

The Drink Tank is back, and this issue is kinda like most of the old days. I got a few articles that came in, I had a few ideas, Alissa was a massive inspiration, and I wanted to make some art about libraries.

This issue, by the way, is mostly about books. I love books. So many books. I'll talk more about that in a minute.

Con Jose II, aka WorldCon 76, done come and gone and I loved it! I saw folks I hadn't seen in years, like Chris Barkley and Guy Lillian and on and on, and saw people for the first time, including Esther MacCallum-Stewart, Fia Karlsson, and Sarah Gulde. Good people one and all. My most visible duty was, of course, MCing the Masquerade, which was a lot of fun, and nerve-wrecking, and ultimately rewarding. I had to vamp a lot, which was nice, but I told one truly great joke. Someone in the audience said something about a wookiee.

"I am not a wookiee;" I said, "I am an ewok. I was the center for the Endor Planetary Basketball team. We lost every game except one, a forfeit win against Alderaan."

That felt like a good improv.

I cried like a baby at the Hugo memorial crawl. Milt Stevens. Randy Byers. I had forgotten that Baron Dave Romm had died last August. Good people. I miss them terribly.

And now, a Drink Tank debut writer, and a lot of library-themed surrealistic, collage art that I played with!

Devotees will remember the little girl I babysat, Evelyn. She's now the young woman I babysat in the dim-dark past Evelyn. She's been kind enough to send me some wonderful art for the issue, which I believe marks her return after seven or eight years! God I love this world!



The Drink Tank is edited by
Chris Garcia and Alissa McKersie

LoCs to Garcia@computerhistory.org



Art this issue is by Evelyn Nelson (Pgs. 4, 9, 12, 14, 25, 30) & Chris (the rest)





The Reviews of Stephanie Alford Stephanie Alford

One of the things I love most about my job is I get to walk around the office. That's a weird way to look at what I do, but a large portion of my job, off-the-books of course, is to make my way around from cube to cube, from the common area kitchen to the lounge, and talk to people. It's rarely about work, but at the same time, it's a critical part of my job... at least as I see it. I sometimes call myself the Morale Monitor. I walk and I know things...

Whether it's stopping into a cube for a surrealist exchange with Cate, a lovely chat with my boss about something that invariably will run into a Simpsons quote, or sitting around talking art and movies with my friend Jenny. These little things are keys to a form of bonding done over a carried cup of coffee.

Stephanie was once a co-worker, and as you'll read, she was not treated well by her department. I am sad that she isn't around to run into at the coffee bar any more, but since then, I've been reading her words, her reviews, and what seems like a renewed outlook on things ranging from day-to-day existence to just plain old fashioned reading. One of the figures that we share in common is M. Todd Gallowglas, who will get his own issue someday. I was most excited that when Stephanie got back from WorldCon that she had encountered my man and seemed to be seriously inspired! I get that, he's an awesome figure who is far smarter

about LitCrit than just about anyone I know. OK, he's in the league with folks like Farrah and Mike Perschon and the like. That's good company, so far as I can tell!

One of the things that I love is the fact that she appears to be transforming in her view of writing and reading, which is amazing to watch, but more importantly, she writes reviews EXACTLY the way I love them, with the author being present. She's a major player within her reviews, and the review/love letter to Kameron Hurley and her amazing book *The Geek Feminist Revolution*, is exactly the kind of personal literary review I love. It is a view of her life, and how shitty people can be to work with, and how structures that we thought were torn down still stand, as unnoticed as median arbors. But this is not a personal essay, functionally, it is the best kind of review. It doesn't tell you merely the facts of the book, nor the ties, but how it changed the reader. Every book is a step into new water, and the prevailing wisdom, that you shouldn't talk about how cold the water feels and how loudly you yelp as you enter so you can focus on the shape of the pool, is pure crap. Stephanie avoids that beautifully.

I'm so excited to be able to run her words here, a ton of awesome reviews! She's a great writer, and if you get a chance, check out her blog, [7 Stillwell](#). It's phenomenal stuff and well worth checking out regularly!





Title: [The Geek Feminist Revolution](#)

Author: [Kameron Hurley](#)

Published: 2016

ISBN-13: 9780765386243

Publisher: [Tor](#)

Twitter: [@KameronHurley](#)

Publisher's Blurb: *Outspoken and provocative, double Hugo Award-winning essayist Kameron Hurley writes with passion and conviction on feminism, geek culture, the rise of women in science fiction and fantasy, and the diversification of publishing.*

Dear Kameron,

The first panel I attended at WorldCon 2018 was [M. Todd Gallowglas'](#) Lit Crit for Geeks. I was enthralled. One of the writers he mentioned was you, as doing some great work in feminism. I dutifully wrote your name down in my journal.

Since then, I've lost my job and spend my days reading and writing and thinking. I hash things out a lot in my brain, the one that never shuts up. And then I write stuff for my mentor to read.

One evening after dinner, a friend took me book shopping. [Kepler's](#) is this fabulous indie bookstore whose customers banded together to keep it from closing its doors. There were two names on my list that I knew would go home with me that night, yours and N. K. Jemisin. And since I didn't know where to start with you, I picked up *The Geek Feminist Revolution*.

Always a voracious reader, I am inhaling them now. This is my job while I figure out about the day job, I read and write about what I'm reading. Not only does it give me direction for a life which could easily be adrift and feeding my food addiction, it makes me stronger in so many ways.

Never really shy about self-reflection, I now have the time and space to really look at some of the things coming up right now. And sometimes, it is some scary, sad shit.

“But because my body was coded female, I was never ever assumed to have the kind of knowledge or credibility that a man would have.” (p. 37)

I read the first 38 pages of your book and sobbed. I felt so completely bereft that I had to set it aside for a week or so. Because those pages were my story. The story of being a woman and the rampant sexism which had become so normalized I didn't see it anymore. I read your story and began to understand that not only was I not alone in this mess, but that there were ways I could raise my voice.

But first I had to reconcile some stuff within myself. Because the stuff that was coming up was more than just re-evaluating my entire life in terms of how I'd been treated because I was female, it was looking at some pretty horrifying events and having the light bulb go off. Which led to, “Well shit, no wonder. I never had a chance.”

And without going into too much detail here, there were new realizations about my parents. Then there was looking at my most recent job and realizing that it had been a put-up job from the day I walked in as a temp until the day I walked out as a no longer employed here type. Things started slamming into place. And it was scary.

I've been following you on Twitter and reposting some of your articles on Facebook, because you speak to me in a way that no woman ever has before. And that's valuable to me. I've learned a lot from you.

Taking a deep breath, I picked *The Geek Feminist Revolution* up again, and only put it down when other, more pressing matters demanded my attention. It made me wish I knew you well enough to take you to dinner and ask you to just tell me stories about your life. To talk about process, and yeah it sucks to have to have a day job for the insurance, and holy shit I hadn't realized how bad the sexism is.

There are hard truths in your book.

At my last job there was a week when I had to actually go to my manager and explain to him what being a part of the team and having a voice meant. The group admin wouldn't put me on the meeting agenda because I didn't have Director in my title. She would only do it if my male manager said it was okay. I was pissed. So pissed I was vibrating. And that I had to explain it several times in very small words just made it worse.

Reading your book gives me such hope. For the first time in my life, at a time when people are looking forward to retirement, I realize I still have time to make change in my world. I have time to rearrange everything I thought I knew about myself and create a different life for myself. The life I want is one which tempers my very emotional responses and allows me to reasonably explain to someone why they're not allowed to take my voice away.

I get to figure this out, and you have motivated me to keep doing that. To read, and write, for the sheer joy of it. To understand I need a day job for the health insurance benefits, and to pay my bills. And that all of it's okay and necessary to survive. My writing can be my night job. It doesn't have to be a binary choice anymore.

