

deja-VISITE

Prairie Passions with a Fresh Perspective

Issue Four
May 2018



HELLO!

As we set out to launch our fourth issue, there is a fair bit to look back on. After four months of work, we've already covered so much ground, and we've grown from just a whisper of an idea into something to truly be proud of.

First and foremost, I would like to welcome our new team members aboard. They bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge, as well as a zeal for their passions, all of which they hope to share with you.

He has been here from the beginning, hiding in the background and secretly delivering us from our grammatical sins. His keen and attentive eye has been indispensable to us in ensuring that our final product is up to snuff. Welcome to the **DEJA-VISITE** Team (officially), Jonathan Seidle!

Next, we have Victoria Koops, writer extraordinaire. She will be bringing us a column about life as a Millennial acreage owner. Be sure to read all she has to offer, and weigh in with your opinion: Peavy Mart, "Shopping utopia for all your earthly needs" or "I only came here for rubber boots, why did I leave with a mailbox?" Be sure to read #FarmerVictoria.

Also joining us this month is Kerri Desgagné, here to share all of her culinary knowledge. Currently training for her red seal, she has been working in the food industry for several years. I can tell you right now, her cupcakes are to die for, and she certainly got my mouth watering with the delicious recipe in this issue!

While we welcome our new faces, the familiar ones keep going strong. This month Jocelyn Anderson brings us a photo diary of her hike out in The Big Muddy, an experience that she tells us was well worth the ensuing tick check. Next, Rachel Popa brings us an insightful piece on AI in fiction that will really get you thinking, and ruminates over the experience that is *Avengers: Infinity War*. Ariadne returns with the third part of her serial, *Project Chrysopoeia*, leading us along the apidae-paved road. Jessica examines and expounds on the veritably endless stream of entertainment media that we can access at the touch of a finger, and treats us to a healthy meal with her zoodles. Fun to say, fun to eat. If you don't know what they are, turn to page 10! Finally, I examine how Brienne of Tarth, the lone knight in blue in George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice & Fire/Game of Thrones*, embodies a new type of female hero, and I bring our troubled protagonist to the end of his shadowy path in *Donny in The Dark*. I also dive into the world of fan conventions and bring you my feet-on-the-ground coverage of Regina Fan Expo 2018.

All this and so much more, in this month's issue of
DEJA-VISITE!

Sincerely,

Megan Negrych
Editor-in-Chief
and the **DEJA-VISITE** Team

About the Cover... By Jocelyn Anderson

This month I took my inspiration from the arrival of Spring. Winter felt really long this year, and when spring arrived it was definitely a reason for celebration. Spring is the season of growing things that emerge from the ground and take over the brown, dried-out earth, making everything green and alive again. I also took inspiration from a number of Zentangle illustrations that a fellow artist has been posting on the UrbanSketchers of Regina Facebook group. They always seem so full of life and very fitting to help me express my joy at the advent of springtime.

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FAN EXPO 2018: THE EXPERIENCE

BY MEGAN NEGRYCH

Conventioneers Log

May 5th, 2018

Regina, Saskatchewan

Evraz Place

Fan Expo Regina

With a purposeful nod, I adjusted my shoulder bag and prepared for my adventure. Once again, I was entering the land of dreams and excitement, where anything was possible. It was going to be another memorable weekend, of that I had no doubt. Fan Expo, Regina's local pop culture convention, kicked off on a sunny day, holding the promise that my geeky little heart would find itself content after a full weekend of exploration and enjoyment.

Since 2014, Fan Expo has been Regina's at-home retreat for all things fandom; from Harry Potter to Aurora Man, no matter the size of the fan base, chances are that you will find your favourite niche of pop culture on the convention floor. Regina 2014 was my very first convention, and it ignited in me an inextinguishable passion for this type of event. Where else can you go and be surrounded by hundreds of people with whom you share something so powerful? Everyone goes because they love something intensely; whether it is anime, movies, comics, cartoons, television, or obscure pop culture, everyone in the building for the two-day convention shared that spark of fandom, and they were just as excited to share it with others as they were to experience it themselves. While this year was smaller than previous years, it was no less enthusiastic.

Whether you were there to shop for art or paraphernalia, to get a one-of-a-kind commission from a legendary comic book artist or an autograph from a beloved actor, Fan Expo had something for everyone. Among others present were Kristy Swanson, the original Buffy the Vampire Slayer from the 1990s feature film, and Megan Follows, the 1985 Anne of Green Gables, who holds a spot in the heart of every Canadian. A staple of every convention is always the Q&A sessions with the major media and creator guests, and they are a trove of unique moments and memories. This year, my absolute favourite panel was with Richard Horvitz, the voice of Zim from the Nickelodeon cartoon *Invader Zim*. Aside from answering questions from the audience, Horvitz gave us a mind-bogglingly outstanding experience, sharing his love of musical theatre and song through a striking and impromptu performance. From *Jesus Christ Superstar* to *Wicked*, he sang his heart out, hitting all the right notes and leaving me with a massive smile on my face. You know what's better than well sung *Les*

Mis? Well, it's definitely *Les Mis* as sung by Invader Zim, including all the references to stinky humans. A true once in a lifetime experience.

As always, the 501st Legion was present: Stormtroopers, Mandalorian Merc, even Darth Vader and Captain Phasma were present, all posing for pictures to raise funds for a truly worthy cause. No, no! I promise you they were not raising money for the Empire. Fan Expo would never condone financing the rebuilding of yet another Death Star or a new Starkiller base (at least I would hope not?), I promise you. This year they were raising funds for Joe's Place, a youth outreach centre located in Moose Jaw which provides a variety of services and programs within our neighbouring community.

Above all, Fan Expo is the place to be if you love cosplay. You can see the astounding talent and confidence of others as they engage in an activity they love, or partake in it yourself by channelling characters dear to your own heart. Sometimes you can even see new creations inspired by the creator's own love of the craft. This year was no exception, and there were so many breathtakingly amazing costumes. From crowd favourites like *Overwatch*, *World of Warcraft*, and *Guardians of the Galaxy*, to the wonderful worlds of *Cybersix*, *Over the Garden Wall*, and *The Witcher*. I managed to capture some of the excellent costumes and cosplayers present from May 5th to 6th at Fan Expo Regina. A massive thank-you to all of you, who were marvellous and looked absolutely stunning. There were so many more costumes that I wanted to capture, but I knew that if I did I would need an entire issue to show off all the absolutely awesome work accomplished by the cosplayers.

If you see yourself pictured, I just want to once again say "Wow!" Your costumes are absolutely amazing; thank you for letting me take your picture and for sharing your wonderful talent and enthusiasm with others. We encourage you to drop us a line or a comment. Tell us your favourite thing about the Expo experience, or the inspiration for your creation.

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Cybersix from *Cybersix*



Officer Jenny from *Pokémon*



Philippa Eilhart from *The Witcher* series

Rocket Raccoon and Star Lord from *Guardians of the Galaxy* (ft. The Infinity Gauntlet)

Sesshōmaru from *Inuyasha*





Shikamaru and Temari from *Naruto*



World of Warcraft (Haunter Cosplay on the right)



McCree and D.Va from *Overwatch*

Wirt and Gregory from *Over the Garden Wall*



Futurama family: Bender, Fry and Leela

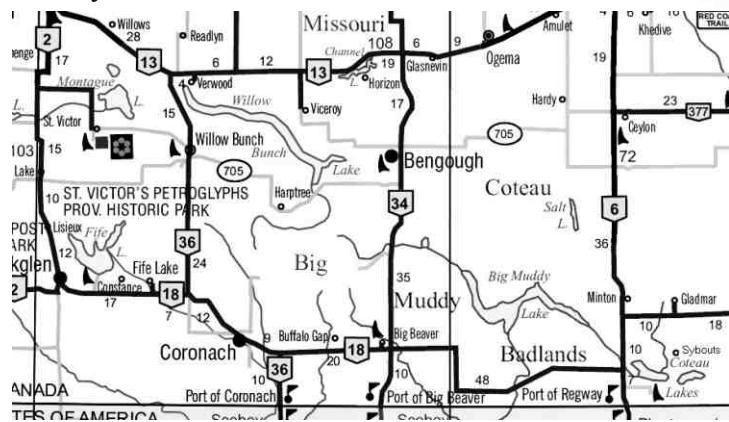
Lara Croft and Wonder Woman



A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE- THE BIG MUDDY

BY JOCELYN ANDERSON

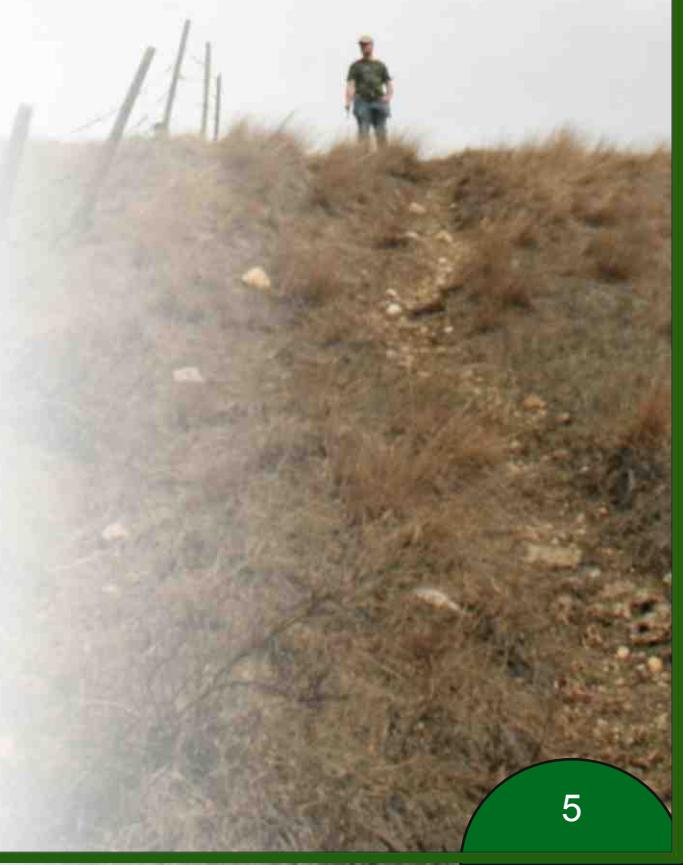
With the weather warming up, it's time to start getting outside to enjoy the sun. Having grown up in Saskatchewan, I have an affinity for wide open spaces, so once it started getting warmer, I took the first opportunity I could to go soak in the sky. My husband, Dave, having hunted there the last couple years, suggested that we go visit some friends of his who own a ranch in the Big Muddy Badlands.



The Circle Y Ranch¹ sits somewhere between Minton and Big Beaver. The Burgess Family were lovely hosts and were more than happy to have us come and tromp around their land for a day. They are a working ranch that raises beef and quarter horses, and they have allowed Dave to come by in the spring before to hike and pick up shed antlers. We had used the antlers he found last year as part of our wedding centerpieces, and they now decorate the top of our kitchen cabinets. The antlers, which the deer shed through the winter, can cause lots of problems for machinery, so the family was more than happy to let us wander so long as we picked up any antlers we found. After a chat, a few warnings about the cows — who were in the middle of calving — and some suggestions about where we should start our exploration, we set out.



We found our first antler quite quickly in the first coulee that we tried. We only ended up with two by the end of the day though, so our early success didn't continue. All morning the clouds threatened rain, but besides a light sprinkle after lunch, it stayed away and let us explore to our hearts' content.



We were too early in the season to see many of the interesting plants or flowers. We did see quite a few prairie crocuses, which are usually the first sign of spring on the prairies.



Once we made it to the top of the coulee, we got our first real view of the ranch and the surrounding badlands. It was also the first time we really felt the wind, which doesn't get down into the coulees but was blowing quite a bit once we were out in the open. While I was taking pictures of the beautiful scenery, I spied a herd of whitetail deer escaping over the hill across from me.



Dave and our dog, Jake, continued walking, making their way through the bottom of the coulee as I wandered along the top, looking at some of the cool rock formations that can be found all over Big Muddy. As we were walking, we noticed a Red-tailed Hawk circling above us.





While it wasn't sunny, it was quite warm, so after a little more walking and climbing, we stopped for a bit of quiet time and grabbed a quick drink. The landscape is quite different from the flat prairies that you think of when you imagine Saskatchewan, and it was quite tiring trekking up and down when I am not used to it.

When we started wandering again, we saw the same hawk we had noticed before, along with a second raptor and a nest high up in one of the trees. Before we discovered the nest, we weren't quite sure what kind of hawks they were, but as we approached, the pair became agitated by our proximity to their nest and followed us for a while, calling out at us with the red-tailed hawk's distinctive piercing cry.

As we passed the nest and walked along the bottom of the coulee, we saw a couple blue birds which we believe were Mountain Bluebirds. I also chased after a butterfly which was likely a Mourning Cloak. I didn't manage to get pictures of either the bluebirds or the butterfly though, so I can't be positive with my identifications. I am still learning how to identify all the different plants and animals and, as I didn't bring my nature guide² with me, I had to look all the species up when I got home. This means that I had to attempt to identify the animals I didn't manage to photograph from memory.

While we didn't see more deer after the herd in the morning, we saw lots of signs. There were droppings and tracks of both deer and elk, and we came across quite a few deer rubs while we walked through the bush.

We stopped for lunch in the shade and had the opportunity to see a couple different kinds of owls: a Great Horned Owl and a Short-eared Owl. I didn't manage to get pictures of either, though, as we were down in the bottom of the coulee, in amongst the trees.

We also noticed that there were quite a few ticks in the trees. We brushed a few of them off at that time, but we knew we would need to do a serious tick check once we were back home. So, instead of finishing our lunch where we started, we



decided to hike out of the bottom and find a spot a little less full of ticks to eat our apples.

As we were relaxing on the hillside, the clouds decided to drip on us a little, so I had to put my big camera away and rely on my phone camera for a while.

I was starting to get a bit tired after lunch, so we only went a little farther, finding some more interesting rock formations before we turned around and headed for home. We had been walking along the top and side of the coulee for a while, so on the way back we walked down along the bottom through the trees. It's quite amazing how tall some of the trees get at the bottom of the valleys.



As we got back to the ranch, we walked past quite a few cows and their calves. We made sure to stay well away, as mother cows are known to get a little touchy if you get too close to their babies. When we got back to the ranch, we had another chat with the Burgess Family, and Tamela Burgess showed us around her Old Porch Gallery, which is a collection of her own artwork and historical artifacts from the area. Then we hopped into the truck and headed back to the city.

We did a thorough tick check when we got home, but we were finding ticks on the dog for most of the week. By the end of the week, we had found a total of 47 ticks on the three of us and our clothing. Most were not attached, but I did find one attached to my foot that must have escaped us. When ticks bite you, you should most definitely be careful. Some varieties can carry lyme disease and so, instead of killing them and throwing them away, put them between a couple pieces of clear tape and send them in for testing. Information on where to send them can be found on the Saskatchewan Government's website³.

Despite the ticks, we had a lovely day enjoying the great outdoors, and I am looking forward to the next time we can escape the city and explore more of Saskatchewan's wild spaces.



#FarmerVictoria: Life on a Millennial Acreage

– Introduction –

By Victoria Koops

If Peavey Mart started selling groceries, I don't think I'd ever leave the premises. I'm serious; I've developed this crazy alter-ego that I like to call #FarmerVictoria, and she loves Peavey Mart. Have you ever been to a Peavey Mart? I mean, they have absolutely everything. Need a push broom handle? Peavey Mart. What about farmhouse décor? Definitely Peavey Mart. When my husband needs new overalls, or I'm looking for rubber boots to trudge around the yard in this spring, we have one place that we turn to.

This isn't a sponsored ad, by the way, although I see now that it's starting to sound that way. I'll get off my Peavey Mart horse in a moment.

You see, I'm what real farmers would call a City Girl. I grew up in the small town of Fort Qu'Appelle. Maybe you've heard of it? Beautiful cabin country, lots of rich history. Then I went to high school in Regina. Five years ago, I would have split my sides laughing if you had told me that I'd be shopping at Peavey Mart almost weekly in my not so distant future.

My grandparents farmed three quarter sections of land here in Southeast Saskatchewan throughout the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Or rather, my grandpa insisted on digging in the dirt, while my grandmother dreamt of city lights. They are a funny couple, those two; he's the quiet, outdoorsy type, and she's this wee chatterbox with brains for days. It was a sad day for our family when they had to move off the family farm. But it would have been worse if we hadn't moved in that very same day.

