye olden days of stf fandom, and more.

Some articles don't look like they would work, but miraculously, do, such as Chris Sherman's deliberately disjointed look at notable people in science fiction and related areas he has experienced over the years of his life.

There were a few articles that didn't work for me, including Alva Svoboda's look at science fiction robots and artificial intelligence by tapping the works of R.A Lafferty and Kazuo Ishiguro. It went right by me. I'm sure he knows what he is trying to link up and explain here, but the concept never jelled for me. Another that didn't work for me was Peter Young's article trying to equate the oddball SF novels by Charles Yu with the satirical sf/fantasy writings of Kurt Vonnegut, with asides about Georges-Olivier Chateaufrenaud. Say Huh? I didn't get it at all.

Likewise I was not interested at all in Paul Di Filippo discussion of the frankly homoerotic works of Samuel Delaney, most of which have connections with SF that are tenuous at best. People who are gay are fascinated in the subject of gay sex including all its potentials and offshoots, and they don't seem to understand why the rest of us are not.

I've barely touched on the depth and variety of material offered here, all of it very readable, and almost all of it providing thot-provoking concepts to mull over, including a very long and meaty letter column.

My only quibble is that editor Breiding himself does not offer much of his own writing in his zine. He has a very short editorial (slightly over a page long, if you take out the illos), about how he liked good old fashioned pulp space opera as well as the New Wave stf, along with a few bits about his adventures as a teen turning out fanzines and meeting pros, leading up to this issue of Portable Storage. It doesn't seem sufficient, at least in my opinion. I really would have expected something more from a guy who turned out a zine this croggling.

Editor Breiding says this issue will show up on the efanzines site, someday, but as of right now that someday hasn't arrived. Instead write him direct at portablezine@gmail.com and ask for a digital copy of this latest issue. You will be glad you did.

I ALSO RECENTLY RECEIVED a copy of *Hypno Video* #18, from Dr. Bill Kobb; P.O. Box 30231; Pensacola, FL 32503. This is an 8-1/2x5-1/2" saddle stitched zine devoted to Bill's examination of bad movies. OK, he doesn't exactly phrase it that way, but that's the way it works out most of the time.

Bill is fascinated with horror and noir movies produced on the cheap, particularly material produced in the 1960s and 1970s into the 1980s when there was a veritable tsunami of independent and low cost flicks produced by studios major, minor, and independent, along with stuff turned out by enthusiastic amateurs with enuf equipment and enuf money to create their version of a motion picture.

In the past the distribution of these films was decidedly limited. Mostly they showed up at drive-in theaters, or were aired on very late nite TV by independent stations with financial problems. The introduction of video tape, and then DVD discs has meant that quite a lot of these movies have been saved and are now being offered to the public in home viewable formats.

Many of these movies are god-awful, as Bill cheerfully admits, but then again, some are not. Some have redeeming features, some are pretty good, and a few of these fringe production orphans are genuine gems that deserve wider viewing. Bill attempts to do the hard work of sorting thru the material, separating the gems from the dross so you don't have to, and *Hypno Video* offers his reviews of what he has recently viewed.

This time round it's a special Halloween issue devoted to vampire camp; offbeat vampire films, some with humor, some with lots of female nudity, some with mystery story backdrops, and some that are just straight vampire stories with unusual plot twists. Bill reviews eight of these flicks this issue and I get the impression he could have turned out an issue with four or five times as many reviews on the same theme if he wanted to.

Most of the movies he discusses are pretty bad, often for reasons beyond inept production and poor acting. Things like ridiculously stupid plots, or the inability to take a good idea and run with it are common problems.

An oddity that Bill notes with this group of films is that all of them feature Dracula as the protagonist, and four of the eight involve Drac operating some sort of trendy vampire theme tourist spot so he can lure innocent victims into his web, and also generate some spending cash—maintaining those dungeons and castles and creepy old mansions is quite a financial drain in this day and age.

Several of these movies were intended to be satirical humor, but most don't make the grade, even "Vampira" a 1971 Paramount Studio comedy-horror offering starring David Niven and Teresa Graves mostly falls flat, altho Bill notes that the Goth-vampire-disco theme dance party at the London creepy mansion is weird and whacky enuf to almost redeem the whole picture; that and the super surprise twist ending.

Bill is relentless in his objective critiques of these flicks, but he also has a few kind things to say about most of them, pointing out high points and potential redeeming features, while suggesting that with just a little more effort, or money, or marginally better acting, that the films could have been a whole lot better than they turned out.

I can't say that his reviews impelled me to rush out and pick out any of the titles he reviewed, but I did enjoy his coverage and his comments about this octet of vampire pics. Every issue *Hypno Video* covers a



different theme, and each issue is always an enjoyable read whether you are deeply interested in horror or noir movies or not.

WHETHER HALLOWEEN?

Yes, spook-nite is coming our way again, and after a year and a half of the Coronavirus Plague it appears that a lot of people (at least in my region) are going all out this year to get into the Halloween spirit. Halloween is the second most popular holiday in the United States, right after Christmas, with people spending serious amounts of money on Halloween spook deco and treats. Parties for adults and the kiddies abound, and of course, it's all topped off with the evening launch of youngsters attired in costume trying to score as much candy as they possibly can before adults call a halt to it.

I haven't had any trick-or-treaters at my home for years and years. The whole neighborhood aged out a long time ago, and I sure don't do any Halloween decorating myself. But I'm still going to buy a couple of multi-packs of candy "just in case". Just in case I eat one bag before Halloween nite, I'll still at least have one bag for that evening. If no costumed kiddies show up, then I'll polish off that bag after the nine o'clock hour. I only buy two because thru the years I know that however much or little I buy, no bag of candy is going to survive to November 1st.



THE COLONEL MARCH SERIES

by Richard Dengrove

I had recently seen Boris Karloff in an episode of the Mr. Wong series on Amazon Prime Video. Even though Monogram Pictures made him look ludicrous and had given him a persona that even Karloff could not figure out, I admired his attempt. I searched for other series starring Karloff. Shortly, I found one, “Colonel March of Scotland Yard” (1956-57). Adapted from a short story anthology by John Dickson Carr, *The Department of Queer Complaints* (1940).

I watched the entire series, all 26 episodes. I loved it. I admit to loving some episodes more than others. However, even after viewing the so-so ones, I could not wait for the next episode. In this article, I will tell why I liked the series and why I occasionally disliked it.

One reason I loved the series was the actors. Most of all I loved Colonel March, played by Boris Karloff. He is a man of mystery. His only mundane trait is he has a niece. Otherwise, much about him screams man of mystery. For instance, his eye patch. In the ‘50s, a man with an eye patch was considered sexy, sophisticated – and the perfect man of mystery. In addition to his eye patch, his religion made him a man of mystery “Being a devotee of the religious and health giving rights of an ancient Neolithic cult.” Huh? That’s a man of mystery.

Furthermore, Colonel March’s knowledge screams man of mystery. Does he know everything? Well, almost. He knows fencing. In fact, he must have been an incredible fencer in his prime. Other experience was more useful in solving crimes. Being with British army intelligence during World War II. Being a doctor of divinity and law. In addition to these known life experiences was vast personal knowledge from who knows where-of: Javanese dance, Tibetan Magic, early Medieval manuscripts, interplanetary communication, Himalayan mountaineering, mass hypnosis, cacti, monastic tonsures, parapsychology and philately.

In short, as the author Dave Mann says, he rivals Sherlock Holmes and his brother Mycroft.

On top of all these things, Colonel March is a man of mystery because of his one man office in Scotland yard – the Department of Queer Complaints. Ostensibly, this is the last resort for crimes other offices in Scotland Yard have thrown up their hands on. However, in a number of episodes, he investigates any murder he damn well pleases. I remember one where a fellow tells him he will commit murder; and when the foretold murder occurs. March bypasses regular Scotland Yard procedure to take on the case immediately. In another case, he gets involved not because of Scotland Yard but because of his niece. In an episode set in France, far from throwing up their hands, the police believed they had their man. Nonetheless, March investigates.

Come to think of it, why is someone from Scotland Yard investigating in France?

Apparently, March has bound himself to only one rule: he never investigates any crime where all the protagonists are dead. At least, in none of the episodes I saw.

The above man of mystery was created by the writers and the director: they created his eye patch, his religion, and his knowledge. Boris Karloff took March and made him genial and appealing; in short, someone the audience is rooting for. Also, he revels in a boyish enthusiasm for his job. March often appears busy playing children’s games. For instance, billiards. However, far from fooling around, he is actually figuring out murders. How could you dislike a hero like that?

Next we come to the secondary characters. They are dwarfed by the shadow of Colonel March. Still, they have an important role to play. The second most important character is Inspector Ames. I cannot say I liked the character. I do not blame the actor who played him, Ewan Roberts. He was a fine actor. Anyone who could do a ‘plummy’ English accent at the beginning of the show and a deep Scottish burr at the end deserves our admiration.

My problem is more with the writers. I suspect, to fix the character, they messed him up. Originally, Inspector Ames was the uber conventional policeman. In short, Colonel March’s establishment foil; a policeman



outraged by March's methods. Sometimes he was moved to yelling. Of course, as the foil, Ames was always wrong.

Unfortunately, I suspect the writers feared he had become a cliché. After a while they instead made Ames totally placid; as dull as the proverbial dishwasher. By the episode where March solves a crime with mass hypnosis, "The Devil Sells His Soul," Inspector Ames follows March's orders to the letter. The problem with this particular story is that mass hypnosis is arrant nonsense. March may as well have solved a crime by calling up the tooth fairy. We needed Ames' tantrums then.

While the writers messed up on one secondary character, another achieved pure Shakespeare. I really liked Inspector Goron of the Paris Sûreté.. You saw him a lot because a good chunk of the series took place in France.

As Goron, The writers had him combine a devil-may-care attitude about investigating with an ear for gossip, a good judge of character, and a love of fine food and drink. In short, like March, he is an unconventional policeman, an officer who is more curious than someone who goes by the books. As an example



of the devil-may-care attitude, Goron is fascinated when March proves a American guiltless, a person whom Goron had marked as guilty. Furthermore, while you would not expect it, Goron's knowledge of food and drink solves a crime. Goron finds that a liqueur at a café, Garcazon, is not the real McCoy; not made by monks. Not only does that help solve a crime; but, more important to Frenchmen, it exposes an insult to drinkers.

Goron was played by Eric Pohlman. And both roles were convincing. As Goron, Pohlman's acting skill combines Goron's devil-may-care attitude with his voice of authority. Thus making him lovable but competent. How he did this, I will never know. I will say he was a really good actor. Living in Germany until 1939,

he immigrated to England with his Jewish wife and played roles in English films and on stage. Not only did he play the continuing character of Goron in the Colonel Marsh series; but also, in one episode, an Arab Sheik. That role was convincing too.

So much for the continuing characters. How about the characters of each episode? It is true a half-hour is too short to develop a complete character. It is enough, however, to make each character distinct. In the Colonel March series, many characters were distinct in wonderful ways.

There are too many characters, though, to discuss each one individually. Let me tell about one I liked and one I disliked. You can then compare my likes and dislikes with yours. I really liked the lonely, retired military man whose hobby is spying on his neighbors.. The killers exploit the belief he is dotty to hide a murder. However, the actor convinced me we should, nonetheless, believe him. I really liked that performance.

A performance I disliked was by an actor who was not really good at acting. I found myself rooting for the American kid he was playing to get the guillotine. He has an enormous chip on his shoulder. Of course, some of the blame has to go to the director, and maybe even the writers.

What I liked as much as the characters in the Colonel March series was the plots exuded the exotic. One episode approaches science fiction. It centers around a scientist who has contacted Martians. That this does not count as science fiction is not a let down. We are expecting a murder mystery and we get it. The Martians are just there as a very exotic element.

For me, other episodes were suitably exotic as well. In one, members of a London mountaineers' club are being killed off by a yeti, a king of cryptozoology. Eventually, we find out how the 'yeti' can get around '50s London unseen. In another episode "The Talking Head," a twelve year old boy claims his dead father is telling him to kill his mother's fiancé.



In yet another episode, a skull known as the Damascus Man proves a hoax. Obviously inspired by the Piltdown Man hoax, which was exposed in 1953. For me, the hoax remains wonderfully exotic. Finally, one last episode. Its exoticism does not stir the imagination but sends us to a foreign land. Specifically Java. In "Death in a Dressing Room," a real Javanese dancer is murdered at a Javanese themed night club in England.

Overall, I loved the characters and the exotic. How about the plots? Not so much. The forte of the Colonel March series, as well as John Dickson Carr's anthology, is the 'impossible crime.' The most oft heard example is a man found murdered inside a locked room. In the series, something similar happens: a man is

killed on a jetty 100s of yards from anyone. Other episodes use other magic tricks, which are also regarded as impossible. In "The Case of the Misguided Missal," a manuscript seems to remove itself from a safe and appear in somebody's room. Later, it is proved someone is doing the moving. In another episode, the crime is committed by a trick known as the Sphinx Illusion.

In one episode, "Death and the Other Monkey," it uses an animal trainer's tricks rather than a magician's. Other ploys outside stage magic are grist. One crime, the Javanese dance episode, requires no arcane knowledge at all.

All such tricks go over my head. Since I never can guess the culprit in regular mysteries; an impossible murder absolutely passes me by. I do not need a Houdini trick to enjoy a mystery. Conversely, only a very 'improbable' crime would ruin the show; and I do not remember any. The series was popular with BBC viewers when it originally aired, but there was strong competition from radio and independent (and pirate) TV in the same time slot (not to mention local sporting events on the evenings the program was broadcast). The critics were somewhat less cordial toward it. There was some political and economic background involved in the development of the series, and once the owners of the program had 26 filmed episodes in the can, enuf to sell the series as a syndicated property in the USA, Canada, Australia, and other countries, they were satisfied.

