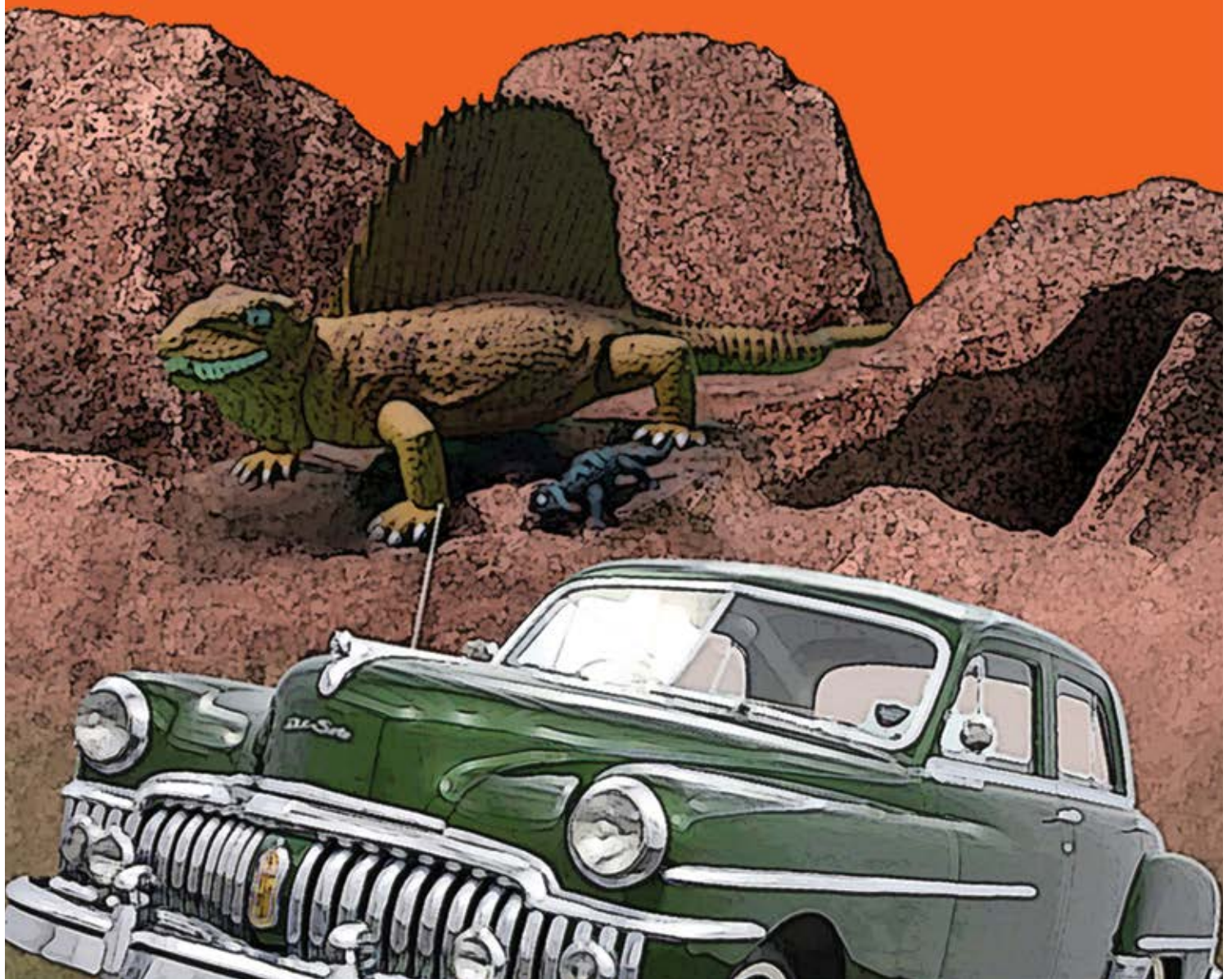


WARP

A PUBLICATION OF THE MONTREAL SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY ASSOCIATION

Issue 117



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WARP Design & Layout by Valerie Royall

MonSFFA Calendar of Events

MonSFFA usually meets on the second Saturday of every month at 13:00h. There are exceptions, so please check our website for updates.

We meet via Zoom and in person at the Nouvel Hotel, corner of René Levesque & St Mathieu.

Email president@monsffa.ca for a Zoom invite.

Upcoming meetings:

Jun 13: Field Trip

July 12: Sunday in the park (19 in case of rain)

July 26: Zoom only

Aug 15: in person/ Zoom regular meeting

Sep 19: in person/ Zoom regular meeting

Oct 17: BOOK SALE

Nov 14: in person/ Zoom regular meeting

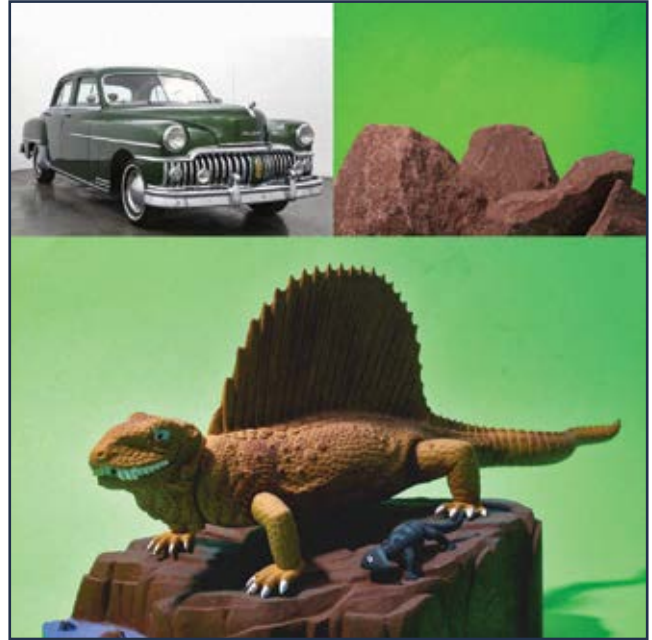
Dec 5: Party

Dec 12: Zoom only

Stay safe and follow us on the internet!

Website: www.monsffa.ca

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MonSFFA



On the Cover

This issue's cover is a digital collage entitled "Dimetrodon & DeSoto," by Keith Braithwaite. It came about as a demonstration piece for a live, online art workshop Keith gave in 2024 showing how one might create sci-fi art without necessarily knowing how to draw. Keith photographed the model dimetrodon, built and painted some few years ago by his young son, set against a green backdrop, as he did the jumble of rocks picked out of the family's backyard garden. Keith does not own a vintage De Soto, so the image of a 1950 model sedan was harvested from the internet. Next, the backgrounds of these images were removed, and all three components assembled into a layout and blended together in Photoshop. Finally, several of the software's art filters were applied to arrive at the finished illustration.



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Letters to the Editor

Dear MonSFFen:

I have issue 116 of *WARP*, and many thanks. A letter is in order, but ah, am I up to this onerous job? Let me have another cup of coffee, and I'll let you know...

(I am writing this up in the morning, mostly because Toronto Hydro has shut down the power in this area for repairs and rewiring. I won't get it out until this evening. So I am sitting in the dark with my warm coffee, and great music on the radio.)

My letter... well, I am now 66. We plan to offer our services to Anime North again, probably in Staff Services again, and we will see what their plans are. I had a great time at Word on the Street in downtown Toronto, and at Can*con in Kanata, and sales at both were brisk.

Cathy, your *Blast From the Past* column might as well be titled, Look How Old We Are! We all appear in that column regularly. In December 2027, I mark 50 years in fandom...where's my gold watch?

I remember the passing of Nancy Kilpatrick... I had been asked to edit a proposed re-issue of one of her older books, and I did so, but I don't think the book was ever re-issued. I hope I can find out for sure,

I like to keep a physical copy of each book I have worked on over the years.

I have to wonder if it would be a good idea to propose Thomas P. Kelley as a new member of the Canadian Science Fiction Hall of Fame? There's a project for the club, and I do know that David Clink is the current manager of the Hall of Fame...he could propose it to those who make those decisions.

I see mention of *A Sorceress Come to Call* by Ursula Vernon/T. Kingfisher. I do not get to read many of these books, but I was given one when I was at the 2024 World Fantasy Convention in Niagara Falls, NY. I have read it, quite enjoyed it, and thought *Downton Abbey* meets dark magic, and a quiet, mousy girl learns to stand up for herself, and separate herself from her witchy mother. I thought it might have taken place in Victorian England, but it could have taken place somewhere in the US; the ambiguous setting seemed to work well.

Newest *Amazing Stories* news... the big book we've been working on for a year or more is finally ready to go. *The Martian Trilogy* by a lot of people, including me, is the story of another *Amazing Stories*, this one starting in the late 1920s in Black



Issue 117
Spring 2026

Photo by Valerie Royall

newspapers in the southern USA, with stories of exploration by men of money, science and philosophy, all Black, as they explore other worlds and interact with the alien beings they find. White explorers would interfere with the conflicts, but Black explorers would observe, and offer solutions if they are asked for them. These stories appeared in these papers under the name *Amazing Stories*, unaware of the pulp magazine that had appeared out of New York a few years earlier. This is a new chapter in the history of science fiction, rediscovered by Black scholars, and we are pleased to help present this back to SF readers and fandom.

I think I am all caught up, so I will have to wait until the power returns so I can get this processed and sent to you. Given the frequency of WARP, I think we should wish all of you at the club the happiest of December holidays! Whatever you celebrate, party hard! and see you in that SFnal year of 2026.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney
Etobicoke, ON



In October 2025, EU diplomat Adam Gerencsér—who is also the publisher of Sci Phi Journal—was in town for work. He contacted us, and Keith, Cathy, Joe, and I had dinner with him at Schwartz's. Afterward, Joe had to leave, but Keith and Cathy and I took Adam to the "Joie de livres" SFF bookstore on St. Laurent.

Dear Cathy, Danny, Keith, Joseph,

Thanks once again for your kind hospitality in Montreal! I returned this morning to Brussels (just in time to repack my bags, as I'm leaving this afternoon to Malaysia with my family).

On the flight back, I enjoyed reading Danny's con report from Scintillation 5 in *WARP* 115.

The retrospectives to past *WARPs* were a reminder that you at **MonSSFA** put years of time and energy into the genre we're all passionate about. The fragile mosaic of SF communities woven around the planet owes its continued existence to folks like you. I remain impressed by the *WARP*, the *Impulses* and all you do to keep this alive, persevering in the face of rising operating costs and scarcity of affordable venues.

On a side note, yesterday I had the privilege of visiting Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu research station, and met several enthusiastic SF fans there, incl their chief remote sensing specialist. Who knows, might be good to reach out and invite them one day to give a talk at a **MonSSFA** event, e.g. on the future of rural Québec in the age of drones and AI-driven farms?

In any case, hope our paths cross again!

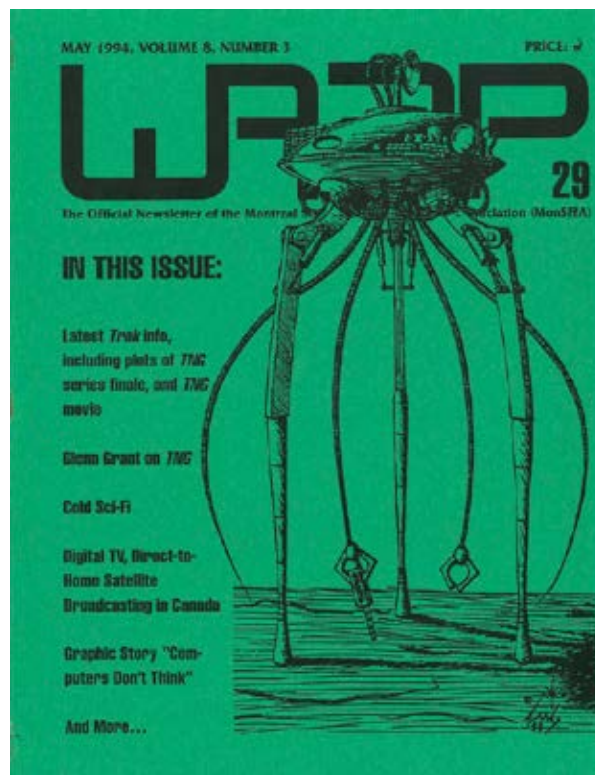
Take care, best regards,
Adam Gerencsér

Blast From the Past

By Cathy Palmer-Lister

WARP 29, May 1994

President Lynda Pelley wrote in her report of the importance of raising our club's profile. Back then, there were several clubs in the city which used to unite for an event we called Transwarp. At the time of writing, **MonSSFA** was preparing for



the 3rd such mega meeting.