If I could go back in time, I'd tell my middle-school self to keep writing, because writing

would keep her happy and sane. I would insist she not give it up and not worry about what it looked like or sounded like. I would tell her no matter what, do not quit writing, even if it's just a sentence about how particularly shitty the bullies were that day. "Keep writing, always," I would whisper in her ear.

I had so much to heal from, so much to learn, it's hard to regret it took me this long to realize what I had been keeping from myself. Reading books like yours help so much, and I don't know how to tell you what an impact you've had.

I close this with an open invitation, if our paths cross at any time, dinner is my treat. It's the least I can do, aside from buying your other books and joining your Patreon once I'm gainfully employed again.





Title: [American Gods](#)

Author: [Neil Gaiman](#)

Published: 2001

Publisher: [Harper Torch](#)

Twitter: [@NeilHimself](#)

What's Auntie Reading Now? [picture](#)

Publisher's Blurb: Released from prison, Shadow finds his world turned upside down. His wife has been killed; a mysterious stranger offers him a job. But Mr. Wednesday, who knows more about Shadow than is possible, warns that a storm is coming — a battle for the very soul of America . . . and they are in its direct path.

“This isn’t about what this is,” said Mr. Nancy. “It’s about what people think it is. It’s all imaginary anyway. That’s why it’s important. People only fight over imaginary things.” (p. 427)

Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods* has a simple premise. The old gods are dying as people forget them and create new ones. As simple as that may sound, the story is rich and complex, exploring the relationship of people to their gods, and of the gods to their people.

Shadow Moon gets out of jail early to take care of his wife’s affairs after she and his best friend die in a car accident. We later find out they were having an affair. Shadow accepts

this news numbly and spends the rest of the story allowing events to move him along.

On the plane home, he meets the persistent Mr. Wednesday, a somewhat shabby old man who keeps offering Shadow a job. When Shadow finally accepts, he's told that he's expected to just do whatever Mr. Wednesday tells him to do.

Mr. Wednesday, later revealed as [Odin](#), is recruiting the old gods to a final battle with the new gods (Media, Technology, Drugs, etc.). One of those meetings is with [Mad Sweeney](#), an Irish leprechaun. Mad Sweeney teaches Shadow how to retrieve gold coins from thin air. It is one of these coins which Shadow places in his wife's coffin as she is buried. The coin brings Laura to life, and she follows Shadow on his adventures, offering a Greek chorus commentary along the way.

The final battle occurs when Shadow Moon offers himself as sacrifice after Wednesday is killed. Shadow is hung from the Tree of Life ([Yggdrasil](#)) for nine days and nights. During the tasks Shadow performs on his vigil, he learns that Mr. Wednesday and his former cell mate Low-Key Lyesmith (Odin's son, [Loki](#)) have been playing a long two-man con meant to generate an all out battle between gods so the old gods would die in Odin's name, making him powerful once again.

Shadow returns to the battlefield, explaining this to the gods, who all disappear. And yes, of course, I have oversimplified the story. *American Gods* is nearly 600 pages long. In preparing for this review, I visited many websites which go into the story, the characters, the symbolism, etc. more deeply than I do.

I've been interested in ancient religions for quite some time. Finding authors who give the gods a different spin is really entertaining. [Richard Kadrey](#) does it to great effect in his [Sandman Slim](#) series. [Kevin Hearne](#) with his [Iron Druid Chronicles](#). *American Gods* is top of the heap for me.

Having read it twice, and expecting to read it many more times, the surprises of the familiar never stopped. And as with all good stories, I just followed along. Or, as Shadow Moon says,

I feel like I'm in a world with its own sense of logic. Its own rules. Like when you're in a dream, and you know there are rules you mustn't break. Even if you don't know what they mean. I'm just going along with it ..." (p. 90)

It's not necessary to be familiar with all the gods to enjoy this story. There were many I didn't know, like the Slavic god [Czernobog](#) and his relatives the Zorya Sisters, the story never faltered. Mr. Wednesday was up to something and he was involving everyone he ever once knew.

The concept of people creating their gods and bringing them from their home land to a new land is intriguing. It seems obvious to me now. Even the Christians did it. But we often overlook the diversity of the United States, missing the stories of so many who have come in the hope of a better life.

Of course we brought our gods with us. The gods are the familiar, the tether which we hold on to as we try to make sense of the unfamiliar surrounding us. This idea shouldn't be new, nor should it be shocking.

If it makes you more comfortable, you could simply think of it as metaphor. Religions are, by definition, metaphors, after all ...

Religions are places to stand and look and act, vantage points from which to view the world. (p. 508)

Neil Gaiman uses this idea in *American Gods*, to illustrate how each of us has a story, and it's often different from our neighbor's story. New gods shove their way in, pushing the old gods aside. This is one of the most fascinating themes in the book. How does your god differ from mine? Is mine a new god, or an old one? And have I morphed mine into something different in order to survive the times in which I live?

This is the beauty of Gaiman's work. He touches on these ideas in all his books. And *American Gods* focuses on it with charm and wit.

Resources:

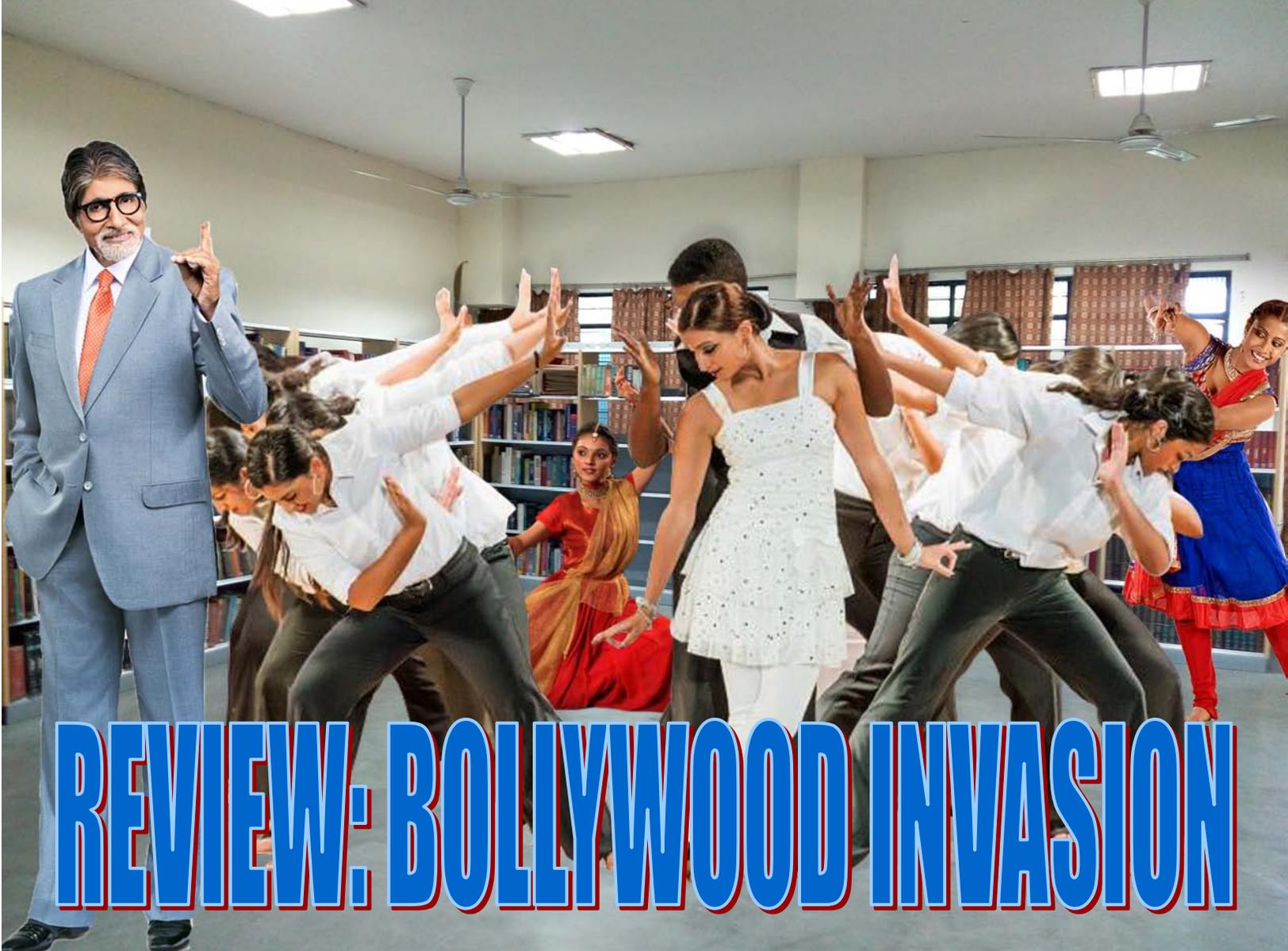
[American Gods: A novel by Neil Gaiman](#)