If you have not experienced the series you might check it out. All 26 of the original programs are available for free to anyone signed up for Amazon Prime. A few episodes are posted on YouTube, and a complete DVD set of the entire series is available at a very reasonable price.



Foster's forgotten comics
present: **200**

"Zero Heroes"

Psychic Psydekick

Created by Mort Lee, publisher of the "Good Ums" comics line, after he was fascinated by the psychic-powers craze of the early '60s. Mort had the writer of *Big Muscles Man*, Jack Wood, introduce **PP** as a new sidekick. Jack hating writing a character who always knew what would happen, with the irritating catch-phrase: "I knew you were going to do that!" He killed **PP** off after only five issues, but Mort loved **PP** so much, he came up with a reincarnation story to shoehorn him into another title. **PP** did not last long there either, and it became a game with the writers to see how quickly they could kill him off when Mort assigned him to their books- not an easy task with a character that could predict the future!

"Big Muscle Man" #27-31 (1962); "Largest Laugh Comics" #1,037 (1962); "The Weird Stranger" #102-104 (1963); "Bulk the Bunny!" #412,413 (1963); The Octadic Eight" #15 (1964); "Six-Gun Aliens" #8 (1964)

MIND GAMES

BOOK COVER MEMORIES FROM THE PAST

by

Dale Nelson

My in-laws drove out from Pennsylvania during the year my wife, kids, and I lived in Wisconsin. Ed, my wife's dad, had served in the Navy during World War II. A lifelong resident of Wilkes-Barre, he'd preserved the Racine address a shipmate had given him something like 43 years before.

Ed hadn't kept up with the friend, but he decided to drive over to the address. A little while later, he came back, professing surprised that somehow, the people who lived at that address didn't know anything about the man who'd lived there before (almost half a century ago).

Of course, if the shipmate had still lived there, and Ed had popped up on his doorstep after all those years, or even if the present residents had remembered the guy and been able to entertain Ed with a few good stories, what a great moment that could've been!

My dad, who never owned a computer, would walk over to the university library and search telephone directories for the names of people he remembered from his Army days, and occasionally send letters to likely-sounding names and addresses, hoping to make contact again after such a long time.

What about lifelong sf and fantasy readers? Maybe we too sometimes look up people we remember after all these years. Do we, furthermore, have our own peculiar way of acting on memories of bygone days – specifically, memories of books?

Well, of course we reread old favorites. But also, we bookish people might suddenly remember paperback covers and dust jackets on library books, that caught our eye a very long time ago. These were books, then, that made an exceptional impression on us, but that we didn't read at the time, don't now have on a To-Be-Read pile, and haven't even thought of in years. Suddenly, many years later, we remember a cover design, perhaps for no reason we can pin down. Now, even if only out of curiosity, we might get hold of some of these books and, at last, read them.

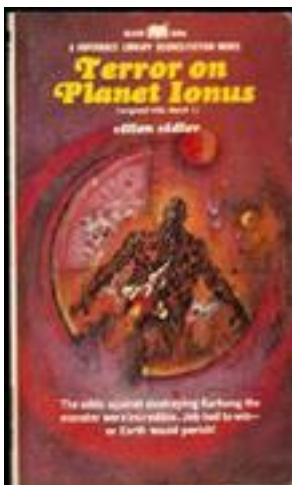
Lately, from time to time, not methodically, I've been doing that. Here's a look at ten of these remembered books.

After almost 50 years I still remembered the cover art of raging gigantic Karkong under hellacious missile attack, on the 1969 Paperback Library edition of *Terror on Planet Ionus*.

"The odds against destroying Karkong the monster were incredible. Jeb had to win – or the Earth would perish!" Whew! I surely would've bought that book if I'd had the funds when I was 13.

Forty-eight years later, a year from retirement, I took home an interlibrary loan copy of Allen Adler's novel and read it. I wrote up some notes on this pulp classic.

In the first four chapters, we meet Jeb Curtis, jet pilot, ruggedly attractive to beautiful Janis Knight, meteorologist. Jeb gets slapped when he plants a kiss on the unwilling Janis. He resents having to follow the orders of security officer Commander Shawn, who is "in his soft-fleshed forties." Shawn and Curtis seem to be feuding, but Admiral Buchanan insists that Curtis is the man for the job of flying the Mach, a top-secret new jet.



So Curtis takes off when the time comes for a big test of the jet's power. Suddenly the engine stops. Curtis finds himself and the Mach taken into a Grid Space Mass. "The Grid" is the name that the beautiful and tall Keesa uses to refer to herself and others aboard the clam-like space travel device. They appear in bizarre colors, e.g. "Keesa's eyes were transparent gold and her hair was a solid platinum!" Curtis discovers that the Grid has also brought Janis aboard their weird vessel. Kalphon, another Grid person, tells Curtis that the Grid people have come to save Earth from destruction from a "wilful force, with an intelligence for evil."

Up through Chapter 7, Adler introduces us to Ionus, which is a moon of Saturn. Its surface is a wasteland. The Grid-people have names all beginning in K: Keesa, Kalphon, Kimian, the Kal. Karkong is the deadly enemy. The humans on Ionus are Jeb and Janis, so Adler's habit of starting names with the same letter is an odd feature of the book.

The Grid people occasionally voluntarily discharge electricity that builds up in their bodies. I gather that Karkong was an Ionian who had been transformed by his gluttonous absorption of energy: "He has even devoured his own people! ...He draws the life out of all -through some kind of superpower in himself. And he grows with each feeding. He grows!"

The humans are surprised to learn that the Grid-people are unwilling to try to kill Karkong; they are shocked by the idea of killing, very reproachful of the earth people for their violence. But the Grid-people fear that Karkong will use one of their "Masses" (a type of spaceship) and come to Earth and destroy it.

Jeb returns to Earth and tries to convince the military authorities that he has been to another planet and that a terrible monster is on its way to our planet, no easy task as you might imagine.

By Chapter 11, Karkong has moved on from attacking San Diego and is heading for Shasta Dam. "Karkong had left a charred, lifeless rut one hundred yards in width and six hundred miles in length... a wake of cremation and death."

"While humanity [sic, with two Ns] cringed on the ignited powder keg of the earth," the crisis approaches.

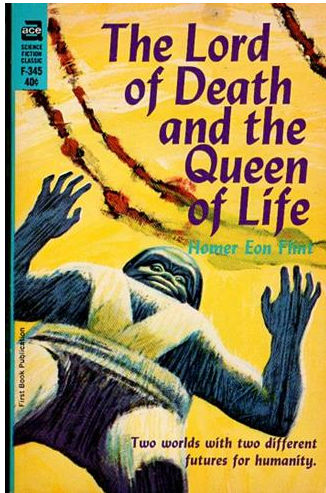
The novel ends with Jeb and Martin, and two other crewmen, aboard the Mach attacking Karkong. Martin is killed in an accident. The Mach bombs Karkong and weakens his forcefield. "-----Karkong stood reeling on the lifeless rock of a small, barren island [in the Aleutians, I gather]. The illuminating flashes of lightning were outlining a monstrous figure over thirty feet high. It stood in the center of its shattered field and it seemed to be clawing at the lightning. The thing's form was that of a human giant that had been burned black by its own heat. The powerful muscles of its body were partially melted so that the tendons ran like tree roots from arms to chest, from legs to groin. Even its huge hands had been seared to webs and one foot was shaped like a charred elephant's, as though it has served as a ground for its electric discharges. It was completely hairless and its face was a black putty lump of melted flesh. An ebony, tarlike substance oozed from its depthless eye pits as it did from its twisted mouth. Over-all, Karkong looked like a huge, human-shaped pile of pitch smoldering under intense heat.----"

The destruction of Karkong's field enables the Grid people in their Mass -- their abhorrence of violence overcome at last -- to destroy the "beast." This done, they fly away. Jeb "----saw the Grid Space Mass soar up and away. He watched it until it seemed to stop growing smaller. Then he realized that he was not seeing the Mass any more. He was staring beyond the opening clouds. He was watching a glittering star afloat in the serenely infinite heavens."

Those are the final lines, with a poetic quality distinct from the rest of the book.

Obviously I've had some fun sharing plums of bad prose with you. Still, there really are a few things that can be said for *Terror on Planet Ionus*. It gets the job done in 160 pages. I would rather read something like this than a novel written today (likely enough as part of some dreadful multi-volume series) that's padded out with dialogue, tedious development of characters' backgrounds, repetitive scenes of destruction, etc. If writing today, Adler could have turned this into an 800-page novel. Happily for us, he didn't.

Then the military and technical material is convincing, at least convincing enough. And Karkong was an interesting monster and I wondered if Stan Lee and Jack Kirby got the idea, probably sometime in 1964, for Crusher Creel, the Absorbing Man, from the 1957 hardcover edition of this book (published by Farrar, Straus, & Cudahy as *Mach 1: A Story of Planet Ionus*). If so, Lee and Kirby took the "absorbing" idea much farther than Adler did for their Thor comic, which I used to love so much.



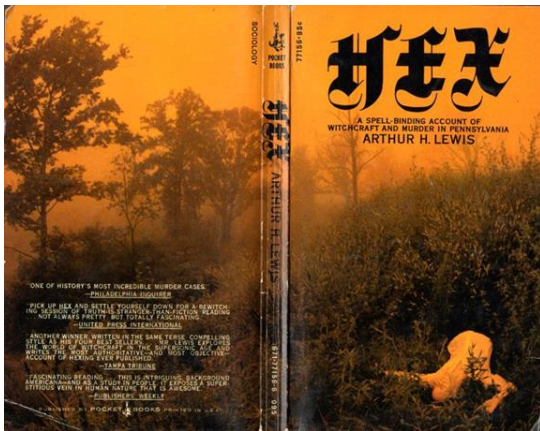
From around age ten to 13, I lived in Coos Bay, Oregon. For some reason, I associate the 1965 Ace paperback of Homer Eon Flint's *The Lord of Death and the Queen of Life* with the bottom of the Cottonwood Avenue hill. Why? Did I spot the book at someone's house there? But I don't remember having a boyhood friend down there. Why my memory of the book was associated with that location remains a mystery to me.

Anyway, a while ago I got Flint's work in the Ace paperback on interlibrary loan. It did not turn out to be a gem that I should have read back then. I read the first part, "The Discovery," of *The Lord of Death*, about 35 pages. Next comes the narrative by Stroker, son of Strok -- but I decided to return the book.

The few pages that I did read were mildly interesting, and I wondered if Lovecraft's later *At the Mountains of Madness* had been influenced by the account of the explorers looking around in the ancient buildings on the surface of Mercury. Flint's investigators find tape reels and a player, and are able to figure out the language without much trouble. (Flint seems to have no idea of the terribly

difficult linguistic issues that would actually be involved.)

It seems that Flint was leading up to the evocation of a civilization based on strength and aggression. Jack Gaughan's cover art and interior drawing come from this first half of the book. He didn't, apparently, concern himself with the second half, *The Queen of Life*; and, as for me, I didn't even get that far. I suppose I didn't give the book much of a chance. It was fun, though, to have a copy of the book in my hands again after so many years.



Another seen-long-ago book that popped unpredictably back into my consciousness was Arthur Lewis's non-fiction work titled *Hex*. I don't suppose I had seen it or thought of it in many years, but Pocket Books's eerie cover design had caught my eye back around 1970, when I was about 15. This one I did read straight through.

Strangely, it wasn't until I came to write this article that I realized that the white figure on the cover photo is lying on its back, its arms thrown out in death. I had seen it as a sinister figure on its belly, perhaps crawling. Now, it seems less weird.

The book proved to be a pretty good read. According to Lewis, belief in hexerei was rife in the York County/Pennsylvania Dutch country even as late as the 1920s.

John Blymire, a folk healer, suffered from headaches, anxiety, family troubles, job failure. A fourth-generation "witch" himself, he consulted numerous occult advisors to try to figure out who was persecuting him. His wife divorced him. Not a sociable man, he did befriend a couple of youngsters, John Curry (age 14), from a miserable family (alcoholic stepfather, etc.), and Wilbert Hess, whose parents were firm believers in hexerei. Wilbert's father Milton told Blymire about his troubles – the failure of his wheat, corn, and potatoes; the theft of some of his chickens; his remaining hens not laying; his cattle not eating or giving milk. Blymire visited the Hess farm and confirmed that it had been cursed.

There are a few bits that could have appealed, back in the early Seventies, to the Lovecraft fan in me, if I had read as far as them. Take this passage:

"-----Access to the Hollow ["Rehmeyer's Hollow, four miles east of Shrewsbury"] from the main highway, through narrow, winding, dirt roads, was difficult at bestWhen melting snows and spring rains flooded the normally swift-flowing Codorus [River], it was impossible to get either into our out of Rehmeyer's farmhouse.

Even today, almost within sight of a four-lane, limited access expressway sweeping traffic from Harrisburg to the nation's capital, Rehmeyer's Hollow is hard to find. Roads leading to this gloomy bit of Pennsylvania are narrow, winding and often muddy and the foliage hanging over the whole area remains dense. A musty scent of decaying flora and fauna hangs over everything and the casual visitor has an eerie feeling that he has suddenly stepped into a bygone civilization."

That's pretty Lovecraftian!

Hoping to improve his life, Blymire saw a “powwow woman,” Nellie Noll, who told him that the person who’d bewitched him was Nelson Rehmeyer. Noll told Blymire that, to free himself from Rehmeyer’s curse, he must either “Get the book or the hair” – that is, get *The Long Lost Friend*, a spell-book, and burn it, or get a lock of Rehmeyer’s hair and bury it between six and eight feet deep.

Blymire, Curry, and Hess went to Rehmeyer’s house with pieces of rope, intending to overpower the stronger man and compel him to tell where his magic book was or to get a lock of his hair. In the struggle that night, however, they ended up putting rope around his neck and beating his head with a log, kicking him, etc. until he died. Then they started a fire in the house.

