



The Drink Tank 409

# H. P. Lovecraft

## The Rats in the Walls *and* The Outsider



Performed by **Erik Bauersfeld**

2019 is well-underway, and I'm having a good time. Lately, it's all been about pumping out podcasts and zines and keeping the gumpy three year olds happy as I can.

Which ain't easy.

There's Cinequest coming up, and I'll be writing about that. There's the Houdini issue of Claims Department, which is a lot of fun, and there's The Matrix issue of Journey Planet.

So much.

Alissa is headed to Gallifrey at LAX, which is always fun, and I wish I could make it. There will be a day when the GarciaGate family will attend Gallifrey, but it's probably best to show the boys some Doctor Who first.

I'm doing Oral Histories for work, and interview for my podcasts. I'm folding up Three Minute Modernist for a while, so that I can do my podcast about the history of computers in the arts that I'm called Engineers & Enthusiasts. It'll be fun.

This one is a short little look at... things!

Covers by the amazing Aurora Tucker. She works with me at the Museum and is, without doubt, too many awesome!



My Friend Chris Burrous

I was up at 4am with Benji. Alissa was asleep in the living room, so I was trying to be extra quiet, but Benji had no such interest. I gave him a handful of pretzels, his choice for midnight snacking, and then opened up Facebook. There was a post—*Chris Burrous, dead at 43*.

As has happened so many times over the last few years, there was a wave over me. It was such a sadness mixed with terror mixed with not at all understanding. Benji noticed.

“What’s wrong, Papa?” he asked.

“A friend of mine passed away.”

“Why did he pass away?” Benji said.

“I don’t know, Ben.” I responded.

I clicked to read the story. The second I saw the words “found in a Glendale Days Inn” I knew that later in the article the word ‘suspected’ would either be followed by ‘murder’ or ‘overdose’, and I hate that I was completely right. Those are the two ways that people die at Days Inns.

I hadn’t spoken with Chris since about 2012 or so, when we reconnected on Facebook. The last time I saw him in the flesh was about 1998 or 1999. He had swung by the house with our friend Matt, and I think Adam and Dennis, and we all headed off to Coco’s, had some pie, coffee, and conversation. At least five years had gone on between graduating high school and arriving at that pie place, but it was like nothing had changed. We were loud, charmingly obnoxious... or so I always hoped. We ate, and paid, and left. It was a good memory to have.

Chris was Santa Clara High’s local boy made good. From the start, we knew he was going to be a broadcaster, that he was going to go places. He was going to be on TV or the Radio, and he was going to be a star. We were not wrong. I first encountered his TV personality when I visited my Mom for Thanksgiving one year and there he was, on *Good Morning Sacramento*, laughing and joking with his co-hosts. It completely reminded me of when we’d do the morning announcements at Buchser Middle School. He seemed completely relaxed, and I totally understood that it was so incredibly taxing to maintain that. I seen it in him from the time he was 15. He did those announcements in High School too, only better. I was happy to get to appear on them every now and then. He always played brilliantly with others over the airwaves. Off the air, he was charmingly obnoxious. He would play pranks, including calling the mom of one of my oldest friends pretending like he was from a funeral home, reporting my death. He was never brutal, but always out on the edge of good taste. I loved that about him. He always went that extra step I would never take, and people loved him for it, largely because he was so damned talented. We all dreamed we would find the success we wanted; we all knew Chris would find it.

When I think of Chris back in school, I am shocked at how much like James Bacon he was—so much confidence, so sure of outcome, tireless at making it look effortless. We’d make silly little movies for class, and he’d shoot and edit them. They weren’t slapdash little efforts, but they had the charm of slapdash little efforts. So many memories of Chris’ parents garage, of my house building the Homecoming floats, watching VHS tapes, playing games, talking, laughing. Laughing. My God we spent so much time laughing.

A bunch of Santa Clara folk got together the other day. We chatted, we told Chris stories, and something was in the air. *This wouldn’t be the last time this happened. We will meet like this again.*



**2018 Reading in Review**  
**by Stephanie Alford**



For the first time in so many years, I'm not in utter misery looking into the New Year. 2019 holds great promise and hope for me. As unexpected as that is to say, it comes as a great relief. Books and lists are the great constant. The great coping mechanism of all time, making lists. It was like the sun shone only on me the day I realized I could combine the two and keep my sanity.

One blissful weekend in August when I was hanging out with other geeks and nerds who loved what I did my vague dissatisfaction was temporarily banished. I went to panels about writing, met authors (and a real live astronaut), sat in lines with others and talked about writing. Frequently amused that wherever there was a line, we all had some kind of device out in order to read. My device was dead tree style.

Exhaustion was my companion the entire con, but gods I was happy. Happy? How could that possibly be? When WorldCon 76 San Jose was over, the sticky film of vague unrest returned. Barf, I thought (or words to that effect, anyway). Inklings filtered through my overtaxed, hyperalert brain.