[only the gods are real](#)

[Your Guide to the Gods of American Gods](#)

[Neil Gaiman's American Gods Resources](#)





Title: [Bollywood Invasion](#)

Author: [Ricardo Alexanders](#)

Published: 2018

ISBN-13: 97819811590193

What's Auntie Reading Now? [Picture](#)

Publisher's Blurb: The story starts from modern-day Brooklyn. sixteen-year- old John Palmieri is living an average life until one day he is hit by a bus and wakes up as Raj Scindia, a prince in India, in 1958.

Suddenly, he finds himself with riches and power beyond his wildest fantasies. Brooklyn is readily forgotten. He makes out with his hot teacher; he tells about the future; his new life becomes a constant stream of debauchery till he meets "the one".

I received a copy of the book from the author in return for an honest review. Thank you Ricardo!

Listening to his iPod, riding fast because he's late, John gets distracted by the girl he likes and gets in an accident with the school bus. When he comes to, he's no longer in contemporary Brooklyn, he's in 1958 India and is the Maharaja Kumar (son of) the Maharaja (governor).

This is the beginning of Alexander's imaginative tale of a world in which the Beatles don't exist and John creates the Indian version to gain fame, and the attention of the girl he loves.

It's not a deep story. Teenage boy discovers he is wealthy beyond his wildest dreams and takes advantage, becoming a bit of an arrogant pig at first. This is not unexpected, after all, if you woke up in a strange time and place to discover that you could have whatever you wanted due to the social class you were born into, wouldn't you act the same way?

John discovers that not only is he wealthy and comes from a powerful family, he's not really expected to study in school. In fact, his doppelganger has quite the reputation, including an affair with one of his teachers.

Then he meets Ankita, and everything changes. He forms the Beetos with his friends to gain her attention and then prove himself worthy of her to her father. Using his memories of the songs he listened to on his iPod, they write songs and gain a following. They become very famous, and wealthy, but it doesn't bring John the peaceful life with Ankita he expected.

To Beatles fans, there are many familiar moments in *Bollywood Invasion*. The most chilling is Alexander's retelling of [John Lennon's assassination](#). [Mark Chapman](#) isn't the only one looking to ease his pain.

As John comes back to his own time and place, he thinks he's just had a bad dream and hurries off to school where a new girl joins their class, and her name is distinctly familiar.

Ricardo Alexander's writing style is earnest. This story means a lot to him, as do the Beatles. It's an interesting idea of setting them and their origin story in India. There are many, many details about the trajectory of the Bee-tos which come straight from Beatle history. Some of them can be quite unsavory, but none of us should flinch from them. Especially because, at its heart, *Bollywood Invasion* is a love story, in which Ricardo Alexander explores what it means to want to become a better person for the one you love. It's a detail worth exploring.





Review - The Invisible Library

Title: [The Invisible Library Series](#)

The Invisible Library

The Masked City

The Burning Page

The Lost Plot

Author: [Genevieve Cogman](#)

Published: 2016 – 2017

Publisher: [Penguin Random House](#)

Twitter: [@GenevieveCogman](#)

What's Auntie Reading Now? pictures: [Library](#) – [Masked City](#) – [Burning Page](#) – [Lost Plot](#)

Publisher's Blurb: *Irene is a professional spy for the mysterious Library, which harvests fiction from different realities.*

An evil book warbler called on my birthday and dropped sweet little nothings in my ear about a series featuring an interdimensional library and Librarians who time traveled to retrieve books in order to keep the balance of the universe in place.

Having just purged half my personal library and swearing no more series until I'd finished what I had on hand, I somewhat firmly told this book warbler I would have none of it. And then he delivered the fatal blow, "it has dragons in it." That book warbler plays dirty he does.

"And at that moment the alligators burst into the room." (The Invisible Library, p. 148)

Best line in a book ever. Ever. If I wasn't enjoying myself before, that line sealed the deal. A line like that makes you sit up and take notice.

Irene is a Librarian with the Invisible Library and is sent to steal books from other timelines for the Library in order to maintain the balance of the universe. She reminds me of a very bookish Mary Poppins with all sorts of tricks "up her sleeves." She gets stationed in an alternate steampunk Victorian London where she befriends the local esteemed private detective and the chief of police.

Kai is her assistant. A student sent along to train with her. He is gut-wrenchingly absolutely perfectly handsome in a somewhat otherworldly way. He and Irene develop a nice friendship and professional working relationship. But sometimes thoughts get in their heads ...

And as it turns out, Kai in his non-human form, is a Chinese dragon. Part of one of the noble ruler clans who very much disapprove of Kai's involvement with the Library.

There are adventures, both in Irene's home base London and other worlds, which involve various amounts of chaos between factions of the Fae. And each adventure begins with being sent to retrieve a book and turns into solving a crime of some sort.

And, of course, there's a big baddie named Alberich who was once a Librarian himself. He's gone rogue and threatens the Library itself. Intent on killing Irene in the process, he also thinks he can outsmart her and Kai. Despite his prodigious powers, and many close calls, he has yet to kill either of them.

Don't expect deep philosophical debates on weighty issues within. These are light hearted mysteries with absurdist tendencies. What can you expect when you're dealing with an interdimensional library, time traveling Librarians, disguised dragons and, the Fae who are out to wreak havoc as only they know how?

The evil book warbler was right, and these were a great summer read. And the alligators? That would be telling.



The White Trash Zombie Series

- *My Life as a White Trash Zombie*
 - *Even White Trash Zombies Get the Blues*
 - *White Trash Zombie Apocalypse*
 - *How the White Trash Zombie Gets Her Groove Back*
- White Trash Zombie Gone Wild* Author: [Diana Rowland](#) Published: 2011-2015 Publisher: [Daw](#) Twitter: [@dianarowland](#)

Zombies are so not my thing. Vampires, demons, other supernatural critters I can mostly do. But definitely not zombies. Until I discovered Diana Rowland, author of the Kara Gillian *Demon* series, also wrote a white trash zombie series. And I loved this one almost as much.

The best thing is the trajectory its main character, Angel Crawford, takes. From white trash loser addict living with her alcoholic father to becoming an important part of the Zombie Tribe/Mafia, holding down her job at the morgue (free lunch) and getting it together enough to pass her GED and get into college.

Angel juggles this while trying to keep it a secret from the non-zombies in her life. She

lives in a world where zombies are mythology, not actuality.