When questioned, Mrs. Rehmeyer, who lived apart from her husband not far away, identified two men (Blymire and Curry) who had seen her shortly before the killing. The three were arrested and confessed. Blymire claimed he was now free from the witch’s curse.

Local authorities feared ridicule resulting from the inevitable publicity as newspapermen descended to cover the trial. Journalists had already got hold of the witchcraft issue and made much of the pervasiveness of superstition remaining in the age of modern progress. However, the district attorney blundered and led Clayton to say that Blymire had told him, “I got the witch,” bringing witchcraft into the court proceedings after efforts to suppress that aspect of the case. In succeeding interrogation, Blymire’s defense lawyer wasn’t allowed to lead the inquiry towards hexerei. Lewis doesn’t think the judge was deliberately trying for a cover-up, but that he thought the witchcraft angle was beside the point.

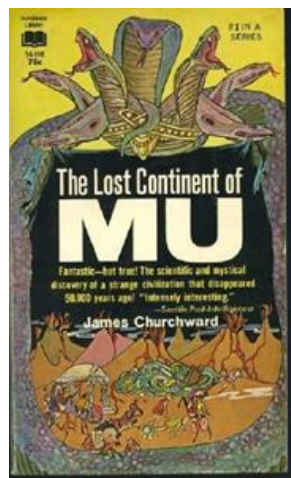
Lewis thinks, too, that the district attorney wanted to keep the witchcraft angle out of the case because he knew some of the jurors might believe in it themselves and be more sympathetic to perpetrators who had acted out of desperation relating to being hexed. He emphasized “murder for profit” as the motive. The jury’s verdict (Jan. 1929) was “Guilty of first-degree murder, with life imprisonment.” This puzzled me a bit because I didn’t think juries made verdicts about sentencing. Reporter Dudley Nichols of the *New York World* objected, saying Blymire was a victim of “York County’s medievalism and the sad circumstances of life, who belongs in the asylum,” but the Commonwealth had failed to take his beliefs into account.

Fourteen-year-old Curry was also convicted of first-degree murder, with the jury calling for a life sentence. Aply defended by the capable “Bulldog” Gross, Wilbert Hess received a verdict of “Guilty of murder in the second degree.”

Prison psychiatrists rated Blymire’s IQ at 72. Hess and Curry were paroled in 1939. The governor commuted Blymire’s sentence in 1953, after he had spent 23 years and 5 months in prison.

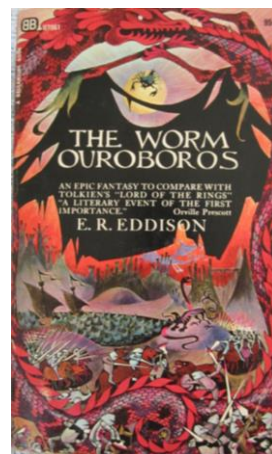
Lewis means to entertain readers throughout the book, usually by telling an interesting story. In telling the Blymire story (about 4/5 of the book) he generally refrains from nudges in the reader’s ribs. The last 50 pages or so describe encounters Lewis had with psychics, etc. in Pennsylvania. I wonder if Chapter 25, with Mrs. Anne Fauzio, for example, wasn’t fiction or “creative nonfiction.”

The book ends with an account of a man whose wife spent a lot of time and money on an occult healer. She ended up in a mental institution and the man was bitter – so the book doesn’t end on a note of amusement. Throughout the book Lewis mentions some alleged cures and seems to think that the placebo effect accounts for them.



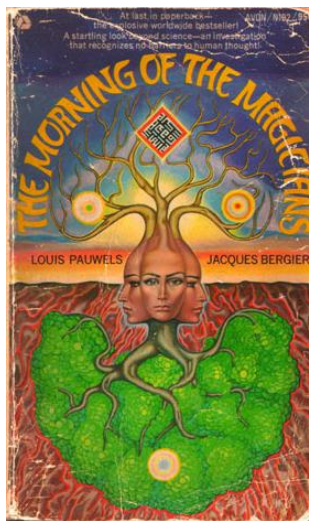
I liked highly imaginative fiction. That was one thing. Tarot cards, magic rituals, horoscopes, palm reading, etc. were definitely another thing. In the late 1960s, many counterculture people were attracted to peculiar items they could buy in head shops and to ’zines and books supplying supposedly arcane knowledge. Some of the books that publishers targeted at this juicy market had striking cover art that, to me, looked like that of science fiction and fantasy releases, and books like that could catch my imagination in spite of myself. A good example is the Paperback Library releases of the Mu books by James Churchward – *The Lost Continent of Mu* (1968) and several sequels.

My theory about their cover art goes like this:



1. Ballantine releases its edition of *The Lord of the Rings* as three books with art by Barbara Remington. 2. They're a huge success, so in April 1967 Ballantine releases E. R. Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* with a cover design also by Remington. 3. Paperback Library's artist imitates Remington's art for the Mu books. Compare the covers of *The Worm Ouroboros* and *The Lost Continent of Mu*: both have serpent motifs, a banner motif, small figures in antique costumes, etc.

After a few Rider Haggardish paragraphs about the author's discovery of the Naacal writings, the Churchward book proves to be simply unreadable – pseudo-archeology that is an obvious waste of time.



An example of another book that reprints supposed nonfiction but with fantasy-type cover art, is the paperback of Pauwels' and Bergier's *The Morning of the Magicians* (French publication 1960), which apparently was first issued by Avon in October 1968, and which, to go by Wikipedia's account, was popular with counterculture people and helped to pave the way for the New Age Movement. Wikipedia says that Pauwels eventually "returned" to Catholicism and disavowed a magazine he had edited that seems to have been along the same lines as this book. I doubt very much that I ever considered buying a copy of the book; the point is that it was something I saw from time to time and that caught my eye.

I recently got hold of a copy on interlibrary loan. The fun for me was, as I flipped the pages, spotting things like the following, on page 171: "It may be that Numinor, that mysterious Celtic center of the fifth century B. C., was not a legend [footnote: "cf. works of Professor Tolkien of Oxford"], but we do not really know." I do know Tolkien wouldn't have appreciated that reference.

And then on page 206, they (or a translator?) refer to C. S. Lewis's science fiction novel *Out of the Silent Planet* as *The Silence of the Earth*!

The Pauwels and Bergier book mentions Lovecraft and has some sentences on Arthur Machen's horror novella "The Great God Pan." Since *Morning* was widely circulated in the 1960s, I suppose it was something that attracted some then-young people, including Mick Jagger, to Machen.

There's mention of Swift and Mars's two moons and Dante's description of the Southern Cross constellation (alleged to be something no European of Dante's day could have seen).

Many pages are about what's become known as "esoteric Nazism," relating to some of the National Socialists and the occult. Rauschnig is cited for the source of Hitler saying that "I am founding an Order ... Man will be the measure and center of the world. The Man-God, that splendid Being, will be an object of worship," etc. The book isn't indexed and is grossly under-documented. A far better treatment is provided by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (2004), which has an appendix on fanciful pseudo-scholarship such as that of Pauwels and Bergier.

Other topics in *The Morning of the Magicians* include Rosicrucians, Emperor Asoka's founding of the secret society of the Nine Unknown Men, alchemy as "one of the most important relics of a science, a technology and a philosophy belonging to a civilization that has disappeared," Charles Fort, the Earth having had a series of moons, the hollow earth (or that we live inside a globe that contains the sun, moon, and sparkling things in blue gas which we take to be stars), the swastika, parapsychological anecdotes, etc. Atlantis is mentioned, of course. They discuss the possibility of visits from ancient alien astronauts -- and unsuspected mental powers, such that after "observing a star with the naked eye, a Maya priest would have been able to recompose in his brain the whole solar system and discover Uranus and Pluto without a telescope (such as certain bas-reliefs would seem to suggest."

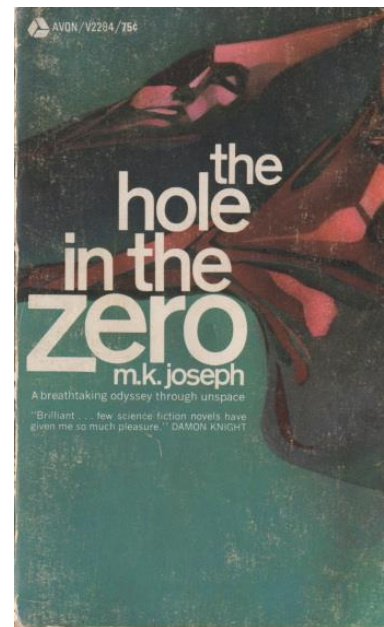
Their book is a real classic of the irrational, bogus-mystical, and ultimately depressing side of The Sixties.

Novels of the 1960s and 1970s sometimes exhibited affinities with the drug culture. Avon's cover art for M. K. Joseph's *The Hole in Zero* could easily have appeared on a Sixties record album of psychedelic rock music. And, in fact, even though this was another interlibrary loan book that I didn't finish, I'm going to contend that the novel showed the influence of a genuine drug-lit classic.

I did read approximately the first 35 pages. It is about at that point that the four space travelers Kraag, Merganser, Helena, and Paradine lose control of the vessel traveling in the continuum that lies beyond the edge

of the universe. It appeared that the remainder of the book would be a tedious, unreadable account of “trippy” experiences.

I shall quote a clotted mass of clauses and phrases accumulated from the novel’s pages:
...how the Free People lived, always aloft above the cloud-layer on their unresting birds (39)... He knew the rock and tasted it with all his senses (42)...blankets. [That is how the paragraph begins.] They filled the whole of the long corrugated iron huts, neatly folded and stacked... “We would therefore conclude with confidence that Ftoomian Nargostics is a development stock with significant and sound possibilities” (55)...a radar-station for the hydrofoils (58)...He pointed to the row of full-sized copies of famous paintings along the invisibly curving wall, all painstakingly disfigured; the Mona Lisa with a property beard, the Birth of Venus scribbled over with children’s drawings of ships and airplanes (74)...A taped brass band struck up “Happy Days Are here Again” (86)... For a long time, or even before a long time, it simply was, formless, static, undreaming. When it became aware of itself, it was conscious of two things, simplicity and potentiality (102)...She dissolved herself and drifted in a thick scatter of golden foam (104)...a dark-cowled figure...heavy leather-bound books... racks of alembics (105)...He licked the night-dew from the rocks; he sucked scraps of meat from splintered bones left by jackals; he chewed the bark of stunted bushes and scrabbled beneath them for grubs (114)...cosily vicious huddle of sailors’ dives, strip-joints and opium-dens (120)...“Great Khan,” panted the horseman, “we caught this wretch trying to sneak away on a stolen horse” (122)...The albino was dragged from the donkey and carried to the tallest of the stakes (124)...The survey ship came out of overdrive with a hyperphotic bang (130)...The round, featureless stone room was becoming unspeakably tedious to them (141)...After they had exhausted every topic of conversation, they sank into a bored and savage silence (145)...A tall, inhuman figure moved across his field of sight, like an enormous mantis, its body covered in green lacquered mail (149)...“Take it or leave it,” said the princess in a cross, childish voice (158)...they slowly drew near the frozen city (162)...The next seven years were busy ones. The palace was restored to its earlier splendor (170)...“The magic sword and bowl are obvious fertility symbols” (175)...Everything and nothing had both happened and not happened (186)...ANDROID PAY STRIKE (188)...The first one he tried turned out to be a water-world (190)...Behind them, in the blue sky, the thunder rumbled to itself: “Increase and multiply, my children, and replenish the earth” (191, the final words of the novel).



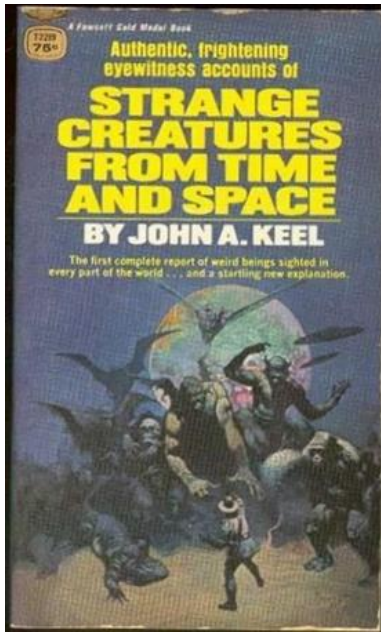
Whew! That stuff reeks of its period, like stale patchouli, and it has not aged at all well.

That bit that goes like this – “He licked the night-dew from the rocks; he sucked scraps of meat from splintered bones left by jackals; he chewed the bark of stunted bushes and scrabbled beneath them for grubs” – recalls the style of this passage: “I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. I was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud,” etc. That quote comes from Thomas de Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, written in 1821.

Emboldened by the great success of its Tolkien editions, Ballantine Books began to reprint other fantasy classics in 1967, and really took off in 1969 with its series edited by Lin Carter. From that point on, the challenge for a young Tolkien fan was more a matter of just keeping up, rather than of discovering books of interest. But there was a brief period in which Tolkien was all the rage but before the Ballantine fantasy series had issued more than a few books, when “Tolkienian” cover art might appear on books offering something quite different.

Less obviously aimed at the hippie and Tolkien markets was Frazetta’s cover for John Keel’s *Strange Creatures from Time and Space* (Fawcett, 1970). The subject matter would have been of some interest, although I am sure I would have been skeptical, had I actually started to read the book.

As a nonfiction account of strange occurrences, it is almost worthless, because no more than a handful of the anecdotes include citations, although he often makes a journalistic pretense by giving names, towns, and dates (usually from the 1960s, once he gets past some rehashed medieval tales, etc.). Where these exist, references are typically to obscure newspapers, dubious magazines such as *Beyond and Fate*, or to writers who write what I take to be the same kind of pop paranormal books, notably Ivan T. Sanderson; and the citations are



Keel also fails to win the reader's confidence when, for example, he refers to arachnids as "insects," asserts that "science, by and large, is a lot of bull," makes a crack about getting rid of one's mother-in-law in connection with a cannibal cult, suggests that the book of Genesis is derived from something called The Book of the Secrets of Enoch (which, if it is an ancient work at all, has to refer to an apocalyptic work written much later than Genesis even so), characterizes an elusive creature as the Abominable Swamp Slob and abbreviates it as A. S. S., and so on.