Lynda thanked the 7 members who made their way to St. Jerome to represent the club at a small event organized by a Francophone group, Conv-iction. All the usual suspects were thanked: Sylvain St-Pierre, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Wayne Glover, Josée Bellemare, Yolande Rufiange, Dominique Durocher, and Marc Durocher.

We had a T-shirt, designed by Keith Braithwaite, and Lynda encouraged us to wear it at events such as the PBS pledge drive. I remember those drives to WCFE, at least one in a snowstorm. We'd hit the mall and sup at Ponderosa.

SIGs: Lynda mentioned the writers group, and two more were on the drawing board, one for model builders, the other for costumers.

Keith's editorial apologized for forgetting to credit Berny Reischl for the work he did translating non-Mac to Mac formats. Berny was promised a couple of shots at the next Christmas party. Keith introduced new member André Poliquin, who wrote the graphic story which appears on pages 20 and 21. Later, André was to become more involved in our video projects.

The editorials are followed by 17 business cards, all enterprises offering discounts to **MonSFFen**. We'd be lucky today to find one outfit to collaborate with.

The letter section is notable for two letters, one from Marc Durocher outlining problems with Con*Cept 93, and a response from the chair of Con*Cept 95, John Zmrotchek. You'll note the skipping of number 94. I remember this kerfuffle well. In 1993, the con went nearly entirely literary. Montreal fans at the time were more media-oriented. The GoH was Robert Sheckley, a hugely influential author, but his glory years were well behind him. John promised to listen to the fans and include the clubs in their programming. Media guests are a draw, but they cost a bundle. The lit vs media conflict—and trust me, it was a conflict!—haunted the con for the rest of its existence. Lloyd's letter advised us of various upcoming events and an issue with Peter David not respecting his obligations. Another fan wrote to advise us of an

upcoming *Star Trek* event which Lloyd had also mentioned, as it was a home-grown event. (It was a disaster and best remembered as the time the Ferengi didn't get paid.) Joe Casey, Strike Force Morath, KAG/ Kanada, wrote to arrange a zine trade.

Announcement was made, among other things, of the birth of Sarah Aspler. Sarah is a young adult now, and learning to make jewellery. There is a line in a song from *Fiddler on the Roof*: "I don't remember growing older, when did they?"

The main event at the March meeting (attendance 30-35!) was a discussion on the state of science fiction, and how it is losing ground to fantasy. Looking at upcoming titles in *Locus* confirms the trend is still to fantasy. My opinion? I like strange new worlds, and SF no longer delivers. Keith had a trial run of a game tentatively called *Galactic Conquest*. I wonder if he still has the board? Guest speaker Glen Grant came with a top 10 list of science fiction's best short stories and best novels. Kevin Holden gave a presentation on SF audio and radio plays. The writers group will be writing a script for our own radio play. This was, if I remember correctly, the first of two attempts at radio plays that never reached "publication".

Sylvain wrote a fine article on stories about ice ages, which ended with a promise to write about stories in which the sun goes nova. Joe Aspler wrote a review of Harry Turtledove's *Guns of the South*, an alternate history in which aliens provide the Confederates with AK-47s. Lynda Pelley reviewed an audio release, *Transformations*, a Captain Sulu adventure. Lynda also reviewed a relaxacon held in Ottawa, which she, Wayne Glover, and Dom Durocher attended mainly for the display of models. I wrote a review of Conv-iction in St Jerome. (Apparently, I seemed to think it important to mention that I got there without getting lost.) Stephane Marcotte wrote about Digital TV appearing in the States, and expected to arrive in Canada the following year. He wrote that cable companies feared this little pizza-sized antenna, calling the DBS-1 the Death Star, because they're afraid that it will draw away some of their subscribers.

André Poliquin's graphic story "Computers Don't Think" appeared on the next two pages. Lovely pen and ink drawings!



"Channelling Horny Jellyfish in an Anyon Field", an article first published in *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, is reprinted in *WARP* with permission from the author, Glen Grant. I don't think he liked *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. *Sensors: Fact, Rumour and Speculation from Around SF/F-dom*, covered mostly news of upcoming *Star Trek* episodes and the movie, *Generations*, as well as conventions.

Last but not least, two convention flyers, one for the Science Fiction Festival II, the other for Ad Astra. Berny was fan GoH at SFII, and is pictured on the flyer in his Klingon gear.

MonSFFA By Keith Braithwaite

This column covers club meetings and activities that occurred from September 2025 to April 2026. Most of the reporting, here, was culled from the pages of *Impulse*, MonSFFA's monthly news bulletin. Photos/images courtesy Cathy Palmer-Lister and Keith Braithwaite.

SEPTEMBER GUEST SPEAKER TALKS EXOPLANETS!

With club president Keith Braithwaite absent on this occasion, VP Mark Burakoff stepped in to oversee proceedings.

WARP editor Danny Sichel having arranged for our special guest's visit, MonSFFA was pleased to welcome Riley Rosener to the club's September 20, 2025 meeting to speak on the topic of exoplanets. A master's student in physics at Université de Montréal, Riley began by outlining the history of exoplanets, from ancient Greek cosmological models through modern-day discoveries, then detailed various detection methods and the recent advances made possible by the James Webb Space Telescope. Further advances are soon expected, he added, courtesy the new Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope's planned "microlensing" survey.

We thanked our guest for illuminating us so thoroughly on this topic.

MonSFFA's own Joe Aspler followed with an overview of the life, times, and music of Tom Lehrer, who satirized 1950s and '60s society and politics with his amusing folk songs, of which Joe featured a few. Lehrer influenced more contemporary musical satirists like Dr. Demento and Weird Al Yankovic. He is, perhaps, most famous for having set the Periodic Table of Elements to music, and singing sardonically about NASA rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, whose Nazi past was downplayed!

Before his recent passing, Lehrer released his works to the public domain, for all to enjoy.

The afternoon closed with Danny Sichel expounding upon and leading a discussion of various means of foretelling the future. The predictions of astrology, oracles, and prophecies are invariably vague and open to wide interpretation, Danny noted. He and the group further explored fictional characters having precognitive powers, as featured in literature, comics, and on screen. Time travel narratives, too, were touched upon and the consequences of knowing the future considered.

At about this time, MonSFFA published its events schedule for 2026; some meeting dates were listed as tentative until later officially confirmed.

SUPER SCI-FI BOOK SALE 2025 ONE OF OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL!

We were thrilled to report that the 2025 edition of MonSFFA's Super Sci-Fi Book Sale was an unqualified success, and in fact, one of our most lucrative to date!

This annual book sale is the club's principal fund-raiser; all proceeds from the sale are directed to MonSFFA's operating budget. Club treasurer Joe Aspler reported that the 2025 edition of the sale bested revenues raised the previous year! Over \$1000 was deposited to the club's coffers, with additional revenue added over the coming weeks from special online sales.

The Executive offered heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers who helped transport our inventory of books, set up our sales tables,



Book Sale 2025.

and pack it all away at day's end. With many thousands of books to handle, this is a monumental task, and the sale simply could not operate without our team of volunteers!

Thanks was also extended to those folk who donated books, thus contributing to our robust inventory of publications on offer—hardcovers, paperbacks, comics, and magazines!

Patrons were lined up at the door prior to our opening the sale and our “Big Box Bulk Bargain” again proved extremely popular, with customers taking advantage of the opportunity to score a full box of books for only \$20! Many such lots were sold, and post-sale, folk have been contacting the club wanting to know if books might still be available for purchase.

Well, yes and no.

Note that we pack away in our storage facility the dozens of sealed boxes of books typically remaining after a sale, where they sit largely inaccessible until it's time for the next edition of our sale. But, we do pull a random selection of books out from time to time to stock our “Book Exchange Table,” a feature of the club's regular downtown meetings (take a book, leave a book, or a cash donation). So it is possible, though not guaranteed, that the title one desires may be found among this random selection of books.

Finally, we tendered an acknowledgement to all those book-loving fans who attended our Super Sci-Fi Book Sale and purchased books—“May you all have good reads, and thank you so much for helping to support our club.”

NOVEMBER MonSFFA MEETING

The transit strike on the weekend of our November club meeting left many MonSFFen without a means of getting downtown to attend, and consequently, our numbers on this occasion were a little light. Some of these folk did manage to take part via our ZOOM-chat, however, and we were very pleased to see several new members present for their very first MonSFFA meeting!

Our leading presentation on this afternoon covered the tragically brief life and career of Golden Age comic book artist Matt Baker, an acknowledged master of so-called “Good Girl Art.” A black, gay man living and working in 1940s-'50s America, his unquestionable talent superseded the biases of his times. Although he exercised his skills in the SF/F genre less so than in Romance, Western, and others, he is perhaps best known for his striking interpretation of the sexy superheroine Phantom Lady.

Danny Sichel offered a few rounds of Sci-Fi Balderdash, a

game of bluffing in which participants compose fake story synopses for an *actual* SF/F title, hoping to fool the other players into believing that their phony outline is the genuine article! A lot of fun, resulting in more than a few clever sham synopses that could very well be fleshed out into good stories!

Club treasurer Joe Aspler reported on the financial success of this year's Super Sci-Fi Book Sale, held the previous month, and the closing portion of the meeting was given over to collecting ideas for future presentations and other meeting programming.

GOOD CHEER ALL AROUND AS MonSFFA CELEBRATED THE FESTIVE SEASON!

A good number of MonSFFen gathered to celebrate the 2025 festive season, both at our downtown Christmas Dinner & Party on Saturday evening, December 6, and online the following Saturday as participants in the club's annual Holiday Get-Together on ZOOM.

The Bâton Rouge Grillhouse & Bar, located within Complexe Desjardins, was the chosen venue for our Christmas Dinner & Party, offering folk fine dining and libations. To the delight of all, we handed out dozens of raffle prizes during our traditional Christmas raffle while raising a tidy sum for the benefit of the club! Amid the evening's camaraderie, an impromptu fashion show arose, showcasing fabulous Christmas sweaters!

Out-of-towners and others unable to join us at the Bâton Rouge were able to exchange season's greetings the following Saturday afternoon during our Virtual Holiday Get-Together on ZOOM. Discussion topics were many and the conversation boisterous as the afternoon progressed, and Cathy Palmer-Lister offered a Christmas-themed quiz challenge.

Good cheer all around as the club closed out another year of sci-fi fun!



Holiday Party 2025.

MonSFFA's 2026 ELECTION RESULTS, REPORTS ON THE STATE OF THE CLUB

Elections

As is our tradition, the club selected its Executive Committee for the coming year during the first meeting of the New Year, in this case, our January 10 e-meeting on ZOOM.

Returned to office by acclamation were Keith Braithwaite,

president; Mark Burakoff, vice-president; and Joe Aspler, treasurer. Chief Returning Officer Josée Bellemare made it all official, congratulating and welcoming the “new” executive, with all present bestowing committee members best wishes for the coming year of club operations.

President Braithwaite then renominated *WARP* editor Danny Sichel and *MonSFFA* Webmaster Cathy Palmer-Lister as officers/advisors, with both agreeing to continue serving in their respective roles.

State of the Club

Working from 2025 numbers, treasurer Joe Aspler submitted a report on the state of the club’s finances, which remain quite healthy. He cautioned, however, that revenue streams which helped us weather the COVID-19 storm were certain to ebb as we moved forward. In response, the club, last year, reluctantly raised its membership rates, and enacted cost-saving measures wherever possible.