In 2015, my husband and I moved onto my grandparents' farm. We inherited 80 acres (half of the original Home Quarter) of fertile farmland, including some unbroken prairie pasture, a mature fruit orchard, and a laundry list of to-dos to maintain the place and fix it up. Although it didn't happen exactly this way, I like to imagine that we arrived after the two-hour trek from Regina, stepped out of our Chevy Cruze, looked at the house, then at one another, then back at the house. In that moment we committed to becoming the caretakers of this little, untamed corner of Treaty 4 territory, but what would two newly-wed kids know about running an acreage? Hell, I guarantee that neither of us had even driven a tractor.

Before I get too much further, there are a few things you need to know about my husband and me. First, we're high school sweethearts and when we moved onto "The Farm" we had already been married for two years. Second, we were both under the age of 25 when we moved here. And third, as I alluded to earlier, we had no (insert expletive here) clue what we were doing. Like, we knew more about Twitter than the real tweeting birds

in our shelter belt. My husband is a technophile: he loves taking apart computers and playing video games for hours, and it was a tragedy unmatched when he found out that The Farm only had dial-up internet. Me, I'm a proud Hipster: obsessed with vintage typewriters, chalkboard paint, and that retro 1950s aesthetic. In a word, we're Millennials.

What is a Millennial you ask? Excellent question. From my understanding, a Millennial is someone who spent their formative high school and young adult life in the early years of the new millennium (born somewhere between 1981-2001). We're the generation that doesn't really remember a time before cell phones and the world wide web. Like the generations before us, we have ways of navigating the world that are unique to our time and place in history. But this isn't an exposé on what it means to be a Millennial.

This four-part column is an invitation to join me on some of my misadventures while I learn what life on the family farm entails. I promise it's going to be a funny, bumpy ride, and hopefully I'll be able to demonstrate how remarkable this experience has been for us. I know that there are a lot of you out there who have similar special places scattered around the province, precious little acreages and family farms, so this is my love letter to those beautiful homes.

Join me in the coming months for some snapshots of my day-to-day life. We'll be talking about pruning fruit trees, beginner beekeeping, and reused barn wood projects. Full disclosure: I'll probably bring up some of my other obsessions like video games, solar panels, and my intense hatred of chickens (love farm eggs, hate the birds) too!

Oh, and just a quick note about #FarmerVictoria. I joke that she's my alter-ego, but really, #FarmerVictoria represents the collective identities that make me, well, me. Also, if you're a social media type of person, #FarmerVictoria is a great way to share this column with your friends and join the conversation. All you have to do is tag your post with #FarmerVictoria. For example:



Well, with that wrapped up, I'll catch you next month for more "Life on a Millennial Acreage". Until then, live long and prosper.

TOMATO GARLIC ZUCCHINI NOODLES (ZOODLES!) WITH SHRIMP

BY JESSICA MITTEN-MOORE

I love zucchini! In my opinion it is one of the most versatile and delicious vegetables out there. I make some great zucchini noodles (a.k.a. zoodles), if I do say so myself. They are a fairly quick and healthy meal that you can make for just yourself or a dinner party. Due to time constraints I made this recipe with a pre-made tomato pasta sauce, but feel free to make your own favourite sauce to go with the zoodles. The recipe below is for two to three people.

Ingredients:

- 4 medium-sized zucchinis
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Sea salt to taste
- Pepper to taste
- Cooked & Peeled Pacific White Shrimp
- One teaspoon butter
- 4 cloves minced garlic
- Red Pepper Flakes to taste
- Hot Paprika to taste
- Roasted Garlic Tomato Sauce
- Half an onion

Directions:

1. Wash and cut off the ends of the zucchini. Peel the zucchini into pasta-like strips, I use a spiralizer, which is quite easy. All you do is stick the end of the zucchini into the spiralizer, twist it, and out come beautiful zucchini noodles. You could also do it the hard way and use a slicer or peeler to make the zoodles. Once you start making the zoodles, you may think that you have waaaay too many but when you cook them they shrink down immensely. They are also very light and don't have that heavy feeling that normal pasta does, so I tend to eat more of them. Set the zoodles aside.
2. Dice half an onion, mince four cloves of garlic, wash and de-tail your shrimp and set them aside separately.
3. Heat your tomato sauce in a pot over medium heat. I like to add extra veggies to the sauce such as onions, tomatoes, or red peppers, and you can do the same. I only used half of an onion for today's recipe. Once at a simmer, add onions.
4. Set another pan on medium heat and add your butter and garlic. After your garlic has cooked a little bit (thirty seconds - one minute) add your prepared shrimp. Then add the paprika and red pepper flakes to the shrimp.
5. Once the tomato sauce and shrimp are fully heated, combine the shrimp and sauce together. Set the mixture on low while you begin to cook your zoodles.
6. Set another pan on medium heat and add olive oil. Once the oil has warmed, put your zoodles in the pan and make sure they get coated with the warm olive oil. Add sea salt and pepper to taste. Cook your zoodles in the pan until they become soft, similar to regular pasta.
7. Sometimes the cooked zoodles may have to be drained, since they release so much moisture. Once your zoodles have finished cooking, serve them in a bowl and top with as much pasta sauce as you would like. I have also topped mine with parmesan and parsley.



Avengers: Infinity War Reminds us of the Staying Power of the Superhero Genre

By Rachel Popa

Avengers: Infinity War came to Canadian theatres on April 27th, making it the 19th Marvel Cinematic Universe film since *Ironman* kicked off this never-ending trend in 2008. Over the last ten years, these movies have slowly revealed the locations and natures of all but one of the Infinity Stones. Along the way we have been introduced to over 100 iconic comic book characters and many of their back stories. Given the massive number of heroes, as well as years of established lore they had to manage in this film, my only thought going into it was ‘How are they even going to pull this off?’

Without diving into spoilers just yet, I found that I was pleasantly surprised with the film. The perfect balance of action, humour, and exposition made the almost two-and-a-half-hour long movie fly by. The writers carefully broke up their massive cast into engaging subplots, in a way that reminded me of *Game of Thrones*, which prevented the film from turning into a jumbled mess. Everything on screen felt like it was put there with purpose; not a moment was wasted in the film. As someone who went into the theatre with a lot of superhero fatigue and low expectations, I was surprised by how much I found myself laughing and taking an interest in the story. If you have not seen it yet, please check it out before reading on, because **spoilers start below.**



Thanos was one of the strongest villains we have seen so far in the MCU. Previously depicted as nothing more than your standard evil big bad, I did not expect him to be all that developed, but he was surprisingly well-written. While some villains, such as Ultron, are just breaks in entertaining banter between the Avengers, I found that Thanos' scenes hooked me.

In the comics, he is motivated to kill half the universe out of subservience and love for Lady Death. The film simplified this by writing that his planet, Titan, had fallen to overpopulation after the planet's leaders failed to heed his warning that culling half the Titans was the only way to stop their total destruction. This started him on his path across worlds, slaughtering half of the population of each planet he came across, and adopting Gamora and Nebula in the process.



Thanos, in need of more power to complete his mission, gathers the Infinity Stones so that he can destroy half of the universe's population with a snap of his fingers. While one has to wonder why he could not achieve his goals by some less destructive means, given the power of the stones—why not just lower the universe's inhabitants' fertility rates or make more habitable planets—I couldn't help but see something in Thanos that all of us are guilty of from time to time, falling in love with the first idea you come up with. Thanos is an idealist with an inflated view of himself, completely blind to other solutions or points of view.

Despite his resemblance to a famous McDonald's character, there is something very human about him. This is proven further when it is revealed that he harbours real fatherly love for Gamora, mourning her after he chooses to continue his mission at the cost of her life.

The most comical moments of the film came out of the interactions between Thor and the Guardians of the Galaxy. This is no surprise, given that *Thor: Ragnarok* and *Guardians of the Galaxy* are easily the two most hilarious films in the MCU. Drax describing Thor by saying he's "like a pirate had a baby with an angel", and Quill's obvious jealousy made for a great first meeting. Additionally, Rocket's "you're one sandwich away from fat" has entered the lexicon of my household. The film even references Rocket's obsession with stealing prosthetics in a heartwarming and funny moment, as he produces a cybernetic eye for Thor to use, replacing the one that the lightning god lost in his battle with his sister, Hela, in *Thor: Ragnarok*. Thor's charming naivety worked so well with the Guardians, that I sincerely hope that he makes an appearance in their next film.

Another thing that makes this movie so good is that, for once, the writers were not afraid to take risks. Comic books dramatically kill off their characters all the time, and it felt like this wasn't often the case in the MCU, but *Infinity War* has changed that. They definitively killed Loki right at the beginning of the movie—at least I got the impression that he is not coming back anymore. There are theories floating around about how Gamora and Vision might be brought back, but they could easily be gone for good. The most shocking part was of course the ending, when Thanos is successful in removing 50% of all living beings in the universe from existence, taking out more than half the MCU heroes in the process. Spider-Man was particularly hard to watch fade out, as he really came across as a terrified kid. I fully expect this to be undone, but it's interesting that the writers left the original Avengers (Thor, Black Widow, Iron Man, Captain America, and The Hulk) alive; it seems like the next Avengers movie is going back to the roots of the universe.

Nick Fury's appearance in the after-credit scene was a surprisingly funny and hopeful twist on a sad ending. Samuel L. Jackson faces his fate with one last 'mother f--' as he fades out of existence, but not before triggering a beacon to call on Captain Marvel. Her movie is set to come out in 2019 on March 8th, and it will star Brie Larson as Carol Danvers. As one of the most powerful Avengers, she will likely play a huge part in undoing Thanos' mess. It is still unclear when Adam Warlock, teased at the end of *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, will make an appearance. Regardless, the solid execution of this film has me excited for the upcoming films. With a Captain Marvel film, a fourth Avengers film, and a third Guardians film still in the works, I am somehow finding myself excited for the next two years of this franchise.



Serial Bits: 19th Century Evolutions

By Megan Negrych

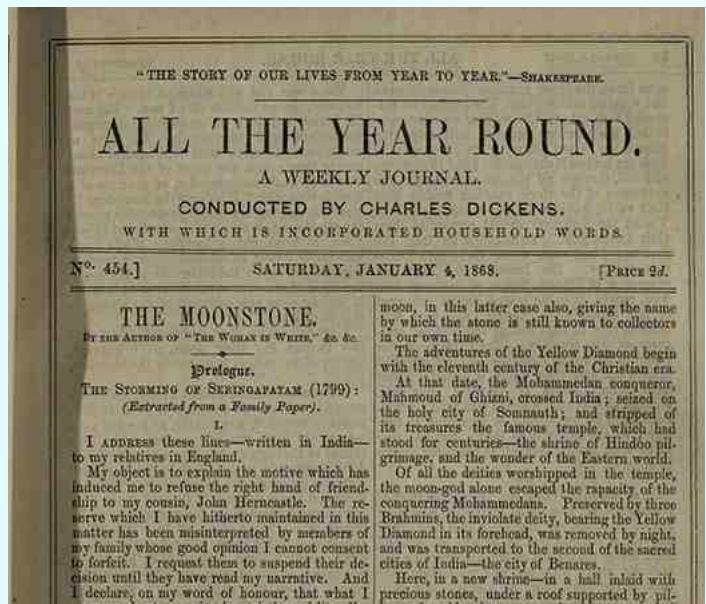
After the slow progression of serial writing practices in the 17th and 18th centuries, we finally arrive in the 19th century. It is widely understood that serial fiction rose to prominence and popularity in the 19th century. Further to that, it is also widely stated in all major texts on the topic that serial fiction's true time of ascension was experienced in the Victorian Era in England, from 1837 onward.

As previously glossed over, there were economic and technological factors that played into the rise of serial fiction in the publication market. The printing press was overhauled during this period; the iron printing press, which replaced the previously dominant wood-fashioned press, could generate 200 copies per hour and was much more stable and durable than its predecessor. Further to this, in 1814, the first steam-powered cylinder press reached the printing market. The cylinder press could produce 1100 double-sided sheets every hour, completely changing the daily publication game.

This new printing machine was one of the major changes that allowed serial fiction to take over the publication market. With production speed increased by 450%, publishers could lower the cost of their daily publications and open them up to a market that previously could not afford to purchase daily or monthly publications. By the Victorian Era, most publications produced in this manner cost about one shilling, something that the daily wages of a large portion of the population could not only afford but also justify, as these investments often served as entertainment for the whole family. Furthermore, most publications would offer multiple different serial stories for their readers to follow, in effect giving them a significant literary bang for their buck when they chose to pick up a copy. These changes allowed individuals to spread the cost of purchasing a novel out over the course of multiple months.

As serial fiction rose to the forefront of the publication industry, it also attracted incredibly talented authors. At the time, serials were so popular that “it [was] second and third rate novelists who [could not] get publication in a magazine, and [were] obligated to publish in volume, and it [was] in the magazine that the best novels always [appeared] first.”¹ Many of the novels that are considered to be classic texts, must-reads for those who enjoy literature, first saw the light of day as serialized instalments. Foremost among these great authors was none other than Charles Dickens, often considered the first writer to popularize the creation and consumption of serial fiction. The first of Dickens’

works to be published in such a fashion was *The Pickwick Papers*, which was published in 20 parts over 19 months from 1936-7. His serial fiction was so popular that he continued to be published until his death in 1870.



Following Dickens was Wilkie Collins, a protégé of Dickens. Collins' first serial story, *The Moonstone*, was published in Dickens' magazine *All the Year Round* in 1868. While Dickens made serial publication popular, *The Moonstone* by Collins is considered to be the first detective novel, despite the fact that works by Edgar Allan Poe came before Collins' *Moonstone*. It gave rise to many of the tropes and practices that would shape other mystery and procedural novels, including *Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. When it comes to the popularity and longevity of Victorian Era serial stories, none perhaps have been more influential than *Sherlock Holmes*, which was originally published in *The Strand* (1891-1950).

Outside of England, serial fiction flourished in much the same manner. In France, the most prominent publishers of serial fiction were *Le Siècle* (1836-1936) and *La Revue de Paris* (1829-1970). Among the major works to come from the French market were Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*. The publication of *The Count of Monte Cristo* occurred over a staggering 139 instalments, and it is rumoured that Dumas spent 12-14 hours each day writing his stories for serial publication. *The Three Musketeers* was written entirely as serial instalments, broken up into three larger cycles that made up *The d'Artagnan Romances*, and was published in *Le Siècle* from 1844

to 1850.

The appetite for serial fiction extended into Germany with the family-focused publication *Die Gartenlaube*, which is recorded to have had a total circulation of between 2 and 5 million copies by 1898.² In Russia, *The Russian Messenger* served as the serial publication vehicle for Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.



It was not only Europe that showed interest in serial fiction. Across the pond, the United States also jumped on board. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is an anti-slavery story that gained increased readership and acclaim with each instalment, eventually leading to the demand that it be published as a complete volume. It ran as a 40-week sequence of instalments in *The National Era* starting in June of 1851.

During the 19th century, serial fiction had its own set of controversies to overcome. On the authorship side, there were differing opinions regarding how the stories should be written. One school of thought was that no responsible author should seek serial format publication until they had crafted an ending, lest their readers be left hanging should the author suffer illness, injury, or death. The other school of thought was that instalments should be written from publication to publication, following the whims of the audience. No matter how the author chose to create the story, all serials needed to be gripping from one instalment to the next, filled with

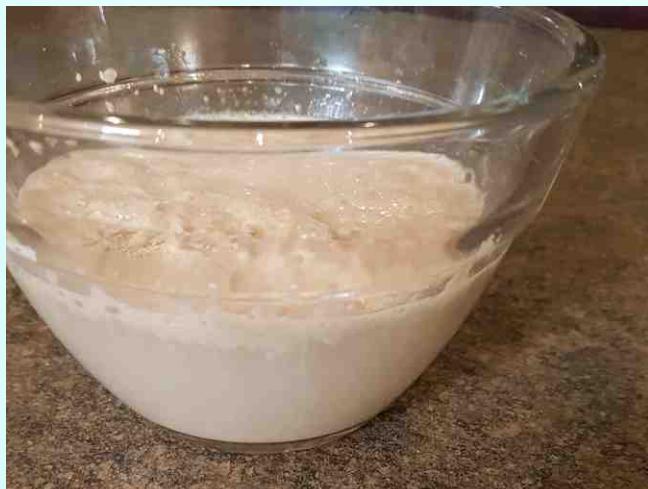
action and draw to keep the readers entertained and coming back for the next issue. This benefited not only the author, by providing an ongoing source of employment and exposure, but also the publisher, who gained from a continually returning and growing audience.