Keel's book is largely about Bigfoot/Sasquatch, UFOs, etc. It reminded me of the attention given to unidentified flying objects in the late 1960s, something I was aware of and somewhat interested in. So far as I remember, I was never interested in or impressed by Bigfoot; it seemed obviously to be a matter of hoaxes.

Keel does, at least, avoid a heavy-breathing UFO-nut tone. He writes of UFOs "scattering ordinary debris in their wake, tossing newspapers, shoes, and even peeled potatoes overboard as they cruised" the skies in turn-of-the-century incidents. "Even today UFOs often leave perfectly ordinary rubbish in their path, particularly after landing. This appears to be a simple psychological warfare gimmick. The discovery of mundane materials at a landing site usually leads investigators to conclude that the witnesses were

wrong or were lying."

Keel mentions "little green men" and the Loch Ness monster. It occurs to me that these are creatures that "all" of my schoolmates would have recognized in the 1960s-70s, but that don't seem to be mentioned now. I wonder if they would have much recognition with today's middle school or high school students.

Sometime after I began to explore the adult side of the Coos Bay public library as a kid of 11 or 12, in the late 1960s, I noticed the dust jacket of L. P. Davies's *Psychogeist*. That phantasmal figure against enigmatic darkness was bound to appeal to me.

When I read the title, in my mind's ear I didn't hear something sounding like "poltergeist," a word I can't say I knew then. I heard the title as "psycho GEE ist," with the G as in "get." It seems I didn't even ask myself what on earth that signified.

I doubt that I'd have persisted with the book had I checked it out 48 years ago, although the combination of science fiction, mystery, and weird tale had potential. But I might have been too confused to finish it. However, if I had stuck with it till the shambling monster appears in the final forty pages or so, no doubt I'd have read on.

There are times when I'd have felt that I could guess where the story was going, and been mistaken, e.g. with the secretive government installation, which actually doesn't turn out to be particularly important. The plot element with the installation worker whose hand was injured doesn't seem to have been integral to the story after all. The plot suggests that the solution to the situation will involve tracking down a story published in a children's comic paper 40 years earlier, but this doesn't really seem to develop. It's an odd mesh-up of deliberate red herrings to stretch the story plot out.



John Brunner's books used to be all over the paperback racks: Ace, Avon, Ballantine, Bantam, Dell; and DAW and del Rey, when those imprints got going. For this article, I'm hovering around the years 1968-1973 or so, which is when *Now Then!* (Avon, 1968) came out, with its eye-catching cover painting by Hector Garrido.

It contains three different novellas, but, since the author says that the middle one, "Imprint of Chaos," is a "conscious pastiche" of James Branch Cabell, I didn't bother to read that one. I gave James Branch Cabell a try years back because he was reprinted in the Ballantine fantasy series, but I never have cared for Cabell.

The first story in this Brunner collection is “Some Lapse of Time,” a grim visitor-from-a-devastated-future thing that would have kept me turning the pages 50 years ago, as it did in 2020. The hospital and home scenes are particularly convincing.

The last story is “Thou Good and Faithful,” Brunner’s “first-ever sale to a science fiction magazine,” though here it appears in a “somewhat different form.” Brunner acknowledges its origin in an idea he got while reading a Cliff Simak story, and that’s exactly what it’s like. It’s a story of planetary colonization, robots on a new world, and a fateful choice for all humanity: to go on desperately trying to find “jackpot” worlds that are uninhabited but suitable for humans, or to take the next step in evolution towards becoming “pure mind.”

Brunner liked the novella form. He’s right: it is well suited to science fiction, allowing development of suspense and a sense of mystery where appropriate, while avoiding padding.

I get the impression that the short novel – definitely a novel, not a novella, but only 160 pages or so – used to be standard issue in sf publishing, but a format that has almost disappeared. What a shame!

A pretty ordinary specimen of the type is Lindsay Gutteridge’s *Cold War in a Country Garden*. Putnam published it in 1971, and it was released in paperback in 1973 with a cover design that caught my eye. Then, it seems I forgot about that cover for decades – but remembered it just lately. I purchased a copy by mail.

The novel starts with the protagonist, Mathew Dilke, already shrunk to a quarter of an inch, in peril from ants in an English garden. He discovers a “fortress” -- a small wooden box -- which before long three other miniature human agents also use as a base. For it turns out that the big concern of Lord Raglen is not, in fact, finding a solution to overpopulation by shrinking humanity, but using tiny spies against the Iron Curtain countries.

The first half of the book is in the vein of *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Swiss Family Robinson*, about how they hunt (for insect meat), make fire, construct crossbows (from bits of sowbugs), learn to use venom (from wasps) for poisoned arrows, and so on.

When they discuss it, the miniaturized pioneers are vague about what process effected their transformation. How’d they get to be that size? The author indicates very vaguely that “drugs” were used. Nonliving things can’t be miniaturized. The tiny radio and other equipment that Dilke and company eventually get are produced by a laborious method. For the first stage, people who have been miniaturized to about a foot tall make the needed tools. Then two-inch people use those tools to make smaller tools. Then a team of engineers and craftsmen about half an inch high use those tools to make the things the quarter-inch agents need – the radio, clothing, boots, slide rule, etc.

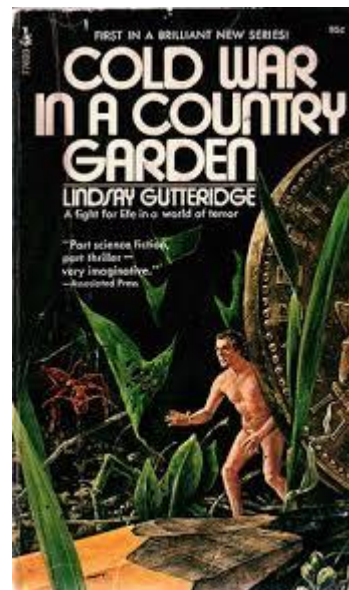
The novel leads up to a mission in Rumania, to plant a microphone in the scalp of Marshal Volsk, overhearing discussions of the other side’s capabilities. The mission fails and, of his team, only Dilke comes back alive, but he brings some good microfilm back with him along with Hyacinthe Yelwa Kasama, a Ugandan who’d been studying economics in Bucharest. It isn’t quite clear how or why she became miniaturized.

Gutteridge was working with the pop entertainment fad for spies using sci-fi technology, but I think the trend had pretty well run its course, (aside from the James Bond movies), by the early 1970s. This novel may safely be forgotten; there were two sequels, but I wouldn’t even buy ‘em at a garage sale.

I’ll conclude with a book I remembered seeing at a cousin’s house when I was kid: *Beyond Belief*. I might have tried cautiously and unsuccessfully to see if he would part with it for a little spare change. I’m not 100% sure who the cousin was, Ken or Steve, but the book I did remember and get from an online dealer.

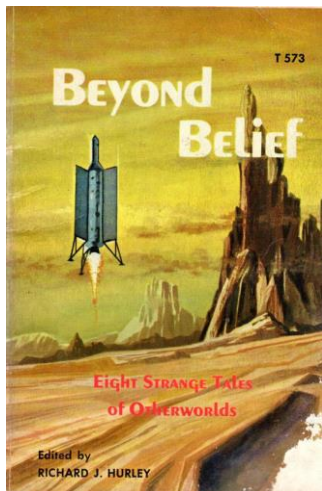
Beyond Belief Story #1: “The Hardest Bargain,” by Evelyn E. Smith. Rating: 2/5. It seems to me that *Galaxy* used to publish lots of “clever” stories, intended to be humorous, back in the 1950s, as if to show the world that sf wasn’t all a matter of pulp adventure or ghastly Orwellian prophecy. I’ve never had much use for this type of story; it’s certainly not what got me interested in sf or keeps me interested.

In a radioactive future, Earth trades art masterpieces and historical relics for food. The American president participates in an attempt to trick a trader from Fomalhaut. The upshot involves the real facts behind



Browning's "Pied Piper of Hamelin," of which the basic concept was probably familiar to us kids in the 1960s. Kids today? I doubt it.

Story #2 is Willey Ley's 1940 "The Invaders." It's an example of a bygone (I take it) variety of sf that really is almost exclusively about a technical/hard science situation and that possesses virtually no characterization or "human interest." It begins with a lingering description of artillery and its denouement is the destruction of the alien vessels thanks to a clever use of weapons. "Science fiction for engineers." Purely as such it might deserve a higher rating than 2/5, but I wouldn't have finished it if I weren't determined to read this anthology straight through. (Ley writes under a pseudonym but is identified by the book's editor.)



Story #3 is Asimov's "It's Such a Beautiful Day," which I don't remember having seen or read elsewhere. In 2117 people routinely go everywhere via teleportation Doors and rarely go outside, where robots maintain lawns, etc. that people apparently don't even see from windows. A 12-year-old boy finds he likes walking outside and his snobbish mother is agitated. The tension is resolved thanks to a reasonable psychiatrist. This story is based on an idea that Ray Bradbury could have developed; he would have written lyrically about the outdoors, and the satire might have been sharper-edged. Asimov's telling is likable. I rate it 3 out of 5

Story #4 is Sturgeon's "The Man Who Lost the Sea," which must have confused some young readers although, if they stuck with it or skipped ahead, they would have found most, at least, made clear. This reminded me of a William Golding novel I read years ago, Pincher Martin, also the thoughts and impressions of a dying voyager. 3/5

Story #5 is Clark Ashton Smith's "Phoenix." This one shows Smith in reasonably good command of the contemporary sf-adventure medium, with the idea of using atomic warheads to cause the almost-dead Sun to blaze again so that the frozen earth can become habitable and the few remaining human beings can emerge from subterranean refuges and repopulate the planet. It's told in the context of a loving couple who must be willing to sacrifice their personal happiness so that the earth has this chance. Smith writes sparingly of their relationship, keeping the focus on the science-fictional situation. The style was less rococo than in the fantasies for which Smith is better known, though some rare words are used. I was pleased to see Smith prove capable of getting away from the morbidity of his better-known work. The reprint credit goes to August Derleth for Time to Come, an anthology of original stories. 3.5/5

#6 is Matheson's "Third from the Sun," one that many science fiction readers will have encountered, kind of a groaner "surprise"-ending thing about refugees from a doomed planet venturing to start over on a new world. In fairness I thought this might have appealed to me if I'd read it as a youngster when this anthology came out in 1966. Now it's a 2/5 thing.

#7 is Leinster's "Keyhole," which isn't very skilfully realized, but remains somber and disturbing. Earth people need the moon for a fueling station to Venus and Mars, and get off to a poor start with the weird animals that live on the moon. And they aren't just "animals"... 3/5

The 8th and final story is Clarke's "History Lesson." At least as much as the Matheson does, this one strives for a punch-line effect, as we perceive the irony that the Venusians, puzzling over a relic of Terran popular culture, never will be able to. A reader might extract from the story a reminder to himself or herself that our own knowledge of much of the past is based on fewer relics than we would like. But there seems to me a little "cheapness" to Clarke's story. 2.5/5, I guess.

So this anthology rates as "passable."

In conclusion, this article has been about books, and, obliquely, about memory. I was quite a young man when I first noticed how odd memory is, or at least how odd mine is; how I could suddenly find myself remembering, despite no obvious trigger, things from years before. I like this quotation: "In some occasional states of the mind, we can look back much more clearly, and much further, than at other times. I would advise to seize those short intervals of illumination which sometimes occur without our knowing the cause, and in which the genuine aspect of some remote event, or long-forgotten image is recovered with extreme distinctness in spontaneous glimpses of thought, such as no efforts could have commanded."

--John Foster, Baptist minister, in an essay "On a Man's Writing Memoirs of Himself" as quoted by Grevel Lindop in his biography of Thomas de Quincey, p. 251. Lindop cites Foster's Essays in a Series of Letters to a Friend, 13th ed., London, 1838, p. 8.

I recognize the experience to which the Rev. Mr. Foster refers, and I (sometimes) followed his advice before I ever read it. For example, one time I was reading Anthony Trollope's thick Victorian novel Orley Farm before turning in for the night – it was a sequence about a fox hunt and a rider suffering an injury in a fall; and, without warning, I found myself remembering, from over 20 years before, the two women who comprised the staff of the learning resources center at the university where I taught, neither of whom I had seen in many years nor had ever been close to. Why should I remember them, and at that moment? I wrote a note about the experience.

It was the same thing with *The Hole in the Zero*. There was no obvious memory trigger, but there it was, suddenly remembered. Likewise with *Cold War in a Country Garden*. These books' cover art had, understandably, impressed me, and something I don't understand brought these books to mind many years after I'd seen a copy of either of them.

Perhaps readers of this article will recognize the same sort of mental experience. Do you suddenly remember books that caught your eye decades ago, but that you didn't read at the time and haven't seen since? If not, you might think the present author is a peculiar specimen of humanity, and you might be right.

Oh, and, on the topic of memory itself, I'll suggest readers take note of criminal psychologist Julia Shaw's *The Memory Illusion*, which calls into question the "recovered memory" industry (e.g. "satanic ritual abuse"). Her book has absolutely devastating implications, by the way, for a book it doesn't mention, John Mack's UFO book *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens*. I also liked Rupert Sheldrake's *The Science Delusion's* chapter "Are Memories Stored as Material Traces?"

There remain a few books whose covers or dust jackets made an impression on me and that I didn't read at the time – and perhaps never will read.

The wraparound dust jacket art and title for Andre Norton's *Moon of Three Rings* (Viking, 1966) enticed me repeatedly when I was a kid – I'd pick the book up and look at it; but somehow I didn't check it out and read it, and never have.