President Keith Braithwaite noted that the pandemic and post-pandemic years have seen a thinning of our ranks as many people remained hesitant to re-engage in their pre-pandemic pastimes, a phenomenon apparently not limited to *MonSFFA*. There has been a notable change in the greater communal mindset, Keith believes, which has seen some adopt a more reclusive posture regarding society’s “new normal.” Economic factors related to the rising cost of living, too, have had their effect, of course.

Keith reminded the group that during the pandemic years, *MonSFFA* was required to suspend many of its usual activities, and therefore opted to temporarily suspend the collection of annual dues. Thus have *MonSFFA*en—some, at least—simply gotten out of the habit of regularly paying their annual membership fees.

Of utmost importance to the club’s financial health, and ultimately its future, is that we all get back into the habit of paying our annual membership fees on time, and that we help recruit new members!

It should come as no surprise that it costs money to rent meeting space, publish our fanzine, maintain our Website, and generally fund the daily operations of the club.

To put it in relatable terms: without the bucks, there can be no “Buck Rogers!”

The pandemic is over, now, and its aftermath has brought increases in *MonSFFA*’s costs, sometimes sharp increases. To date, we have managed to cover expenses with fund-raising efforts like our annual sci-fi used book sale, and further benefitted from generous donations of books, comics, and other collectibles, which we have been able to sell at our fund-raisers, and online. We’ve done well in difficult times at keeping this club a viable, going concern—better than many thought we would. But long-term, fund-raising alone won’t be enough!

And so, with all of that said, the Executive encouraged all club members to first, talk up the club to friends who share their interest in SF/F and might consider joining our ranks, and secondly, to please renew their annual membership fees on time!

*Membership fees are charged annually to each club member, and are due during the calendar month in which their membership was initially activated! A *MonSFFA*n whose membership was first activated in January, for example, is*

required to pay their fees every subsequent January.

Please remit your fees in a timely manner as they help to cover the cost of club operations.

Don’t recall in which month you joined? Check to see if your name is listed in the Membership Column, or just ask us when your fees are due!

Your *MonSFFA* membership dues remain excellent value for money—works out to less than \$3 per month!—and help to support a club that stages events every month, providing fascinating and fun sci-fi content, creative projects, and so much more!

MonSFFA’S “BOOKWYRMS” HAVE BEGUN MEETING!

Former club president Cathy Palmer-Lister leads the club’s Special Interest Group (SIG) for readers of genre books, the group having met several times already. A handful of the club’s avid readers, dubbed the “Bookwyrm,” get together via ZOOM on occasion to talk books, reviewing and recommending those that they have recently read. Often, the Bookwyrm’s discussions revolve around a meeting theme—libraries in SF/F, for instance, time-travel, or stories of medical practitioners aboard space stations or starships.

SIGs are small groups within the larger club that focus on a particular interest, such as, in this case, SF/F books. Our SIGs meet online outside of the club’s regular meetings. *MonSFFA* also supports an Art SIG, which focuses on illustration and painting techniques, and sci-fi art in general. SIGs may, once in a while, contribute content to a regular club meeting, leading a discussion or offering a presentation.

JANUARY e-MEETING

Our January e-meeting included the election of the club’s Executive Committee for the coming year; the 2025 team was returned to office for another term.

Danny Sichel opened another year of *MonSFFA* activities with a talk on AI as interpreted by the science fiction genre, citing a plethora of books and movies that offered different versions of AI, opining on what exactly constituted artificial intelligence, and whether the human mind could be replicated artificially. With nascent AI now a fact in the real world, how might humanity’s future be shaped, for better and for worse?

Keith Braithwaite brought content from the club’s Art SIG to a club meeting with his primer on visual perspective in 2-D art, detailing how the illusion of three dimensions is realized on a two-dimensional surface, like paper or a canvas. The horizon line, vanishing points, and atmospheric perspective were outlined, with Keith showing in a live demonstration how to create an accurate perspective grid for use as a guide to realistically drawing in perspective.

Following the mid-meeting break and a few articles of club business, the meeting closed with a nostalgic look back at some of the cool sci-fi toys we played with as children, dating as far back as the 1950s and ’60s.

With early science fiction TV shows and the Apollo moon shots ongoing in those years, space toys were popular and plentiful, featuring astronauts, rockets, and robots of various designs. The Cold War brought ballistic missile playsets to toy-store shelves, and the release of *Star Wars* in the late ’70s unleashed a cavalcade of related



Major Matt Mason action figures.

action figures, vehicles, and playsets, with other sci-fi franchises joining in on all the fun. The fantasy genre influenced such popular toy lines as Masters of the Universe and, more recently, Monster High.

The group reminisced as a collection of vintage toy commercials were screened.

FEBRUARY e-MEETING

Joe Aspler opened our February e-meeting with his presentation on SF/F movies adapted from books. Often, a perfectly fine book is adapted poorly, resulting in a bad sci-fi movie. Joe provided examples to illustrate the point, *The Postman*, *Waterworld*, and *Return to Oz* among them. But sometimes, the reverse is true, with a mediocre book providing the basis for an excellent film!

Joe also touched on movies and television episodes deemed impossible to adapt, or too expensive to produce, citing Harlan Ellison's screenplay adapting Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*, and his original script for *Star Trek's* "City on the Edge of Forever." Examples of promising film projects relegated to "Development Hell" were also proffered, and Joe spoke, too, of unnecessary remakes, like *The Time Machine*—based on the H. G. Wells classic—comparing the excellent 1960 and tedious 2002 screen versions.

Cathy Palmer-Lister led a discussion of genre books or movies serendipitously happened upon, and against expectations, thoroughly enjoyed. She told of discovering Michelle West's *House War* books while attending a Worldcon.

Folk chimed in with their examples, which included Whitley Strieber's 1978 premiere novel *The Wolfen*, Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone's *This Is How You Lose the Time War*, the anime *Psycho-Pass*, TV's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the films *Planet of the Vampires* and *Quatermass and the Pit*, and the South Korean television series *See You in My 19th Life*.

The afternoon concluded with a lively round of our familiar Sci-Fi Balderdash game, hosted by Sci-Fi Balderdash game, hosted by Danny Sichel, and described in this very issue a mere two pages ago!

CLUB RETURNS TO DOWNTOWN LOCALE WITH MARCH MEETING!

With our March club meeting on the 14th, we returned to our downtown function space at the Nouvel Hotel. The worst of winter now over, regular club meetings will take place at the hotel for the rest of the year. Out-of-towners, of course, will still be able to take part online as we always set up for a ZOOM-chat.

Technical issues with the room's electrical system, which kept our projector from working properly, stymied us initially, but

we managed a work-around that got things fixed.

We welcomed a number of first-timers, and were pleased to see again some familiar faces, absent for too long! On our March agenda: *Alien*, architecture, and ESP!

Charles El Rahi opened proceedings with his examination of the *Alien* franchise, focusing primarily on the conception of Ridley Scott's seminal 1979 sci-fi/horror film, which introduced one of science fiction's most terrifying space monsters, designed by Swiss surrealist painter and sculptor H. R. Giger. The artist's "biomechanical" style was a unique mix of organic and machine-like elements.

Charles traced the evolution of *Alien's* screenplay, at one point called "Star Beast", beginning with the seeds of writer Dan O'Bannon's story idea. With colleague John Carpenter, O'Bannon had made the film *Dark Star* (1974), a sci-fi/comedy featuring an alien taken aboard a spaceship, and played for laughs. O'Bannon had the idea of making a *Dark Star*, but as a horror movie rather than a comedy. He developed his story over time, drawing inspiration from numerous sources across the spectrum of science fiction cinema, literature, and even comics. Hired to work on director Alejandro Jodorowsky's ultimately unrealized *Dune* in Paris, O'Bannon was introduced to Giger, and artists Jean "Moebius" Giraud and Chris Foss, who would all contribute production designs to *Alien*, as would designer Ron Cobb, who had worked with O'Bannon and Carpenter on *Dark Star*.

Charles spotlighted and sourced the ideas, big and small, included in *Alien's* screenplay. For example, the story's spaceship was named for Joseph Conrad's novel, *Nostramo* (1904)—a setting of that novel was the fictional port city of Sulaco, adopted as the name of the Colonial Marines' spaceship in sequel *Aliens*. Crewmembers Dallas, Kane, and Lambert coming upon a giant, fossilized, skeletal alien corpse mirrors a similar scene in acclaimed director Dario Argento's *Planet of the Vampires* (1965). And heroine Ellen Ripley's surname was apparently derived from the *Ripley's Believe It or Not* franchise!

Charles continued with the details of *Alien's* formation, including director Ridley Scott's joining the production, and concerns, quickly allayed by Giger's design, that the alien would come across as cheesy, having too much the look of a man-in-a-monster-costume, as in *It: The Terror From Beyond Space* (1958), another of *Alien's* influences.

This was a fascinating and thorough examination of the birth of a legendary sci-fi/horror film and franchise.

Keith Braithwaite followed with his look at real-world architectural marvels and oddities featured on the SF&F screen,



illustrated with an abundance of photographs and video-clips showcasing sleek, ultramodern structures employed by filmmakers as the settings of their sci-fi movies, as well as a few contemporary buildings used in genre films. He outlined both the particulars of on-location shooting, and the architectural styles popular with science fiction filmmakers—stylishly utilitarian Modernist, elegant Art Deco, beautiful, intricately detailed Victorian, majestic Neo-Classical, and imposing, dystopia-evoking Brutalism.

For instance, the bleak, angular concrete housing tracts of Thamesmead in London, and the massive Espaces d'AbraXas complex in Noisy-le-Grand, near Paris, were used as backdrops in, respectively, *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and *Hunger Games, Mockingjay, Part II* (2015). Numerous incarnations of *Superman*'s Daily Planet Building were covered, and the strange, space-age curiosities of Woody Allen's sci-fi/comedy *Sleeper* (1973) highlighted. The famous Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Ennis House, a Los Angeles mansion, has been featured in many productions, including *Blade Runner* (1982), *The Rocketeer* (1991), *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019), and as Vincent Price's scream-inducing *House on Haunted Hill* (1959). Keith offered details of these buildings and projected stills of the edifices as they appeared on genre movie and television screens.

Montreal's Olympic Stadium, former Mount Stephen Club, and dilapidated Mirabel Airport Terminal Building appeared in *Warm Bodies* (2013), a zombie-infused version of *Romeo and Juliet*, and the old Expo 67 site served as the backdrop for *Quintet* (1979) and for an episode of TV's *Battlestar Galactica* (1978).



Olympic Stadium
Photo by Valerie Royall

The venerable Empire State Building's famous role in King Kong's last stand, both in the 1933 original and 2005 Peter Jackson remake, was given the spotlight as Keith concluded his presentation.

The afternoon's programming closed on the topic of telepathy in SF&F. Both Josée Bellemare and Danny Sichel spoke on the subject, a pillar of paranormal belief, as well as a plot device in SF&F fiction. Sci-fi television series such as *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* were briefly covered, these featuring telepathic characters capable of non-verbally transmitting and receiving thoughts over distances. The idiosyncrasies of that ability were outlined, sometimes depicted, for example, as allowing communication only within close proximity, or within the telepath's line of sight, other times only by means of physical contact. An obscure, mid-1970s fantasy TV show, *The Girl with Something Extra*, starring Sally Field, saw telepathy used for comedic purposes!

Danny noted the decline, in recent years, of telepathy as a story device in SF&F literature in favour of ESP-like abilities more grounded in reality—ultrasonic communication, nanobots, brain implants. Dividing his material into categories, Danny covered in

some depth a selection of science fiction and fantasy novels and short fiction featuring telepathy of one kind or another. Exploring the ramifications of telepathy, on an individual, or on the greater society, Danny cited characters like Isaac Asimov's *The Mule*, of his *Foundation* series; James White's empathic physician, Dr. Prilicla, of the Sector General stories; and Alfred Bester's telepathic detective, Gretchen Nunn, starring in 1974's "The Four-Hour Fugue." Inter-species communication by means of telepathy, too, was discussed, such as Mr. Spock's mind-meld with the Horta, and the alien children conveying their thoughts to humans in John Wyndam's 1957 classic, *The Midwich Cuckoos*.

CLUB HUNTS GIANT LEECHES, EXPLORES SF/F'S TITANIC TALES AT APRIL MEETING!

