

The next piece is the foreword to a 2014 Fantagraphics coffee table book anthologizing all the syndicated *Peanuts* cartoons running in various Sunday newspapers from 1956 to 1960 (in the olden days, these colorful inserts were referred to as “The Funnies”). As a consequence, there are a few references to specific *Peanuts* strips on annotated pages of the coffee table book. Don’t worry about it. You don’t need to see the cartoons in order to understand what I’m writing about.

I was honored to write this foreword. I still can’t believe I was asked to do so. But I wish the essay I ultimately typed into my keyboard remotely reflected the essay that still exists inside my skull. Something was lost in the translation; I think I just choked. My relationship to *Peanuts*—and specifically to the character of Charlie Brown—is so overwhelming that I couldn’t describe the things I wanted to describe. It was too uncanny. I feel more intimately connected to Charlie Brown than to any musician or any athlete, and I care about *Peanuts* more than any novel or any film. I’m almost embarrassed by the depth of this feeling. I haven’t watched *A Charlie Brown Christmas* in at least twenty-five years, solely because I can’t emotionally reconcile the final scene: I can’t get over the fact that the other kids don’t tell Charlie Brown that his decision to pick the tiny, pathetic tree was ultimately the right call. They wish him a Merry Christmas and help him sing “Hark! The Herald Angels,” but they never concede he was correct. This will bother me forever. Even writing this paragraph is making me angry.

The rain falls on the just and the unjust. And as Charles M. Schulz once noted, that’s a good system, no matter how it makes us feel.