And there's Brian Aldiss's anthology *All About Venus* (Dell, 1968).

Hallet's *Congo Kitabu* was a book one used to see on the paperback racks (Fawcett, 1967), and the odd title, at least, has stuck in my mind. I think I'll pick that book up someday.

But looking over the list of the books discussed in this article, I ask myself: Did any of them turn out to be really good – to be books it would have been a pity to have missed?

The answer is, no. *Terror on Planet Ionus* is a good choice if and when you want sf pulp and nothing more than that. Folklore interests me and *Hex* avoided the gloating on ugliness that I associate with a lot of true crime accounts, so it's a decent read. I think I'll give Lewis's mystery novel *Copper Beeches* a try.

But, no. There was really nothing here about which I would say, "Oh, if only I'd read that when I was a kid!"



READER REACTION



Nic Farey fareynic@gmail.com

Thanks for this Bob, and I'm glad you found the time to get the ish out.

I'm obviously going to be most gratified by the review of *This Here...*, (It's All About the 'Boo, innit?) and I found your particular perceptions of my wayward self interesting, if a little wayward themselves. So let me do some 'splainin'...

Alcoholic content: a significant component of UK fandom (a group I have never philosophically left, geography notwithstanding) exists in two primary states: (a) "roaring drunk" (as you put it) or (b) woefully hung over, and thus fanac, or anything else, will be committed under one of those [conditions](#). It may be a clear observation to you that I make "shock value" statements, and although there's an element of truth to that, I rather reject the implication that this is done solely to elicit reader response. Of course (as I've said many, many times) reader response is our fundamental currency, so naturally I'm going to take steps to achieve it.

What I'd suggest, though, is that rather than simply being fandom's shock jock, (and I get your remark about such things "wearing thin") I'm really just trying to promote public discussion about topics of interest to the Faniverse in a forthright manner. In some ways this is what my esteemed BEAM co-editor Ulrika O'Brien would call "arseholes on parade" (and she's right, as usual), but I don't exclude viewpoints which are not necessarily my own - otherwise what's the point?

Jumping ahead in your review to the FAAn Awards (long one of my favorite hobby-horses), I need to correct you on a couple of things. Where, I wonder, did you get the idea that I am the "publicity coordinator" for the FAAns? (No such position exists.) The job title, perhaps grandly, is "FAAn Awards Administrator", though I grant you that "publicity coordinator" is part of the job description, making sure that awareness of the ballot is flung far and wide, which in my previous turn on the job was (and still will be) about as simple as making sure that qualifying zines listed in The Incomplete Register listing are all notified. This was successful in 2018 with 78 ballots received. You should know all this already, having voted that year yourself. Mike Dobson's massively revamped 2019 awards attracted only 19 voters, John Purcell's 2020 ballot a barely better 23. I do hope to turn the numbers back around. For good or ill, the awards are now associated with Corflu, but as I seemingly have to point out every time this gets mentioned, Corflu members do not vote in the awards in significant numbers. "Turnout" of this group is typically around 20%. A small aside: you note that the 2020 event had a paid membership of 65. The actual attendance was around 30.

A couple other smaller points:

You see me as a "utopian socialist", and I suppose that's fair enough, although I've tended to describe my base philosophy as "Marxist-anarchist-realist". As to what I might replace ultra-capitalism with, the cod answer is "almost anything else" (that isn't totalitarian). If I have a touchstone, still, it's Antonio Gramsci.

I'm not so sure I agree with "not many illos", since I do try to break up the text on at least every other page. I will concur that on-screen reading is a bit of a pain, but the design of *This Here...* remains one of a zine intended for print.

The music column (originally titled 'Tunes!') has been a fixture since the early days. You don't mention the footy at all, though...

Good arrers!

///I have to take your word for it that you are not often trying to make statements solely for their shock (and amusement) value, but that's the way it seems to me rather more often than just sometimes. (Not that this is necessarily a bad thing in the current fannish world). I do have to question your assertion that UK fandom including yourself enacts the bulk of their fanac either drunk or hung over.

Quite right that you are not officially a "publicity coordinator" for the FAAn Awards, but looking around I couldn't immediately find any reference to what your actual job title might be, and that seemed to be a pretty reasonable definition of what you are trying to do these days. Let me say again that I am fully supportive of your efforts to get the FAAn Awards better known, with much better participation than in the past. This hobby desperately needs some kind of relevant recognition of the creative people who produce fanzines, especially since venues like the World Con and Dragon Con seem to consider fanzines an antique anomaly.

I am not sure your term "Marxist-anarchist-realist" isn't composed of three mutually exclusive words. I think you ought to devote at least a few paragraphs from time to time in upcoming issues of *This Here* to exploring, and defining, what sort of political and economic system you would prefer to replace free-enterprise capitalism.

The problem in the past has always been that the human animal is capable of cooperating selflessly to oppose clearly defined menaces (to repulse that Visigoth Army coming over the hill, say), but when it comes to day-by-day realities, people will automatically put their own personal interests first, and their family and friends second. The good of society or the welfare of the nation become abstract terms that are easily ignored in the daily scramble to survive..

Even socialist societies that have never invented the idea of money (think the Incas, Mayans, Aztecs and other pre-Columbian South American societies), still had individuals and political factors determined that he and his clique should rule, and get all the symbols of power and wealth, including lots of concubines in the mix.

Modern socialist and communist societies have become either totalitarian dictatorships, or internally riddled with self-serving opportunists willing corrupting the system (sometimes both at the same time.) The ideal

of socialism, or even full equality for all under the benign rule of law are wonderful ideals, but I don't see how the ideals could ever become reality. Perhaps you have some thots on the matter.///



Ray Palm; raypalmx@gmail.com

I share your concern about the COVID crisis. The other day I told someone about all of my underlying health problems – weight, age, etc. – that made me a prime target. I said you know what will happen if I get infected. His on-point reply: “You're fucked.”

Good to hear your business is booming. Do you have a web page/list/catalog of items for sale? I don't remember seeing the details in Fadeaway.

I enjoyed the article by Dale Nelson, “The 1968 List,” because I've also seen how my tastes have changed since my young years. One of my first big comic book heroes was Adam Strange, DC comics. The character had to be modernized, showing more depth and getting away from dialog that included words like “gosh.” But when the Dark Knight dark stuff became the flavor of the month DC over-adultified Adam, turning him into an unsuspecting pawn – a stud – to repopulate Rann, its inhabitants laughing at him behind his back. Thanks, Alan Moore, for nothing. A lot of other fans didn't buy into this revisionism.

Tom Feller provided a good detailed overview of “The Fly,” the short story and movies it inspired. The article reminded me of a comment by Vincent Price on a TV talk show when the topic came up regarding the version he starred in. He claimed the ad campaign included this line: “The Fly is opening at a theater near you.”

If you don't hear from me after a long time either I was teleported via the zeta beam to a better world or I was permanently zapped thanks to some self-centered idiot who didn't bother to wear a mask.

///The two things that frightens me the most about the coronavirus epidemic is the inability of our Past President and his cohorts to accept reality about the crisis, let along doing anything effective about it, and the vast numbers of people who believe that if they catch it the episode will be nothing worse than a bad cold and they'll easily get over it. I wish the electronic media would show more footage inside hospitals with the wards jammed to the rafters with patients fighting for their lives and in absolute misery trying to survive the virus. Maybe then people would take the threat seriously.

I totally agree with you on the re-imaging of the classic Adam Strange character. I don't know who approved the idea of shifting his personality, but I don't see any evidence that the “new” character with the flawed personality is any more popular than the classic version. The original stories were interesting problem science fiction adventures. Adam's agenda was to be with his lady love on Rann and fighting off the menaces they faced. That original version was certainly popular with the readers when those stories first came out, and they sold well when DC reprinted the original run later on as well.

It seems to me that the people who run the major comic companies these days are thrashing around fighting an ebbing tide trying to somehow revive sales with more and more outrageous refitting of established characters hoping that the older readers will stick around while the revamp will miraculously attract lots of newer comic buyers into the fold. That tactic almost never works, as recent history continues to teach us.///



Jefferson Swycaffer abontides@gmail.com

I love Steve Stiles' cover! What I can't tell is...is this done with good old-fashioned cut-and-past zip-a-tone, or is it computer tone? It's marvellous in execution, and seriously adds to the “epoch” of the art, looking like something very 80's. Elegant composition, lovely stone-work, and emotionally evocative, with the stern-jawed hero and the scary demonic silhouette!

I'm sorry to learn that Steve is no longer with us, never again to produce a picture as engaging as this one, never again to hug and say howdy... “Death comes as the end,” quotha Agatha Christie, and it only serves to remind us -- memento mori -- to live as well as we can in the hours we have left.

Coronavirus woes, I'm okay, everyone I know is okay, but my home-town (San Diego) is having a flare-up, and is not taking “closing down” as seriously as it ought. I'm in an “essential” field of work, so I've still got my job. At least for now. Anything could happen. Stay safe, all y'all!

My local comic book shop is doing well. They even managed to keep all their employees. They're clever, though, doing split business as a collectible coins shop as well as comics. Always wise to diversify. I've noticed quite a number of comics appearing in an oversized, "magazine" size, format. The one I'm following is "Harley Quinn and the Birds of Prey." Palmiotti and Conner, who are titans, geniuses, heroes among heroes, in the writing and drawing biz. It's *funny*! And it's VERY well drawn. But why the darn oversized dimensions? It won't fit in standard storage boxes! Not cool!

re fanzines, one thing in their favor is the collapse of convention fandom, now that people are shunning large gatherings (or are if they have any darn sense.) I'm sorry to lose several local conventions, from the giant Comic-Con down to little niece-and-nephew cons like ConDor. These were always joyous events and I'll miss them terribly. Maybe fanzines will take up part of the missing social contact. And, of course, blogs and FaceBook. (Is it even meaningful to distinguish between "Fanzines" and "Blogs?")

Admired Dale Nelson's summary of past reviews of classic SF; not much to add, other than I quite agree with these reviews and have personally read about half of the books listed. The other half, I might just start in on searching for!

Had to skip over the summary and review of The Fly and its spin-offs and sequels. Those movies were too much for me; I saw the old original, and wish to God I had not. I very carefully avoided all the others. I can respect a good horror movie! I'm a big fan of Alien -- but I've never actually seen it, and nor ever shall. I wish I were in the same position re The Fly.

Taral Wayne: Aye, "Modest Medusa" is being fun. I think I like the "real world" sequences better than the "Yeld" sequences, but both are darn good! (My other favorite web comics are FreeFall, Spinnerette, Girl Genius, and Tom the Dancing Bug!)

Gary Casey: There is still *some* mighty good SF being written today. Vernor Vinge is a hero of mine, and a neighbor, too. I believe Jack McDevitt is still writing; check out his "Engines of God" for a seriously thoughtful thrill-ride -- or a thrilling intellectual exposition -- or both! Work your way up to "Omega," which, with Vinge's "A Deepness in the Sky," are quite possibly the two best "First Contact" novels ever written. Dinnae despair!

As ever and ever and always and always, Dan Carroll's back cover is magnificent! Conan the Barbarian, just the way we love him: sword bloody and shield battered, frowning and defiant. Same question as to the front cover: manual zip or computer? i love the fact that I can't tell the difference. The technology is a delight. In any case, the zip and fade-sepia background (that's almost certainly computer-done) are nice enhancements to a superlative pen-and-ink drawing. Remind me never to get Conan mad at me!

///I don't know what technique Steve Stiles used on the front cover art, but the bacov by Dan Carroll used zip-a-tone, an ancient technique popular before computers overwhelmed the art biz. That was an old piece of art I'd had in my files since 1980. Believe it or don't, I've got even older artwork here than that I never got around to publishing (don't ask! Many long, dull stories involved).

My suspicion about some comics going magazine/bedsheet size is that the publishers are trying to get the issues into convention book stores and other places that carry standard general circulation magazines. The problem with that is that there are not that many places left that carry any kind of magazines these days. This is a situation I've discussed in the pages of the zine before, but during The Plague retail display spaces for magazines has shrunk at a much faster rate. One wonders how some of the established print titles will be able to survive in the future.

I'm surprised you were overwhelmed by the original Fly film, to the point that you never saw any of the sequels or remakes. I am not a great fan of horror movies, but my objection is mainly to films that are excessively gory or glorify brutal violence. The modern splatter film is an established cash-cow business for the movie business, but I have no interest in seeing that kind of stuff. On the other hand The Fly pics, and the original Exorcist are very well done, and very effective without showing bodies being chopped to pieces or smashed to jelly as part of a convoluted story line.

From my point of view, there is so much good new science fiction and fantasy being turned out these days that I can't keep up with it. In both the last Hugo and Dragon Con Award nominations for best novel I had barely read even one of them out of the grant total. I think anybody who automatically decides all modern SF is junk hasn't given the field a fair chance.///



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

I was happy to see the latest issue of Fadeaway (#64) in my mailbox recently; after not hearing from you for such a long time I was worried the Coronavirus might have claimed you as a victim. I'm even happier to read that, because of the virus, your book-selling business has seen a resurgence.

I created an issue of my Ken Chronicles (#55) while I was in Florida and sent that out to my usual subscribers and trading partners; but I did not have my mailing list with me and resorted to looking up people's addresses online, through Xerography Debt, or emailing some folks. So, I'm not sure if I sent you that issue because I also don't have a list of the people I sent it to with me now in NY. I am currently preparing tKC #56 for printing and that will go out in a couple of weeks.

I enjoyed your longer than usual intro, comments, and reviews in your latest issue and would like to offer some feedback for you. I will have my own Covid-19 related tales in my next issue but, like you, I am going to be 77 this month and very concerned about the possibility of contracting this virus. For that reason, my wife and I finally got around to making up our Last Wills & Testaments. In a related note, I was sorry to hear of Steve Stiles passing; I always enjoyed seeing his artwork in your zine.