Our April 11 meeting began with a screening of the public-domain, low-rent, 1959 B-movie *Attack of the Giant Leeches*, during which MonSFen were encouraged to shout out commentary and crack jokes at the film's expense, in the style of MST3K!

MST3K (*Mystery Science Theatre 3000*) was a TV comedy series that featured characters compelled to watch cheesy, really bad, sci-fi B-movies. During the screenings of these films, they would comment aloud with droll, pithy remarks mocking plots, acting, special effects, etc.

A monster flick worthy of the drive-in circuit, produced by Roger Corman and his brother, Gene, *Leeches* really skimmed on special effects, notably the giant-leech costumes, which were apparently made of old raincoats and garbage bags!

Club members had a lot of fun mocking the movie and generally commenting on its shortcomings, of which there were many—writing, acting, production values, the lead character's girlfriend serving, perhaps, a little more coffee than necessary throughout proceedings!

On this occasion, calling out remarks aloud during the screening was perfectly acceptable, and in fact, encouraged!

On this very date, April 11, in 1912, Keith Braithwaite noted, the *Titanic* set out from Ireland on the final leg of her scheduled transatlantic crossing. He offered a brief primer on the great ship, outlining her construction and launch, and the timeline of her doomed maiden voyage, before exploring science fiction and fantasy's take on the famous ocean liner.

There have been numerous SF&F novels, films, and television shows featuring the *Titanic*, and Keith highlighted a selection of these.

The first work of *Titanic* fiction that he remembers reading, fresh out of high school, was Clive Cussler's science fictional techno-thriller/undersea adventure novel *Raise the Titanic*, later adapted as a movie. The pilot episode of Irwin Allen's *Time Tunnel* was a *Titanic* tale. Numerous paranormal romance and supernatural horror novels have been set either aboard the ship, in 1912, or at the wreck site, more than two miles beneath the surface of the Atlantic. A *Doctor*



Who Christmas Special was set aboard a spaceship version of *Titanic*, as was an episode of the animated sci-fi comedy *Futurama*.

Showing still images and video clips, Keith covered his topic from bow to stern, concluding with his assessment of James Cameron's blockbuster *Titanic* as a paranormal romance! While most consider the movie a classic romance, set against an epic historical calamity, Keith argues that the closing sequence introduces a supernatural element. The just-departed spirit of Rose is reunited with the ghost of her beloved Jack, and with all those she had travelled with aboard ship, and who died in the sinking, on a preternaturally restored *Titanic* inhabiting the wreck site at the bottom of the ocean, as if a ghost itself.

Naturally, of interest to our group was NASA's return to the moon, freshly in the news, with Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen having been a part.

We screened edited TV coverage of the Artemis II mission, from launch to splashdown, which, just the evening prior, had successfully concluded to much acclaim and fanfare. Older MonSFFen recalled that the same kind of excitement surrounded the Apollo flights of the late 1960s, including, of course, the first lunar landing mission in the summer of 1969.

CLUB ASKS WHERE TO GO ON JUNE FIELD TRIP?

Each June, MonSFFA ventures away from our meeting hall on a field trip, visiting museums, exhibitions, and such.

In past years, we have visited Montreal's Biodôme, for example, and several of the city's museums to take in special exhibitions on medieval knights, dinosaurs, ILM, the art of Disney's animation studios, and aviation. We've also car-pooled to Ottawa on a few occasions to visit the many national museums in our country's capital.

We generally select a destination that offers some element of science, technology, history, or art, especially when some even tangential aspect of SF/F is a part.

The club collected from MonSFFen suggestions as to a destination for the 2026 field trip, scheduled for Saturday, June 6, with plans, at the upcoming May meeting, to review the suggestions offered and by vote, choose one of the options as our 2026 field trip destination.

RUSSELL LISTER, 1948-2026

We were terribly saddened by news of the sudden, unexpected passing of Russell Lister, husband of long-time club member and former MonSFFA president Cathy Palmer-Lister. Russell passed away on April 11 at age 77. He and Cathy had been married for 54 years.

"He was a wonderfully amiable sort," recalls current club president Keith Braithwaite, who had occasion to visit from time to time, "always warm, welcoming, helpful, quick with a smile or a laugh, and only intermittently the curmudgeon Cathy affectionately ascribed him to be, but always in the most charming of ways."

We are pained that the vagaries of fate have left Cathy



shocked, staggered, and in this life abruptly and ever parted without opportunity to have said goodbye. We can only imagine the sorrow she must feel as we offer sincere condolences to our friend and her family at this most difficult time.

No funeral was held, in accordance with Russell's wishes. He was a wholehearted supporter of the SPCA Montréal, and donations may be made to that organization in his memory.

In Memoriam: Russell Lister

By Keith Braithwaite

I was stunned and saddened to hear that Cathy Palmer-Lister's husband of 54 years, Russell Lister, had passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on April 11, the same day I and other MonSFFen were gathering downtown for the club's April meeting. I had just days earlier talked with Russell over the phone, learned that Cathy was up north at her cottage, and would not likely be attending the meeting because she was awaiting a special delivery at home on that Saturday. She planned to return home Friday, and had committed Russell to helping her haul the thing into the house when it arrived. Cathy thought she might be able to join the meeting online, afterwards. But she never did.

It wasn't until that evening that I received confirmation of Russell's having passed that morning, suddenly, surprisingly, shockingly. My first thought was of Cathy, and how devastated she must have been. Her neighbours were apparently helping her get through this most awful day. That was good to hear. She wasn't alone. I was able to communicate with her later, and offered my sympathies, as well as a helping hand with anything she might need—I live only about a 30-minute drive from her. She was appreciative, but told me she was holding up, managing.

I had noticed, in retrospect, that Russell was moving a little slower than usual the last time I had visited, which I did on occasion, usually around the time of the club's annual book sale, when he and I helped Cathy move boxes of books from their storage shed to her SUV, and back again. But I chalked that up to his advancing age. I don't move as well as I used to either, and I'm 10 years younger. Maybe that was a sign. I don't know.

What I do know is that Russell always impressed me as a loving husband to Cathy, a supporter of her many interests, including fandom, even though he didn't particularly share her love of sci-fi, not that he didn't enjoy a good *Star Trek* episode once in a while. He was a wonderfully amiable sort, always warm, welcoming, helpful, quick with a smile or a laugh, and only intermittently the curmudgeon Cathy affectionately ascribed him to be, but always in the most charming of ways.

I am profoundly disconsolate at my friend's loss, especially in that she never had the chance to say goodbye, after more than a half-century together, as she would have were Russell in predictably failing health, or had taken ill, or was hospitalized, and there remained time before the inevitable.

We have all lost someone we love, and while we do carry on, an emptiness persists, always, that hole in our hearts, like the missing piece of a puzzle. They say that time heals all wounds, and I hope that for Cathy, that proves to be true, and the grief of today is eventually eclipsed by fond memories of the joys of all her and Russell's yesterdays together.



Fiction: *While Drinking Emerald Wine*

Story and Illustrations By Sylvain St. Pierre

Editor's Note: While going through more items from Sylvain's collection at the 2025 book sale, I found a copy of the zine New Moon (vol. 1, no. 4, 1987). It contained not one, but two stories by Sylvain: one that had been published in the zine, and one that was a stapled typescript he had... possibly placed inside the magazine for safekeeping?

As far as I can tell, "While Drinking Emerald Wine" has never been published anywhere, and I feel Sylvain would have been happy to finally have it be published in WARP.

Illustrations are likewise by Sylvain, and were included in the typescript.

I remember well the morning when it all began. It was the first sunny day after a month of purple rain and, like everybody else in the city of Emadaire, I had rushed outside to enjoy what little sun and warmth there was to be had before the blue rain began.

I saw them coming through a rift in the departing violet clouds. Riding a finely woven flying carpet of obviously expensive make, though perhaps a little grim with all those designs of skulls done in white spider silk...



"Certainly you jest!" I said to Master Zorom as I peeked at our visitors through the cleverly concealed slit in the wall. "Must I really team up with her?"

My tone of voice had been somewhat less respectful than what is expected of an apprentice when speaking to a Master, but my peculiar condition allows me to get away with a lot of things a regular Thief would get flogged for.

"Why, yes," he said, his left eye glued to another slit. "One can tell she is perfect for the job just by looking at her."

I made a derisive snort. Perfect indeed! She was wearing little beside pink gauze, a flower in her hair, and a ridiculously thin sword with a hilt like a half-limp phallus.

"As you can see," he continued, "she is wearing a Veil of Azora, the shade of which is obtained by dipping the spun hair of a manticora in a mixture of gargoyle tears and wild hippogriff blood," and, after a pause, "the main difficulty being that the wearer of such a garment must get the ingredients herself, over the objections of the various sources."

"And this lovely flower," he went on, pretending not to notice my gaping mouth, "is it not the bloom of the Tree of Bones, that grows in the middle of the Temple of Death, in the Forest of No Return?"

"Where lives the many-toothed Brawling Beast," I meekly completed.

"I see you understand," said Master Zorom, "so I will not have to explain how she came by the charming jewel she wears in her navel."



We entered the room by a door opposite the erotic mural where the viewing slits were hidden. Once again I admired the cunning that had gone into their concealment. Nobody would want to be caught looking too closely at that particular spot...

The woman was still there, scantily clad in garb for which I now held considerable respect. Her companion's accoutrement was no less exotic, if not quite as comely.

Looking at him, one got the impression of staring at waves of black ink, so slick and shiny were his robes of deep ebon. He was, of course, a sorcerer.

Both guests were staring at the display that was the centerpiece of this room, and part of the reason for their coming.

In the days of Emadaire's glory, treasures without number filled her lofty halls of porphyry and lustrous marble. But since the fateful day when Dahlgon and Kragën did battle less than a league from the jade quays of the city, there is nothing to be seen but a sea of mud where mermaids swam in azure waves.

And over the years the treasures have dwindled, sold to support our city that could no longer send its bejeweled ships to ply the trade route of the Golden Sea. We also do a bit of Thievery on the side, but do not care much to advertise it widely.

This one item had not yet found a taker. It represented a most hideous demon, man-sized, holding a tray upon which were scattered exquisitely carved miniatures of precious stones and metals.

We probably would have been able to get quite a few guilders for the thing, had Master Zorom not been so adamant against breaking the set. As it was, a couple of figurines were missing and the demon holding the tray had a large hole in its chest, where an expensive pendant had once been set.

In the very center of the tray rested the figure which interested most our visitors. Wrought in untarnishable silver, it was the likeness of a most curious creature, with six arms, three legs, and no face that I could see. On the deep blue gem that was its pedestal were incised, in hard-to-read Old Emadairian script, the words: **INN KEEPER.**

"You are quite sure that there is no doubt as to the authenticity of this item?" asked our wizardly guest in a voice that did nothing to hide his belief that there was, indeed, a great deal of doubt in his mind about it. I decided that I found him very dislikeable.

"Quite sure," said Master Zorom. "I examined all the catalogs with great care following your letter. The demon, the tray, the miniatures, were all made for a wizard whose name is utterly unpronounceable—but I have it here in writing—during the reign of Korob the Cavorting. Thirteen artisans, all known for their skill at attaining realism, toiled for seven years to produce this masterpiece, the title of which translates as "Happy Hour at the Tavern of Wonders". We know that the sculptors worked from life, under unclear conditions, and that one of them was turned to stone by the client because he had forgotten to show a wart on the nose of one of the patrons."

"Very well," said the sorcerer after glancing at the name of the long-departed wizard. "We leave tomorrow."

I went to my quarters, packed my traveling gears, and drank a fifth of Old Dragonsweat. I hate to leave on an empty stomach.



Of the journey I will say little, save that it is without a doubt

the most confusing one I ever undertook. After a while we found ourselves—that is, the wizard, whose name was Arokynn; the warrior maiden, who never said a word but was referred to as Ekua by the wizard; and I, Talgen – in a maze of dusty corridors with walls of pale stone. At last, we came to an immense door of dark wood bound in greenish metal. It opened silently at a push of a finger and we stepped into the Tavern of Wonders.