What I didn't like was when Rowland carefully laid out the rules for being a zombie and then ripped them to shreds. Late in the series, one of the main characters inhabits another body belying the "has to be bitten to become a zombie" rule.

Which completely resets this character's story, confuses the hell out of the reader, and blows up what could have been a really interesting subplot. Congresswoman meets zombie and falls in love ... didn't see that one coming.

(All the endearments and nicknames used in this series nauseate me. Zombie Mama and Zombie Baby are just creepy.)

Book 1 – *My Life as a White Trash Zombie*

Meet self-described white trash loser Angel Crawford. She's in the hospital recovering from being left on the side of the road after a car accident the night before. She remembers being drunk and high, but she doesn't remember the accident, and certainly can't figure out why there's not a scratch or bruise on her.

She receives an anonymous note telling her a job at the morgue is waiting for her and she has to keep it for 30 days or she'll be turned into the police. Angel reports to work and discovers she has no problems with handling dead bodies but is a little squicked out when her stomach growls at the sight of brains.

Eventually, we learn that Angel left the bar with a stranger who tried to rape her and there was an accident. He died, and Angel lives, getting turned into a zombie. She receives anonymous notes and packages to help her acclimate to her new reality.

A string of murders reveals a killer who believes the only good zombie is a truly dead, beheaded zombie.

At the end of the book, Angel has made a remarkable turnaround. No longer able to get high due to the regenerative power of her zombie "parasite," she has to face the hard truths of her life.

Angel's very likeable. It becomes clear that she was handed a nasty life and figured she was going to be a loser the rest of her life, just like her alcoholic father. Before zombie, there was no reason to even try to do more than just survive by taking low-wage jobs she frequently quit or was fired from. Drugs, sex and alcohol were how she numbed the pain. After zombie, she begins to see it doesn't have to be that way. Changing won't be easy but it's the only way now.

Book 2 – *Even White Trash Zombies Get The Blues*

Angel's kept her job at the morgue and gotten into the rhythm of being a zombie. She's discovered the person who turned her was someone she knew from high school and is now a detective with the local law. Oh, and they're a couple now.

She's attacked in the morgue and a body goes missing. Of course, Angel's blamed and gets suspended. Everyone, including her zombie boyfriend and his uncle, head of the local zombie mafia believe she did it. We're only in book two of the series so it's too soon to believe that she's not the pill-popping, alcohol swilling white trash loser everyone already knows. Determined to prove her innocence, Angel goes on the hunt and discovers a horror chamber of a lab experimenting on zombies. Run by Saberton Corp., which is looking for a way to militarize zombies and get a contract from the government.

Angel is abducted by the director of the lab, Dr. Kristi Charish, and forced to undergo

experiments, one of which is to make another zombie, Philip. This has all kinds of consequences in later books, and lays the foundation for one of the main conflicts going forward.

Book 3 – *White Trash Zombie Apocalypse*

The movie makers are in town and shooting their zombie movie at the local high school. Angel nearly gets run over by a car and is saved by Philip but he disappears before she can thank him. Later, he forcefully holds her down while someone steals some of her blood. The main thrust is that Saberton unleashes their experimental zombies into the midst of the locals dressed as zombie extras. It gets ugly, and not just the skin falling off kind of ugly. As things get sorted out, Angel becomes a more integral part of the Zombie Mafia/Tribe, respected by the godfather, Pietro. Her ascent into the inner circle is fast. Still insecure about her place in the world, Angel works hard to earn and keep their trust, which sets up the rescue from the devastating flood at the end of the book nicely.

And Marcus, her boyfriend, still can't seem to understand that making decisions for Angel is the exact wrong thing to do.

Book 4 – *How the White Trash Zombie Got Her Groove Back*

Uncle Pietro represents the knight in shining armor who rides in to rescue Angel with his wealth and power. This is less a judgement statement, than an observation that nearly all of us wish for a rich fairy godfather to ride in and save the day.

At the end of book 3, Angel and her dad have lost everything to a flood. Pietro rescues them from the roof of their home in a helicopter and offers a no-interest loan to get them into another. Angel is appropriately awed, humbled and fully accepts wanting to do the work it takes to have earned so much trust.

It's been a year since Angel was turned into a zombie and she's now passed her GED and is taking classes at the local community college. Along the way she's learned she's dyslexic and is developing processes which allow her to learn, and retain, the information.

Angel's helping out in Dr. Ari Nikas' lab, who's trying to find a way to resolve the mess Saberton's lab made of Philip. When Dr. Nikas steps outside the lab, he disappears. So does Uncle Pietro.

Road trip! From Louisiana, Angel and her compatriots drive to New York City to rescue both Tribe members and kick some Saberton ass. The plot is chaotic and messy in this one.

Mostly it's running around New York City fighting, getting caught, escaping, kicking the wrong ass, then finding the correct ass to kick, nefarious deeds and at least one Saberton who becomes what he's exploited the most in his life.

Adding to the mess is the bit of [deus ex machina](#) which allows Pietro to use a skill that shreds all the carefully explained methods of become a zombie to bits. Wow, okay.

What this does is upend the interesting subplot of romance between Pietro and the Congresswoman, who knew he was a zombie. That has to be completely discarded. The lie that Pietro is dead is allowed to stand as fact. Which, frankly, frustrated me.

One of the tenets I use when reading, and reviewing, is to meet the book as it is, not as I would have wanted. Rowland makes that difficult in book 4. Authors are allowed to upend everything, books are their creations, not mine. But still

Angel gets a good taste of big city life and being around people who want to help without expecting anything in return. Which is handy since everyone who's not Angel seems to

have tons of money with which to fund their operation.

Rescuing their Tribe members and getting back on track to take down Dr. Charish to keep her and Saberton from doing more nefarious things takes a lot of energy. Angel and her tribe wind up back home, but her addictive personality raises its ugly specter.

Book 5 – *White Trash Zombie Gone Wild*

It's true. Once an addict, always an addict. Any addict is one action away from giving in to it again. Angel knows this, but when she figures out it somehow counters her dyslexia, she really doesn't want to give it up.

Meanwhile, FBI agents are making appearances at Tribe owned funeral homes asking questions. And the Tucker's Point Zombie Fest gets under way, featuring the film shot at the high school, *High School Zombie Apocalypse*. It's supposed to be fun until a flash drive containing evidence of real zombies surfaces.

High on VI2, Angel starts hallucinating, leaving her vulnerable and ashamed. This is where her pre-zombie life and after-zombie life couldn't be more stark. Her old habits kick in and she figures she's back to being a loser which could include losing the trust of the people who have become her tribe.

She is completely flabbergasted, and embarrassed, when the tribe continues to treat her with respect and dignity and insists on helping her. Which allow her to regain her self-respect and go after the flash drive and the man who's bent on outing the zombies.

This plot's a little messy too, but it hangs together in the face of swamp escapes, drunk starlets, and a newly made zombie who's reluctantly part of the resistance against Saberton.

There's a big set up for book 7 which is the last in the series, so everything should be wrapped up in a nice bow. I hope so, Angel deserves a grand exit after all the work she's done in the series to improve herself and earn her education. I'll always have respect for Diana Rowland for making Angel the kind of woman who dumps her man because he can't stop telling her what to do with her life.





WIZARDRY & WILD ROMANCE

Title: [Wizardry & Wild Romance](#)

Author: [Michael Moorcock](#)

Published: 2004

Publisher: [Monkeybrain Books](#)

Publisher's Blurb: ... *this invaluable work analyzes the Fantasy genre from its earliest beginnings in Medieval romances, on through the notable practitioners like Howard, Lovecraft and Tolkien, and up to the brightest lights in the field today. Insightful and often controversial, this is a book every fantasy reader should have on their shelf.*

"Michael Moorcock – Extreme Librarian"

Introduction by [China Miéville](#)

"To read something that somebody else has written and have it make better sense of your own reactions than you have been able to, is a momentous thing." (p14)

Miéville's central thesis, with which I wholeheartedly agree, is we should all want better, demand "vision and passion" from the epic fantasy we read. Not because Moorcock says we should, but because so much of it has fallen into disrepair. A lot of it is imitative and lim-

ited. Fans can get caught in the [Catch-22](#) of reading what's available which keeps getting written because it's what sells.