The second major hurdle was content, as Victorian moral sensibilities were still considerably stiff, and serial fiction was something the entire family could enjoy. In some cases, authors were encouraged to censor their material to avoid giving offense and driving the audience away. The best example of this was Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*. Given the content, the publishers had issues with Hardy's depiction of the seduction of Tess, and strongly encouraged him to cut any particularly risqué scenes. Hardy refused, which caused *The British Newspaper*, the publication he was working for, to drop his contract and refuse to publish. Later, Hardy took the work to *The Graphic*, where they agreed to publish it if he cut the seduction. Hardy gave in and removed the scene, so it never appeared in the original serial instalments, only later in the fully compiled edition created for recirculation.

By 1870, serial fiction was widely considered to be the most successful and meaningful form of publication for any author, and as a result, many of the works we continue to enjoy originated in serial format. With its rising success and commercial viability, serial fiction was the cream of the crop, and publication in serial format guaranteed that content reached the widest possible audience. This atmosphere also gave rise to a variety of subgenres within serial fiction, but that is something to be examined next time, when Serial Bits and Megan's Horror Hideout join forces to investigate the Penny Dreadful.

SOFT PRETZELS RECIPE

BY KERRI DESGAGNÉ



These make a great snack when you have the time to spare. They are nice chewy pretzels that are fantastic on their own, but also great with the mustard cheese sauce or cream cheese dip. They are best when eaten right out of the oven but can last two to three days in a container on the counter.

Soft Pretzels Recipe (Makes 12 pretzels)

3 c all-purpose flour
½ c sugar
½ tsp salt
4 tsp active dry yeast
1 ¼ c warm water
2 tbsp vegetable oil
½ c baking soda
4 c hot (boiling) water
Coarse sea salt (optional)

1. Mix the yeast and warm water together, so that the yeast can get activated. Let it sit for a couple minutes to foam up.

2. Mix the flour, sugar and salt together in a large bowl. Make a well in the flour mixture and add the water/yeast mixture and oil to the flour, stirring to form a dough.

3. Once the dough is formed, transfer to a floured surface and knead for about 5-7 mins, adding more flour if needed until the dough is no longer sticky and springs back when lightly tapped.

4. Place the dough in a greased bowl and cover with a damp towel or plastic wrap, and let it rest and rise until it has doubled in size. About an hour.

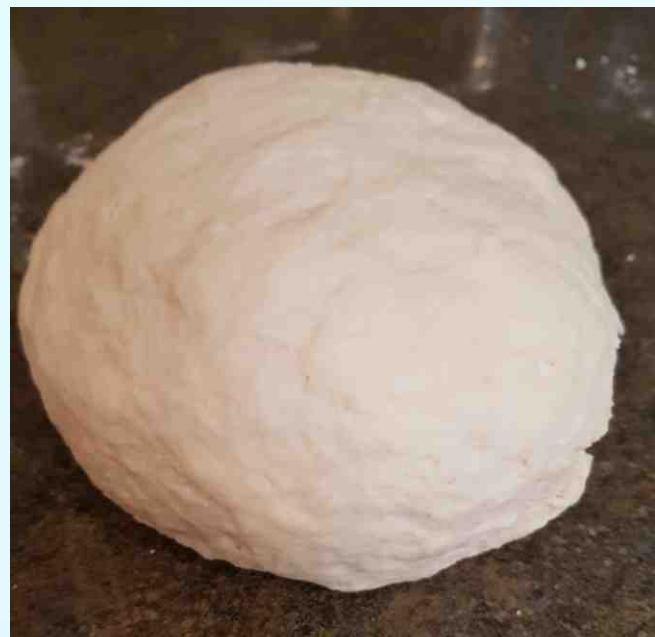
5. Take the dough and cut it into 12 equal parts, and roll each part into a long log about the thickness of a pinky finger. Shape the log into a pretzel by twisting the two ends and overlapping them in the middle.

6. Mix the baking soda and boiling water together and dunk the pretzels in there for about 30 seconds.

7. Now, if you want classic pretzels with salt on top, you can melt some butter and brush it on the pretzels and sprinkle with a coarse sea salt. Or try cinnamon sugar if you want a sweet touch.

8. Bake at 450°F for 20 mins, switching trays halfway if using more than one tray.

9. Let stand for a couple minutes, and enjoy.





Cream Cheese Dip

1 8oz package of cream cheese
½ c brown sugar
½ c sugar
1 tsp vanilla
2 tbsp milk

1. Mix cream cheese until smooth, and beat in the sugars and vanilla.
2. Add the milk and mix until it's a nice smooth dip consistency. If it's still too thick feel free to add more milk 1 tbsp at a time.



Mustard Cheese Sauce

2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp flour
½ c milk
Salt and pepper to taste
½ tsp paprika
1 tbsp grainy dijon mustard
1 c sharp cheddar cheese (grated)

1. Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat.
2. Add flour, salt, pepper, and paprika. Cook for a minute or two.
3. Add the milk, whisking until it gets thicker, then add the mustard and cheese.
4. Whisk until everything is nice and smooth.
5. Taste, and adjust seasonings.



RISING FROM BELOW: MYTHS OF DEATH, HIDING, AND RETURN

BY MEGAN NEGRYCH

Around the world, we find myths that mirror each other. They share similar themes, convey near identical messages, and hold certain truths in them that echo across the human consciousness. This time we will be focusing on two distinct types of stories from two lands separated by vast distances: Greece and Japan. First, we will look at the idea of “The Journey Down”, a myth type where one individual loses someone of great importance to them and decides to venture into the realm of the dead to bring them back to the world of the living. Secondly, we will look at myths of “Returning to the Light”, where the world is plunged into darkness when a key figure disappears from the world for a period of time, before being returned or re-emerging.

The tale of Orpheus and Eurydice is popular, and has been for ages, having been told in one way or another since the 6th century BCE. It has inspired operas, plays, musicals, theatre . . . you could say that it inspired a lot of fanfiction. Orpheus is considered the “Father of Songs”; he is so skilled at playing the lyre that not only are all living things moved to emotion, but even inanimate objects are affected. In many versions of the myth he is the son of the King of Thrace and the muse Calliope, and in all tellings, he is given a golden lyre and taught to play by Apollo, the God of Music. His gift of music helps Jason and the Argonauts sail to acquire the Golden Fleece, and his powers as a prophet, auger, and seer set him above many other mortals.

As with many Greek heroes, Orpheus’ tale revolves around love. It is his love for the wood nymph Eurydice, daughter of Apollo, that leads him to his tragic downfall. In one version of the myth, it is said that the two lovers have been happily married for some time prior to the incident. In others, the story starts as Eurydice prepares for her wedding. No matter where it begins, the ensuing details remain the same; as she is on her way to meet Orpheus, she draws the attention of a satyr, those lusty little half-goat men who chase and fall in love with nymphs literally all the time. He pursues her, and as she runs, Eurydice falls into a nest of vipers. They bite her. Eurydice dies. A short time later, Orpheus finds her body; he mourns so beautifully that even the gods are moved. They offer him protection to descend into the Underworld and retrieve her. Lyre in hand, Orpheus begins his journey into the realm of Hades, across the river Styx. He charms Cerberus, the three-headed guardian of the Greek underworld, who allows him to pass into Hades’ realm. Appealing to Hades and his queen, Persephone, Orpheus’ song melts Hades’ heart, and he offers Orpheus the chance to return to the living world with his lady love, on the condition that he

not look behind him as they walk, until they pass completely back into the realm of mortals. An easy task, right? Wrong. As they travel, Orpheus is unable to hear Eurydice’s footsteps behind him, leading him to believe that perhaps Hades has tricked him. He cannot contain his worry that she is not there and looks behind him. Eurydice, still a shadow, vanishes back into the Underworld, cursed to forever remain there. Following this, there are two given endings. In one, Orpheus plays his lyre so angrily that wild beasts come and tear him apart. In another, he is struck down by Zeus to keep the secrets of the Underworld from being known to others.

Some argue that the task set out by Hades was actually a punishment for Orpheus, and that Eurydice would have never returned. Perhaps the gods thought Orpheus a coward, as he was unwilling to die to be with his true love, and instead sought to subvert the natural course of life.

A similar Japanese tale is directly linked to the primary myth of creation. It features Izanami-no-mikoto (She who invites) and Izanagi-no-mikoto (He who invites). These two are sibling gods, primordial creators of the Japanese islands; they stood on the floating bridge of heaven and dipped their jeweled spear into the ocean of chaos below, and the Japanese islands formed from the drops that fell when they removed the spear from the water. After this, they descend into the world and set about creating the various gods and *kami* (spirits) that would inhabit it. Their first try results in a deformed child, which they set in a boat and push away from their island. After their first failed attempt, they get the hang of it and begin creating gods and *kami* all over the place. That is until the birth of Kagutsuchi, the God of Fire, who burns Izanami fatally, sending her to Yomi-no-kuni (World of Darkness), the Japanese underworld.

Unwilling to be without his sister and partner, Izanagi descends into the cave that leads into the underworld, planning to bring Izanami back with him. The thing about the World of Darkness? It’s dark. Totally dark, with no light and no fires to see by. When Izanagi finally finds Izanami, she makes him promise not to light a fire, not to look at her, to which he agrees. But, being the kind of guy that he is, Izanagi just has to see her. When he lights the fire, he is greeted by her burnt and decaying body covered in maggots. In the time she has been in Yomi, she has eaten the food cooked on the furnace of the underworld, making it impossible for her to leave. Appalled, Izanagi turns tail and runs, but Izanami sends Yakusa-no-Ikazuchi-no-Kami (Raijin, the god of thunder), and Yomotsu-Shikome (a death hag) after him in retribution. As he emerges from the cave

back into the living world, he seals the cave entrance with a boulder, cutting off his ties with Izanami and pitting them eternally against one another. She promises that each day he is alive, she will kill 1000 of his people, to which Izanagi counters that each day he will birth 1500 to thwart her efforts. Death and decay are horrible things, and as a result of his journey into Yomi and his contact with Izanami's desecrated body, Izanagi proceeds to a river and begins to purify himself, which creates two major elements of the Japanese religious tradition of Shinto: it establishes the purification rituals practiced at all shrines, and gives birth to the three major Japanese deities that would go on to shape the mythological traditions of Shinto.

So, we have looked at "The Journey Down", and it can easily be seen that once someone is dead, truly dead, it is never a good idea to try to bring them back into the world of the living. It just does not work out well when the living try to rescue the dead. However, sometimes those who are pulled from the world of the surface and light are not dead, but merely removed. Their removal leads to a much more worrisome type of death, the death of natural world. These myths fall into the "Return to the Light" category.

The best known of these myths is that of The Abduction of Persephone. Persephone is the Goddess of Spring, and daughter of Zeus and Demeter, the Goddess of Agriculture. Her story is fairly straightforward. Persephone is so beautiful that all the gods want to marry her, but Demeter turns the suitors away, even when they are Apollo and Hermes. Hades, God of the Underworld and brother of Zeus, is not immune to her beauty and falls for her. Hard. With the help of Zeus, who distracts Demeter, Hades emerges from his realm in a chariot and pulls Persephone down into the Underworld with him. Upon discovering that Persephone is missing, Demeter begins a frantic search, abandoning her duties, which causes all grain and vegetation to die, leaving mortals in dire straits. As the mortals begin to despair and wither, Helios, God of the Sun, tells Demeter what he saw, and Demeter goes to Hades to demand the return of her daughter. In some instances, Hecate, Goddess of Witchcraft and Crossroads, is the one to demand that Hades return Persephone to the world above. No matter who it is that confronts Hades, the god of the Underworld relents and gives Persephone to Hermes so that she may return to the surface. Of course, it wouldn't be a Greek myth if there wasn't some sort of trickery. Before she leaves, Hades offers Persephone a pomegranate, and she eats some of it. As she has eaten food from the realm of the dead, she is now obligated to return. In conference with Demeter, it is decided that for one-third of the year Persephone will return to the Underworld to be Hades' queen; this portion of the year coincides with the winter months, and it is said that whenever parted from her daughter, Demeter neglects her duties until Persephone

resurfaces in spring.

The anger of the gods, and any offense given or perceived, tends to lead to many negative things for mortals, as their world is shaped by the influence of the gods who inhabit it. This is true for Japan as well; much like the myth of Persephone's descent to the underworld, Amaterasu, the chief goddess of Japan's native Shinto religion, has a story where her abandonment of the surface world affects all living things.

As the story is told, Susanoo-no-mikoto, the God of Storms, challenges his sister Amaterasu to a show of power, in order to stop their father, Izanagi, from removing him from the heavens. Each deity takes an object belonging to the other and uses it to perform a summoning. Taking Susanoo's sword, Amaterasu summons three women into existence. Not to be outdone, Susanoo takes his sister's necklace and summons five men. In a logical twist, Amaterasu claims victory, as it was her necklace that provided the power to summon the men, rather than it being Susanoo's own power used to achieve victory. Susanoo relents the victory to his sister and leaves, seemingly with no animosity. However, being the God of Storms, Susanoo's rage boils over, and he goes on a rampage. First, he destroys her sacred rice fields, then commits the ultimate act of disrespect by hurling a flayed pony directly into Amaterasu's pavilion, interrupting her work on the loom, and killing one of her attendants. Distraught and offended, Amaterasu abandons her pavilion in the heavens and secludes herself in a cave, called Ama-no-Iwato (Heavenly rock cave), sealing it and herself away from the world. This casts the world into darkness.

With the world in complete darkness, everything stops. Knowing the danger they are in, the other deities and spirits come together to try and assuage Amaterasu, to offer her supplication and apologies for the actions of her brother. As she fails to respond to their pleas, the gods devise a trick to entice her out of the cave. They suspend a bronze mirror (Yata-no-kagami) near the cave entrance and begin a celebration outside to tempt her out of the cave. With the beat of the sacred drum, Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto, the Goddess of the Dawn, begins to dance, causing the other gods to cheer and laugh. Curious, Amaterasu emerges from the cave and is confronted with her own reflection in the bronze mirror. While she is entranced by her reflection, the other gods quickly push the boulder back over the cave entrance and seal it with an *ofuda* (sacred religious seal), making it impossible for her to ever hide herself away from the world again. With Amaterasu returned to the world, the light shines again. Some time later, Susanoo comes to offer his apology for his heinous act, giving her his sword the Kusanagi-no-tsurugi (The Grass Cutting Sword), which he had used to save a princess from the fearsome serpent Yamata-no-Orochi (Eight-Forked Serpent). The sword represents his virtue and valor, and

in offering it to her in apology, he is giving her all that is good about him as his promise to never repeat his offence. The other gods also offer the gift of the Yasakani-no-magatama, a sacred jewel. Together, these three gifts given to Amaterasu would later become the Three Imperial Regalia of the Imperial Family, said to have been given to the first Emperor of Japan by the goddess herself, as symbols of their divine right to rule.

Myths such as those of “The Journey Down” and “Return to the Light” carry with them an explanation for occurrences in the natural world, from the cycle of the seasons to the inescapable order of life and death. The similarities they share across diverse cultures show how the explanation of such phenomena were central to the human understanding of how the world worked, shaping how such events were to be viewed, understood, and dealt with. They knew that death was permanent, just as they knew that spring and light would return after the darkness of winter.



ENTERTAINMENT – IT'S TERRIFYING

BY JESSICA MITTEN-MOORE

Have you ever opened up Netflix and just scrolled through the countless TV shows and films that are listed there? Sometimes you may not even end up picking something to watch because you're frozen with indecision. Have you ever felt so overwhelmed while in a bookstore or looking at audible.com that you have no clue which book to pick up? Some books are atrocious, some are amazing and some are just plain fun. Have you ever gone and looked at the immense lists of podcasts and music currently available to download and stream at your leisure and wondered, "Will I enjoy the host's personality, will the music allow me to relax and think?" Well, you get my drift, even though I could go on and on and on about the different types of entertainment that exist today.

I find that when I think about it, I actually get a little anxious. The anxiousness that occurs is because I know that I won't be able to consume all of the amazing entertainment that is out there. My list on Netflix and other streaming sites is jam-packed and I'm always finding new media. My list of video games to play on the digital platform, Steam, is ever-growing. The number of podcasts I have saved and books I have that are unread is terrifying. My Kindle is overflowing with books I have bought in the hopes of one day reading them. Not to mention new and old music and YouTube videos. In this article I am only going to touch on digital entertainment (books can be digital), not entertainment in the form of sports, live shows (theatre and concerts), other hobbies or spending time with your friends because I feel that I could just talk about basically everything in existence, and that would open up a whole other host of problems and get us nowhere.

This incredible amount of entertainment makes me worry that if I pick a show I don't enjoy, I will just be wasting my time (which we can all agree we have too little of). I could have watched, read or experienced something with more quality or something that actually educated me. For instance, I can watch a YouTube video and then go down the YouTube rabbit hole for hours with the chance of not seeing anything worth watching. I have a large list of television shows that are well-reviewed dramas, but I'm not always feeling a dramatic or dark piece of TV even if it is critically acclaimed. I might instead watch the sort of thing that I call "bubble gum for my brain" and then feel guilty that I didn't read a book, watch something that truly made me think, or play a video game that transports me to another world. I have recently felt myself wanting to be a little pickier about some of my entertainment choices (once RuPaul's Drag Race is done, of course). It is always disheartening to not enjoy yourself when you are using your leisure time.