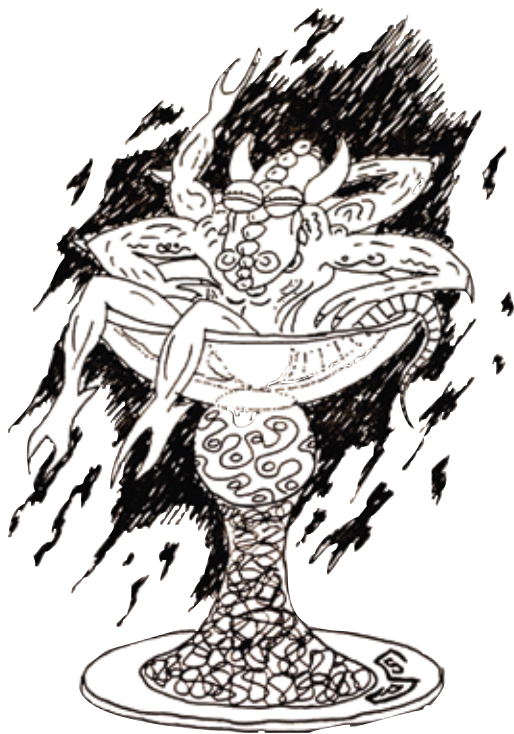
We had been seated for more than an hour when Arokynn suddenly rose.

“Stay here,” he ordered. “Do not do anything until I return.”

And with that he went away, disappearing shortly in the forest of polished columns that seemed to stretch into infinity in all directions; his robes almost, but not quite, a match for the fathomless night of the floor.

In truth, I was all too content to stay where I was. My seat was wondrously mellow, my gold and silver drink an experience in itself, and the ambiance was, well, something!

The other patrons were very much like the figurines I had seen in now no-doubt-distant Emadaire: utterly weird. Trying not to stare too openly at anybody, I tried to spot the extremes. The smallest customer was the size of a kitten, though it did not even remotely look like a cat. It was enjoying its drink much in the way one takes a bath: lying contented in a large crystal cup.



The largest—I suppose I must say ‘person’—was so big that the glow of the orichalcum lamps failed to illuminate it entirely. Its figurine must have been one of those missing on the tray.

The most beautiful was something thin and delicate, clad or covered in bright feathers, its features hidden by a mask of copper filigree, set with a diamond that would have ransomed a dozen kings.

The ugliest was probably a creature that must have been the fruit of the guilty love between a deformed toad and a spinster monkey. I caught myself wondering if it was on the likeness of such a one that an ill-fated sculptor had once forgotten to put a wart.

My eyes had just completed a circuit and my gaze was again resting on the shapely form of Ekua. I was raising my cup to my lips to take another sip of the marvelous liquor it contained, when I heard:

“Don’t you drink a lot, for a Thief on assignment?”



I froze motionless. These were the very first words Ekua had pronounced since I had laid eyes on her. I had thought her very discreet, as befits a good assassin, but was beginning to wonder if she might be mute.

“They will not hear us,” she said, correctly interpreting my worried look. “In the Tavern of Wonders, no one is overheard unless one wishes to be.”

And, indeed, nobody reacted. Not even the thing with ears like bat wings at the table closest to us. I could hear conversations here and there, but I suddenly realized that I could not *listen* to any of them, no matter how hard I strained to do so.

“You come here often?” I asked, regretting those words as soon as they had left my mouth.

She let go a laugh that would not have been out of place around one of the campfires of the army of Rughl the Gross.

“No,” she said, “but for over a moon now, Arokynn has been talking of little but what he knows about this place. And until a moment ago, I could do little but listen.”

To my inquisitively raised eyebrow she answered:

“He was my lover, you see, and it’s his first time here too, but he has read much about it. When I decided to leave him he laid a spell over me. I have been following him in a daze ever since.”

“What broke the hex?” I asked.

“Who knows? This is the Tavern of Wonders, I’m told everything is possible here. I drank my hydromel as he told me and I snapped back to normal. It took all I had not to relieve that son of an eunuch from a few pieces of his anatomy right on the spot.”

“What held you back?” I inquired.

“Do you think you could find the way out of this place?”

I shook my head.

“I thought not. Neither can I. I’m afraid we will have to wait a little longer.”

“We?”

“He has no intention of paying you the money he promised. You are to be a decoy, taking the blame when he and I make away with the Inn Keeper.”

“Somehow, I am not very surprised,” I said. “Is the thing potent enough to be worth all this trouble?”

“Arokynn believes so. The last time one was used in thaumaturgy was when the Garnet Empress had her palace conjured up on the Fourth Moon.”

“There is no such thing as a Fourth Moon.”

“That is correct. Think about it. And slow down on the drinking, you’ll need your wits to get out of here.”

“Huh? Oh, this!” I said, raising my cup to hide my embarrassed look. “It’s my lunch. Don’t laugh, it’s true! Have you ever heard of Ebriatus Dragonis?”

“Don’t they also call them Bar Dragon Flies? In my country we use pink elephants...”

“They really do exist!” I said, showing her the fang marks on my left palm. “They are about the size of your hand, green with wings like sheets of brass. They do look like little dragons, and it’s true that they have a fondness for bars. You see, in the wild they feed



on fermented fruits and berries—alcohol.”

“And one of them bit you?”

“Yes. I was drinking colored water, pretending to be drunk, to not arouse the suspicions of a rich trader. Only, when I reached into her pouch, there was a Bar Dragon Fly waiting inside for me. The only good antidote for the thing’s venom is alcohol, lots of it, so they poured a whole jug of Emerald Wine down my throat.”

“Ugh! Icky stuff. I tried

it once—tastes like rotten grass.”

“That’s what they use to make it. It’s also very cheap. The innkeeper was a friend, but not a very good one. Anyway, I survived, but I found out soon after that I could feed only on alcohol, just like an *Ebriatus Dragonis*.”

“Is that bad? For somebody who takes nothing but booze, you don’t seem to be in terrible shape.”

I let the compliment go.

“I’m not, I mean I can never get drunk again.”

“A fate worse than death,” she giggled.

“... I can’t get rid of my hangover either...”

“Oh...” and with that she pushed her cup toward me. “Here,” she said. “Finish this. You won’t get any worse, and I will need *my* wits to deal with Arokynn when he comes back.”

“Do you have a plan?” I asked as I started to drain the iron and copper vessel.

“No, but that has never stopped me before. Arokynn has gone to lay a network of spells around the place. This is a very complex web and it will take him a while to complete it. I have seen him to it before; a good deal of it is illusion, but there will also be a geas put on you so you will draw attention to yourself and be caught in our stead. The time to jump him will be when he comes back, while he is weak from his conjuring and just before he triggers the master spell. We will have to be quick, for all he needs is a single word to set everything in motion.”

“A word I will gladly utter!” said an icy voice behind me.



I think I must have thrown my drink over my shoulder before he had completed the exclamation point. I cursed my chair for hugging me so lovingly and managed to turn fast enough to see the cup roll at the feet of a wizard in wet ebon robes, a frightful curse glowing in his eyes.

Obviously he had been standing there invisible, and was apparently surprised not to be so any more. I took advantage of his split second of confusion to put my foot on the table leg behind me and leap forward.

The cockatrice feather on top of my hat burst into flames, as no doubt my head would have, had I aimed at Arokynn, as he must have assumed would happen.

Instead, my fingers closed over the silvery disk I had seen

roll from the empty cup. Sparks flew all around me, but the wizard’s second bolt left me unscathed.

Ekua had taken her sword out and was using it to weave around her the most amazing protection I have ever seen. The peculiar shape of the hilt allowed a curious turn of the wrist by which she twirled her weapon so fast as to give the impression she was holding in front of her a shield as sheer as her dress.

The wizard smiled contemptuously. I could see him slowly draw his breath, no doubt to say the awful word that would spell my doom and bring him victory.

His mistake was to take too long to do it. Before he could open his mouth, I had already shouted, wanting very much to be heard:

“WE CAN LICK ANYBODY IN THE HOUSE!”



Later, back in Emadaire, in the room of the erotic mural, Master Zorom asked me:

“Was it not something dangerous to say?”

“Not really,” I said as I replenished my companion’s cup. “This was obviously a high-class establishment, and such places hate scandal. I knew that the worst that could happen to us would be to have the way out politely pointed. The only thing that worried me was *where* we would end up. Fortunately we did not too badly in that regard.”

“It still took us a month to get back from the Edge of the Shadow Sea,” said Ekua. “Not that I complain, it was a memorable trip...”—that, with a languorous wink at me.

“I can well believe it,” said Master Zorom in a tone that was either regretful or envious, I couldn’t make out which. “But is it not surprising that the wizard did not come out with you? After all, it is hardly common practice for taverns to evict unruly patrons through different doors. Or so I’m told,” he hastily added.

“Hah!” I replied. “But Ekua and I were merely obnoxious, and went out quietly, while Arokynn tried to fight. You see, for all his booky knowledge, he was very ignorant about the way a tavern is run.”

“It is fortunate that you are *not*.”

“Very much so indeed. We will probably never know how this got into Eku’s cup.” I said, flipping the silvery disk. “It is obviously a potent protection against magic.”

“I suppose it must be one of the reasons they call the place the Tavern of Wonders.”

I silently nodded agreement as I rose and covered the few paces between my chair and the tray-holding demon. The disk fitted perfectly into the hole in the chest. I stepped back to look at the thing again.

Yes, the artist had been very faithful to the model. Even the scale seemed accurate, I noticed again as I glanced at the tiny figures in the tray.

Poor Arokynn, I thought. Not being a bar fixture, like myself, I don’t think he would have made the connection. Even if he had managed to read the characters on the medallion.

In finely-chiseled hard-to-read Old Emadaire letters, was inscribed therein a single word:

BOUNCER.

Fiction: *Starfleet Treachery*

By Barbara Silverman

PREVIOUSLY: Star Trek: Voyager? No – alternate timeline. Ship: “USS Explorer”! Commander Cavit and Doctor Fitzgerald killed during transit to Delta Quadrant? No – survived! No position for Chakotay, no EMH, many other differences! **CURRENTLY:** Janeway: comatose! Cavit: new captain! Starfleet/Maquis truce: canceled! All Maquis: arrested! Chakotay: given show trial by Cavit, sentenced to death by lethal injection! Tuvok: uneasy, but not emotional!



CHAPTER 65

After Tuvok left, Cavit walked to another console, where he tapped in a series of commands. He focused on Chakotay. “There! We will not be disturbed. Well, Maquis, how do you like the price of treason? Are you enjoying the waiting and watching as we prepare the deadly mixture?”

Waiting and watching purposefully, callously arranged and designed so as to brutalize the prisoner’s psyche. A specially designed nightmare from which there would be no awaking! No escape! No reprieve!

Chakotay’s fingers dug into the material beneath him. Lying helpless, awaiting his execution, the Maquis leader knew he had only himself to blame. He had become careless. Working with Janeway had been easy, even pleasant. She had gained his trust.

He had never doubted that Cavit’s message had not come from Janeway, he should have questioned, but everything had seemed so plausible. Now, not only would he himself be paying the price of his carelessness but so would his entire crew. His heart ached with the knowledge that as a leader he had failed them. He could only hope his death would bring them life. After Cavit had his revenge, there would be no reason to harm the other Maquis.

Since joining the rebel movement, the threat of death had been a constant companion. However, this was not how he envisioned his end would be. His crew confined under heavy guard. A determined Starfleet officer bent on vengeance. Chakotay dared not resist. One wrong move would result in the death of some, or all, of his crew. In this, his final battle, he quietly conceded defeat.

Though resigned, the Maquis leader could not rid himself of the nauseous feeling in the pit of his stomach. He was a sacrificial lamb on the altar of hate.

That hate clearly showed in the eyes of the doctor as he looked up from the console, his gaze locked on the Maquis leader. In a voice full of disdain Fitzgerald taunted his victim. “Well, Chakotay, I do hope you are comfortable. How does it feel knowing you have only minutes left to live? Helpless, locked in position, ready for Cavit your executioner to administer the fatal dose?”

Fitzgerald’s face contorted in contempt, his mouth forming a snarl as he returned to his task.