As far as the diminishing comics scene goes, I can only say that I stopped buying comings after they hit the \$4 price point. Besides, there are not a lot of titles that I really have an interest in anymore. I think you've got to be a pretty dedicated fanatic to continue collecting comics these days. On a related note, I recently decided to re-read my entire Carl Barks collection in chronological order. I have a nearly complete collection of original releases - and reprints of anything I could never find or afford back in the day (March of Comics, Firestone Giveaways, etc.). Being home more than usual due to the Plaque affords me plenty of time to enjoy all those Barks stories (some of which I don't ever remember reading in the past). When I finish reading the Barks stuff, I may revisit some of my Astro City, The Maxx, or older titles like Deadman and Enemy Ace.

Zines, on the other hand, are alive and well, from what I can see. I trade with quite a few people on a regular basis and there seems to always be a new offering out there to enjoy. It may not be like it was in the era of Factsheet Five, but it's not bad. There may not be as many theme-related fanzines like yours - devoted to Science Fiction, for example - but there seem to be plenty of perzines from folks who just enjoy telling their own stories for anyone who will read them.

Regarding Dale Speirs & Opuntia: I traded paper zines with Dale for quite a few years and I was always puzzled as to why he would put out up to three thin zines (each with a different theme), over a one or two-month period at times, and mail them out at different times - instead of putting them all in one envelope. Then, when he stopped producing paper zines and went to electronic versions only, he cited high postage costs as one of the reasons. Well, duh!

Now that he's gone over to the new format, I may have only searched for and read a few issues back when he first made the switch. I much prefer paper and don't like having to remember to search for someone's digital zine in the first place. Not to say that I don't enjoy trading PDF versions of zines; at least that way, it comes directly into my inbox and I don't have to remember to look for it on the internet.

I've heard about This Here... zine but, again, if it's digital only, I wouldn't have seen it because I don't look for those. If he puts it out on paper then I probably have just never chanced upon a copy. Similarly, I've never seen a copy of My Back Pages either.

Your Trump's Broken Promises was quite amusing.

I haven't gotten into the rest of this issue's articles yet but if I have any further comments, I'll send them along. Thanks again for #64,

Joe Napolitano justjoeguytwo@aol.com



Just got through reading Fadeaway 64. You sound very pessimistic. I am wondering what happens to your business if you don't make it to 78 or some other more advanced age? Will anybody take over? BTW, the link for 64 is posted twice. This brings up another issue, could you automate your store such that after you pass the whole thing

could go on like a programmed robot? It might make a pretty good s-f story?

Have you seen what's going on in Washington? Congress is trying to figure out what will be in the next stimulus bill but a lot of the hard bottom line bargaining is done off camera. The public is not there. Maybe that's a good thing? I guess they thought too much transparency would be bad for business but not necessarily for Congress? Who knows what they were thinking but if I had to guess I'd say it's because it gives certain people an advantage if they keep other people in the dark.

When it comes to comic books it seems to be the case they'll find a way to survive somehow. They've always found ways to survive in the past but these recent changes are a bit much. But there's still some demand and somehow somebody will fill it. I think you spend too much time reviewing old s-f novels. I can't seem to remember reading any one of the books reviewed even though they all seemed familiar. In fact I have most of those in my collection? But I would have to look inside some old cardboard boxes to be sure. Are any of those valuable if by some miracle they were still in very good condition or better? They can't be worth more than a buck apiece?

As usual you do a good job and have a very readable writing style. I keep thinking you must be a professional writer.

Ah yes I remember watching *The Fly* in the movie theater back in the 50's. But I didn't like it. It was too horrible for my taste and strangely it just repulsed me more than anything else. That plus the constant screaming inside the theater was too overwhelming. But here's a trick question for you about this movie: Who played the Fly in the original 1958 version?

And then there's Charles Fort who didn't take himself seriously and neither did most other people. How could anyone think the guy was for real? He was just writing about fake news stories. Come to think of it most of what's in the paper seems to be more like a fantasy than anything else. Is that why they call them stories? But if you like that kind of thing it can be like reading a prozine. Actually better since a paper only cost 50 cents.

///What would happen to my book biz if I should die unexpectedly, or soon, has concerned me for some time. It especially concerns me now, during the time of *The Plague*. I have a will leaving everything to my younger brother, with a friend who is familiar with my business as the estate executor. My brother is a physician, a specialist who makes more money in a week than I do in a whole year, so except for my personal comic book collection, he has absolutely no interest in any of the other material. Clearing the bank account and selling the house would be easy, but I suspect my executor and my brother will just decide to shove all the material in the warehouse into the canal and be done with it.

In my opinion most of the people in Congress are not happy about spending more money that the government doesn't have to help boost the economy and rescue people from the economic disasters *The Plague* has created. However, if they don't do something, at least symbolically, they will lost the next round of elections, so they are forced to generate more programs that will, in theory, move more deficit money out into the hands of families and businesses. One of the things that bothers me is the vast sums of money that were allocated for programs to promote testing, or to buy medical equipment, or to aid overcrowded hospitals is not being allocated or spent when it is allocated. What's the point of creating available funds if they don't get used?

I hate to disappoint you, but most old SF/fantasy books, particularly paperback books, are almost never worth much money. One of the good things about the science fiction field is that worthwhile books get reprinted, often. And often a lot of books that weren't so hot get reprinted anyway, since the publishers know there are always new readers coming into the market to whom those titles will be new anyway.

In theory first edition hardback books sometimes get to be worth more than their original cover prices, but even that is a toss-up, and depends on how popular the author is/was, and how many copies were originally published.

For example, Stephen King is certainly a very popular author, but most of his first edition books don't sell for much money because so many copies were originally sold that there are plenty of copies out there to buy. As titles age, and the number of available copies diminishes, then sometimes those old titles become worth money. But again, you have to find somebody who will pay big money for a book that most science fiction fans just want to read. There are a few dealers who semi-specialize in rare and expensive SF/fantasy/horror print material, but I have to wonder how successful those businesses really are.

I appreciate the compliment about my writing, but I am not a professional author. I sell books; I don't write them.///



Rich Dengrove; 2651 Arlington Drive, #302; Alexandria, VA 22306

Lots of good articles in Fadeaway 64.

By good luck, I seem to have kept away from people, like the Steve who died from Coronavirus. Not that friends haven't died on me. Ned Brooks shouldn't have been on that roof. On the other hand, I don't know why my friend Chris died. All I know is he had to receive a lot of infusions. From such experiences, I am always wondering how much I should fear death. Probably not at all: It will happen sometime no matter what we do. ...Not that I don't fear death

From there, let's go literally to the opposite topic, comics, although many comics are not comical in any way. I agree, in the '50s, most kids, when they wanted a comic, went to a pharmacy, a newsstand, or some other outlet. I rarely bothered because comics seemed to appear in my house magically. However, I know where one title came from, Donald Duck. My father loved those comics and subscribed. Too bad he never knew Carl Barks scripted it.

Let's go to fanzines now. Weirdly enough, My fanzines, JOMP and JOMP, Jr., have been going longer than Opuntia. I started JOMP in 1984. Like Dale, I also have had a habit of writing on arcane topics. However, we differ in how our articles are arcane. Recently, I published two articles, in JOMP, Jr. on occult magicians in the Vatican. One that the Pope didn't dare fire and one the sitting Pope was a fan of. Also, I have recently decided to devote articles on my life with the Federal government in JOMP. For instance, sweeping up after Ketchup as a Vegetable.

From fanzines, we go to Dale Nelson's article on his 1968 reading list of science fiction. He read Asimov's *Fantastic Voyage* (1966) then and re-reads it now, He notes that an alpha-male American agent was trying to make hay with a beautiful lady scientist. Typical Isaac. In 1972, he published *The Sensuous Dirty Old Man*. Not one of his better known books. Now I remember it because one of my favorite anecdotes arose from it. George Wells bought it but Asimov couldn't make the convention; so George had an incredible number of people, famous and lowly, autograph the book. Ned Brooks tried to sell it for \$400 but to no avail.

This article jogged my memory on that and also on how different the future looked then. Few people had any notion that a computer revolution was in the making. Yes, in Lester del Rey's *Outpost of Jupiter* (1963), rocketships could reach Jupiter; but people were still using typewriters and punch cards. Furthermore, people believed we were going toward another ice age, like in Robert Silverberg's *Time of the Great Freeze* (1964).

Another article I liked concerned the history of a popular film, Tom Feller's on "The Fly." Of great note was that, in the original "Fly" with Vincent Price, the director had to do several retakes because he and a co-star could not stop laughing at the dialogue. Not good in a serious film. I wonder if that had anything to do with why some remakes and sequels of "The Fly" have been rated better than the original.

The articles are finished and now we get to the letters. I tend to agree with Taral Wayne: Charles Fort was no scientist. If I remember reading Fort's books right, his evidence was mostly newspaper articles. The problem is some news articles, written during slow news time, haven't had much to do with the truth, like in Mark Twain's *Virginia City, NV Territorial Enterprise*. Even contacting the teller of a tale, like he did once, would not be science. However, contacting another observer would be closer to science.

On the other hand, Charles Fort was great at tall tales. They're needed by the inner man if not the outer man. In fact, I think some tall tales are worth their weight in gold.

Also, I agree with you, Bob, in your comments to Gary Casey, that there's too much LGBT in science fiction and fantasy these days. It helped ruin Gail Carriger's steampunk for me. Not that that much heterosexuality wouldn't ruin the novels for me too. Not when sense of wonder takes a higher priority than sex.

Finally, we come to Bill Plott. How about a mantra a little different from yours:

"You remind me of a man. What man? The man with the power of Hoodoo. (Who do?) You do."

The movie where someone said that, I doubt, was "The Power" (1968); instead, I bet it was "The Bachelor and the Bobby Soxer" (1947). Which starred Cary Grant and Shirley Temple. Of course, teenagers may have been repeating that mantra a lot at the time.

That's it for Fadeaway #64.

///You are right that sooner or later we are all going to die. However, I would greatly prefer that my own death would come some time in the far future, like say when I'm 107 years old, hunched over my psycho-computer,

composing my last article for the new psychically endowed mega issue of *Fadeaway*. Not, please, next week, wracked by fever and wheezing my lungs out due to COVID-19.

"Sweeping up after ketchup as a vegetable." Huh???

The alpha male in "Fantastic Voyage" trying to hit on the sexy lady scientist was not a plot device created by Isaac Asimov, but rather was part of the movie. Asimov did not write the movie, or have anything to do with its creation. He did write the novelization of the film, for a flat fee, and he tried to inject some elements of scientific plausibility into what is basically a fantasy film masquerading as science fiction, a typical Hollywood Sci-Fi Flick.

From speaking with various authors, it seems that creating novelizations of films and working from the shooting script is generally viewed as a plum job, a well paying assignment that can be knocked out with no real effort on the part of the writer, since all the plotwork, characterization, and background is already laid out for them. I don't know if I could do that kind of work, writing a story from somebody else's script, but my opinion seems to be in a real minority, and apparently Asimov was happy to spend a weekend cranking out the novelization of "Fantastic Voyage", and cashing the \$5,000 check the job paid (which would be equivalent to \$22,600 today).

According to the actors in "The Fly" movie, Vincent Price and David Hedison cracked up repeatedly during the filming of the scene where they see the creature with the head of a human and the body of a fly caught in the spider web because it looked so stupid. The scene is much more effective in the actual movie.

I think most the remakes and later sequels of "The Fly" work because the producers of those productions were determined to produce quality work that would score big at the theater box office. They succeeded admirably. The 1980s versions are excellent stand alone films that surpass the original and hold up well today.///

Bill Plott, 190 Crestview Circle, Montevallo, AL 35115

I hope things are going well for you in these surreal times. Certainly better than the gloom and doom opening of this issue. It is a tense time, intensified by the "leadership" of the past Moron in Chief and the indifference of such a large portion of the population to the fact that a pandemic is serious business. I commented to a friend recently that I was puzzled some years ago when I heard an Arab leader refer to the U.S. as arrogant. I no longer puzzle over that comment. Our reaction to the pandemic is incredibly arrogant: We Are Americans And We Will By God Have Our Rights. We have been spoiled by decades of prosperity and unparalleled freedom. Sadly, Trump's base cannot see the steady erosion of those freedoms with his dictatorial approach to the presidency.



Well, on to another aspect of the crisis or as you put it: Comic Crisis #7,926. There was a period of a couple of months when stores did not receive shipments of new comics, thus halting the walk-in trade, a staple of their business. I checked magazines at two local chains last week. Books-a-Million had the July-August Fantasy & Science Fiction but still May-June of Analog and Hitchcock's. Barnes & Noble had only May-June of the fiction mags on hand. There has been talk online that both chains are going to cut back on magazine stocks in the future.

I don't really know about comics because I don't buy them except for the occasional Uncle Scrooge. Well, I did buy two Doctor Who comics last week because my grandson Atticus, 10, has become totally immersed in that series. He thought one of them was cool and the other just so-so. The same with the artwork in the two issues. I found the artwork crappy in both, too cartoonish for a serious story. But my real problem with comics today is the darkness. Whatever happened to four-color? Practically all comics today have this dark wash over every page. I hate it. In a conversation with a comic artist at a con last year, he said that is just the way comics are done today, that's what people want. He does do four-color type work on some of his kids comics. As I said, I hate that presentation. Now, I'll just go over here in the corner and try to be old-and-out-of-the-way.

Jumping to another aspect of comics, you commented on how we grew up with stacks of comics to be shared and traded with friends. I agree that comic books gave many of us a head start on learning to read and becoming proficient at reading.

You wrote: "What do youngsters use today to learn how to read? Do internet abbreviations and emoljons [sic] do the job? I don't know. Can you learn to read from a Twitter feed/ Is there a Sesame Street equivalent on the internet?" Atticus, who has been with us since he was about a year and a half old, has always

been exposed to books. Consequently, he has been reading well above grade from the time he entered first grade, maybe even kindergarten. He got into "chapter books" early and dearly loves series such as the 39 Clues and Lemony Snicket.