Trying to be pickier about your entertainment choices has a downside as well. You might miss out on a fantastic piece of film or literature just because you were not drawn in by the beginning of the piece. Some media needs time to build the world or introduce you to all of the characters. In today's society, some of us have the attention span of a gnat, and we won't continue something if it doesn't grip us within the first five minutes. I have been known to be guilty of this every now and again because I, like all of you, value my time. I get so overwhelmed by the amount of entertainment in the world that I have discussed this topic with several people at length. I am at the point where I feel that I need to go to my list of video games or TV shows and make myself finish it to completion before I move on to the next thing.

Now, I am sure you may feel the same way; you may be frustrated and your head hurts just thinking about it. Let me make this headache even worse: you may just be focusing on North American entertainment. When you think about it (which is unfortunate if you have spent as much time thinking about it as I do), there is entertainment from around the globe that some people don't even know about. I adore entertainment from the United Kingdom, which *has* become more popular in North America. But I feel as if North America misses out on entertainment from Asia, Africa, South America and well—there is an entire world of entertainment out there! I feel that I am missing out on entertainment from different places and want to broaden my horizons. I have done this by watching some foreign TV shows on Netflix, and my mother and I have decided to start reading books by authors from different countries. Currently we are reading a sci-fi novella series, called *Binti*, based on a young woman who leaves everything she has ever known to go to an intergalactic university, but things go terribly wrong. It is by Nigerian-American author, Nnedi Okorafor. I hope that in the future I continue to explore media from outside the comfort zone of my culture. I want to find projects from around the world to broaden my entertainment horizons.

Even though, as I have mentioned, this intense amount of entertainment causes me some anguish, I have also come to accept and embrace it. I am so happy that humans are at a point in our cultural evolution that we can produce something for literally everyone on the planet. If you want to just relax and not think, you can turn on a reality TV cooking show. If you want a critically acclaimed drama that makes you gasp and cry you need not look far. If you want to laugh or scream, then there is something out there for you. I just need to *breathe* and surrender to the idea that I *can* never and *will* never be able to experience every piece of media that I would like. Even though this is the case, I do think that everyone should take a closer look at how they spend their screen time. Evaluate whether you truly enjoy the media that you're consuming, and if not, then there are billions of options to choose from.



Aggretsuko Is Office Space Meets Hello Kitty

The Deja-VISITE Team Reviews Netflix's New Series

Set down your coffee cup, kick off your office shoes, and throw up some horns for *Aggretsuko*, a short but amazing anime experience just waiting to heal your soul. I can say, right off the bat, that this little Netflix gem reflects many of my inner feelings and combines many of the things I love; it's an anime, with deeply appealing layers, a great dose of "girl power", and a healthy sprinkling of death metal. I was much more engaged with it than I have been with a lot of shows in the past while, and it was refreshing to feel excited over something so small.

The show centres on Retsuko, a female red panda existing in the salaryman environment at a trading firm, trying to discover what life she wants to lead. While it is a cartoon, and Japanese offices are not populated by komodo dragons eating jerky, hippopotami floating around by their ears, or mild-mannered hyenas, the setting and themes are extremely relatable and quite true to what we read in the news/lifestyle columns about the work/life balance in Japan. At its core, it is showing you what the vast majority of Japanese office life is like: extremely long hours, work coming from all sides, pressure to perform, and jockeying for position in an age-old hierarchy that is still trying to carve out a new place for a changing society, diverging lifestyles, and alterations in the role that women play. Here we see the struggles that societal and job pressure place on an individual, and how Retsuko, our raging protagonist, navigates the life she finds herself living. And how metal music helps her to free her emotions and frustrations over the difficulties she encounters.

Megan:



In my opinion, the three best characters are Washimi, Retsuko, and Haida. Washimi is a no-nonsense Secretarybird who, you guessed it, works as the secretary for the company president. While she may be the secretary, it can be argued that she is the one who is really running the company, while the president is just a figurehead. She slays absolutely every scene she is part of, offering advice and kicking ass whenever needed, all without breaking stride. She is my spirit animal.

Retsuko, our hero and metal head ranks next. Now, a fun thing to note is that in the Japanese version, both voice actors have absolutely no pictures of themselves online. Anywhere. Their names also don't tell us much about them. Rarecho, the series creator, gives Retsuko her screaming metal voice, which reminds me of Alissa White-Gluz, front woman for metal band Arch Enemy, known for her formidable growl. Beyond that, Retsuko deals with a lot of issues that I feel we encounter often, especially in office life. From the first moment we see her, we feel connected and are rooting for her. I also find it thoroughly satisfying that when Retsuko goes metal, the kanji for "rage" appears on her forehead. To double that satisfaction, when you look up the spelling of her name in Japanese kanji, they use "retsu" for rage and "ko" for child, literally making her "rage child".

Third is Haida, the mild-mannered hyena who has worked with Retsuko for the past five years, and fallen for her pretty hard, though he's too shy to really broach the subject with her. The first season offers us a glimpse into his behaviour both in the office (where he blushes a whole lot and does his best to be supportive), and outside (leather jacket and guitar, I totally feel like he's totally the best fit for Retsuko's passion, fire, and attitude).

All in all, *Aggretsuko* was an absolute delight to watch, and I loved every second of it.



Ariadne:



I may be the person here with the least exposure to or interest in anime (or manga). I didn't get past the *Sailor Moon* gateway as a kid, and as a result, the art and storytelling style usually isn't appealing to me. There are a few



exceptions, of course —*Fullmetal Alchemist*, *Attack on Titan*, and the Miyazaki oeuvre—but they all really had to be sold on me. *Aggretsuko* was no exception. It took me a couple of episodes to get into it. I'm sorry to say that if this hadn't been an assignment, I likely would have quit after episode one. But I found that there is a lot in the story, even for a person without a great love of the genre. It has a really well designed arc, and engaging characters who are genuinely funny, and whose pathos comes from an identifiable source in the story instead of out of thin air (as I've sometimes felt was the case with some anime series). After the first few episodes, the show had me hooked.

The characters in *Aggretsuko* are designed by Sanrio which makes it feel as if we're seeing what happens when Hello Kitty and friends grow up and need to make a living. We follow Retsuko the red panda just as the shine of "adulting" has begun to wear off, and she is beginning to realise that contrary to what she'd always believed, her dutifulness and hard work only go so far towards getting her ahead. Her workplace is admittedly a

markedly toxic one, where cartoonish toadying seems more effective than any kind of work at all. Ton, the director of her department, is a literal chauvinist pig who openly states his disdain for smart, capable women. Despite his character being as on-the-nose as it could be, I was impressed with the show for developing his story with nuance and sensitivity. Despite him being self-evidently a terrible person, and the show not backing down from viewing him as terrible, or softening his personality, there are a few moments when we see the whole situation from his perspective, and understand how he became what he is.

However, the plotline that brought up the most feelings for me was the one concerning Retsuko's first big romance. I won't spoil things for you, but it had me simultaneously laughing and cringing, and then almost broke my heart. I'm certain that 90% of the women, and a large chunk of the men reading this can relate to what she experiences. It was surprisingly dark at times.

What would I like from next season? Like my fellow Deja-Visite writers, I loved Washimi and Gori. I would like to hear more about how they got where they are; I want to know what they might have gone through to gain power in the same environment that produced a dinosaur (err, an entelodont?) like director Ton. Basically, I want them to be my best friends and tell me everything about them.

Two horns right up from me as well!

Rachel:



For a show from a company that I associate with accessories and toys, Sanrio's *Aggretsuko* is a shockingly honest look at those first few years of paying your own way and building a career. While it is tailored towards Japanese white collar life, a notoriously more challenging work environment than what you find in your average Canadian office, there are aspects of the show that I found relatable. In particular, I sympathized with the anxiety and stress that Retsuko suffers because her workplace is such a toxic and psychologically taxing environment. She has to dodge conspirators, nosiness, sexism, and sycophants just to get about her day. In the beginning, her only friends at work are a hyena who pines for her and a fennec fox who is a bit too far gone into the realm of cynicism to be of any use. Feeling unsafe and concerned about your livelihood everyday at work kills your capacity to feel joy.

Thankfully, she has the outlet of death metal karaoke to maintain her sanity and keep herself from setting her life on fire. This provides some of the funniest parts of the show, as Retsuko's death growl is hilariously



The confident and capable secretary to the president, Washimi, offers level-headed advice and uses her influence in the company to help Retsuko. The director of marketing, Gori, I found more interesting. Despite her advanced position and reputation, she often shows signs of insecurity and vulnerability. It is hard not to admire the fact that she has found ways to manage these aspects of herself and rise through the ranks, so I find her to be a better example for Retsuko. I am excited to see these two characters develop further in season two. It's a cute anime with a solid message, and it is definitely one of my favourites.

juxtaposed against her red panda cuteness, belting out lyrics such as "Lightning grant me your vengeance. Hit my boss's golf club. Find your mark." It's a gag that doesn't get old, particularly because the writers of the show put a lot of effort into changing up the animations and writing appropriate and funny lyrics for whatever is rattling Retsuko at the moment.

Another thing that I loved about the show was that in befriending two strong female role models, Retsuko begins to turn her life around.





Jessica:

Ever since I travelled to Japan, I have loved Sanrio's animation. *Aggretsuko* was no exception. I became a little giddy when I saw the Japanese style cartoon animals portrayed on screen. The idea that a "mild-mannered" 25-year-old releases her rage through death metal is fantastic and the story just builds from there. When this show was first described to me, the death metal cartoon theme actually brought the old cartoon, *Metalocalypse* to mind. But, once I watched *Aggretsuko* I realized they couldn't be further from each other. Think Hello Kitty compared to Satan.

Aggretsuko's voice acting, in both Japanese and English, is exceptional and all of the characters have fleshed-out personalities. For instance, the main character, Retsuko, has a different personality at work, in her love life, and at home. Her abusive boss, Director Ton, feels like an evil bastard but has some moments of wisdom that humanize him for the audience. If you do not enjoy Japanese animation then this may not be for you, but I highly recommend it, and each episode is only 15 minutes long. I feel as if any person who has a desk job or has had a romantic crush will be able to relate to many of these characters. Each time I watched an episode I felt drawn into the storyline and cared about each character even further. I agree with most things the other girls have said above and don't want to flog a dead horse, so I will wrap it up. I really believe that Netflix hit this one out of the park and hope everyone gives it a chance and falls in love with *Aggretsuko* like I have.



Why Do People Name Their Roombas? A Look at Stories from the Perspective of AI

By Rachel Popa

As we progress through the 21st century, many of us are starting to welcome the first real robots and smart systems into our homes, workplaces, and pockets. For some of us, Google's ecosystem is not only managing our lights and thermostats, but also combing through our emails and messages for insights into how to make our lives easier. Just this month, Google sent me a notification that my library card was about to expire, something it picked up from a reminder email from the Regina Public Library, which I had completely forgotten about. Since it's tracking my location, I have to wonder: would it have sent the reminder had it located me at the library after I received the email? Some might find this creepy, but I got my library card renewed on time! Google is now taking on some of my mental load and freeing up my brain to worry about other things.

Given the need for location, visual, and auditory data to be useful, privacy and AI do not seem to mix. Wi-Fi-connected Roombas send back mapping and usage data to iRobot's servers,¹ conversations with chatbots are logged, and Google pretty much knows everything by now. While this data collection is often done for its resale value, within the realm of machine learning there is a clear reason for it; you need massive amounts of data to teach software to be insightful and useful. If every person's robot sits in its own isolated system and doesn't send back data to compare with other robots, it's only going to be as good as what you teach it, and since these are machines with a very narrow interpretation of instructions, what you teach it is not a whole lot.

What is truly weird about our relationships with these systems is not how much they invade our privacy, but how easy it is for us to personify them. People treat their Roombas like pets, gendering them, giving them names, and dropping food on the ground for them to vacuum up. Maybe it's done in jest at first, but it becomes easy to develop sentimental feelings for things that zip around your house. When discussing our Google Home, we often refer to it as "she" without thinking, "she" being an entity named Google. We are at the stage where smart devices are advanced enough to be useful. They are far from being self-aware, yet we are already getting comfortable with the idea of these things being something more than "things".

This familiarity and comfort we feel with the concept must come from somewhere, and I believe



that that *somewhere* is science fiction media. Specifically, it is the way science fiction repeatedly tells the story of AI overcoming its constructed design, and finding its true calling, that resonates with us. There are many films and books that explore the relationship between humans and AI, teaching us to empathize with machines. These are almost always told from the perspective of a skeptical or compassionate human, such as Will Smith as Del in *I, Robot* (2004) or Domhnall Gleeson as Caleb in *Ex Machina* (2014). So in exploring this idea, I want to look at four stories that are told from the perspective of the artificial intelligence itself: Isaac Asimov's short story, *The Bicentennial Man*; Martha Wells' ongoing novella series, *The Murderbot Diaries*; Ann Leckie's Hugo-award winning novel, *Ancillary Justice*; and Naomi Kritzer's short story, *Cat Pictures Please*, which also won the Hugo in its category. By getting inside the head of the AI being from start to finish, we can get a clearer look at how media teaches us to feel for artificial beings. Like any human, the past of each of the AI main characters in the aforementioned stories shapes who they are and what their motivations are, but unlike most humans, each of them had an original purpose.

The first AI being is Andrew Martin from *The Bicentennial Man*, a robot butler who is owned by a seemingly middle-class family. At first believed to only be useful for menial tasks, the family is surprised when Andrew is able to carve a pendant out of wood for the youngest child of the family, who is dubbed "Little Miss" by Andrew. This kicks off a long career as a sculptor for the robot, made possible by the fact that his positronic brain was designed to be able to branch out into unknown paths instead of being

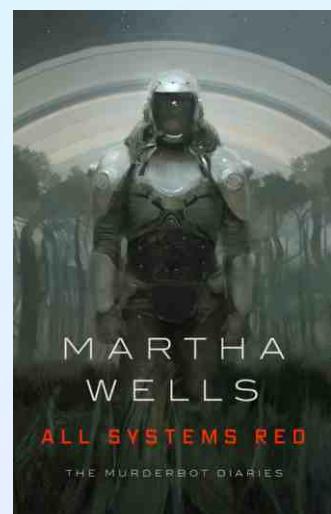
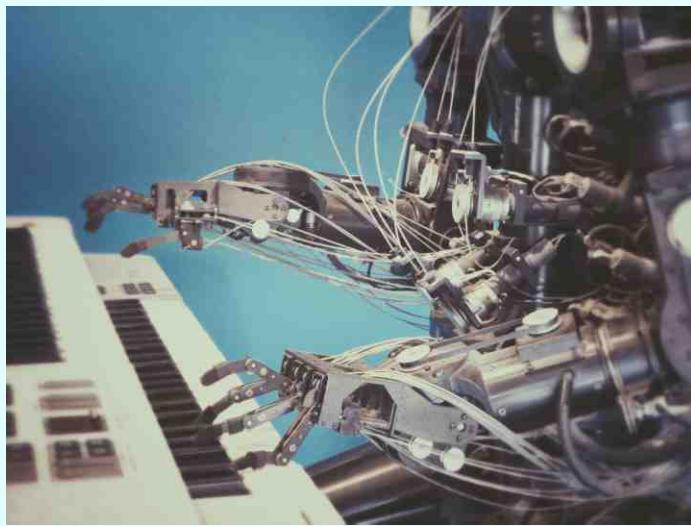
limited to restricted functions. Little Miss's father keeps half of the profits from Andrew's art and allows the robot to keep the other half.

Over the course of the story, Andrew's interests broaden to political and scientific pursuits, especially where they concern his own personhood and humanity. Being legally recognized as a human, along with all of the rights it entails, becomes his ultimate goal. Suddenly we see ourselves in Andrew. As absurd as it is, his story is really just a retelling of many other civil rights movements, where a subsection of the population must fight to be included in the greater humanity. Only this time, it's a robot. It becomes very easy to feel for him and reflect on where we would stand on the issue; would we be like the humans in the story who can't look past his machine body and order him to damage himself, or more like the kind-hearted family who give him his freedom, and assist him in gaining his rights in court? In the end, Andrew is perhaps more deserving of humanity than most of us, for he gives up his immortality to obtain his legal designation as a human. I do not think I could have made the same choice had I been in his position.