Cavit moved away from the console. Eyes gleaming with triumph, he approached Chakotay. “Because of you, I have been humiliated and disgraced. My record tarnished, my reputation ruined. Now, outlaw, it is your turn! Will you not beg? Ask that we spare your life? Come on, traitor, we can be merciful. Don’t you want to live?”

Chakotay remained silent, staring with steady eyes into those of the man who was to take his life. All that could be said had been said. His only concern was for his crew; perhaps somewhere in the records, the good which he had done would outweigh the bad.

Standing at the foot of the bed, Cavit looked down at the man he despised. Placing his hands behind his back the captain planted his feet slightly apart.

His voice was quiet and smooth. “So, Maquis...you’re going to deny me the satisfaction of watching you plead for mercy. Giving up so your crew will be allowed to live. Planning to die quietly. Well... we have a little surprise for you. Don’t we, Doctor? Your escape resulted in this ship landing in the Delta Quadrant, and the death of Captain Janeway. Now justice will triumph.”

Fitzgerald took two objects from the top of his console. Holding the hypospray, and the vial containing the lethal mixture, slowly, steadily, purposefully, he walked in the direction of Cavit and their waiting prisoner.

Trying to control his nerves Chakotay took a deep breath. His body tense with dread and apprehension, aching from torturously tight straps drilling through clothing into flesh. Muscles screaming for release.

Placing his hands beside Chakotay’s legs, Cavit leaned slightly forward. Looking, gloating at the man he had condemned. His voice carrying a trace of joyful menace. “Within moments you will hear the soft hiss of the injection. Feel the usual coolness against your unprotected neck. However... this time there will be no medication. This time, the final darkness and...”

Captain Cavit smiled sinisterly. Returning to his lordly stance, he finished the sentence. “You will soon know what else!”

In a strong, clear voice, eyes showing no fear, Chakotay addressed his judge and executioner. “Cavit, killing me might bring you pleasure and revenge; however, I have done you no wrong. Your actions were yours alone! As for the captain, if you’re looking to blame someone, then hold the Kazon responsible, not me. However... you do bear the responsibility for my death!”

Chakotay’s words stung the Starfleet officer. Cavit raised a fist and took a step forward. Then slowly, a diabolical grin on his face, he lowered his arm.

He turned his head to the man standing beside him. “Dr. Fitzgerald, have you finished preparing the injection as we discussed?”

The doctor replied with an equally sinister smile. “Yes! Exactly as planned.”

There was no concealing the great pleasure and satisfaction Fitzgerald was feeling. “Once administered, death will be slow and painful, over a period of at least two or three hours, perhaps longer. Since this is a special mixture, there is no antidote, there can be no last-minute reprieve.”

Both Cavit and Fitzgerald savored the terror they knew Chakotay would now be feeling.

Cavit glared down at his horrified victim. His voice was hard

and callous. “This execution has been designed as a punishment. To be effective, punishment cannot be pleasant; therefore your execution must not only be painful, it must also proceed slowly. The crimes of treason and murder require harsh uncompromising retribution.”

Hands clutched tightly behind him, Cavit spoke with the insanity of revenge and hate. One hand tapping the other, his voice radiated corrosive apology. “Since the replicators cannot produce lethal substances, it was not easy finding the right drugs that we could produce, then combine. As you can see, we have gone to a great deal of trouble to accommodate you. I’m sure you will be pleased at having the extra time to reflect on your crimes. Unfortunately... there is an uncertainty as to the full effects. Rest assured it is fatal, but otherwise...”

Cavit gave a small shrug. “How your body resists death will determine the time and the suffering you will have to endure. How long your body withstands the enjoyment of digesting the chemicals will determine your punishment.”

Numb with disbelief and horror, Chakotay’s nails dug deeper into the fabric on which he lay. He looked from Cavit to the doctor, then back to Cavit. The truth was now frightfully clear.

They wee insane! Both of them!

The hopelessness of the situation screamed at the Maquis leader. His heart was racing, blood pounding through his body with horrible awareness. Torture! No escape! Their distorted minds had planned well. Too well! The three of them alone. The crew attending to their duties, all of them knowing nothing of the events taking place in their sickbay.

Events that no one of conscience would ever justify.

Somehow Chakotay found the strength to speak. His words were cutting. “Remember this! Both of you! Some day you will have to face the spirits that rule the afterlife. I do fear mine. Will you stand without fear before *your* god?!”

To Cavit and Fitzgerald, there was no god. However, the Maquis leader had beaten them, and they knew it! Chakotay’s final words, his strength against their weakness. A lit match against dry kindling inflaming both Starfleet men.

Dispelling the last traces of sanity. Sending them spiraling down into the depths of darkness.

Directly in Chakotay’s line of sight, the doctor checked the working condition of the hypospray. “You may have had the last word, Maquis, but we will make you pay.”

With trembling hands, Fitzgerald started to load the capsule. “This is for Peter, my brother, whom you murdered.”

Chakotay tried to tear his eyes away but they were glued to the hands of Fitzgerald. A dark veil of despair and terror enshrouded him as the two officers prepared to not only end his life, but to do so in a ghastly manner. Surrendering to that which he was powerless to prevent did not grant Chakotay immunity from the growing horror of the situation. Nor to the unimaginable agony to come.

While determined not to show Cavit any weakness, the Maquis leader could not stop the rising sense of dread. His mouth, a sheet of sandpaper, dry and rough. Arctic winds racing up and down his spine as cold fear gripped his body. Breathing restricted as the straps across his chest took on a life of their own, squeezing tighter and tighter against his body. Excruciating pain shooting through tightly bound legs and arms.

Chakotay’s consciousness shut out everything but the hypospray. In vain he attempted to refocus his thoughts, but to no avail. His world had become smaller and smaller, and now held only one object: the instrument of death with the horrendous mixture. It grew larger and larger, filling his entire universe.

Once again Cavit taunted his helpless prisoner. “Now you know how your life will end, sweeping from your body in a mass of pain and anguish. Convulsions from muscle spasms. Choking, gasping for air as the poisons flow through your veins. This is your reward, traitor!”

With obvious delight at the saga soon to unfold, the now-captain of the *Explorer* continued painting a picture of abomination. “Your flesh torn and bleeding from vain attempts to escape the unyielding straps that hold your pain-wracked body. The room shaking with the screams ripped from the depths of your suffering. Will your *spirits* be merciful? Will your *spirits* put a quick end to your torment?”

Turning in the direction of the doctor, Cavit held out his hand.

Slowly, very slowly, Fitzgerald continued to load the lethal capsule. “Oh! I’m sorry, Chakotay. There appears to be something wrong. You don’t mind waiting another minute?”

Chakotay’s fingers dug deeper and deeper into the material.

With a scornful look, the doctor removed the vial. Then carefully, purposefully he reloaded the hypospray. Snapping the capsule into position with finality.

Chakotay braced himself, his fingers now quiet and still.

In the final moment before the injection, he turned his thoughts and eyes in the direction of the dying captain. They had both followed the path set out by fate: she as a Starfleet captain, he as the Maquis leader.

How had it come to be that fate had played a laughing game?

Why were both of them destined to die, here together, on the other side of the galaxy? Far from the place they both called home.

Anachronistic Teapot by Valerie Royall

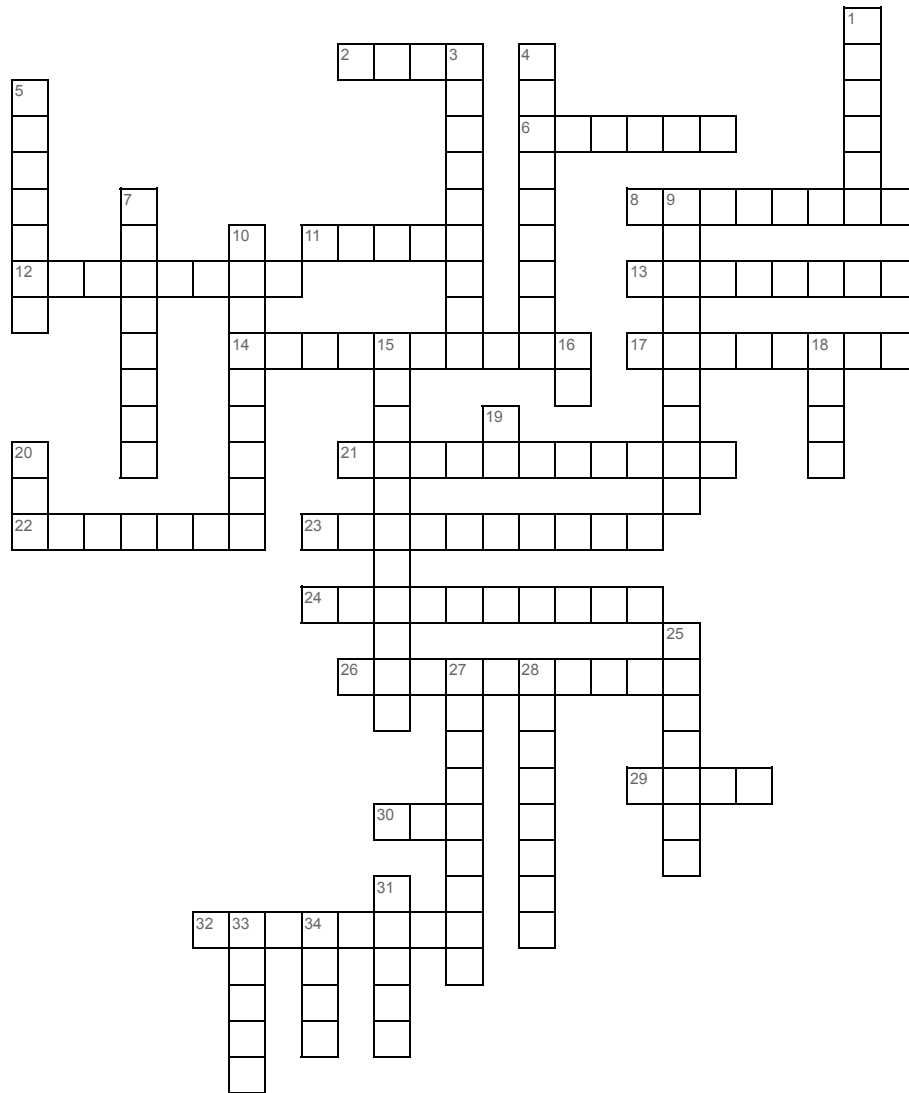


Teapot by Christopher Dresser
Photo by Valerie Royall

With its clean lines and sleek, futuristic look, you might think this teapot was made in the '70s, and you'd be right—if you were thinking the 1870s. Created by Christopher Dresser in 1879, the pot is inspired by the geometry and minimalism of nineteenth-century Japanese design. It was never put into full-scale production as it was considered too unconventional in the Victorian Era, but you can see it in person in the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design at the Musée des beaux-arts .

Crossword Puzzle: Retro Space

By Mauro Antonucci



Across:

- 2: "It was Earth all along" - 1968's *Planet of the ___*?
- 6: Classic retro sci-fi weapon
- 8: Little green men, like Marvin
- 11: Extraterrestrial being
- 12: Someone who seeks out strange new worlds
- 13: Space saga featuring the Force
- 14: Energy sword from 13A
- 17: Giant radioactive lizard monster
- 21: Fictional mineral we can't actually get
- 22: Anything that travels around a planet
- 23: Intense release of radiation that could make a Hulk
- 24: 1927 silent sci-fi masterpiece about a city
- 26: Interstellar alliance in Star Trek
- 29: Vast, vast emptiness
- 30: AI that can't open the pod bay doors
- 32: Shortcut through spacetime

Down:

- 1: Ringed planet
- 3: Explosion brighter than a galaxy
- 4: How the Enterprise moves (hint: where this puzzle is!)
- 5: NASA program in the 70s, Star Trek program in the 90s
- 7: Our home galaxy
- 9: Someone in space
- 10: Starship shield
- 15: How starships send, but not receive, messages
- 16: 2-less 31D who said BEEP BOOP in 13A
- 18: Our natural 22A
- 19: Friendly 11A from 1982
- 20: Classic 11A spacecraft abbreviation
- 25: 31D that looks just like a person
- 27: World outside our solar system
- 28: Rocky body found in belts
- 31: Mechanical helper
- 33: Path followed by a planet
- 34: Home of 8A

Feature: Notes From Scintillation 6

By Danny Sichel

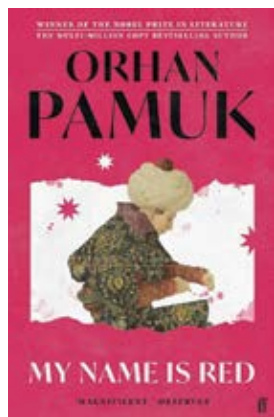
On June 6-8 2025, I attended Scintillation 6, Jo Walton's small literary con. And I took extensive notes. I took such extensive notes (the raw "Scintillation 6 Panel Notes.docx" is nearly 50,000 words) that it won't all fit in one issue of *WARP*, even after substantial editing and processing. Here's two panels, though.