And yes, Moorcock is frustrating. He has a lot to say, all of it supported by citations of his arguments. His prose is dense, his meaning often obvious, but his insistence we should want better is absolutely right. And how in the hell has he read and studied so much and written so much?

“Foreword”

Michael Moorcock

“I admire intelligent, disciplined, imaginative entertainment if it seems to offer me some perspective on my own life.” (p 18)

In the first paragraph, Moorcock defines what he's writing about. Romantic epic fantasy “whose writers invent their own Earthly histories and geographies.” Not, I am relieved to learn, that sentimental love story rubbish churned out by the likes of Danielle Steele.

This too, resonated with me. *“I admire intelligent, disciplined, imaginative entertainment if it seems to offer me some perspective on my own life.”* I'm finally able to admit to myself that much of what I have read wasn't bad so much as boring. Too repetitive, unambitious, and often self-congratulatory.

“I believe that critical dissection of the fantasy story into its components does not detract from the story. Rather, it adds a new dimension to it ...” This is what I've been fumbling around for much of my life, and was what I enjoyed most in my English classes. The many ways to look at a work and interpret it and the richness that adds to it.

Epic fantasy then, loosely defined, are the stories told which feature exotic landscapes from the imagination of the writer, with symbols which evoke strong sensations as a way to escape and discover ourselves. Moorcock references the escape from objective pressure, which can also mean an escape from the inward pressure we place on ourselves to survive an often unpleasant world.

Each chapter title takes on an aspect of Epic Fantasy.

Chapter 1 “Origins” gives a history beginning with 16th century tales deemed Chivalric Romance and its influence on Gothic Romance. Here, romance is defined most succinctly as exploration of the exotic. When Moorcock writes about early epic fantasy he writes, “... their chief purpose was to amaze and shock.” While the prose may not be easily read by contemporary readers, the presence of dragons, magic, castles, ogres, doom and tragedy are instantly familiar.

Chapter 2 “The Exotic Landscape” discusses the landscape of the internal as expressed in the external. The exotic landscape is used to distance the author/reader from reality. In some ways, as though realism is too much to abide.

An interesting brief topic was Moorcock's discussion of “bachelor-fiction” written by the likes of Lovecraft. “... [Lovecraft's] more successful horror stories in which death, idealism, lust and **terror of sexual intercourse** are constantly associated ...” (p. 55) (emphasis mine)

And then there's this, *“Too frequently one gets the impression that ... most practitioners of epic fantasy read only one another's work.”* (p. 77) This continues explaining how epic fantasy can do better by its readers. Don't just read your peers' work, avoid the bloat and the boring and the stereotypical by reading works in other genres as well.

Chapter 3 “The Heroes and the Heroines” focuses on the lack of mature, nuanced, emotional reactions in epic fantasy characters. Most are adolescent, immature or “pretend-adult.” A frequent adjective he uses is “infantile.” The men are in charge, all knowledgeable and the women are fundamentally passive, waiting to be taken care of by the man. (This is the trope which made me uncomfortable enough to go elsewhere for my reading pleasure.) Yet, there’s hope! Authors such as [Fritz Leiber](#), [Robin McKinley](#), and [Gene Wolfe](#) whose characters have “genuine passions, adult concerns, and complex motives.”

Chapter 4 “Wit and Humor” discusses the types of humor most suited for epic fantasy. Irony and melodrama, comedy and fantasy, closely bound to one another in showing the fantastic extremes of life (fairies, dragons, etc.) along with the reversals of fate represented in farce (custard pies, or pratfalls).

Comedy adds a dimension to the characters and the plot. Humans are complex, and often use humor to survive the daily grind. So too should epic fantasy characters. It’s in this chapter, Moorcock explores the idea that fantasy should “*have at its source some fundamental compassion, ... ambition to show ... what human life is actually about.*” (p. 116) Further, he looks for readings which help us (as readers) understand how to deal with problems and respond in a positive manner to injustice and frustrations which hound us all.

Chapter 5 “[Epic Pooh](#)” is Moorcock’s tirade against authors such as Tolkien who write childish books and parade them as gentler adult books. The authors who preach moderation and politeness. Those who do not explore the harsher and extreme truths of life. Moorcock’s explanation, “*Writers like Tolkien take you to the edge of the Abyss and point out the excellent tea-garden at the bottom, showing you the steps carved into the cliff and reminding you to be a bit careful because the hand-rails are a trifle shaky as you go down, they haven’t got the approval yet to put a new one in ...*” (p. 120) tickles me no end. And while I happen to enjoy [Winnie the Pooh](#), I have no illusions that [A. A. Milne](#) wrote anything other than polite, happy nursery rhymes.

Chapter 6 “Excursions and Developments” is the final chapter and deals with the thesis that categorization is destructive. Because it forces authors to pigeonhole themselves in order to sell books and attract an audience. (cf it doesn’t have to be good to sell in Chapter 1.)

This made me ponder how I read. I read books, in search of good stories, not genre. Yes, I like a good dragon tale, time-travel, cyberpunk, etc. but I like other things.

I read [John Scalzi](#) because I like his stories, not because he writes military science fiction.

[Myke Cole](#) tells the story of a village bullied by the religious government and the teen-aged girl who comes to the rescue. Strong female character (we need Heloise today), story about standing up to the bullies. That it’s categorized as fantasy meant little to me.

The [Astronaut Lady](#) series by [Mary Robinette Kowal](#) was a ripping good tale which read like the alternate history it is. But I read it for the women who fought for equal rights in the space program.

Conclusion

Wizardry & Wild Romance is rich, dense, and filled with authors I’ve never heard of. It’s also one I will gladly read repeatedly as I learn more about critical writing. Moorcock’s discussion of what is good in epic fantasy, and what isn’t, can be transferred to other genres, I’m sure. Albeit without the dragons and wizards, etc.





Title: *The Forever Watch*

Author: [David Ramirez](#)

Published: 2014

ISBN 13: 9781250033819

Publisher: [Thomas Dunne Books](#)

Publisher's Blurb: *The truth is only the beginning. When a man is murdered on the Noah, a city-sized spaceship that is half-way through an eight-hundred-year voyage to another planet, his body is so ruined that his identity must be established from DNA evidence. Within hours, however, all trace of the crime is swept away, hidden as though it never happened – a strange occurrence in a world where deeds, and even thoughts, cannot be kept secret. Hana Dempsey, a mid-level bureaucrat who has been genetically modified to use the Noah's telepathic internet, begins to investigate. Her search for the truth will uncover the impossible: a serial killer who has been operating on board for a lifetime, if not longer. And behind the killer lies a conspiracy centuries in the making...*

There is a lot going on in this book. So much it's hard to keep up with what's going on. There's enough in this book for at least two books, if not more.

First, there's the story of *Noah*, the multi-generational space ship headed for humanity's new home, Canaan. No one's quite sure what happened to Earth which required this alien spaceship capable of holding an entire metropolis, to go on a mission lasting 800 years. All anyone of the current citizens on *Noah* is this has always been home.

Then, is there a serial killer loose? Bodies which look like they've been ripped apart are appearing. And people are disappearing, their records marked as "retired," at a high rate.