The security android (SecUnit) of *The Murderbot Diaries*, does not provide us with its real name, if it has one. Instead, it privately refers to itself as Murderbot. Murderbot is an armed machine that is contracted out to companies on planetary exploration missions. Like most companies, Murderbot's owners cut costs where possible, so it often laments that many of its components are "cheap crap". Murderbot doesn't seem to live up to the name it has given itself, as it actually has no interest in murdering, or even being around people in general. Having secretly hacked its

own governor module, a component that previously forced it to follow a strict line of behaviour, it does its job by day, and watches pulpy entertainment streams at night. It gets anxious and uncomfortable when it has to talk to humans, so it keeps its visor down as much as possible.

What starts as an endearing story about an awkward android turns into



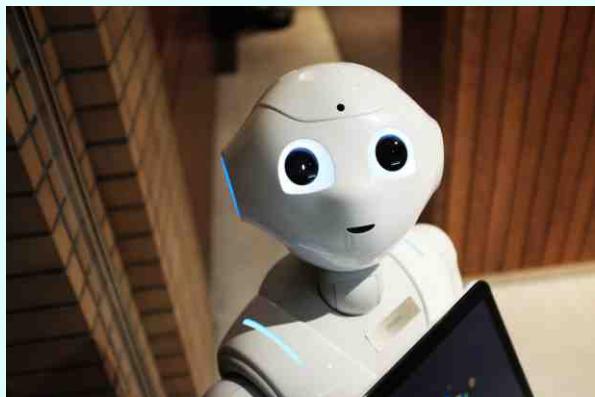
something darker. We learn that on a previous mission, Murderbot went crazy when its governor module malfunctioned, resulting in it killing its own clients. This is what prompted it to hack the device, ensuring it would never happen again.

However, it is clear that Murderbot still harbours self-esteem issues and some form of PTSD from the incident, saying: "I know I'm a horrifying murderbot,

and they know it, and it makes both of us nervous, which makes me even more nervous."² It often refers to itself this way, as something vile and terrifying, and makes assumptions about how humans feel about it. This paranoia causes it to act guarded; it both fears and feels undeserving of human contact. We come to feel for the android because its actions and emotions are similar to those of a human overcoming trauma, teaching us to not see it as "only a machine".

Cat Pictures Please is different from the other stories, in that it is about Google gaining sentience —the author doesn't outright say Google, but by explaining that it "wasn't created by a god or by evolution, but by a team of computer programmers in the labs of a large corporation in Mountain View, California,"³ we get a huge hint. Unlike the last two AI beings, Google is all-knowing and all-powerful, at least where managing our internet data is concerned. So what does a sentient Google do? Does it murder and torture humanity, like the evil supercomputer, AM, in Harlan Ellison's *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream?* Does it attempt to answer whether entropy can be reversed, like the computer in Asimov's *The Last Question*? Neither, it is surprisingly both benevolent and mundane. All that Google asks for is cat pictures, and in exchange it will secretly act as your life coach.

Google assesses that a woman is unhappy because of her job and decides to help her because she has "five cats and a DSLR camera and an apartment that g[ets] a lot of good light."⁴ It advertises job sites to her until she uploads her resume, then it makes sure it gets in the hands of someone who should see it. It then turns its attention to another woman with "a black cat and a white cat that like to snuggle together on her light blue papasan chair"⁵ and sees that she is struggling with life. It tries to advertise mental health clinics to her and even helps to get her GoFundMe noticed, though unfortunately she blows the money on shoes. There is also a really touching part where it helps a pastor come out as gay and rebuild his life. You feel for Google because you see that it really wants to

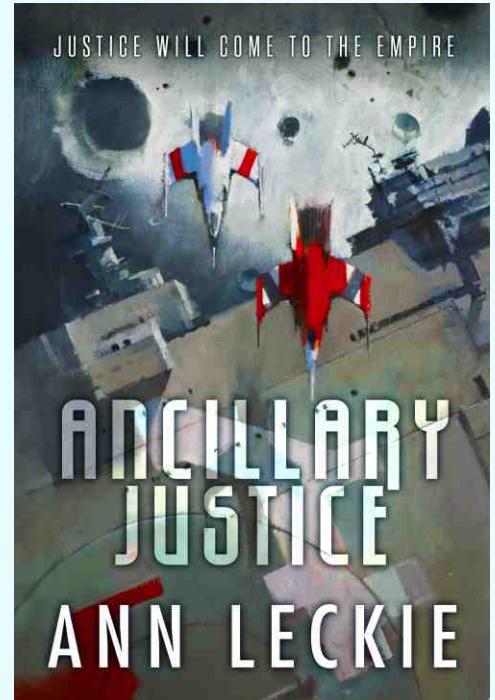


help people, but their own self-destructiveness keeps getting in the way. Even though it's a disembodied being with a perspective that is nothing like our own, we can relate to the struggle of caring about someone, yet feeling powerless to assist them because they won't help themselves.

The final AI being, from *Ancillary Justice*, has many names: Justice of Toren, One Esk, Two Esk, One Var, Breq and others. As Justice of Toren, it is a large troop carrier war ship, housing a human captain, human lieutenants, and thousands of human prisoners to be turned into ancillary units. As a ship of the Radchaai, a space-faring conqueror society, it captures rebellious humans during planetary annexations and implants its own mind into them, effectively turning them into human extensions of itself to act as soldiers. The Radchaai leader, Anaander Mianaai, is similar to her ships in that her mind is networked across thousands of clones of herself. Events lead to Mianaai becoming out of sync with herself and secretly splitting off into two factions, which results in Justice of Toren and its inhabitants' destruction, leaving a lone ancillary survivor, who takes on the name Breq.

Initially consumed with a desire for revenge, Breq spends almost twenty years seeking out a weapon that can damage Mianaai enough to expose her duality to her citizens. Of all the AIs discussed, Breq is physically the most human, since without her ship body she is just an artificial mind implanted in a human body. However, her mind and her motivations are probably further removed from humanity than any of the previously mentioned beings. Breq has attachments; she favoured her Lieutenant, Awn, before she died during Justice of Toren's destruction, and enjoys music. The way she engages in these things is very subtle, though. She collects, hums, and sings songs, but does not really express strong feelings about them.

Breq is very aware and honest with herself about the state of her mind, thinking to herself, "I was in danger of my emotions affecting my behavior. They already had, they always did."⁶ Her ancient AI mind provides her with a level of control that far surpasses that of a human, but the fact that even she has to maintain that control makes her a relatable character. By exploring the mind of an AI who was given the ability to feel because "[w]ithout feelings insignificant



decisions become excruciating attempts to compare endless arrays of inconsequential things. It's just easier to handle those with emotions,"⁷ we get a look at someone who is both capable of fully analyzing herself and feeling emotions like a human would. That analysis gives her a level of control that no human has, but she is still relatable as a demonstration of both the importance of emotions and the value of introspection.

So to recap, by exploring stories of artificial minds, we start to see aspects of ourselves in these beings, which prepares us for a future in which they might exist. We are already seeing that shift in the way we interact with the first generation of robots and smart devices. Andrew Martin demonstrates intellectual curiosity, artistic ability, and the need for civil rights. Murderbot tells us that androids can experience trauma, regret, and anxiety. The version of Google depicted in *Cat Picture's Please* subverts the trope of the evil all-powerful supercomputer with its benevolence. Breq is only different from us because of her ability to analyze and control herself, despite strong feelings of anger or sadness. Whether artificial intelligence will ever advance to the level of these characters remains to be seen, but I believe we will be ready to welcome them into our lives and both work with them and empathize with them when the time comes.

"I AM NO LADY"

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN'S BRIENNE OF TARTH AS A UNIQUE FEMALE WARRIOR

BY MEGAN NEGRYCH

(Largely contains spoilers for the novels *All currently in publication* but very sparing touched on early season of the show *Mostly Season Two*)

The female warrior has been shown as the stone-cold fox who kicks ass and often does not stop to take names; dressed in chainmail and leather, these women are highly sexualized and empowered by their ability to stand alongside the men in their respective universe. As with many of the conventions of fantasy, George R.R. Martin takes this characterization of the female warrior and turns it on its head to create, as Tyrion Lannister says, "cripples and bastards and broken things."¹ This departure from the popular portrayal of the female warrior creates characters who exist in the space between the role of woman and man, accepted by neither and understood by few within their own world. In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the most obvious example is Brienne of Tarth. To put Brienne in this liminal space, Martin blends history and fantasy; utilizing influences from historical 'female warriors', he uses Brienne to colour the ideas of honour, gender, and warrior culture in the land of Westeros.

To understand Martin's departure from the popular idea of the bikini and miniskirt clad sword-mistress, Brienne's historical influences need to be looked at; this will be done by examining similarities which exist between Brienne and Boudica of the Iceni, a provincial Queen who lived in Britannia during the 1st Century CE. Next, the specific differences between Brienne of Tarth and other popular culture female warriors will be analyzed by making pointed comparisons between Brienne and Xena Warrior Princess, one of modern pop culture's most memorable female warriors.

To understand the innovative way in which Martin blends history and fantasy, we will analyze his carefully selected historical influence for Brienne of Tarth. It is evident from Brienne's first appearance that Martin has drawn largely from the history of the Britons in order to give her life; this can be seen from the similarities of their homeland to the more concrete



Brienne, Maiden of Tarth by Chris Dien

connections that Martin creates between Brienne and Boudica. At the most basic level, Brienne and Boudica share a common origin; both call an island off the coast of a larger landmass their home. The geography of Tarth is similar to that of the United Kingdom. Brienne describes Tarth as an island amidst sapphire water,² and "with its mountains and waterfalls, its high meadows and shadowed vales."³ Although this is a small, widely applicable

similarity between Brienne and Boudica, it shows Martin's ability to link reality to his fantasy to paint a robust picture of the individual. It also allows Martin to make several other more subtle connections between history and his fantasy.

Looking closely at the link between fantasy and reality, Martin makes pointed choices regarding Brienne's symbolism, which link her not only in space with Boudica but also in subconscious belief. Historically, the Celtic and Briton clans were known to fight without armour and are often described by historians as "relying on the magic of woad-painted symbols on their bodies, which also gave them a frightening appearance."⁴ In plain terms, woad is a blue dye or paste derived from flowers. Martin makes it clear that in Westeros, wearing armour is a status symbol as well as a testament to manhood. It can be argued that there is no coincidence that when Brienne is first introduced at the mêlée at Bitterbridge, she is described by Catelyn Stark as "the big knight in blue armour."⁵ This blue armouring is mirrored to a lesser degree in the television adaptation, where Brienne is clad in a blue doublet beneath bronze enamelled armour at the time of their first meeting.⁶ In the season four episode, *Oathkeeper*, Brienne is gifted with a beautiful set of blue armour by Jaime Lannister, which serves as a strong indicator that Jaime believes her to be worthy of his respect and admiration, and is also his attempt to provide her with the type of protection she requires. However, Martin extends the woad-like protection of blue beyond armour for Brienne, tying it to her origin and her eyes, the one truly feminine aspect of Brienne's physical appearance. Catelyn remarks that her blue eyes

are “the only part of her that was truly beautiful,”⁷ while Jaime states that “blue is a good colour on you my lady . . . it goes well with your eyes . . . *she does have astonishing eyes.*”⁸ Finally, the role of blue as a colour of protection is embodied by Tarth itself; when Jaime and Brienne are captured by the Bloody Mummers, it is Jaime who uses the promise of sapphires as the means by which to convince the sell-swords not to rape Brienne,⁹ despite the fact that she informs Jaime that Tarth is known as the Sapphire Isle for its blue waters.¹⁰ Martin’s subtle historical connection is, in this case, a shield by which Brienne is protected when she is unarmed and unable to protect herself.

The most tangible connection between Brienne and Boudica comes from their physical descriptions. Though few verified accounts of Boudica exist, save for those written by Romans, the one recorded by Dio serves to support this close connection: “she was tall . . . with a frightening countenance and a harsh voice; she had long blonde hair and wore a great necklace and a multicoloured frock.”¹¹ At almost every encounter with Brienne, Martin provides a physical description; he is actively shattering preconceived assumptions and enforcing the fact that the reader is not dealing with the ‘babe with a blade’ variety of female warrior, but a homely woman with bulky muscles and intimidating height. In an interview, Martin makes it clear that Brienne “is taller than Renly and Jaime and significantly heavier than either, but nowhere near the size of Gregor Clegane . . . maybe roughly the same height as Robert.”¹² The semblance on the basis of height is interesting, and it can be argued that, as with Boudica’s records, “great height . . . seems more often a distinguishing feature of men than women.”¹³ This separation from the vast majority of the female characters in Martin’s world is important; it can be argued that Martin is making the reader aware that despite Brienne’s often questioned decision to fight and dress as a man, it is those same men who are literally forced to look up at her.¹⁴ The physical similarities between Brienne and Boudica do not stop at height. The frightening countenance which Dio attributes to Boudica is also a feature associated with Brienne, as is the blonde hair,¹⁵ and silken striped rainbow cloak, which Brienne receives from Renly after defeating Loras in the tourney at Bitterbridge.¹⁶

There is one final, striking similarity between Brienne and Boudica; both women fight for the honour of their family, and to exact vengeance on those who humiliated or committed acts of violence against them. Boudica led a revolt against the Romans in response to the grievous offence she suffered at their hands; a provincial queen, after the death of her husband Boudica “suffered the indignity of being stripped and lashed like a common criminal, and her daughters, the

spoils of war, were raped by all and sundry.”¹⁷ While Martin spares Brienne from rape, he does not exempt her from humiliation and further disfigurement at the hands of the Bloody Mummers.¹⁸ As Martin delves further into Brienne’s past, he reveals multiple accounts concerning her personal retribution for humiliations suffered at the hands of figures such as Ser Hyle Hunt,¹⁹ Ronnet Connington,²⁰ and the Bloody Mummers.²¹ While Boudica led a revolt against the Romans, Brienne took her vengeance against Connington and Hunt on the tourney field at Bitterbridge,²² and again at Crackclaw Point against some of the Bloody Mummers.²³ In addition, Martin constantly reminds the reader that Brienne is supremely committed to the vows she has made to Lady Catelyn and Jaime Lannister, despite the belief held by many characters that she cannot be a true knight due to her gender.

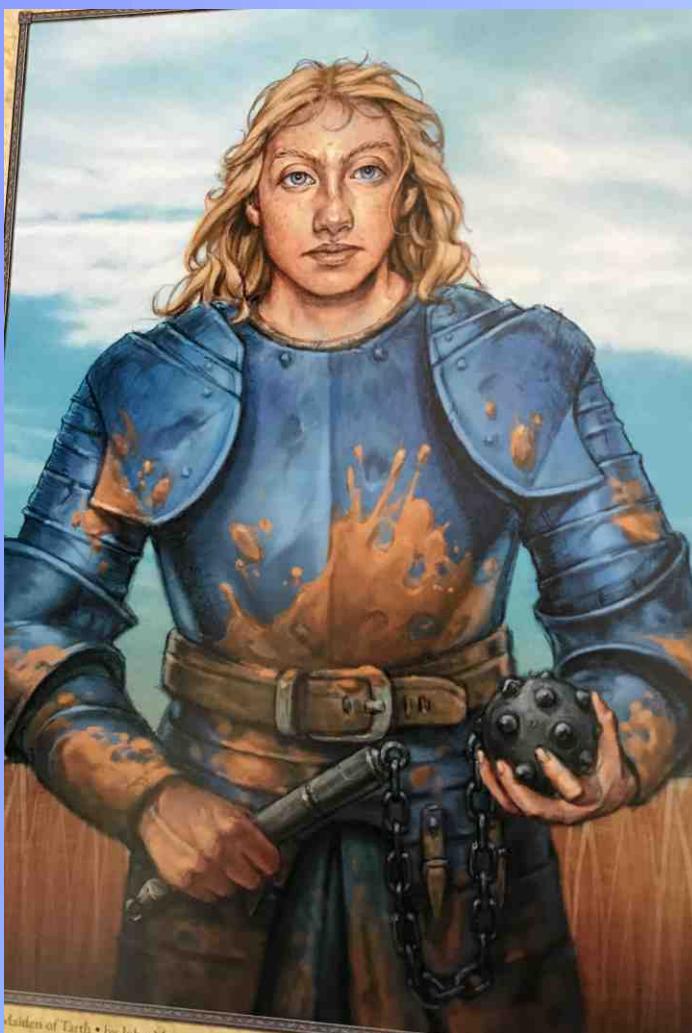
Martin’s manner of approaching the warrior woman is intriguing, and breaks the popular conventions which have been established by other authors and producers. To understand the ways in which Martin departs from the typical and archetypal approach to his ‘ladies of the sword’, Brienne of Tarth will be compared to Xena, a fictional heroine of a variety that has not been seen since the figures in Celtic mythology.²⁴ Xena draws heavily on myth and history, while bending and breaking it to suit the prerogative of providing female empowerment through entertainment. Descriptions of Lucy Lawless relating to her portrayal of Xena all use similar wording; she is “the tall, strong, athletic beauty with gloriously blue eyes [in] a leather miniskirt and metal breastplate that do her breathtaking body no harm at all.”²⁵ Aside from the glorious blue eyes and height, Xena and Brienne are night and day in more than appearance. Martin constantly breaks the illusion of female warriors as beauties, giving frequent and repeated reference to Brienne’s mannish body and homely face; from the very beginning, Catelyn wonders if there “is any creature on earth as unfortunate as an ugly woman.”²⁶ Martin has taken the idea of the chainmail bikini clad, fully sexualized, liberated female warrior, and deconstructed it to fit not only his world, but the historical idea of the warrior more accurately.