Yet, he is a product of his generation. Kids today come out of the womb with a keyboard in their hands. That is the world they are entering, and we must accept it and adjust to it. There are some wonderful reading and math programs available on the internet and on DVDs today. I think they fill some of the void left by comics turning into an adult medium. We allow Atty a fair amount of freedom, but we do clamp down on YouTube, which can have some pretty inappropriate content at times. I do have concern over the addictive nature of gaming. In fact, a pandemic rule recently arrived at here is no gaming before lunch. Read, watch TV, find something else to do in the mornings. That seems to be working for now.

By the way, although they are available on my phone, I have never used an emoji. What I think is really dumb is when someone responds to a message with eight or smiley faces, praying hands, etc. Hell, I have no idea what a lot of those symbols mean when I see them.

I enjoyed your fanzine reviews. I am, of course, familiar with Rich Lynch's My Back Pages through our SFPA connection. I see Nic Farey's This Here occasionally. He sent out a link via email, and if it is not too many pages, I print it out.

I cannot sit in front of the computer and read a 20-, 30-, or 40-page fanzine. I exchange hard copies of fanzines with a couple of other old codgers, David Hulan and Fred Lerner. There is something almost comforting about having a printed zine just laying there, waiting to be picked up and read. When I am in waiting rooms (or a bar when it was safe to go there), I am always curious about what people are doing. Usually, there are only two people reading paper, maybe a woman with a paperback novel and me with a fanzine, magazine or book. Everybody else is staring at their smart phones and working their thumbs. I suppose many of them are reading, but....

I always enjoy lists, so it was fun seeing Dale Nelson's for 1968. I wish I had lists of books that I read in various years. The closest I can come now is the reviews I've written for my SFPA zine, Sporadic. I have them indexed in a Word file dating to my reentry into fandom in 2012. There were not many titles that were familiar from his list, partly because I never read any novelizations of movie scripts. Two titles that jumped out at me were John Christopher's The White Mountains and Lester del Rey's The Runaway Robot. I have not read them, but they are at arm's length almost as I write. They were saved from a box of books belonging to my late daughter, Atticus's mom. I may crack them open one of these days. I probably read a few others on Dale's list but memory fails me.

Another fine in-depth look at a SF classic by Tom Feller. I never read the short story, but I quite enjoyed both the first and the remake versions of The Fly. I agree that Jeff Goldblum is underrated as an actor.

I agree with your rejection of Gray Casey's comment that "What passes for science fiction these days is pure shit." I have found a number of very good authors since getting back into the genre. As I recall Gary made a similar comment about all television when he joined us in SFPA a few years ago. There were many refutations there because there have been some really excellent series in recent years. And thanks to Gary for identifying the site of the couch con.

///Well, I am still alive and have not caught the coronavirus (yet). I consider this a triumph considering how rapidly the virus has been spreading and the devastating consequences it is causing. People who do not die from the crap often end up with lingering after effects, and of course, big hospital/medical bills to remember the experience by. That vast numbers of people believe they will never catch it, or that even if they do it will be no worse than a bad case of the flu astonishes me. But then, quite a lot of things stun and coggle me in the year 2020, a year that will, I am certain, manage to live in infamy.

New comic book issues are shipping again, but I notice that some comic companies have vanished in the meantime. I think it is too early to say whether The Plague coupled with DC Entertainment's decision to sell their product direct to stores will adversely affect the industry, but my gut feeling is that this double whammy will not end well for the comics biz.

I've never kept a list of books I've read. For one thing my reading is wildly erratic, spread out over a number of different genres, from traditional books, to pulp magazines, dime novels, story papers, ebooks, comics, graphic novels, and fanzines. Trying to keep track of all that would take away time from reading, or from listening to OTRadio shows, so keeping a list seems counter productive to me.

I am also not sure what compiling a list of material read accomplishes anyway. Even if you limit yourself to physical printed books read, and discover that after six months or a year or whatever time period you decide on, that you've read X number of books, what does that prove? I already know I read a lot of stuff. I don't know anybody that would be impressed by how many books I might have read.

Back when I was in the 6th grade in school that was important. You got bunny points and extra privileges for reading a lot of books. I recall one other guy in the class and myself were always way ahead of anybody else, so we got to work with the opaque projector, and design posters, and lead the class in group activities, and do some other crap I've pretty much forgotten. Some other kids were mildly impressed and mildly envious, but not many, as I recall. Nowadays, a big list of books read would matter even less.

I find I can read fanzines on a computer these days by reading pages until I get tired, or distracted, then book-marking the place, and come back later to finish more pages. Sometimes I read a whole zine in one setting, but altho I don't dislike reading from a computer screen as much as you do, I am not thrilled about reading a lot of pages at one setting. Luckily most fanzines are composed of natter, short articles, columns, letters and other varied stuff, so stopping and picking up again is no great inconvenience or distraction from the whole presentation.///

Darrell Schweitzer, 6644 Rutland St.; Philadelphia, PA 19149-2128



First of all, let me thank you for continuing to send me FADEAWAY even though I have been remiss in responding of late. It is one of my favorite fanzines. The days in which fanzines were printed and mailed cheaply are long behind us, so I do appreciate that you have gone to some expense to keep me reading. But since the issue at hand is dated July and this is still July, I guess I am not too much of a deadbeat this time.

I am a bit younger than you (68 this August 27th) but I don't feel such an intense race against time yet. Maybe I am given to that common delusion of people my age that "I have another twenty years." History is certainly full of exhausted "old" men who dropped dead at ages considerably below mine, and some of my contemporaries are starting to make their exits, although, it must be admitted, the ones who have died of late tended to have obvious medical problems which accounted for their "early" demises.

That being said, I am not living in terror of Covid 19. I am taking all sensible precautions, which means I wear a mask when I go out and socially distance. Any decent person would do this simply out of concern for others. I wash my hands when I come back from any sort of shopping trip. But I walk to the Post Office three or four times a week. It is not only a form of exercise, but I entertain the superstition that it is bad luck to leave money lying around when I could have it, so I pick up what money I see, which can range from a few pennies to (the record for this year) \$32 all in one trip. I haven't seen any of my friends except via Zoom since about March. My last convention was Boskone and I don't know when I shall get to another one. I have a feeling that "virtual conventions" are here to stay. The one advantage they have is you don't have to travel, so people from all over the world can join in real time. I participated in the Amazing Stories convention. My reading wasn't much (3 attendees), but the dead dog party was great and went on for hours. We had people from all over the country there, and a couple from abroad, including Somtow Sucharitkul live from Bangkok. I hadn't actually talked with him in about 25 years.

But I digress. I do not think we are just waiting for the Reaper to come and claim us. If anything, the Reaper is going after the stupid and selfish people, so if you follow a few simple rules, wear a mask, don't go out much, keep your distance, and avoid crowds (particularly indoors) then your chances of survival are significantly increased. It is not like the Black Death, which struck down beggars and princes equally. You can actually stack the odds in your favor, particularly if you live in one of the more civilized parts of the country, which I would guess Oxford Massachusetts is. If anything, we are seeing evolution in action. The real idiots are self-eliminating.

As for the survival of comic books, I don't remember if I told this story before or not, but bear with me: A colleague told me that when his son was about 12, he (the writer colleague) got out his own comic book collection and showed it to his son and his son's friends. The boys were interested, but they had never seen comics before. This would seem to indicate that the market is still there for comics to actually be sold to children. The problems are cost and distribution. When you and I were kids, a comic book may have been one of the first purchases we made, other than candy. Comics cost 12 cents when I was in grade school. (The 10-cent

ones were just gone, but I already knew about church rummage sales and even a thrift shop, so I found some there.) You could get them about anywhere you bought candy, in drugstores, in Woolworth's, at actual newsstands, etc. But nowadays comics are printed on good paper, cost around \$3 and up, and are sold at comic shops in malls, which a kid can only reach if parents take him or her there. Most comic book buyers are adults.

This does not necessarily mean that the comic book industry is doomed. If those adults are entirely people who started reading comics as children, then, yes, the audience is going to age out. But if comics are something that people start reading about the time they are old enough to go to malls on their own (i.e. teens), then this may still be a viable market. I got to see some survey figures for the Davis Magazines (ANALOG, ASIMOV'S, ELLERY QUEEN'S, HITCHCOCK'S) once in 1980. In those days at least, the average age for the science fiction readers was the middle thirties. It may be higher now. But the average age for the mystery magazine readers was about 55. And it was mostly women. The typical "new" reader of ELLERY QUEEN'S was a lady between 55 and 60. This suggests that mystery magazine reading may be something that women do in old age when their children are grown and they have retired from their jobs. If so, there will always be retirees, so there is no reason to think this can't continue. I am suggesting that something similar may be happening to comics, and there will be no shortage of 15-20-year-olds to keep things going. At the same time, yes, it does look like DC has just shot both feet off. If they go under, though, someone else will fill the niche. In any case I do not think they will go under because the comic-book movies, based on franchises of popular characters, are enough to float the entire industry.

I enjoyed the article about "The Fly" and its iterations. The original story is one of those that appeals strongly to the emotions (like Jack Finney's original *The Body Snatchers*) and doesn't have to make scientific sense. One can well imagine this being rejected by John W. Campbell on scientific grounds, but it reached a wider audience than anything ever published in *ASTOUNDING* other than (ironically) Campbell's own "Who Goes There?"

As for George Phillip's question of Richard Shaver's sanity and what Ray Palmer knew, well, it is hard to say because Palmer had more than a bit of P.T. Barnum in him, and was long in showmanship and maybe a little short on integrity. He was virtually the father of Ufology, which he got himself pretty much run out of that field by his occasional hints that he might just be kidding. But Palmer let something interesting slip in an unguarded moment in an article called "The Facts" in the July 1958 issue of *FANTASTIC*. This was an early Cele Goldsmith issue. It had been ten years since the Shaver Mystery was at its height and now enough readers had heard about it and were curious. So *FANTASTIC* did one Shaver issue, complete with a new novella by Shaver. (The readers swiftly concluded that Shaverism was a load of crap, and that was the end of Shaver in SF magazines, although Palmer continued to rerun much of the material in his *HIDDEN WORLD* magazine.) In this non-fiction piece, Palmer relates a visit to Shaver's home. He comments at first he thought Shaver was nuts. Shaver would drop his shoes heavily on the floor at night to scare away the "cave people." But then Palmer heard Shaver talking in his sleep, in four distinct voices, which were arguing about how much they could let Palmer know, etc. When Palmer mentioned this the next morning, Shaver said, "Oh, those were the cave people. I'll tell them not to bother you." And he clammed up, much to Palmer's frustration. The "cave people" were not heard from again in the course of the visit. If this is true Palmer must have known that the phenomenon was something that came from within Shaver's mind.

Keep up the good work. It ain't over till it's over.



Brad W. Foster - jabberwocky2000@hotmail.com

Getting settled in to the new house, at least half of the boxes unpacked, got the studio space organized to work in, and slowly finishing up the million and one things have had to deal with past year, so that in the past month, I've actually finished a half dozen pieces of art for various projects I had to put on hold- probably more than I had finished in the entire six months before that. Yay!!!

And getting *Fadeaway* #64, totally lacking in any contribution from me, got the fire burning to finally do the latest *Zero Hero* installment. Was fun working on a new one for this series after having to put aside for so long. At some point, going to have to figure a way to gather all of these together in one pub.

Good to read that the mail order book selling has picked up for you and doing well these days. I had something like a half dozen festivals and conventions set up for the spring, and -all- of them were cancelled, pretty much shutting down my single major source of income these days. Of course, weirdly enough, all of those shows would have been smack in the middle of trying to make the move from one house to the other, and that was a full-time job on its own for me for over a month. Not sure if I -could- have swung both the house move – and trying to work all of those shows at the same time. Weird bad news/good news kind of situation for us.

And I'm going to have to start figuring out that whole mail-order stuff myself. Had already been wanting to clear out some stuff for years. But now, having moved into a house about half the size of the old one, I -have- to get some stuff out of here. Lots of records, books, and toy robots I'm hoping to find new homes for, and maybe generate a few bucks to at least make up for a little of the lost income from the art festivals. Big thing now is getting all of that stuff unpacked and organized so I know what I -have- to sell!

Cindy and I being careful these days. She worked at home for about seven weeks in the middle of our move as well, but a few weeks back they re-opened her office. She's probably the only one there who is still wearing her mask, keeping things clean, etc. I just moved into the bottom of one of the "risk" categories, turning 65 this year. (Yeah, I know, still a spring chicken to you!) Still in decent enough health, and while tired from the physical work of weeks of moving, it didn't kill me. Just keep hanging in there.

Your note on the passing of Steve Stiles just shows how, while we all might still -feel- young in her heads, we're not, and gots to be careful! Steve was such an all-embracing part of fandom for me, will be odd not seeing new work popping up any more.

I've got a friend here in Dallas who has owned a comic book store for decades, gone through several moves, ups and downs. He's still hanging n there, but, yeah, it's so "what's going to happen next??" kind of thing. Living through the back issue and book trade right now, which has always been a big part of his biz, but loss of the new-issue market certainly isn't helping. I have to admit I've not bought a new comic in ages, just cannot afford the luxury. Hell, most of my books have either been gifts or things found at used book stores, and usually out of the super-discounted bins. So not like I've been helping out any of these places myself much. Still holding out for that big lottery win.

And yeah, fanzines are no longer what they were when I was growing up. Things change, we got to change with them, I guess.

Enjoyed Dale's look back at his early reading, I think I have read about a third of the books he covers. Been having to do some re-reading around here recently (again, not a lot of budget for new books, and the used book stores have all been closed). Not quite as far back as 1968, have been diving back into Kurt Vonnegut and various James Morrow's like "Towing Jehovah" and "Only Begotten Daughter". One nice thing about having a horrible memory is they are new books again to me, so can enjoy this second time!