There's a love story between the "mission critical" Hana Dempsey and cop Leonard Barrens. Dempsey is gifted in many areas, including as a hacker. Barrens is portrayed as somewhat more brutish but capable of great softness for Dempsey. They work together to figure out what's going on with the possible serial killer. They also work together well as a loving couple, despite the snobbery of Hana's upper class friends.

And the conspiracy story concerning the children born aboard the *Noah*. Women are put into a nine-month coma and never see their children. At the beginning of *The Forever Watch*, Hana has just come out of her coma. What happens to those children is not for the squeamish, their hellish destiny is better left unknown.

Ramirez introduces an overload of technology and psychic abilities. We're talking neural implants, heads up display, instantaneous communication, and entire cities built psychically out of a material called plastech.

And this is where I got lost. Ramirez has been so careful with his world building, thinking through every detail and going on ad nauseum about how the tech works. There's so much information and it gets bewildering after a few pages. And then it keeps going on and on.

This is one of my main complaints about *sf/f* worlds, there's just too much detail. If it's accepted in an author's world this stuff works, that's all that's needed. Authors don't need to convince the readers, we're happy to go along for the ride. That many pages shouldn't be spent on explanations and details unless they are absolutely required to move the story forward. Most of the time, it's not. ([N. K. Jemisin](#) is the best I've read recently in giving the reader just enough detail to move the story without getting bogged down.)

The horrifying revelations are nearly unimaginable. Ramirez obviously imagined them, I didn't see a lot of them coming. Except for the "huh, what do you know,? the founders were right all along." I figured that was coming, realized that what was happening was cyclical, leading to a moral conundrum for the survivors who find themselves in charge.

The Forever Watch is not a bad read, but it's not exceptional either. There's so much potential for great exploration of any of the plot lines, which makes the book feel incomplete.



The Lady Astronaut Series

Title: The Lady Astronaut Series

“[The Lady Astronaut of Mars](#)” – short story (free!)

[The Calculating Stars](#)

[The Fated Sky](#)

Author: [Mary Robinette Kowal](#)

Published: 2013 – 2018

ISBN 13: 9780765378385 & 9780765398949

Publisher: [Tor](#)

Twitter: [@maryrobinette](#)

What’s Auntie Reading Now? pictures: [Fated Sky](#)

Publisher’s Blurb: (*Calculating Stars*): ... with so many skilled and experienced women pilots and scientists involved with the program, it doesn’t take long before Elma begins to wonder why they can’t go into space, too—aside from some pesky barriers like thousands of years of history and a host of expectations about the proper place of the fairer sex. And yet, Elma’s drive to become the first Lady Astronaut is so strong that even the most dearly held conventions may not stand a chance.

(*Fated Sky*): Continuing the grand sweep of alternate history laid out in *The Calculating Stars*, *The Fated Sky* looks forward to 1961, when mankind is well-established on the moon and looking forward to its next step: journeying to, and eventually colonizing, Mars.

I am not kidding even a little when I say these books jumped to the top of my list of favorites. And getting to meet Mary Robinette Kowal was a highlight of my [WorldCon](#) experience. She really is kind, patient and generous.

The Lady Astronaut series is entertaining, even while discussing important topics like sexism, racism and, climate change, just to name a few.

And her publisher Tor has announced there will be [two more books](#) in the series.

The Calculating Stars

This book literally starts off with a bang. A cataclysmic event which takes out most of the east coast of the US, and precipitates a space race to move the world's population to another planet.

It's an alternate history of the US space program set in the late 1950s and grapples with the big question we find ourselves facing now, "How do we save ourselves?"

Elma is a mathematician who ferried planes around during World War II. She is smart, capable and, stubborn. Her only visible flaw is that she's a woman in that time period. She has to fight so much just to have her contributions to the space program noticed. She's fine out of the public eye as a [computer](#). But that's not what she wants for herself, or her friends who also fly.

Part of Elma's story is her social anxiety. In school she was shamed for being smart. One of her coping mechanisms is to count prime numbers. But doing that doesn't keep her from throwing up before she makes public appearances. So she does what any sensible person would do, she goes to the doctor for help.

[Miltown](#) prescription in hand, Elma is better able to handle her anxiety. It has to be kept a secret though, because open knowledge would cause those the men in charge to view her as an hysterical female and drop her from the program.

It would have been just as easy to not write this about Elma. It's already nearly impossible for her to make any headway on equality in the space program. Giving her protagonist social anxiety, Kowal shows just how determined Elma is to make equality a reality.

The things the women have to do to prove their worth are demeaning. Something most women would identify with, no matter their generation or profession. And all the women striving to be in the space program paste their best smiles on and go through the paces. They know there's a lot on the line for so many reasons.

By the end of *The Calculating Stars* Elma has earned her place in the program setting up the Moon as a way station to Mars.

The Fated Sky

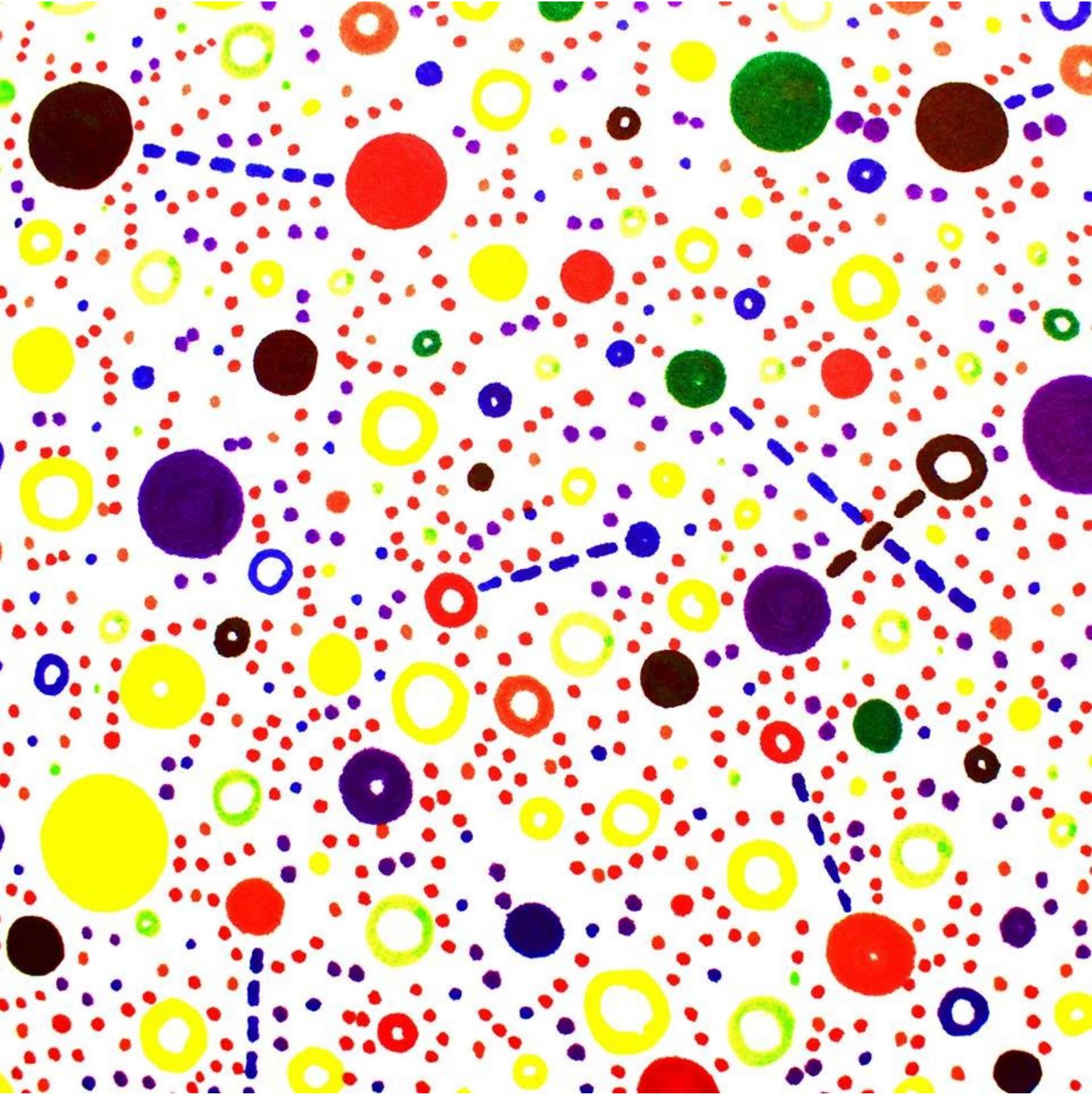
There's a colony on the moon now, and Elma rotates on and off, flying shuttles to Earth and helping prepare for the next big step, colonizing Mars.