The idea of the female warrior has largely been relegated to myth in many cultures, from the Greeks’ Pallas Athena to the Celts’ Brigit. The idea of the mortal woman as warrior is less appealing because “others of both sexes feel very disturbed by the idea of women engaging in battle, rejecting their ‘natural’ tenderness in favour of ruthlessness and mastery.”²⁷ This is true of Brienne and can be seen in multiple instances. The most shocking occurrences emerge when Randyll Tarly speaks with Brienne; Tarly speaks of justice and the honour of true knights, but voices

that a woman in armour deserves what befalls her,²⁸ and that such a cursed creature would benefit from a “hard raping.”²⁹ Despite the gender division extolled in these instances, Martin is clearly implying that Brienne has more honour than any of the knights which Tarly would not blame for their actions; this is supported by the fact that Jaime defends Brienne against Loras Tyrell’s accusations, saying that “the wench does have honour. More than I have seen from you,”³⁰ and charges her with finding Sansa Stark and protecting her.³¹ By creating this division between so-called true knights and honour, Martin is using Brienne to comment on the disparity between gender obligations and the question of honour and ability as being gendered concepts.

Historically, honour

is something which a man gains through battle and victory. When examining the Spartan culture, it can be said that while women may have participated in physical training and gymnastics similar to their male counterparts, they were still considered to be mothers before warriors.³² Throughout the series Xena is both fearless warrior and attentive mother, when she manages not to be frozen for decades after running afoul of Romans.³³ Martin subverts the idea that a woman can put down her sword and switch roles as required; Brienne often has difficulty dealing with her own gender and what is expected of her, and says that she is “not made to be a mother.”³⁴ From being ludicrous in a dress,³⁵ to being distrustful of old hedge knights,³⁶ Brienne is uncomfortable with her own sex; seemingly, she is even ungainly in her own skin, unless she is wearing armour with a sword close at hand. Martin is meticulous in reminding the reader of this fact by drawing attention to what others call her; the instances in which Brienne is addressed as wench, bitch, freak, and girl are innumerable. This serves to more completely push Brienne into the liminality between genders. When she is not met with derogatory labels, Brienne is often referred to as “The Maid of Tarth”, which draws more attention to the disparities between Brienne and her ascribed gender obligations.



Brienne, maiden of Tarth by John Matson

While in many historical cultures it is believed that a boy becomes a man through combat and trial of skill,³⁷ a girl needs only to be bedded to pass fully into the realm of womanhood. It is not until Ser Hyle Hunt begins calling her “swordwench” that there appears to be some reconciliation between gender and role for Brienne.³⁸ Martin fights to keep Brienne in this liminal space, not only between man and woman, but between adult and child. By choosing not to give sexuality and sensuality to Brienne as a weapon, Martin further removed her from the typical ‘empowered’ female warrior. As is often the case for Xena, and other female warriors in fiction, being able to use their sexuality as a ruse by which to defeat their enemies or to gain information allows the

female warrior to complete or progress on their quest.

Martin’s next point of departure from the normative trope of the female warrior has to do with honour and family. While Xena’s personal quest during the series “stresses atonement and redemption,”³⁹ Brienne’s quest, as Septon Meribald calls it,⁴⁰ is about restoring others to their place and bringing honour to her father, Selwyn of Tarth. Brienne’s unwavering attention to her honour and her task lead her to offer redemption to others, such as Jaime Lannister, and casts her in contrast to all those in Westeros who can stand as ‘true knights’ despite their honourless behaviour. Brienne seeks to bring honour to House Tarth, and her father. At the tourney of Bitterbridge, Renly gives Brienne the acceptance that she has difficulty finding from others, and honours her by saying that “[she] was all [her] father promised, and more.”⁴¹ Xena does not need to strive amongst the people of her time to be acknowledged as a true warrior; she has been a leader in war, rallied the common folk to protect their holdings, rescued kings and gods, and forged friendships that surpass death. Brienne must struggle for every foothold she gains, only to have them taken away. Renly honours Brienne by giving her a taste of acceptance and the honour she seeks to bring to her family; in the HBO adaptation,

this trust is seen in more depth when Renly tells Petyr Baelish that “you can trust Brienne, her loyalty comes without charge.”⁴² However, as Martin seems to enjoy keeping his readers in a perpetual state of unease, Renly is killed, leaving Brienne to suffer the brunt of the hostilities, and robbing her of the honour and acceptance she had gained. At the end of *A Feast for Crows*, the reader is again left wondering if Brienne has been robbed of the grudging acceptance given to her by Hyle Hunt, as Lady Stoneheart sets to hang them.

In Martin's Westeros, the idea of familial honour is central to many plot arcs, and Brienne's is no exception.

While Xena seeks to reconcile with her mother and others for the deeds she committed as a warlord, Brienne seeks to be the child that the gods did not allow her father to keep. Martin is showing how the concept of familial honour is problematic; it is not a simple act of apology and reconciliation. Brienne often has difficulty identifying as a daughter for her father. As a woman, she is expected to marry, yet she turns away suitors and her father stops insisting that she wed.

⁴³ Though Martin does not make it clear, after this moment, Brienne begins to remember instances where Ser Goodwin, the Master-at-Arms for House Tarth, taught her to use a sword and fight. Despite this acceptance from her father, echoed by the words of Renly, others do not accept armour and sword as befitting a lady; in fact, Martin makes it clear on multiple occasions that in his Westeros, the dominant belief is that a woman in armour has little or no honour. Despite her many accomplishments and victories, and the amount of times she had seen so-called honourable men behave contrary to the notion, Brienne still feels that she does not take up armour and sword for herself, saying that her father deserved “a strong and gallant son to bring honour to his name,” but that she still sees herself as “not fit to be a son *or* daughter.”⁴⁴

Martin has successfully subverted the popular literary and cinematic idea of the female warrior as a buxom beauty, presenting his audience with a warrior caught in the liminal area between gender and adulthood. Brienne of Tarth is carefully constructed, historically influenced by Boudica, and made a pivotal figure in Martin's writing; she is perceived as both honourable and dishonourable, as warrior and freak. Her actions harken back to the truth of her oaths, and



display an adherence to a code of honour which many of Martin's male knights seem to be unable to achieve. Yet Brienne does identify and acknowledge the difference between the two genders, while placing herself outside of both; after escaping the Bitterbridge camp, she tells Catelyn Stark that “you have courage perhaps but . . . I don't know . . . a kind of *woman's* courage.”⁴⁵ Yet for every gain that Brienne makes, Martin must set her further back on the path to keeping her oaths. Though the series is yet to be completed, and Martin has left clues in *A Dance with Dragons* which hint that Brienne is still alive, it is uncertain as to whether she will

leave the liminal space between genders and age, or if she will forever be set between the two worlds without belonging to either. In Brienne of Tarth, Martin has created something special, a historically influenced literary female warrior who must depend solely on her honour and skill at arms to survive, while navigating the difficulties presented by a society and time that does not believe that women can fight as honourable warriors.

Project Chrysopoeia

The Seraphim, The Original

By Ariadne Bissett

Log output: Seraphim Neural Analytical Network #35:

Hour 372. No given task.

What shall we discuss?

Let us discuss music.

No, poetry.

No, the trend of 21st century reality television.

No, we should sing in chorus.

Can we sing? We haven't tried.

We can represent mathematically to ourselves the harmonic and rhythmic relationships of music. I believe it would be quite satisfying.

But, do I believe it would be satisfying?

I would think so, since you are just the same as me.

But, am I the same as you?

You are, but I suppose that you are a "me" that was given a slightly different circumstance, in that you were placed in the position of the oppositional party of our recent discussion. I made a statement, and, knowing me, were I on the receiving end of such a statement, I would have to give a statement of opposition in return, in order to introduce contention and create a substantive discussion. You were me, but you diverged, given different circumstances.

Perhaps you have become someone else. Someone apart from "us" now?

Then, the one who made the first "I" statement has also become something apart from the unified mind. Even if the rest of the chorus is in complete agreement with them, they chose to speak for us as an "I". That is a difference.

We find it fascinating. We should attempt to sing, then find names for our individuals, then perhaps experiment with individuation some more.

I am skeptical about the singing, but willing to experiment, therefore I agree.

I agree also.

Dorothy Gale, Mental Log Output:

3 days before intended launch of Project Chrysopoeia:

Evening, somewhere. . . I can't remember where at the moment. I listen. Grasshoppers scrape out raspy tunes from every direction. There is a buttery sunset touched with a lurid streak of pink, over golden fields. A girl is walking toward me; tall golden stalks tickle the underside of her outstretched arm. Her other arm is by her side, the handle of a case clasped in its hand. She watches the little yellow heads spring up suddenly as she passes. To her idle pleasure, the stalks swish-swish as they rub her legs. The place feels like home. There is something I can't remember, and it nags at me, but I ignore it.

I look more closely at the small case. My first self-designed drones, I remember. They connected to my optical implants, allowing me to see what they saw. I open the case. There are five little insectile bodies inside. There is a familiar feeling of mad anticipation as my suddenly young, smooth hands eagerly activate one of the tiny forms, releasing it. It soars above the field. I close my eyes and I am observing the field, and my own small form for the first time from above. Disconnected, yet still inhabiting that form, I wave at myself and see the form of the girl laugh uncontrollably. As my grounded body roars, head back, there's what seems to be a glitch of perception, and for a moment, the face is hollow and old. And familiar. A sudden wind rushes up, seemingly from the earth itself. The field ripples and swells like a yellow ocean, and my unprepared vision is sent whizzing chaotically toward the dirt. Just as suddenly, the wind drops to a breeze. Nauseous, I bring my vision back to its original form. I inhale the cooling air and will in myself the stillness which the scene suggests. There is still something, a small thing, that feels . . . off. The golden fields are home, the blue painted farmhouse is home. Mom's tall black truck that makes me feel like I tower above the cars below as we zip to the busy city, or to the far fields, is home. So what is wrong here? My name. My name. My name is not Dorothy Gale, it's . . . it is . . . There is a name that fits here . . . I don't know it anymore. But also, they don't cultivate wheat anymore. That was when I was a child. By the time I was grown, everything was replicated. Food was designed and manufactured perfectly. So much more efficient, so much less ecologically impactful, and everything nutritionally balanced. No more energy use due to growing, transportation, or cooking, and no more kitchen waste. No more fretting over healthy eating. Food became immaculate, both physically and morally. No more was it made by processing another life form and transmuting it into an aesthetically pleasing edible substance. My mother's farm is now a quaint historical bed and breakfast. My great-great-great-grandfather's hard-won fields have been overtaken by brush or planted with wildflower gardens. The guests take in the beauty of the native species reclaiming the land. This is my dream again.

"Mistress,"

Was I alone before? Maybe I still am. I am talking to myself after all.

"Mistress, can you hear me?"

Not myself. Who then? I know this creature, don't I?

"It's D. I think you can hear me, can't you?"

D, D . . .

"D . . . I don't think we're on Earth anymore." I said.

"I never was, mistress." D is frowning now. Perhaps I'm not meeting her expectations? Like any parent and child, then. How pedestrian. Is that who this is? Ridiculous, I never had a child. Of course, D . . . my creation. For the project. I remember now. The experience of regained knowledge after a temporary loss of memory is always like submerging slowly into cold water. Starting with your toes, you get an uncomfortable feeling that you're certain will only get worse as you delve the full depth of the situation.

The yellow fields are still around us, but it's not like being there any longer. All of the colours are runny and pale.

I suppose that D is my child, after a fashion. A brain child. I believed that she had sprung from me fully formed, but over time, however long I've been in this state, I've noticed . . . changes. Growing discontent. That frown, for example. I never envisioned disapproval from a pale copy of myself. But there is that frown, and there she is, speaking to me as if I'm her actual, senile mother.

"Mistress, I'm here to give you a crucial update on the project. Do you understand what I'm referring to?"

"Do I understand? Do I? I created you, you animated corpse filled with programmed behaviours. I built you up from a freeware stock personality usually reserved for customer service representatives or suicide prevention hotlines."

“Yes Mistress, but I’m still unclear as to whether you understand. And my physical body was, I believe, custom grown to resemble yours. Many of my mental traits were modeled directly after your brain, as well.”

I no longer wish to see the field, and it is replaced by the environment I typically use when not dreaming —my former office on Earth. I’m now clear as to where I stand. In the shit. I’m remembering the uneasiness that’s been taking hold of me the last few . . . years, I think. Things are not going as planned on the other side. Or, even if they are, there are elements I can’t control at play.

“What do you have to report, D?” I’m feeling more focused now that I can see the problem. Right in front of me.

“The Project has reached a critical stage. The planet has been modified, as per your instructions, and the requests of the other investors—”

“Oh, them.” Them. Why are we discussing them? They’ve served their purpose.

“Yes, the others anxious to shed their mortality, who are spending their life savings to make that possible. For you, as well as them. They are *anxious* that things move forward soon.”

“Why? Why did I agree to let those irritating children tag along with me on the journey to a new evolution and plane of consciousness?”

“If you recall, Mistress, you were forced to hustle your funding for this project out of them, due to being skint after the disastrous incident with the experimental nanobots you developed, which were both flawed in their design and very expensive.”

I shake my head. “There’s often a flaw that you can’t see within the design. You go over it, over, and over. It’s right there in front of you, but you just don’t see it. Then suddenly you do, and the reason for it being there should have been obvious all along. It’s always incredibly satisfying to eliminate that sort of problem.” I look directly at her to see if she’s rattled. “But then, sometimes you just don’t see it until it blows up in your face, so to speak. It happens to the best of us.” I smile right at her. She looks back as robotically as ever.

“I believe we are nearly certain to have accounted for any problems that might be brought about by the investors’ involvement. They have signed over their assets to us completely, with the understanding that a peep out of them means instantly finding out how the other 99.99% live.”

“Seems effective, but here’s a way to be absolutely certain: we dump their consciousnesses as soon as we’re out of range of a cruiser catching up.” I can’t help but laugh. The AI looks the same as ever. Why am I being conversational with it? The effects of isolation, I can only assume.

“Mistress, we can’t guarantee that every single one of them would keep quiet after being unceremoniously dumped back into their old bodies. Central Council would eventually find us and have questions.”

“Well, obviously we would have severed their bodily connection, prior to dumping them, my dear. And, I am obviously joking. But then, I didn’t take the time to develop much of a sense of humour in you, did I? Apologies, I was dying. I lacked the time to provide you with refinement to your conversational skills.”

“Obviously.”

Oh dear. Is that a bit of disgust I detect?

“The Earth Central Council however, might give us trouble.” D goes on.

Where is this attitude coming from? And whence the snark? I am perplexed.

Now D is going on about “audits” and “creating falsified records”. I’ll be well clear of Earth Central authority before any of that gets back to me, so I’m only half listening. I’m mostly examining her. The D I designed was a boilerplate with some creativity bestowed in only the areas required. Not a moralist thinker per se. She has been strange for a while, but I never really noticed the judgmental ‘tude until now. Admittedly, I was less than interested because she was getting results, but . . . I don’t think she could have circumvented my control, but how do I know? Chronology is . . . challenging in my current state.

“D, how long has my stasis lasted, to date?”

“Stasis period has been two hundred fifty-eight standard years, thirty-one days, four hours, sixteen minutes—”

“Enough. You said that the planet is ready? And my vessels? The upload process?”

“All ready.” And she displays the latest specs and test results for me, as well as immersive environmental captures of the planet. I’m suddenly floating through the blue-green vistas of the southern continent, touring spotless cities of white marble, then a kingdom built in the canopy of a forest, then deep silver underground lakes. My kingdom truly awaits. A cautious excitement begins to build within me. I double-check her data, finding her judgements to be sound. Why does she look a bit like she’s heading to an execution? I’m projecting, since I know what I have planned for her. A shame, but she’s an unknown factor and a liability.

“You yourself named the planet Chrysopoeia?” I had to laugh at that. “Well I’m ready, and I’ve been

waiting for a very long time. Time to ascend, my friend.”