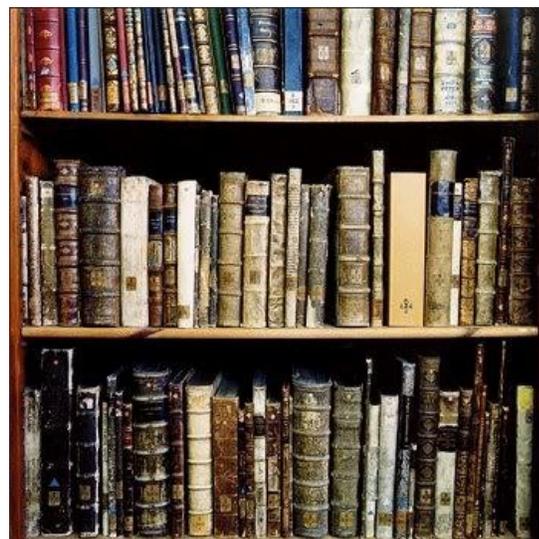
When great ideas hit it can feel like a jolt of lightning, adrenaline flowing through my spine. This idea was quieter. An author I met at WorldCon started posting about teaching writing. And so I asked, "do you have something for me?" His probing questions finally got me to the bottom of my unrest. "I want to learn to read and write about books better."

And that's how I found a mentor, and made the last quarter of 2018 happy. Best decision of my life ever. It's not just the reading and writing which have evolved. Unexpected personal growth came at me like sunshine filtered through open doors. Even on the hardest of hard days when I think I can't even get out of bed, and the writing is like carving bricks of granite with my bare hands, I know I'll be good. Discovering the weird joys of LitCrit have given me a new dimension of meaning.

It is nearly impossible to pick just a few great books from 2018, but here's my attempt at defining the seminal books for me.

### 2018 Books by the Numbers:

- 68 read
- 20,382 pages
- 26 unique publication years
- 40 unique author names
- 19 female authors
- 23 male authors
- 26 new to me authors
- 98 books new to the stacks
- 48 new to the stacks read
- 7 new to the stacks Pearl Ruled



## **Favorite Reads**

*The Handmaid's Tale* by Atwood, Margaret

Even more relevant today than when first published, Atwood's description of a dystopian, Puritanical society with no agency for women chills. My review will focus on the use of Scripture as justification.

[\*The Armored Saint\*](#) by Cole, Myke

[\*The Queen of Crows\*](#) by Cole, Myke

Heloise is the hero we need now. Tight, intricate, suspenseful story about a young woman leading the uprising against the religious order in charge. Book 3, *The Killing Light*, comes out in 2019.

[\*A Visit From the Goon Squad\*](#) by Egan, Jennifer

Freakin' brilliant. We spent a month on it, I read it three times. Don't let the non-linear style throw you off. Egan tells a hell of a story.

[\*American Gods\*](#) by Gaiman, Neil

What happens when Old Gods realize they're being squeezed out by the New Gods? Just as fantastic on the second read.

*My Journey in Creative Reading* by Gallowglas, M. Todd

Don't know how to review this book since he's also my mentor. Every bit is so good and resonated so deeply I knew I had the right guy.

[\*The Geek Feminist Revolution\*](#) by Hurley, Kameron

My love letter to Kameron who speaks the truth about being a woman so hard. I continue to learn a lot from her about feminism and writing. *GFR* has earned a permanent place on my reference shelf.

[\*The Calculating Stars\*](#) by Kowal, Mary Robinette

[\*The Fated Sky\*](#) by Kowal, Mary Robinette

Speaking of feminism ... Elma's a wonderful example of all any human could be; blind spots and social anxiety and all. Mary Robinette Kowal is as kind and generous as I had hoped. An hour with her and

real live astronaut, Kjell Lindgren was more than I'd expected. Excitedly waiting for two more [Lady Astronaut](#) books.

[Beloved](#) by Morrison, Toni

Because I am stubborn and refuse to read what “everyone” else is reading, it took an essay in [The Methods of Breaking Bad](#), and some serious prodding from a trusted friend to read Toni Morrison's classic. Best opening line ever, “124 was spiteful.”

*Binti* by Okorafor, Nnedi

*Binti: Home* by Okorafor, Nnedi

*Binti: The Night Masquerade* by Okorafor, Nnedi

Nnedi Okorafor's brilliant story about a young African woman who breaks tribal taboos to go to university on another planet. My review will focus on the bigotry Binti encounters on her quest.

[River Queens](#) by Watson, Alexander

Alexander Watson's writing is elegant as he tells the tale of refurbishing a wooden boat and sailing her from Texas to Ohio. His is the most polished debut novel I've read and I'm forever grateful he asked me to review it.

*How Fiction Works* by Wood, James

Every writer, every critic, every anyone interested in reading and writing needs to read *How Fiction Works*. My review focuses on why critical reviewers should know about craft in order to write better themselves.

**You should read all of Stephanie's amazing reviews at [7 Stillwell](#)  
(and she's totally on my Best Fan Writer Hugo list!)**