I should try to unpack a few more boxes now, and got to work on painting those boards I got to close in the new patio to make a kitty-palace for the new batch of cats, and oh yeah, got to paint the dark brown garage door white, right now the garage heats up like a sauna every day, and then.... ah, new home ownership!

///I am also glad to hear you are getting settled in after your disastrous tornado encounter. I think the situation with conventions and shows being cancelled is going to continue into the future, probably the distant future. Of course, time will tell.

Some comic and SF conventions are doing virtual shows, then placing the panels and events on the internet so that people can experience them even after the convention has officially closed. At least a few of those shows have had virtual dealer room setups. I am not sure how that works, but perhaps you could be a virtual art dealer in some of the ones that will be setting up this fall.

For that matter, I thot you had a website that advertised a lot of your art posters, folios and suchlike. Is that still operating? If it is, please send me the link and some sort of illo promo, and I'll be happy to run it in the upcoming *Fadeaway* issue. I probably have your old web address in my humongous email directory file, but please let me know what it is again, to be certain I plug the correct location.

Here is another thot. I realize you give your art out to fanzines for free, but it wouldn't hurt to ask for a plug now and then. If you have some old art in your files, or even from your for-sale files, you might consider sending it along to George Phillies to run as a cover for one of the N3F zines, say *Tightbeam*, for example. They can let readers know the art is for sale along with lots of other stuff at your website. You can contact George

Phillies at Phillies@4liberty.net Let me know before you do that and I will contact George to see if a promo plug can be arranged.

I am all in favor of a collection of the Zero Heroes cartoons, but I think you need to come up with a few more to make it a decent sized folio. Of course, that is your decision.

So far as all the people who want to walk around without facemasks, or go to crowded bars or beaches and socialize at close quarters; or refuse to get the vaccination, I can't help but think that we are witnessing lightning fast evolution in action. People too stupid to take basic efforts to protect themselves against the virus are going to catch the crap, and I note that even if a lot of people manage to survive, there are often lingering after effects that impact their ongoing health. I would really prefer to stay safe and alive, and never get the virus in the first place.

I know what you mean by the erasing personal memory. I have decent memory of many things I read/watched/listened to in the past, but sometimes I pick up a book or ramp up an OTRadio show, or a movie, and it seems completely new, until about midway thru when I suddenly remember I experienced that X-number of years back. I usually keep going anyway. Some movies are worth rewatching, but increasingly I am finding that a lot the movies I saw in the past no longer hold my interest when I try to view them again. This may be part of the process of my tastes becoming more sophisticated as I grow older, or, it may be that a lot of movies I thot were OK in the past really weren't so hot at all. I find some of those that I try to watch again are downright awful. Makes me wonder what I was thinking about when I originally decided to see them back in the day.///



Lloyd Penney; 1706-24 Eva Rd.; Etobicoke, ON CANADA M9C 2B2

Thank you for Fadeaway 64, and my apologies for taking so long to reply...you've had good business with your mail order selling, and I have been busy with some voice work and some editorial work with Amazing Stories. They may not be that lucrative now, but with time... Anyway, some time does present itself, and I will get busy.

The COVID-19 hasn't gotten us yet, but at least one friend has succumbed to it, and others, I worry about them. We've seen documentaries about the Spanish flu lately, and the old line about those who do not pay attention to history comes to mind regularly. All we can do is all we can do, and Yvonne has made more than a hundred masks for friends and family. They may be the difference between life and death. I know what you mean about Steve Stiles.

The numbers of newly-empty stores in Toronto continues to rise, with old businesses going back to the 1930s and earlier suddenly evaporating. We are lucky that our local SF bookstore will continue on, but comic shops are either closing or moving to small accommodations. One local comic shop is now in our local mall, which itself is slated for demolition in a few years, to create a new community we've been told will be well outside our ability to afford. I don't worry about what young people read, for I gather they don't. I have seen short essays or responses ignored by people who say they didn't read the essay or response because it was too long. I fear Kornbluth's Marching Morons will become science fact.

Why do I write? To communicate, to respond, to take part. I am a journalism student, so I figure that information adds to the communities I take part in. I suspect what I do write is ignored by more and more every year, but I suspect I will continue to write until I can't any more, or there are no more outlets that would print what I have to write. We all get or try to get what we want out of fanzines. I seem to have become the sole correspondent for a number of fanzines, and that number goes up on occasion. Some do not have a local, but I think they still deserve response. There are some, though, that are so far outside of my own experience, I simply read and file, like so many others.

Trump...mighod, what to say, other than when he is finally done, in about three months, I hope, he and his family and all his cronies will be arrested, charged with a myriad of charges, and they spend the rest of their lives defending themselves in court, or rotting away in jail cells. His successor will in all likelihood spend their full term repairing the damages done to the US and to the rest of the world. His successor will have a lot of explaining to do, and a lot of apologizing to do. It will be a long time before the US can declare things as normal, the pandemic notwithstanding.

Wonderful great list of books from 1968, and I have many of them. I will retain my old Trek books as well, for sentimental reasons, and I purchased a mint third edition of Lester del Rey's The Runaway Robot at a

used book store on Charing Cross Road in London when we were there last year. And just for the record, “Beam Me Up, Scotty” was never spoken in an episode of Star Trek, just as Bogart never said “Play It Again Sam” in Casablanca.

Great local, but no comment at this time. If you didn’t get my response to issue 63, let me know, and I will resend it to you. Just made it to page 2, and I am done for the time being. Many thanks.

///I believe the economic destruction being wrought by The Plague will in the long run be more devastating than the number of deaths the virus causes, altho the ever rising death count is horrifying in and of itself. The other problem, of course, is that for a lot of people who catch the virus and survive, they often end up with long term after effects. An acquaintance caught the crap back in April. He said it was the worst case of flu he ever had, but after he recovered it turned out he had developed asthma, so he now has trouble breathing at night when he tries to sleep.

The thing that continues to bother me about the current political scene, ongoing now for almost four years, is that despite whatever Caligula Trump has done, it doesn’t seem to affect the dedication of his core supporters. The implications are frightening.

In Alabama former senator Jeff Sessions lost the run-off Republican primary to Tommy Tupper, a relative newcomer with no political expertise or experience, but who demonstrated his fanatical dedication to Caligula Trump and everything he stood for. Sessions lost by a double digit margin to a guy whose entire campaign was built on the promise that he would *never* let his dear leader down. As the Rolling Stone noted: “The former attorney general’s defeat in Alabama isn’t a repudiation of his racism and populism. It’s proof they’ve gone mainstream”.

And recently hard-line conservative Representative Liz Cheney of Wyoming was viciously attacked by her GOP colleagues in the House Republican Conference, including demands she resign her position as chairperson of the group, because she dared to say that Dr. Anthony Fauci was “one of the finest public servants we have ever had. He is not a partisan. His only interest is saving lives. We need his expertise and his judgment to defeat this virus. All Americans should be thanking him. Every day.” Since Trump and his White House gang have recently been attacking Fauci, this statement was tantamount to treason in the eyes of the Republican house members.

Other GOP House members recently verbally assaulted female Democratic representative Ocasio-Cortez, in plain view of reporters, swearing at her, with GOP Rep. Ted Yoho calling her a “fucking bitch” in a loud voice that carried very well to all present. His “apology” the next day was mostly a sneering condemnation with more insults. Political civility, even in the halls of Congress, has disappeared.

The United States seems divided into two political camps: those who believe Trump is a political messiah sent by God Almighty to purify and save the nation, and those who view the President as the Anti-Christ, an insane, malicious demagogue intent on turning the country into a fascist dictatorship that will be secretly controlled by Vladimir Putin.

The people who oppose Trump believe they are in the majority, and will be successful in voting the man out of office. The anti-Trumpers are crowing about a commanding lead Joe Biden and the Democrats have in the polls.

The problem is that a majority of Trump supporters do not answer polls, do not express their opinions on social media, and do not speak to reporters. Instead, they vote. In 2016 Trump was considerably behind in the poll, with fresh sex and business scandals breaking weekly, yet he won the election anyway. I have an uneasy feeling he could win the election in 2024 too.///



Justin E.A. Busch; 308 Prince St. #422; St. Paul, MN

[As] Newly appointed N3F’s fanzine reviewer, I received a packet of recent issues from George Phillies, among them *Fadeaway*. The brief review left me pondering more extensive questions raised by a couple of editorial statements, and I decided to revisit them more personally and at greater length.

In your reply to Gary Casey, you “disagree completely” with his dismissal *tout court* of contemporary SF. In doing so you comment (rightly, I think) on the fact that bad writing has always been with us, and suggest “checking the reviews”. In your extended discussion of Nic Farey’s *This Here*, on the other hand, your take on music is rather different. “So far as I am concerned music is almost a totally subjective form of entertainment.” There would appear to be an intriguing aesthetic disjunction here.

That disjunction rests, I would argue, on an elision of the difference between taste and judgment. Taste is, as you say, essentially inarguable: I like broccoli; George H.W. Bush did not. There is no “Theory Of Broccoli” to be offered which would, if only properly understood, convert the vies of either of us (although a fine chef might possibly have offered empirical reasons for him to consider changing his mind). A statement of taste is purely personal; it basically means something like: “this is what I like”. That to which it refers us simply a place market, the comment is of interest only to the degree that one care about the persona making it.

Judgment, by contrast, is, or at least attempts to be, engaged with that which is being judged – *on its own terms*. Every work of art carried within it a world, implied or explicit as the case may be. Taste accepts or rejects that world (not always consciously) based on the character of the individual responding; judgment attempts (not always successfully) to analyze that world based on the success or failure of the work in developing and expressing the world through methods grounded in its own structure and expression.

The problem facing music is that it is so common that most people take it for granted as a thing *which does not need to be listened to*. Imagine someone saying that they need not read a book in order to respond to it; yet this happens with music all the time. So many discussions of (mostly popular) music rest on musically irrelevant matters: the lyrics, the position of the song on the *Billboard* chart, the number of fans the band has, and so on. (I recall an appalling book about twenty years ago in which the argument was made, with a straight face, that the Beatles were better songwriters than Schubert because they were more popular among academics(!)).

But you have already suggested one way to start taking discussions of music out of the subjective; pay attention to (serious) critics. The difference between a good critic and many in the audience is that the critic is deeply familiar both with the components of that which they are critiquing and with the creative context within which the work at hand exists. Someone wholly unfamiliar even with the formal and expressive approaches found in the popular songs of the 1930s, say, is that much less qualified to critique those of the 1960s and 2010s.

A person with limited musical experience or training might wonder how to decide which critics to read or trust. Here again your own example (in your fanzine discussions) points at one beginning. Look for analyses which offer, a) examples drawn from that which is being analyzed and, b) actual arguments based on those examples. It is not that the presence of an argument proves the position being supported, but that it offers something objective about which to think and to which to respond. In other words, to judge.

It’s a lengthy process, and most of the time many of us prefer to stick with our familiar tastes. There’s nothing inherently wrong with that (we can’t know everything in any case), but we should remember always that doing so leaves out much understanding and so many much richer possibilities.

///In the future please send comments/letters/whatever by email, which is fast, reliable, and easier for me to answer than sending back a hard-copy printed sheet via snail mail.

Concerning your comments about books and music, I don’t think there is any real connection between the two. Musical appreciation is almost always a matter of personal taste. People like a genre or a type of music, or specific tunes, or specific music groups making music, and they do not care for others. It’s all a matter of taste.

Within a specific classification it might be relevant to listen to what musicologists and critics say, to access whether group A is producing better music these days than band B, but in the long run it still doesn’t matter, because the end users of the product rely entirely on their own personal tastes to decide whether they like something or do not enjoy it.

Sampling other forms of music may be relevant for a serious student of the form, but it is unlikely to change many opinions about what they enjoy and what they do not. I’ve heard a lot of hip-hop and rap music, but I’ve never liked it, and I never will. I’ve heard a lot of classical music, and while I think some of it is enjoyable and well done, it will never be my favorite go-to form of music to listen to.

The same applies to print fiction as entertainment. There are any number of people who don’t care for westerns, or historical romance, or spy thrillers, or science fiction. Trying to get somebody who has no interest in science fiction to appreciate the form is an exercise in futility. You might be able to get somebody to try a few stories and books and even get them to agree that this or that story was pretty good, but you are not going to get them to become devotees of the genre no matter what you do. Their literary preferences lie elsewhere.

And that’s what it boils down to with commentaries about popular music. It is obvious that popular music is extremely important to you. You seem to have a dedicated interest in the material and its assorted nuances and variations. Popular music is not of paramount important to me. I like popular music. I enjoy rock, rhythm & blues,

classic rock & roll, big band swing, classic hillbilly music and a lot more. But it is never going to be something that matters a great deal to me.

The last time I bought a music CD was twelve years ago, because a dealer was selling out a lot of stuff a rock bottom prices. I mostly listen to music on the radio, and if a song comes along I don't like, it is very easy to reach over and change the station to something I do like. It's a matter of personal taste, and reading reviews of popular music past and recent, however heartfelt the author may be, is simply not something that is going to excite or entice me. It is a matter of my own personal feelings. That's why, in my review of the music sections of *This Here*, I said I usually just scanned those articles.

I also don't expect everybody to be wildly enthusiastic about all the variety of articles and reviews I run in *Fadeaway*. I would be surprised if they did. It still boils down to a matter of each individual's personal tastes, and complaining that somebody doesn't appreciate music, or literature, or a movie as much as you do is also an exercise in futility.///



OUR ESTEEMED ART STAFF & WHERE THEIR WORK MAY BE FOUND HEREIN:

Doug Bratton from his PopCulture Comics ---- page 7

Jeff Stahler from his Moderately Confused comics strip --- page 16

Brad Foster ---- page 19

all other art is clip art from the internet