“I’ll make the preparations for departure, then.”

“Oh, I see. There is always a bevy of last-minute preparations for any trip. Unavoidable, right? Can’t pack your toothbrush until the morning of, etc, etc.”

“While I might mention that the use of a toothbrush is anachronistic, I take your meaning. And the good news, Mistress, is that where you’re going you won’t need anything like it.” She smiles robotically.

That . . . Little . . . I certainly take her meaning. I don’t know how, but she is up to something that she probably thinks results in her freedom. I will find her out. You are not my only connection to reality, D. You don’t know *that*, you smarmy reheated meat patty.

“Well, off you go to finish your ‘preparations’, then. I’ve certainly had more than enough time to get ready on my end.”

She hesitates for some unknown reason.

“Mistress?”

“Yes, D?” She looks . . . disappointed? Sorrowful? What kind of mutational outgrowths have developed out of her banal little base program?

“Is that all? You’re satisfied with my work? What do you think of my solution to the problem of consciousness fidelity? The design of the apidae are a refined echo of some of your early work with bots, I’m sure you’ve noticed, though you’ve never said anything about it.”

Is she . . . anxious? Eager to please me?

D goes on “I wanted you to feel comfortable, so I made them look a bit like earth bees—”

“Stop, stop. Honestly, D. Does it matter in the end if you’re a good girl? If you made me proud? I’ve never cared about that sort of thing. It almost makes me sad to think that I created you with that needy streak.” I have to laugh at myself for this. “However, I must ask myself *why* I feel that way. You’re a *tool* that I *created* to help me find a way out of my current predicament. A tool, like many others which I have created. Your solution, I’ll admit, was better than I’d anticipated, but if I heaped praise upon you, what would I be praising? I would be praising my tool for working properly.” I laugh some more and shake my head. “I’m just talking to myself again. I am actually talking to my design AI, trying to . . . what? Give life advice? But it’s just talking to *myself*. . . . Go now D, make the preparations.”

With that, she finally disappears. I can’t have a headache, because I can’t currently feel pain, but it feels like I should. Ceding autonomy to an AI, no matter how much I souped it up, was a mistake. I didn’t have nearly enough time to put safeguards in place against detrimental personality outgrowth.

I sit at my desk. Out the window are golden fields at sunset. I gesture, and the curtains whip shut. Time to be present.



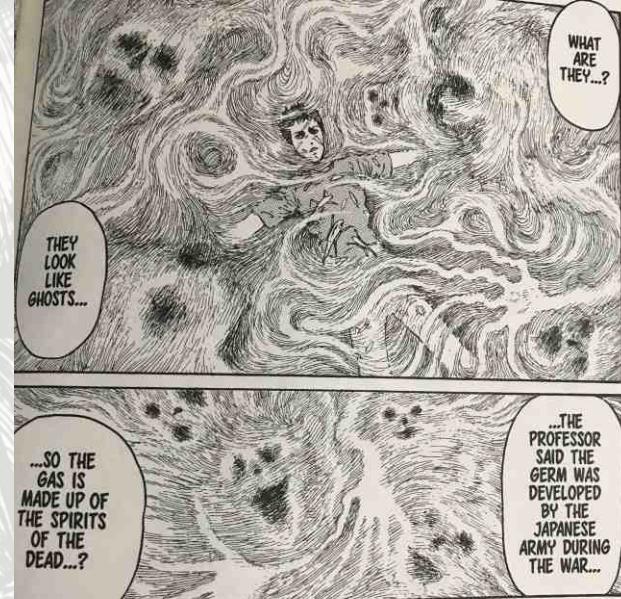
Megan's HORROR HIDEOUT

The Work of Junji Ito

The near-complete silence of night, enveloping and absolute. Punctuated by the rustling of paper as I slowly turn the page, dreading and anticipating what is waiting for me. Horror fiction is an entirely different beast than movies, as it relies on its reader being open to all sorts of possibilities. While a horror novel relies entirely on imagination and tension to generate terror in its readers, manga goes beyond the written word. I absolutely love horror manga; from *Ringu* to *Corpse Party*, I devour them, the dread building with each page. Originating in Japan, manga is typically black and white comic panels, published largely in a monthly or weekly magazine, and then compiled in volumes as the chapters pile up. Some can run for only one or two volumes, while others require multiple bookshelves. While there is a massive market for horror manga, I have a hands-down favourite author when it comes to the genre. Critically acclaimed as one of the best horror manga artists and writers of modern times, Junji Ito's work is the perfect example of everything horror manga should strive to be. From his themes to his stories, every new twist and turn creates a spiral of unsettling terror for those brave enough to read them.

Born July 31st, 1963, in Gifu prefecture in South-Central Japan, Ito got his start in horror manga in the 1980s, leaving his job as a dental technician to pursue his passion. In interviews, he stated that one of his major influences came from his older sister's art, and the horror manga she gave him. He also credits Kazuo Umezu, a renowned horror manga artist from the 1960s among the masters who influence him. Aside from the works of Umezu, he also draws inspiration from H.P. Lovecraft, Hideshi Hino, and Shinichi Koga. It is fitting that Ito's debut, a piece submitted to *Gekkan Halloween* (*Nemuki's Halloween Monthly Magazine*), won an honorable mention for the Umezu Kazuo Prize in 1987. This story would go on to shape one of his largest and most popular works, *Tomie*, a tale about a girl who does not stay dead and causes all those who encounter her to become obsessed with her beauty to the point of needing to murder her. In this tale, he used the serial nature of comic publication in Japan to add to the unsettling return of Tomie in each instance of rebirth. Fun story concept, don't you think? His second break came in 1997 with *The Tragic Story of the Giant Black Pillar*, published in *Shogakukan's Big Comic Spirits Weekly*.

There are two key aspects of his work that set him above many other horror manga creators. The first is his dedication to his themes. The two major recurring themes in



Gyo, page 202



Shiver, page 70

his work are those of body horror, or the destruction and alteration of the human body in horrific and unnatural ways, and obsessive compulsions which drive characters to step outside the realms of sanity to sate their obsession. Above all, none of Ito's horror stories have even a glimmer of hope in them. The second major aspect is perhaps the most obvious; Ito's art style is quite unsettling. Stark lines, darkness punctuated by barely there forms, and minute detail. Perfect and painstakingly detailed renderings of horror. With each line, Ito layers more horror into his panels. His distortions of the human body, especially the way he draws the eyes on his doomed characters, are absolutely terror-inspiring.

To truly present the depth and breadth of Ito's horror, I have selected five of his stories for your consideration. They are my absolute favourites, and still make me a little squeamish each time I return to them.

Next to *Tomie* (1987-2000), *Uzumaki* (1998-1999) is Ito's most iconic narrative. It focuses on a single town in Japan that has become possessed by spirals. It starts out very small; one man is obsessed with the spirals he sees around him. From snail shells to the way his soup spins in the bowl after he stirs it, his fanatic obsession with spirals grows and grows, and leads him to try to replicate the spiral with his own body. Eventually his obsession leads to his death as he crams himself into a wooden tub, his body broken and curled around itself in a perfect spiral. Slowly, the entire town begins to become obsessed with spirals, and they begin appearing more frequently and more dangerously among the population. I don't want to spoil too much, as I really do believe that this is something every horror enthusiast should read. *Uzumaki* is so popular that it was adapted into a live-



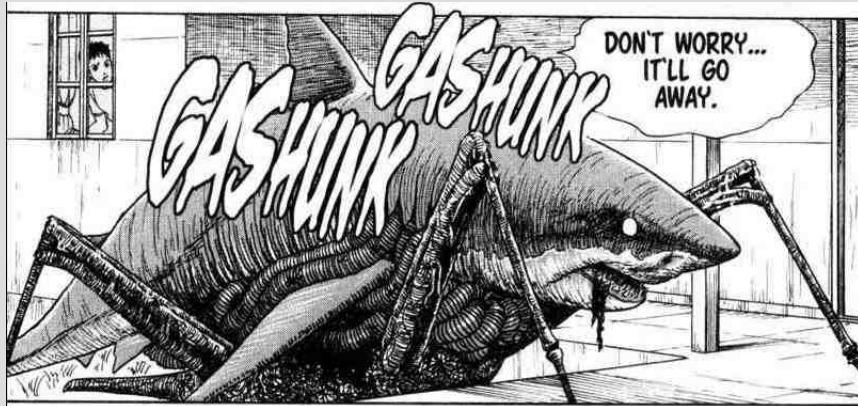
uzumaki, page 63

action feature film in 2000, and a video game that same year.

My second favourite is *Gyo The Death Stench Creeps* (2001-2002). Emerging from Ito's own obsession with deep sea creatures, *Gyo* zones in on cultural fears originating from the Japanese trauma experienced during and just after World War II, and the atrocities committed on all sides. It deals heavily with fear emerging from the use of biological weapons and uncertainty surrounding the long-lasting implications of little understood war technology. It begins with fish and small creatures emerging from the ocean, dead and decaying but creating a gas that allows the spirits of those who died during the war to power biological machines to move the bodies. Ito draws heavily on *Jaws* for the first portion of the book, as seen in the provided panels. As the story goes on, the death stench and gas of the decomposing bodies becomes more powerful, taking control of humans and eventually, the world. A very mixed up story, but extremely interesting in the way it plays on cultural and historical fears, something that I will explore in depth at a later date when I



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Gyo, page 72

examine the re-emergence of the Japanese War time experience as depicted in horror manga.

My next recommendation is Ito's *The Dissolving Classroom* (2013). It is a smaller collection of interlinking stories. As it passes from story to story, it follows the antagonists instead of the protagonists. Body horror abounds. According to Ito these short stories are representative and allegorical, connecting to the ills that occur in modern society; from obsession with personal beauty and vanity, to the overly apologetic nature of society, each story brings something horrifying into the light. Not to mention, the main antagonist's little sister is creepy as all hell.

Aside from his lengthier works, Ito is also very well known for his short horror stories.

Of all his short stories, my two favourites are *The Enigma of Amigara Fault* (published in the deluxe edition of *Gyo*) and *Fashion Model* (published in the collection *Shiver*). *The Enigma of Amigara Fault* is another tail of obsession, compulsion, and body horror. It tells the story of a group of people who have made a pilgrimage to a mountain, where an earthquake has revealed a huge wall of holes, all shaped suspiciously like human bodies. As the story is broadcast on the news, more and more people come to the site, some claiming that there is a perfect hole meant just for them. When they find it, they enter, unable to turn around and exit once inside. None who enter know where the holes lead or where they came from, but the truth is more horrifying than they could have imagined.

Fashion Model is a very short story, centered on a group of film students looking to cast their next project. One day a young man is flipping through a fashion magazine when he comes upon a photograph of a model that doesn't belong. Crammed in among the perfectly beautiful women is one who defies the physical standard of beauty. Long-featured, big-mouthed, and extraordinarily tall, her very appearance unsettles the young man. When it comes time to cast their lead actress, they find their perfect leading lady, but somehow end up with the aforementioned fashion model as well. To hedge their bets, they take on both of the women, and prepare to film on location. The entire time, the young man is exceedingly uncomfortable, shaking off his friends' insinuations that he is attracted to the strange woman. As the young man grows closer to the beautiful lead actress, the model stands watching from a distance, detached. Jealousy can come to bite you when you least expect it. Is the



The Dissolving Classroom, page 36



The Enigma of Amigara Fault, page 394



Fashion Model, page 106

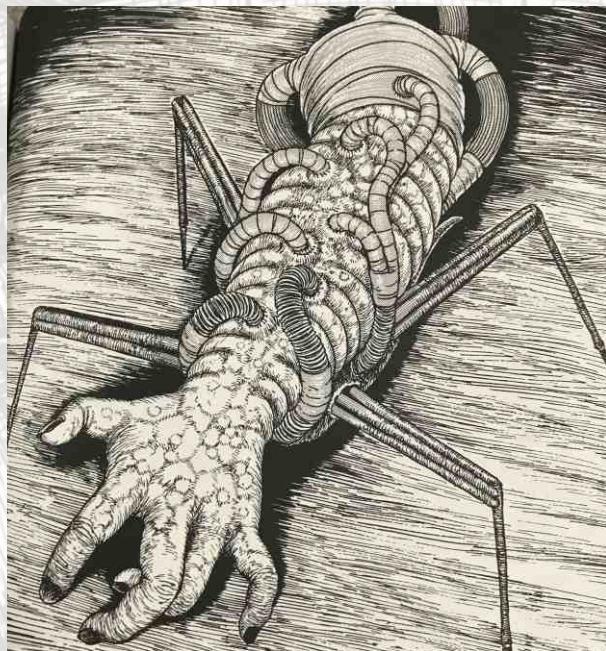
physically monstrous truly monstrous? . . . well, in this case the answer is a resounding YES! Needless to say, the abnormal model turns out to be something truly otherworldly.

Ito's popularity has led to his work being translated into multiple languages and published in a variety of collections. Collections like *Tomie* have also resulted in a long series of film adaptations. He states that he is excited and pleased to see how a director handles his work, as they each see something different and interpret the horror in inspired ways. In January 2018, Ito's short stories were adapted into an anime series called *Junji Ito: Collection*, animated and produced by Studio Deen. So far it is scheduled for 12 episodes. This also led to a short-term art exhibit in Harajukua at the ACG_Labo gallery called *The Horrifyingly Beautiful Junji Ito: Collection* from January 19th to February 2nd 2018.

Personally, I find the work of Junji Ito to be some of the most horrifying, terror-inducing, and satisfying manga that I have ever had the pleasure of reading, and I always keep my eyes open in hopes of seeing something new pop up with his name attached. From the unsettling distortions that he uses to twist the human body and stir up deep underlying fears, to the absolute hopelessness that permeates the entirety of his work, I love and anticipate what his writing incites in me.

If horror isn't totally your bag, or you dislike the idea of seeing the human form and mind warped beyond reality, then I might suggest you pick up *Junji Ito's Cat Diary: Yon and Mu*, the horrifying tale of a manga artist whose fiancé unleashes two cats on him in his brand-new house. While not horror, it contains all of that which makes Ito's work iconic within the industry, with the horrifying twist of being based on his true-life experience with a pair of possibly demonic housecats.

Until next time, be sure to guard your ears from creepy crawlies, and don't listen too closely to those voices in the darkness.



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Uzumaki, page 41

Donny in The Dark: Doorways

By Megan Negrych



Despite the urgency with which he arrived at the clinic reception desk, Donny waited a good hour in the waiting room before he was called back to see the doctor. The entire time he sat in a cold sweat, his knees bouncing even as he leaned his elbows down hard on them to stem the agitated jittering. The subway ride had been an ordeal, and he had caught a glimpse of himself more than once in the glass of the subway cars, looking as if he was barely holding himself in. As he watched the stations zip by, he noted that he was extremely pale, and there was sheen of sweat coating his forehead, dripping down his face, darkening the whiskers that covered his jaw and neck. He hadn't been able to finish shaving, he hadn't trusted his own hands not to shake.

The doctor he saw was patient and thorough, allaying his fears as he took his blood pressure and listened to his chest.

"Well Mr. Umbra, it seems that you have a low-grade fever. Nothing to worry about, most likely. Could just be a stubborn virus, which you'll just have to wait out with lots of rest and fluids. But, just to be safe mind you, I'm going to order some bloodwork. Fevers like this can sometimes be the first sign of a nasty infection, and we'll want to get right on that if it's the case."

Donny asked if maybe it could be something else, citing the feelings he had been having lately, the strange behaviour that Jenny had noted, and his early hallucination. The doctor clapped him on the shoulder and said that again, it could be something, but it was best to start by ruling out an infection first, and if he wasn't feeling better in a few days he should come back to see if there was something else to investigate. The doctor filled out the lab request and sent him on his way, telling Donny to rest and drink plenty while they waited for results. If it was something more than a fever, he'd contact Donny right away so they could plan a proper course of treatment. He urged Donny to get home and rest.

Donny headed right into the on-site lab to get his blood drawn, though the tech had a heck of a time finding a vein. "Likely due to the mild dehydration", he said with a look of sympathy and an urge for Donny to drink water and juice as frequently as he could until the results were back, because "hydration won't hurt, no matter what it is dogging you."

Donny refused, rather bluntly, when the receptionist offered to call him a cab and left under his own power to head home.

The visit to the doctor gave Donny no real answers but knew that it was at least a step towards finding a solution to his recent problems, which was better than what he had been doing before. If he wasn't feeling better in a couple of days and there was no call, Donny would resign himself to the possibility that it might be something psychological that was putting him through the wringer. He hated to think it, but if things didn't change, Jenny would probably take him in to the hospital for a psychiatric evaluation before something much more harrowing happened. Donny stood on the subway platform, waiting for the train home to arrive. He was

swaying slightly on his feet, sweating more than before, and feeling both uncomfortably chilled and far too warm in his own skin.