It isn't until the director realizes that the navigational computer isn't reliable and too hard to program that a woman is considered for the crew. Elma's highly visible profile as the "Lady Astronaut" makes her the choice to go at the expense of someone else's place. And living in close quarters makes it harder on everyone involved.

Seven people on a space ship to Mars. There's a lot of tension. Affairs are revealed, old wounds are picked at, and Elma does her best to roll with it. We finally see what's been festering between Stetson Parker and Elma York in both books.

We also get to see the astronauts try to work through the personal issues which could

very well be the downfall of the mission to Mars. The best thing about Elma is she's always trying to understand, and learn, when her privileged white background gets in the way. By the end of the book, landing on Mars has become not routine, but is well on its way.





River Queens

Title: [River Queens](#)

Author: [Alexander Watson](#)

Published: 2018

ISBN 13: 978-1939710-857

Publisher: [Orange Frazer Press](#)

Twitter: [@riverqueenbook](#)

Publisher's Blurb: *River Queens is at once a romance of men and the river, a fantasy come to life, an unparalleled adventure story, one of the best travel journals around—and a glad picture for our turbulent times.*

I received a copy of this book from the author for an honest review. Thank you Alexander Watson!

Alexander Watson's writing is elegant and the story of *River Queens* is so compelling I'm having a hard time finding my objectivity. I want to write a fair review without seeming to sully for him. But damn this book was good. It's one of the better ones I've read over the summer.

The book releases mid-October, they haven't even gotten this one out yet and I'm already asking what he's working on next. That's how much I want him to succeed and keep writing great books so I can keep reading them.

Ahem

When I was in 6th grade, my family lived in Hannibal, MO. The three things which stand out in my mind all these decades later are the mannequin of Becky Thatcher with ankle long blonde braids, the address at which we lived, and the Mississippi.

We were a nomadic family and so were only in Hannibal for one school year. But the impression that big brown river made on me stays, and makes me homesick for a place I've overly romanticized in my childhood memories.

Which is to say, I can relate in some small way to the call of the river. And that is what Alexander and Dale, their spotted dog Doris Faye, and a left for dead 1955 forty-five foot Chris-Craft Corsair answer.

It starts in Texas where Alexander finds the wooden yacht, and ends with a refurbished beauty which they sail to *Betty Jane's* home berth in Cleveland.

I was smitten pretty early on. A gay couple is gonna fix up their boat and sail it into unknown territory. In the South. They are going to sail right into the belly of unallayed bigotry, and count on the kindness of strangers to help them along the way.

I knew it was going to be good when Watson relates the story of finding *The King & I* (later renamed *Betty Jane*). The man who handles the transaction for the boat tells them, "They think wood boats just sink or break apart ... for no reason. That's bull. They fail 'cause somebody quit lovin' 'em."

This is a hard life they're putting themselves into, and it becomes apparent they have enough love for all concerned. Alexander and Dale go into this knowing it's going to be one of the hardest things they've ever done, and they do it anyway. And they keep doing it, even when it gets harder than anyone could have expected.

Watson does not sugar coat anything. Nor does he dwell on the difficulties. He writes about it all. And there are some heartbreaking moments in this book.

Awkward's in there too. One that had I been within earshot, I'm not sure I could have

looked either of them in the eye afterwards. Watson doesn't flinch in the telling. Their loud argument has a good reason to be in the story, it's not there as some sort of nod to, "See? We're just like straight couples, we argue too." Nothing in this book is done to make anyone feel Alexander and Dale are other than what they are.

And they are two men who love each other fiercely and work together to rebuild this boat and fulfill their dream. The people they meet along the way, for the most part, are polite and helpful. River folk in the South are friendly and say, "See ya down the river." Even when they question what two ho-mo-sex-u-als are doing in their river. And there are several encounters that make me wince for the state of grace which cannot allow people to just be people.

Gods and goddesses what adventures these two have. It makes me want to pay for adult beverages while they regale me with tales and tell me how they got through heartbreaking death, horrifying weather, and the sweltering humidity of life on a boat on a river.

There's not a whole lot wrong with the way this book is written. It's elegant in a way that so few books these days are. It's evident Watson worked hard, and lovingly, on *River Queens*, but it doesn't read like hard work at all. It reads smoothly, like a lazy day on the river when all is right with the world.

I am grateful Alexander Watson reached out to me and asked I read his book. And I look forward to reading more of his writing as it becomes available. The country could use a few more gentlemanly intrepid travelers.



Hugo Winner - The Fifth Season

Title: [The Fifth Season](#)
Author: [N. K. Jemisin](#)
Published: 2015
ISBN 13: 97803162229296
Publisher: [Orbit Books](#)
Twitter: [@nkjemisin](#)

Publisher's Blurb:

This is the way the world ends. Again. Three terrible things happen in a single day. Essun, a woman living an ordinary life in a small town, comes home to find that her husband has brutally murdered their son and kidnapped their daughter. Meanwhile, mighty Sanze — the world-spanning empire whose innovations have been civilization's bedrock for a thousand years — collapses as most of its citizens are murdered to serve a madman's vengeance. And worst of all, across the heart of the vast continent known as the Stillness, a great red rift has been torn into the heart of the earth, spewing ash enough to darken the sky for years. Or centuries.

There's so much going on in this book. It is dense and filled with dangerous adventure. It's also filled with bigotry, sexism and violence. In many ways, it's a difficult book to get through. Three story lines, three different women. Or so we think. Each on their own adventure. Each with a different narrative point of view.

There's Essun, whose son has been killed by her husband. Her story starts with the discovery of her son's body and carries us through as she searches for her daughter who's been kidnapped by Essun's husband. Along the way she meets the mysterious Hoa and gregarious Tonkee who delights in taking samples of things as they go along in search of a community which will take them in after the ground has started shifting under their feet.

There's Dayama, a young girl whose parents exile her to the barn until a Guardian can fetch her. Exiled because she has a scary skill and people would rather her kind, the orogene, didn't exist at all. Dayama's story begins when the Guardian arrives and takes her off to school, on horseback, to be trained. Daya is treated better by the Guardian, Schaffa, than she was by her community and family. Yet his treatment comes with difficult lessons to learn, one of which is that because she is orogene, she will always be considered less than the rest of society. She will always be considered lowest of the low, unless someone needs her to use her

skills for them. Even then, she will be asked begrudgingly.

Third, there's Syenite whose story begins when she is assigned to a ten-ring orogene named Alabaster on what seems to be a simple mission to unclog a shipping port so trade can go back to normal. Syen is resentful and angry, and she takes it out on Alabaster, who returns her anger in kind. The first scene with Syen is almost literally her telling him that she's there to fuck him (Jemisin does not sugar coat this). Syen believes the only reason she is traveling with him is to breed. His ten-ring genes with her four-ring genes could produce a super orogene to be used at one of the satellite stations for the Fulcrum.