(Sentences not in quotation marks are probably paraphrased, and may have been reorganized and consolidated for clarity and length. Sentences in quotation marks are less likely to be paraphrased, but may not be exactly what was said. '*' = Moderator.)

A Good Read. Four people each choose a novel, everyone reads all of them, and then discuss them

Mathieu Glachant* (**MG**), Marianne Aldrich (**MarA**), Mary Ellen Shaw (**MES**), Libby Vega (**LV**)

My Name is Red (Orhan Pamuk, 1998) (**MG**)



MarA: There's 50+ narrators, and they all feel like people – even the tree, the corpse, and the color red!

MES: surprised by overlap between art and narration, how narration is almost a visual art.

LV: The multiple POVs take us through the timeline—not always reliably! Repeatedly given details from the paintings—rooms, colors. Savor the details—then MOVE ALONG w. the murder mystery!

MG: 'narration as visual art' is worth an entire panel. Pre-modern idea of art as illustration: why draw something that's not part of the story? When God sees the world, everything is the same size. Nothing is closer to God than anything else, so perspective is heresy.

MES isn't super visual. Found her way into the book via the tension: Frankish influence of painting conflicting w. Chinese, and the old masters they're trying to emulate.

MG: it's not exactly worldbuilding, but you use genre-reader muscles to keep track of all the threads

LV: portrays art as mystical discipline. Emptying the self—willingness to be blinded, to make the images. "God's-eye view of creation"—ultimate goal for the artist's eye is to become blind. Their sight becomes pure memory. Callback to how God perceives the world.

MarA: in many books, this trope infuriates her, bc in the real world, many miniaturists *did* go blind. As a disabled person who risks blindness herself, she finds this very moving.

The Last Witchfinder (James Morrow, 2006) (**MarA**)

MarA read *TLF* three times when it came out. Narrated by Newton's *Principia Mathematica*. Books writing books and competing w. each other—what fanfic calls 'crack'. "Ridiculousness that I love". Morrow did okay at portraying a woman's experience, even though it's a picaresque, and they're not really about women. Upon rereading: "2006 me knew a lot fewer indigenous people". Morrow tried, but you can tell he did not have a native person read it.

MES: "nerdiest book I've read in a long time, which is saying

something"—she might not know as much about 1500s Istanbul, but studied history of science in uni. Brilliant parallel narrative w. discovery of chemistry and physical science. Morrow's use of historical figures—really well done.

LV warning: there's a lot of historically accurate witch killing. *TLF* doesn't bog down in that, bc of *Principia's* voice. "Zoom in, zoom out, and there's Jennet w. her plucky zeal for truth instead of this mistaken set of beliefs taken piecemeal from the Bible and the *Malleus Maleficarum*".

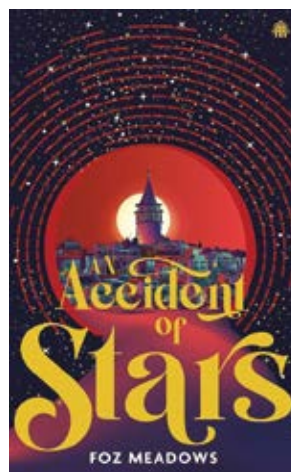
MG: Many novels have versions of Ben Franklin; *TLW's* Franklin was great. The fight between *Principia* and *Malleus*—like they're competing by trying to write their own books. Halfway through, he stopped and said "I need to read an actual biography of *Principia*, to understand the narrator better"! Not just a gimmick, you really feel like *Principia* is talking to you.

MarA read the entire *Malleus* in translation in uni, and realized it was already her enemy.

MES: So much of this book could be gimmicky. *Principia's* narration, how Jennet wants to fight her father, the trials, hooking up w. Ben Franklin—could all be by the numbers, but they're not. This book does cool things.

After **LV** read about Jennet at refuge, she wanted to read up on the tribe mentioned. (**MarA:** they're a fictionalized version of the Abenaki.)

An Accident of Stars (Foz Meadows, 2015) (**MES**)

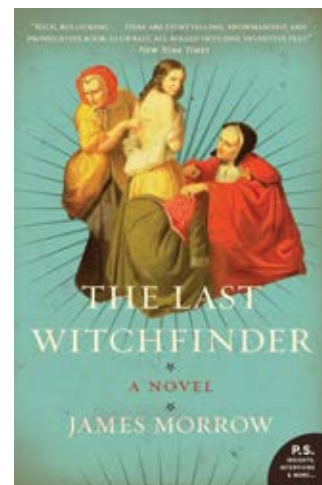


MES: Portal fantasy (PF) in conversation w. so many other PFs and the genre's basic tropes. Tension between PF as escapism, vs. moving to another culture and how stressful that actually is. High school girl goes through portal and the first thing that happens in the otherworld: she gets two fingers chopped off. Very political world w. real consequences, but also beautiful escapist story doing cool things w. race and gender.

LV liked some of it a lot but got lost in the politics. Not usually this much female focus in fantasy of that era.

Intentional, but not like gender-swapping: here's a complex world and gender isn't a big deal. Really interesting magic.

MG: The maiming has political and cultural implications throughout her stay. Also warns us: she can't go home, act like nothing happened. Book keeps doubling down on that. When you move to another place, you can't go home and pretend that you never left. Really well done: shocking but not gratuitous. Done for a reason, fits into her arc



and comments on the arcs of her friends / rivals.

MarA: content note: “realistic depiction of trauma recovery”. Read it all in two days except the last two chapters. Loves the characters—people fought each other and both had valid points. People explain what they’re thinking, even if it makes things trickier for writers. Liked depiction of disability, arguments about role of children in adult situations (common in discussions of PF, but not in PF itself). Also: cool multiverse stuff! It probably has flaws but she didn’t notice any.

MES: not exactly gender-swapped. When rereading—“if X was the other gender... oh, that’s what Meadows is doing!” In earlier books like this, Matu would have been a woman. Got halfway through before realizing: all the main characters were women.

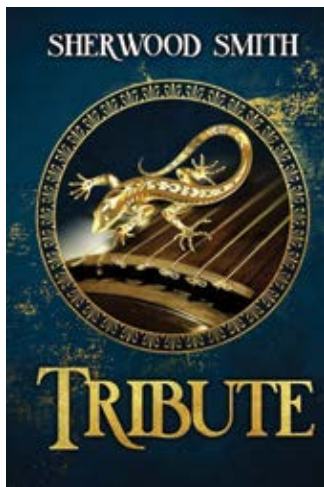
LV: Read the sequel. *AAoS* isn’t a cliffhanger, but the narrator won’t be happy going back to Australia, so NOW WHAT.

MG: complicated politics: main villain in first ‘viper’s nest’ usurped lots of power, sidelined checks and balances by disregarding cultural norms. Felt real—not just mustache-twirling villain. **MarA:** the experienced mentor who helps w. worldjumping... also helped put him in power, oops. **MES:** part of the solution: look at cultural norms—which are helpful, which aren’t. At the end they use norms to replace the villain, but they do it consciously.

LV: Mindfully.

MarA: Compares PF to the immigrant experience. “Not only do the people at home worry about you, they worry about the wrong things.”

Tribute (Sherwood Smith, 2023) (LV)



LV: Book 1 of 4-book sequence, but stands alone: arc, ending, it’s satisfying. No “Oh no what happens next”, but you will want to read more Smith. Starting main characters: young girl w. visual disability and old lady (“like me”), who’s at end of creative life, has been teaching music, and gets sent back on physically challenging adventure—and their friend: young demon posing as human bc she loves music. About making music—how talent is developed, what that takes. Purity of heart. They come from Imperial backwater but have major role: go to

capital, interact w. Imperial family... but first, a long stretch about being in music school.

MG: the Empire (whose authority they don’t really recognize) takes them from their island without expecting much. By sheer dedication and artistic quality, they blast through the ceremony and pomp and structure, and save society from outside threat. The demon who follows—wants to understand music, what it means to be human. Tied together really well.

MES: Othering: who counts as a person? To whom? Such a light touch—classic fantasy that could’ve been done 30 years ago but would’ve done it worse. Treats hard things as hard—take time to get over. Also, the inter-age relationships ring true. She loved it.

MarA liked that the young heroine came from humble beginnings, was treated badly by family, got into music school on luck and innate talent—but *wasn’t* suddenly able to play instruments without training.

LV: we meet the Imperial Family and they’re just people. Sibling rivalries, childhood traumas, etc. Emperor is in charge of a vast

world, and struggling w. that—who can he pick as an heir, his kids all have problems (disabilities!)—so much character development that it’s its own arc.

MES: It’s a book about music, w. several deaf characters (*MNiR* is about art and about going blind).

MarA: also, the meta thread: a narrator, a storyteller weaving a frame.

MG: Literally contract negotiations: storyteller demanding more money.

MES: maybe that’s what connects these books: meta storytelling. All have an internal narrator (*AAoS* has a cult of people who narrate).

Tribute’s narrator says “I know you want more about old people. I’ll tell you about one”.

LV: commonality is righteousness. Living a righteous wellfounded ethical life. True for *TLW* and *Tribute* and *AAoS*. “Heroism is the courage to keep going for the right thing even when you’re reeling”. Although in *MNiR*, the many narrators don’t always know what their own motives are, we don’t know if they know the truth.

MES: also, for them, ‘right and wrong’ is for making art, not living your life.

AUDIENCE: *MNiR* is SF bc it’s about the impact of a new tech on society—and the tech is perspective.

MG: much anxiety there—both the artists and the officials they interact w.—how this new way of looking at the world will affect them. If you draw a person, someone could look at it and then recognize that person on the street!?!? *That’s not what illustration is for!!!*

MarA: these books are about societies dealing w. huge and rapid changes.

LV: they all try to recognize and celebrate some of the gifts of the past. Especially *MniR*: stories going back centuries, so many ruling groups, their art, who they conquered, who conquered them. Earlier reality is valorized. *Tribute* gives the feeling the Empire’s been there a long time. Dig deeper, find out more.

MES: reconciling new tech w. traditions—what to keep or dump, which norms give you something (or don’t). *AAoS* begins w. protagonist being harassed by classmates. You see why she wants to go elsewhere—and then she is elsewhere, w. different problems. Better / worse? How do you choose?

MG: in *TLW*—Jennet keeps trying to change the world, but also wants a *theory* of change. Tries so many theories, they all fail, she keeps trying. Desperate people trying to make do, to break the spell. Really happened. As young girl, “I just need to find the perfect argument and make it to Isaac Newton and he’ll back it up w. perfect math and everyone will agree that witch stuff is nonsense”, and at the end she’s developed so much.

MES: she learns that she can’t rely on Newton. No one’s coming to save you, you must save yourself.

AUDIENCE: **Rich Horton** compares *TLW* to *Everyone Knows Your Mother is a Witch*—“not really fantasy but the characters believe absolutely in fantastic things.”

MG: *MniR* plays games w. “who is narrator” but also “who is author”, how are we getting this text. Some of the narrators are actually drawings. This is tied to the storytellers—but also “other layers of who’s telling the story to who and for what”—sense of infinite regression. Obviously pointing to God—trying to see w. the perspective that isn’t a perspective—but also pointing to Orhan Pamuk. Much interesting meta stuff about authorship.