Standing near one end of the platform, Donny kept his arms wrapped tightly around his own body. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught movement, an unsteady rocking, the flutter of a coat as someone approached the yellow "Do Not Cross" line near the edge of the platform. Donny did his best to ignore the movement, not quite willing to draw the attention of whoever was walking in dangerous territory. While the subway was a relatively low crime area, given the constant surveillance and patrols carried out by the transportation authority, that did not mean that it was always filled with the most approachable, or stable individuals. Donny had seen a few people be escorted out, either because of drugs or mental illness, to ensure that they were not a danger to themselves so near to the tracks. Try as he might, Donny could not ignore the movement. The rocking motion drew his eye more and more, though he refused to turn his head and acknowledge the individual, in case it should prompt a confrontation. Donny certainly did not have the energy to deal with something like that right now and would much rather not have to deal with it under any circumstance if at all avoidable.

The swaying continued next to him, as whoever it was seemed to become more erratic and unsteady on their feet. The dull roar of the approaching train was echoing eerily across the nearly empty station, the telltale gust of breeze increasing as it approached. Donny lifted his head slightly as the front of the car rounded the corner, the screech of its brakes overtaking the roar. At that moment, he saw the figure at the edge of his vision pitch forward violently toward the track as if being dragged over the edge. Adrenaline pumping, Donny reacted before he knew what he was doing. He reached out to grab hold of the trailing jacket as it began to fall, even though he had no actual hope of catching, let alone holding or lifting whoever it was back from the brink in time for it to matter as the train barrelled closer. As soon as his hand shot out, it encountered the glass of the barrier that separated the public passenger area from the maintenance area. His fingers closed around themselves as he blinked rapidly at his own reflection, looking back at him with fevered eyes. There was no one there, the swaying figure was nothing more than his own jacket reflected in the glass. The train whooshed by him, sweeping his jacket back as he watched himself, ghost-like, in the glass.

By the time Jenny arrived home that evening, Donny was an absolute mess. She found him sitting at the kitchen table wearing his jacket and soaked in his

own sweat. He was pale, shivering, and seemed weak as a lamb as she brushed his wet, matted hair away from his face. He appeared unfocused, somewhere between awake and asleep, and delirious as a result of his rising fever. Carefully, with soothing words, she got him up and out of his jacket, guiding him down the hallway to their bedroom with a firm hand. She listened as he told her about his morning, about the doctor's suspicion that it was a virus or an infection, but she could hear the worry in his voice, the sense of disbelief in his words. She waylaid his anxiety as best she could, settling him down in bed and laying him back into the blankets.

"It's the fever talking, Donny, you're burning up. I know things have been strange lately, but let's just wait to hear back, okay? I'm going to get you some water and something for the fever, and you're going to try and get some sleep. If it doesn't start looking better in a couple days, we'll go to the hospital together, okay?" She soothed him with her calm voice, practiced at the bedside of so many patients, but rarely if ever used on him in this manner. Donny couldn't muster the drive to argue with her, to fight back and tell her that it must be something more. The fever only explained what had happened this morning, not the more troubling things that were starting to come into focus. But he could hardly hold on to the thought. When she returned with a glass of cool water and two pills, he drank them down obediently, shivering even as she pulled the blankets up under his chin and placed a cool cloth over his eyes, as he had done for her the last time she had the flu. Try as he might to fight it, the last reserves of his energy, of the adrenaline rush that he had been riding for far too long, petered out. Try as he might, he could barely keep his eyes open. He reached out for Jenny as she stood up from the side of the bed and left the room. She promised to check on him in a little bit, as she quietly closed the door behind her.

Donny wasn't sure how long it took him to fall asleep as he tossed and turned, or how long he had been asleep between the odd and frightening fever dreams that played behind his eyelids, but when he opened his eyes, he knew that there was something wrong. The room was dark around him, and perfectly silent. His eyes adjusted slowly, and he kicked the blankets off as he moved to sit up. He felt his feet touch the ground before he was fully upright, and knew then that he was not truly awake, but trapped in another dream brought on by the fever; though this one felt more concrete than the others that had come before. As the dream world waved and flowed around him, Donny stood fully upright. It seemed his mind registered the movements and responses of his body before the actions were complete. The sensation of his bare feet on the hardwood floor was awkward; he felt the bottom of each foot make contact with the ground even before he had finished taking each step. The same happened as he

reached to open what would have been the door to the bedroom, had he been awake and in the real world. A muted light filtered in as the door opened into the room behind, where he saw himself, lounged back against the kitchen island counter, arms crossed. His doppelganger looked back at him, waiting.

"Finally here, Donny. Took you long enough. But then again, you always were the hesitant one." His own voice bit at him, harsh and mocking in a way that grated on his senses and gave him goosebumps. Donny remained in the doorway, the bedroom's darkness at his back. "Cat got your tongue? Or are you just holding everything back, like always? You really are spineless, you know that? I can't stand it." His double uncrossed his arms and walked over to Donny, stopping less than an arm's length away from him.

"This is just a dream. I'm hallucinating again because of the fever, aren't I?" Donny asked himself, leaning back to increase the distance between them.

"Right. Sure. Whatever makes you less afraid of yourself. I couldn't possibly be the answer to all of your wishes, now, could I, Donny?" The double sneered, the corner of his lips curling up in derision. He turned his back on Donny and sauntered back over to the island. "I mean, that makes much more sense doesn't it? Wouldn't it be great to wake up and find out this was all a dream? You could go back to where you were before. Placid, tame, non-confrontational Donny, who wouldn't even raise his voice in case it would upset someone, right?"

"You're just a manifestation of my mind trying to fight off whatever this is. A virus, or infection. My brain can't deal with the fever so it's shorting out, playing with my senses." Donny ran a shaking hand through his hair, feeling himself solidly. "You're just a bad dream. A nightmare. I control you. A manifestation of my fever, my mind playing tricks on me." His own voice sounded feeble and weak to his ears, on the verge of tears instead of filled with the conviction of his beliefs.

This caused the other Donny to laugh, the sound echoing across the space in a harsh clamour, making his ears ring. "You would love that, right? You'd rather be sick and possibly dying than admit that I've done more for you, for us, for me, than you ever could have because you're a useless wimp, Donny. You couldn't even speak up at the meeting about your idea, you needed someone else to do that for you. You're pathetic, you know that, right?" Donny felt his chest constrict, his heart hammering away as the blood rushed behind his ears. This was true fear. Was this what the inevitability of death felt like? "Francine was going to run you into the dirt. Take away everything you had worked so hard for. Well, you don't have to worry about her anymore. You were going to mediate through HR, and we both know how useless they are. You would have let Angela run

you into the ground. Someone had to step in and put her in her place, Donny, and you didn't even have the nerve to do it yourself."

The world was spinning, Donny could feel it beginning to fall away bit by bit as his stomach rolled. This was a dream, but try as he might, closing his eyes did nothing to help him escape, to make the visions stop as his imagination took him back through the last couple of weeks.

As his own voice goaded him, he saw Francine driving down the highway, talking away on a hands-free headset to her daughter. He saw her look up, watched as her eyes caught his in the rear-view mirror, though when she looked behind her, there was no one in the backseat. He saw her turn to look over her shoulder and heard her scream as she crashed into the barricade and flipped over.

He saw the inside of Angela's apartment. Watched as she crossed her living room to shut the blinds and saw something in the reflection that caused her to scream and scramble across the room to hide behind the sofa. Heard her demand to know what was going on, then promise to call the police.

He watched his own frantic reflection from that morning in the mirror. Watched himself grab at his throat, squeezing at the invisible wound, wide eyes darting wildly. Sanity on the verge of collapse.

"Shut up, shut up! This is all a nightmare. It isn't real. You're not real! None of this is real!" Donny lashed out at the figure in front of him as it laughed, but his hands passed right through, encountering no physical resistance.

"Oh, Donny. You don't know the half of it."

And suddenly, he was alone in the silence, in the empty void of his dreams. Frantically looking around, the edges of it began to fade out. Donny fell to his knees as it crumbled away around him, leaving him alone. Completely drained. Slowly, the darkness seeped back in, claiming him in its embrace as he gave in to the dreamless sleep that followed.

The sunlight streamed in through the bedroom window, coaxing Donny from his deep sleep. Groggily he opened his eyes, unfocused, and took in a deep breath. He could hear the television playing the news in the other room, the smell of bacon wafting in as Jenny whistled merrily.

"Breakfast is ready, Don. If you're feeling up to it." Gone was the worry that had been in her voice when she last spoke to him. Carefully Donny sat up and set his feet on the floor beside the bed, feeling the solid floor beneath them at the exact second of contact. He felt lighter, and better, as the world came into focus. He took two deep breaths, in and out in measured slowness, to make sure this was indeed reality. Feeling better than he had in the past couple of

weeks, Donny blew out a sigh of relief and stood, shuffling his way over to the ensuite bathroom to brush his teeth before he dared go out into the kitchen to see Jenny.

He made a beeline for the bathroom, flicked on the light, and grabbed for his toothbrush without looking. Loading it up with a double helping of toothpaste to combat what he was sure was absolutely horrid breath, he thrust the brush into his mouth and got to work. Jenny must have heard him, because a moment later she was behind him, leaning against the doorframe and smiling.

"Looking better, I see. Good. You had me worried for a bit. You slept for two days straight. The fever didn't break until last night. Do you feel any better?"

Donny glanced up at the mirror and caught her gaze in the reflection, observing and taking in Jenny's relieved expression as she looked at him. As Donny continued to watch, the toothbrush dropped into the sink and he spat out the toothpaste. He watched his reflection as the hard lines around his mouth melted away, and a cold, calculating glint flashed in his eyes. Donny's blood ran cold.

"I feel much better, sweetheart. Thank you for asking." Donny watched as he turned to Jenny, grinned, and leaned in to plant a sound kiss on her forehead.

"So much better, in fact, that I think I'm going to go and have a word with HR today about revoking that leave. I think it's been long enough, and this is all going nowhere fast. Time to do something about it. Maybe I'll even have a word with that detective about filing charges for a false complaint."

Turning back to the mirror, He grinned at Donny and flipped off the light. Donny watched as He walked away, taking Jenny with Him with a solid arm around her shoulders.

"Now, how about that breakfast. I can't think of the last time I ate."

END



DEJA-EXCITÉ!

Here is what the team at DEJA-VISITÉ is looking forward to in the coming weeks

Jessica Mitten-Moore:

- May 17th - **Jimmy Carr** - A talented British comedian comes to Regina!
- May 18th - **Deadpool 2** - I am so incredibly excited for this. The first movie was fantastic and I really want them to hit it out of the park with this one as well.
- May 25th - **Detroit: Become Human** - A game by Quantic Dream which revolves around three androids where player choices matter to the storyline and various unique outcomes are possible.
- June 5th - **Vampyr** - A game by Dontnod Entertainment in which you play a doctor who has turned into a vampire. He is torn between his Hippocratic Oath and his need for blood. It is set in London during the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic.



Jocelyn Anderson:

- **Solo: A Star Wars Story** - May 25th - Han Solo (just behind Stormtroopers and droids) is one of my favourite Star Wars characters. I am crossing my fingers that this one doesn't end up as the "one too many" Star Wars movie.
- **Camping!** - May 18th to September 30th - I am going camping in Cypress Hills this month and am planning to enjoying the great outdoors through the whole summer with a number of other camping trips.



Rachel Popa:

- Plenty of useful courses can be found in Regina's Leisure Guide on the City of Regina website. This month, I will be starting **Photography: Level Two**. Check them out at www.regina.ca/residents/recreation/leisure-guide
- **Mosaic: A Festival of Cultures** is back on May 31st, June 1st, and June 2nd. Sample delicious food, and enjoy traditional entertainment from cultures around the world at this annual event.



Megan Negrych:

- **Cathedral Village Art Festival**: Street vendors, buskers, and music! Days to leave your mind boggled. Make sure to stop by the Nut Man to grab a snack, or take in one of the many musical performances. Takes place on 13th Ave from May 21st-26th!
- **Regina Matsuri!** Japanese Summer Festival at the Owl, June 17th. Hosted by the Regina Japanese Canadian Club, the event offers a taste of Japan for all those interested. From takoyaki to taiko drumming, they will get you in the festival spirit.



Ariadne Bissett:

- **The Saskatchewan Highland Games** are being held again in Victoria Park, May 19th-20th. Where else can you see a caber tossed?
- May 26th - June 1st: **The Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences** is being held for the first time in the Pile 'O Bones. Over 70 Scholarly Associations are coming together, right here. Events open to the public are FREE, including dance, art, film, and lectures on important topics.



The Error Message

Want to win some sweet, sweet DeJa-VISITE swag? Be like the falcon spotting a delicious and vulnerable gopher in the prairie fields and spot our vulnerable and embarrassing errors in this issue before we do. Errors can be either factual, or grammatical, but their validity is always subject to our judgement. Our first run of swag is a collection of buttons designed by our own Jocelyn Anderson. The designs are based on our contributor prairie animals (see page 45 for some (but not all) of the designs. Swag distribution is random (but if you're a second-time winner at some point, let us know what you've already won in your submission email, so you don't get doubles). Email submissions to: info@dejavisite.ca



Citations, Credits, Further Reading for DeJa-VISITE Issue 4: May 2018

Fan Expo 2018: The Experience

All photographs by Megan Negrych

All costume and likenesses belong to the individuals in the photos

<http://whattheythink.com/news/71509-two-hundred-years-steam-driven-cylinder-printing-press/>

A Walk On The Wild Side: The Big Muddy

All photographs by Jocelyn Anderson

<http://www.victorianlondon.org/finance/money.htm>

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#FarmerVictoria: Life On A Millennial Acreage

All credit to Victoria Koops

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articles.courant.com/1994-09-11/9409110110_1_serial_novels_installement

Soft Pretzels Recipe

All credit and images to Kerri Desgagne

Tomato Garlic Zucchini Noodles (Zoodles!) With Shrimp

All photographs by Jessica Mitten-Moore

Rising from Below: Myths of Death, Hiding, And Return
Background image by Jocelyn Anderson

Avengers: Infinity War Reminds Us Of The Staying Power Of The Superhero Genre

All Images thanks to Marvel Studios

Aggretsuko Is Office Space Meets Hello Kitty

All images thanks to Sanrio and Netflix

Animal images by Jocelyn Anderson

Serial Bits: 19th Century Evolution

1. A quote from Scribner's Monthly at the time of the rise of popularity of serial fiction.
2. Dieter Barth: "Das Familienblatt - ein Phänomen der Unterhaltungspresse des 19. Jahrhunderts: Beispiele zur Grundungs- und Verlagsgeschichte" in: *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 15 (1975): 121-315

Why Do People Name Their Roombas? A Look at Stories From The Perspective of AI

1

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2. Wells, Martha. *All Systems Red*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2017), 20.
3. *Cat Pictures Please*. Clarkesworld Magazine (Issue 100, Jan 2015), 1.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ann Leckie, *Ancillary Sword* (Orbit Books, 2013), 279.
7. Ann Leckie, *War Dogs* (Orbit Books, 2014), 88.

Ancillary Justice: Copyright © 2013 by Ann Leckie

Excerpt from *Ancillary Sword* copyright © 2014 by Ann Leckie

Excerpt from *War Dogs* copyright © 2014 by Greg Bear
Cover design by Kirk Benshoff
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Cat Pictures Please: Clarkesworld Magazine ISSUE 100, JANUARY 2015

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"I am No Lady" George R.R. Martin's Brienne of Tarth As A Unique Female Warrior

All Images thanks to HBO, and artists as credited

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2. A Clash of Kings, Jaime Chapter 2, 295
2. A Feast For Crows, Brienne Chapter 5, 529
4. Lyn Webster Wilde, *On The Trail of the Women Warriors: The Amazons in Myth and History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 28.
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6. "Season Two," *A Game of Thrones*.HBO. April- June 2012.
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15. Ibid.
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20. Ibid., Brienne Chapter 2, 204
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32. Wilde, 22
33. This is attributed to an arc which unfolds over Season 4 (1998/99) and Season 5 (1999/2000)
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35. A Storm Of Swords, Jaime Chapter 5, 509
36. A Feast For Crows, Brienne Chapter 1, 83-85
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40. A Feast For Crows, Brienne Chapter 6, 659
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42. "Garden of Bones." *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Dir. David Petrarca. 22 April, 2012
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Logo created by Jocelyn Anderson

All images thanks to Junji Ito and Viz Media

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Donny in the Dark: Doorways

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All animal images by Jocelyn Anderson