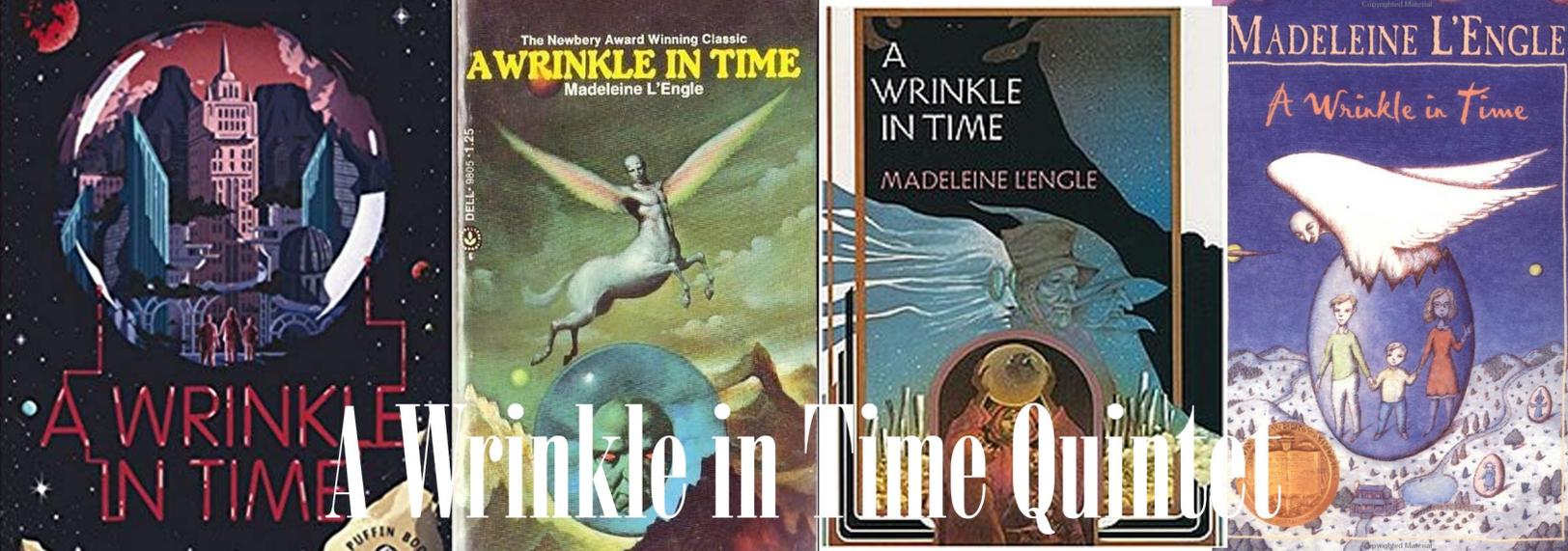
“Everything changes during a Season.” (p. 185)

The Fifth Season refers to an extended winter triggered by cataclysmic earthquakes or catastrophic weather events. And one is on its way.

Then there comes a humdinger of a loop. One which threw me completely out of the story and made me feel betrayed. I had to put the book down and walk away for a long while. Truly, I didn't understand why it happened, and it threw everything I thought I knew about this story into disarray. I wasn't sure I could go on. The book won a [Hugo](#), what was I missing? After I calmed down, I did some reading of other reactions to *The Fifth Season*. What I read made me curious enough to go back and finish the book. It was worth it.

In a way, all the characters congregating at Castrima, the community run by orogenes, which welcomes everyone seems too easy. But there's nothing easy about this book, you have to work for the payoff. Three women are actually the same woman, their stories set in three different times of her life. The stories of hardship, impossible choices, and survival come to a head in Castrima. Alabaster has the last word, "... have you ever heard of something called a moon?"

Everyone important to this story has gathered in Castrima, and it has something to do with a moon. What a great setup for book #2 *The Stone Sky*.



Titles:

A Wrinkle in Time
A Wind in the Door
A Swiftly Tilting Planet
Many Waters

Author: [Madeleine L'Engle](#)

Published: 1962-1986

Publisher: [Farrar, Straus, Giroux](#)

What's Auntie Reading Now? pictures: [Wrinkle](#) – [Wind](#) – [Swiftly](#) – [Waters](#)

Publisher's Blurb: *Madeleine L'Engle's classic middle-grade series, A Wrinkle In Time, follows the lives of Meg Murry, her youngest brother Charles Wallace Murry, their friend Calvin O'Keefe, and her twin brothers Sandy and Dennys Murry. Beginning with A Wrinkle In Time, each novel features the characters encountering other-worldly beings and evil forces they have to defeat in order to save the world. The characters travel through time and space and even into Charles Wallace's body in this beloved series that blends science fiction and fantasy.*

A Wrinkle in Time

For a teenage girl, a misfit herself living in the midst of a tumultuous dysfunctional family, *A Wrinkle in Time* was a gift. What I saw at the time was the love of the family for each other, that I was enough like Meg to make me feel a little less alone. Over the years, I remembered Meg, and her glasses, and the Mrs. W's who swooped in and took her on a quest to find her father.

Now, in 2018, on my second reading I notice how I've changed. The book I remember hasn't aged well but the portrayal of love, family, and a place for all misfits still resonates.

That longing to fit in never goes away. But I'm a long way from the girl who sat on the floor in her closet and read, longing to fit in anywhere. I no longer strive to fit in. I love and accept who I am and often revel in the weird quirks I have which make others look at me quizzically. It is not I who doesn't fit in, it's them.

Many Waters

Many Waters is a time travel fantasy story about the time just before the rains fall on Noah's ark. The title is a reference to the biblical verse [Song of Solomon 8:7](#), "Many waters

cannot quench love.” It’s both a reference to God’s love for his people, and the love of the Murry twins and one of the characters have for each other.

Sandy and Dennys are described in *A Wrinkle in Time* as “ordinary.” And they are, especially compared to the rest of the Murry family. Extraordinary things happen to the twins in *Many Waters*, but their reactions are strangely ordinary.

While illicitly playing on their father’s computer, the boys wish to be in a place that’s warmer and less humid than their New England winter. Zip, zap, zere, their wish is granted, and they appear in the desert in what is now [Eastern Turkey](#).

Always logical and practical, despite the adventures of Meg and Charles Wallace, they try to reason their way out of their predicament. Surrounded by short humans (a point L’Engle makes repeatedly) who are characters from the Bible, [seraphim](#) and [nephilim](#) and, magical unicorns, Sandy and Dennys behave as though none of this extraordinary.

No matter, I was able to provide the sense of wonder for them. *Many Waters* isn’t a strong story, nor does it add to the quartet, but I found it fascinating. The bible only says God told Noah to build an ark, and that while following this directive, Noah was ridiculed by his neighbors.

What L’Engle does here is flesh the story out and explores one possibility of the events which led to the Flood. I could buy into all of it, except the unicorns. Really? Magical unicorns who transport people across the desert and through time? In the Bible? One would think that a suspension of disbelief which includes time travel, angels and God talking to humans, unicorns would be just another magical element to accept. I couldn’t. The unicorns felt like a forced explanation of how Sandy and Dennys got from their cozy home to the desert in another time and place. And the emphasis on the boys being virgins ... just, no.

There’s a theory in Literature Criticism I’m just learning about called [Reader-Response](#), which basically posits that a reader brings all their experiences with them to the book, and those experiences are how the text gets interpreted.

This definitely applied to my reading of *Many Waters*, because all my reading of ancient religions played a part in my interpretation of the book. I was able to overlook the many faults of the story and find wonder in this imagining of Noah’s world. It probably would have worked better if L’Engle had just left the twins at home.