Susanna Clarke. Susanna Clarke has written very few works, but what she has written is brilliant and different from everything else. Let's consider her work so far and what's so great about it.

Patrick Nielsen Hayden (**PNH**), Zach Smirin (**ZS**), **Jo***, Eugene Fischer (**EFi**), Tamara Vardomskaya (**TaV**). *Jonathan Strange and Mister Norrell*: **JSMN**; *Piranesi*: **P***; JS = Jonathan Strange; MrN = Mister Norrell; **P*** = Piranesi (the character); SC = Susanna Clarke

EFi paid to watch a panel of SC and Alan Moore! **PNH** published SC's first short story, and all three Starlight anthologies (SC was the only one to have a story in all three). **TaV** loves the stories. **ZS** is just a reader.

FOOTNOTE: **PNH** says "Strange" is pronounced STRAWNJ, it's an old West Country name. Nobody pronounces "Norrell" right either. In the BBC adaptation, someone says "nor EL" and someone else says "don't be pretentious"

EFi: first realization that "*JSMN* will be very clever" was the first footnote, introducing JS even though he's not in the text until hundreds of pages later.

PNH: the footnotes are an entire alternate universe running alongside.
TaV: SC was afraid of having to omit the footnotes. Imagine *JSMN* without them!

PNH: all these great things happened to SC on her first book (her choice of illustrator!).

Jo: starts out as normal world w. 1 element of the uncanny (MrN). Once we're familiar w. that, we meet JS: the uncanny uncanny. Once we're used to *that*, we meet the Man w. the Thistledown Hair (MwTH). SC keeps tossing in new levels!

PNH: you think it's all familiar then you look down and you're 5 miles in the air.

ZS: during the war, first JS is useless, then he starts building magic roads and moving towns. Shock of transition from "historic fiction about Napoleonic wars" to "something very surreal"—a strange intrusion into our world and yet somehow natural.

PNH: ambivalence about how much magic matters to the world. The Napoleonic wars are going on and magic is creating illusions of fleets coming into shore and making rivers run backwards and moving towns... but it doesn't really change much.

EFi: why does SC's work feel different? Three different layers of knowledge—what the reader knows that the character doesn't and vice versa. Always this meta level—"it's *actually* an academic work by a fictional professor!" Historic artifacts from our world appear in **P***—**P*** doesn't know what they are but we do.

PNH: publishers and adapters engage imperfectly w. SC. Art in original *JSMN* hardcover was very elegant, the adaptation has great actors. 3-volume version has Charles Vess art; **PNH** loves Vess but felt it was wrong. Compares SC to the self-taught gentry antiquarians of 1600s to 1800s: "the guys who spent their lives writing 30-volume histories of one county w. local folklore and engravings of ruins of 800-year-old farmhouses."

Jo: bought **P*** when it came out, and didn't read it, bc it was 2020 and she wasn't reading hard things, and *JSMN* is hard. From how people were talking about **P***, she expected it'd be hard too and wanted to

be FULLY BRAINED when she read it. Saw photo of a mural—two marble robots fighting. Someone said "this would be a better cover for **P***"; she loved that idea and now **P*** is wonderful.

TaV: *JSMN* parallels democratization of science. First, only gentlemen of leisure did science. Opening of magic to women, minorities, kids, etc—the girl cursing off her brother's ears—and gradual expansion of who has access to science. The role of reason: **P*** is worried about losing his own reason—he tries to make notes and be reasonable—even while the world corrupts his mind.

ZS: JSites vs. MNites—matches how the big science debates eventually became much more public ones. Newspapers wrote about how evolution works or doesn't. Don't just read magic in old books, see it in nature. What is magic: empiricism and observation, or pure theory. Matches how science was discussed first privately then publicly.

Jo: Ada has issues of *Gentleman's Magazine* from 18th century, w. big debates over how spiders spin webs. Some men who theorized, and some women who actually looked at spiders and observed. Very active conversation. Democratization of magic is exactly based on what happened w. science.

PNH: much of *JSMN* takes place in London and Europe, but it's about the England of the counties.

Jo was wowed that it started in York.

EFi: in *Ladies of Grace*, JS objects to being called a Londoner!

PNH: hyperrealistic class conflict and historical change. Old trick: adding magic to make things seem more real.

Jo: insert magic to annoy.

PNH: Extremely nonschismatic politics; our world is weird enough. In *JSMN*, two characters discuss industrial unrest—"the workers in the North are entitled to strike as long as they march under the Raven King banner"—feels totally realistic.

Jo: a normal book about **P*** would be "his mind being corrupted by the world"; this one is "him learning to be happy".

TaV found it touching when **P*** finds the torture victim and takes him back to the world.

First time **Jo** read **P***, she was worried about the ending—would **P*** be restored to being Matthew? That'd be the normal way to end that book. Would SC portray re-Matthewing as happy rather than tragic? Easier to reread once she knew she could trust the ending.

ZS: The ideas flowing through the riverbed and carving it away—also what happens to **P***'s mind. Not corrupting him—stripping away extraneous parts of his brain ('writing a book about the cult') while leaving important stuff (empathy, analytical focus, notetaking).

TaV: Matthew's gone. From his sister's POV, this is a tragedy, bc her Matthew is not **P***. But **P*** as **P*** is a person worth knowing.

PNH: **P*** uses magic and the uncanny to grapple w. how we're all Ships of Theseus—ruins of what we once were. Grappling w. happiness—very novel thing for a fantasy novel to do.

EFi mentions Lawrence who remembers Matthew: "you were a jerk but now you're charming". Identity is contextual. Much of *who* you are is *where* you are. What happened to Matthew: the core person is whatever is brought to the surface and remain.

PNH: fully continuous identity, like clockwork plots, is overrated.

Jo: like the river wearing away some parts and leaving others.

PNH vividly recalls how **P*** explores the house, investigates, finds more halls. His year-naming is super imaginative.

ZS: he's so excited to show his notes to someone else!

Jo: Just like how there's an ordinary novel about Jane Fairfax hidden in Austen's *Emma*, there's an ordinary horror novel hidden in **P***. **P*** isn't that book, and it's wonderful that it isn't, I hate that book. Even the true crime book by Matthew's sister, I wouldn't like. What's wonderful: **P***'s delight in the world, how he tries to make it all make



sense, how he looks for the 16th person and takes care of the bones and loves them.

TaV: just wants everyone to be safe from the tide.

Jo: such an unusual character, nothing else like him. I wish Voltaire could read it—it rebuts his “you can’t be happy and have an intellect”. P* is happy and has a complex and interesting intellectual life. Very other-brained.

PNH: early, P* watches birds doing things—writes “the intellect of birds is in the flock, not the individual bird.” Clearly this makes him happy.

Jo: People don’t engage w. happiness as much as you might think.

ZS: in *JSMN*, JS and MrN both seem unhappy, except when they have total freedom to be magicians. Descriptions of JS early in his marriage to Arabella—“good but not entirely happy”, are they happy living this way?—felt more concerned w. characters’ inner lives than would normally be in novel about fairies and witches and the Napoleonic Wars.

Jo: why haven’t people imitated it?

TaV: bc it’s very hard!

Jo: and it’s too soon. People need to read it and grow up w. it. Nobody imitated *LOTR* for years after it was done. Wrote an essay about it for Tor; the comments were full of people saying “there are tons of novels like this!” but they were just Victorian magic. That’s just furniture.

PNH: in SC’s recent short collection, uses magic to talk about neurodiversity (ND).

TaV: ND angle is fascinating. JS shows many ADHD symptoms—e.g., he moves the churches and forgets to put them back. MrN has many autistic traits—excessive focus. Both have difficulty navigating social norms.

PNH: this isn’t shown as terrible. Challenge, yes, but they have the same rich inner life as anyone.

TaV: P* is happy even out of society. After he returns to our world, he has trouble coping w. how many people there are.

Jo: P* could probably have coped w. *Scintillation* if we were the whole world.

EFi: something SC does really well: different modes of cognition. Not only real ones – also the strange psychology of fairies. Why it feels so real when we’re introduced to how fairies interact w. the world.

PNH: MwTH isn’t just a magical force, he’s a person.

ZS: role of madness as not just total random. When JS takes the madness potion, it’s not just his hallucinations we see, it’s how he thinks about reacting. Madness: logic of its own. Seeing that from JS’s perspective, after seeing it from the outside (compare how MwTH acts the whole book)—not a creature of irrational whimsy, it’s alien logic. Great way of showing how weird the magic is, instead of just having someone be random.

Jo: It works. It integrates into our world and we just accept it. In her Florence apartment there’s wallpaper of 1511 mural *The School of Athens*, and PNH looked at an unidentified character on the wallpaper and said “who’s that” and Jo said “that’s MwTH,” and for a second PNH believed her.

ZS: *JSMN* and P* both have people seeking hidden lost knowledge. Compare *Foucault’s Pendulum* w. the conspiracy theorists searching for the secret that doesn’t exist. How is SC’s treatment of hidden lost knowledge different?

Jo: the warmth? Most examples of ‘arcane forgotten knowledge’ in books: transactional, cold. The absence/presence is perceived as bad. SC is warmer. Like ND: seen straight on, fitting in the world. The

magic isn’t negative or positive, it’s just there.

PNH: at the end of *JSMN*, the puzzles haven’t all been solved but the magic is still there.

Jo: difference between fantasy and magic realism: fantasy usually takes a stance on the goodness or badness of magic.

PNH: SC doesn’t take a stance on whether it’s good or bad, but does take a stance on it being real, and that’s why it’s genre fantasy.

Jo: and second- and third-order changes. In magic realism, the magic is just there bc it feels right. At a wedding, the cake makes people cry—that doesn’t mean they could make a crying cake business.

EFi: in P*, P* gained hidden lost knowledge, and it immediately became mundane. We need to find MORE hidden lost knowledge! Traditional fantasy attitude: the *real* lost knowledge will let me force my ideas on people and live forever and turn into an eagle!

The knowledge that lets me access this Borgesian Neoplatonic space—worthless!

ZS: hidden knowledge is just something that’s there.

Jo: loves that the only one of the things he wants to ACTUALLY do is fly.

PNH: theory of fantasy storytelling: we experience the uncanny in the real world all the time. Life is full of inexplicable coincidences. Fantasy works when it exaggerates that into reality just enough: the shape and taste of reality just around the corner. A very small What If. Makes the real feel more real.

Jo: people contact her about the ear piercings in *Among Others*—“do earrings really do that? Is that why I can’t do magic?”

EFi: P* reminds him of Borges’ “Library of Babel”, but Borges has a chilliness that P* doesn’t

ZS: Borges also has the Search For the Right Book Somewhere In The Library.

Jo: Family trees of fantasy writers SC is part of a very interesting tree that is different from the one that most writers we read come from. Not just Mirlees’ *Lud-in-the-Mist*, but also Sylvia Townsend Warner (STW) and Greer Garson. STW is incredibly cold, her *Elfland* book is cold. SC is not cold.

AUDIENCE: Ruthanna Emrys asks about the narrator in *JSMN* as a character? How we’re pulled into that world as an assumed reader who is not us.

ZS: feels like reading a book from the 1830s about what happened in the 1810s. Reduces the distance to the characters. Renders the emotions more accessible. In more standard historical fiction, harder to get in touch w. the characters’ feelings about what’s going on around them at the time.

EFi: some authors, you can tell how much fun they’re having writing the book. SC’s definitely one of those.

Jo: but not so much that it feels self-indulgent.

Crossword Puzzle Answers

Across

2: APES 6: RAYGUN 8: MARTIANS 11: ALIEN
12: EXPLORER 13: STAR WARS 14: LIGHTSABER
17: GODZILLA 21: UNOBTAINIUM 22: ORBITER
23: GAMMA BURST 24: METROPOLIS 26: FEDERATION 29: VOID
30: HAL 32: WORMHOLE

Down

1: SATURN 3: SUPERNOVA 4: WARP DRIVE 7: MILKY WAY
9: ASTRONAUT 10: DEFLECTOR 15: TRANSMITTER
16: RD 18: LUNA 19: ET 20: UFO 25: ANDROID
27: EXOPLANET 31: ROBOT 33: ORBIT 34: MARS

