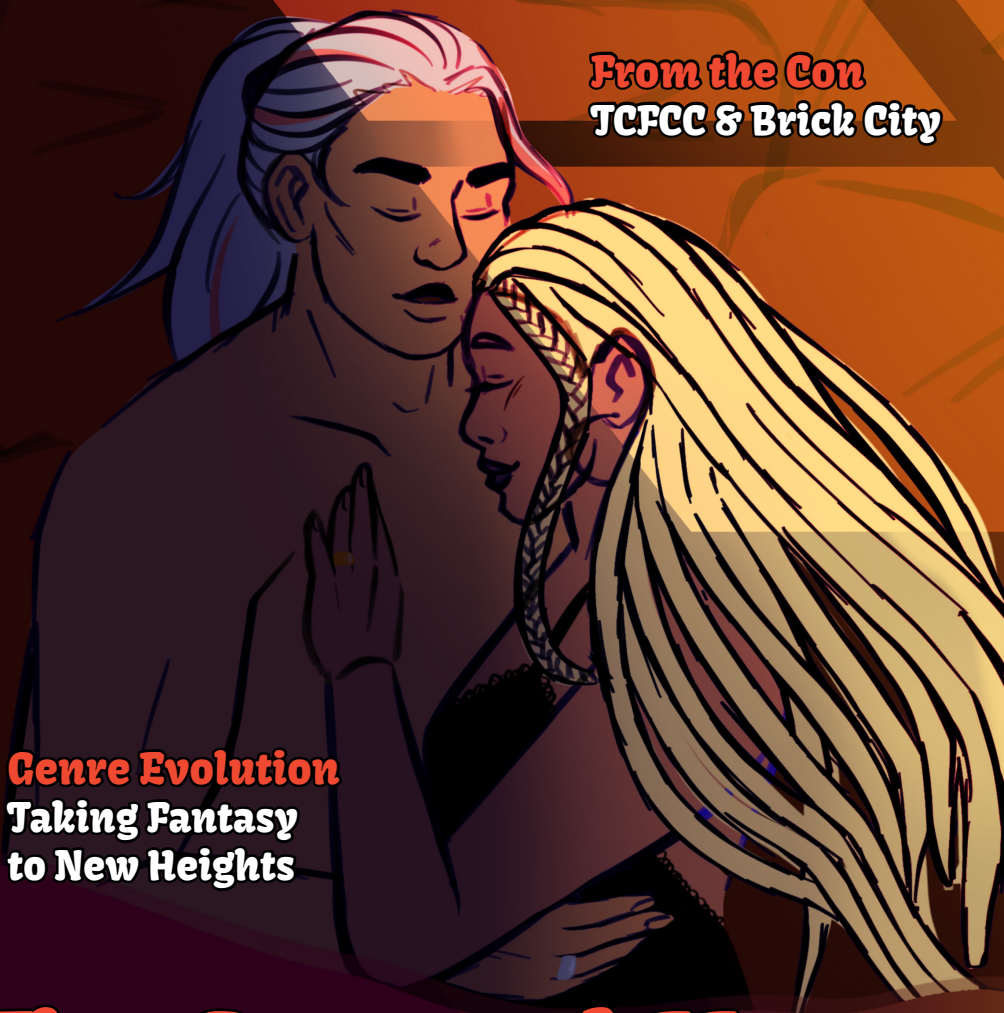




February 2023

Hotluck

From the Con
TCFCC & Brick City



Genre Evolution
Taking Fantasy
to New Heights

The Sun and Moon

Exploring Stories of Love in Fictional Places

A Letter from the Editor: What is Potluck?

Created over 5 years ago, Entertainment Stew (E-Stew) is a Central-Florida-based media production company specializing in applying philosophy and critical thinking to entertainment.

The members of E-Stew believe entertainment functions a lot like a stew. Different things make up our concept of entertainment, each bringing its own flavor into the end product. By examining the “stew,” one can determine the ingredients of thought behind a

particular piece of media.

Once those ingredients are decided, the E-Stew Crew can facilitate discussion and showcase that we can learn from the entertainment we consume.

With this in mind, E-Stew produces original content that showcases these ideas. Content that includes edutainment-based podcasts, films, documentaries, published academic articles as well as performing panels at both fan and academic conventions.





Potluck is the natural evolution of this concept. Potluck is a magazine that aims to showcase the innate value of the entertainment we consume. This magazine works underneath the premise that there is educational value in the artifacts of Pop-Culture and Entertainment we consume.

Our popular culture represents the zeitgeist of our era. It champions our contemporary ideas and beliefs for future generations. Why shouldn't we get a jumpstart on that future analysis by critically thinking and learning from these different aspects of popular culture? Potluck aims

to do just that.

With an overarching message of "Teaching through Pop-Culture" that when done well, thoughtfully, clearly, and carefully – the fusion of popular culture and critical, curiosity-fostering overthinking as part of practice can be part of an education that builds learners' attention to and application of typically challenging but still-important concepts and topics, through a lens of popular culture.

Samantha Sainz-Valdes
Editor-in-Chief
Potluck Magazine

The Evolution of Fantasy

Derrick Jean-Baptiste

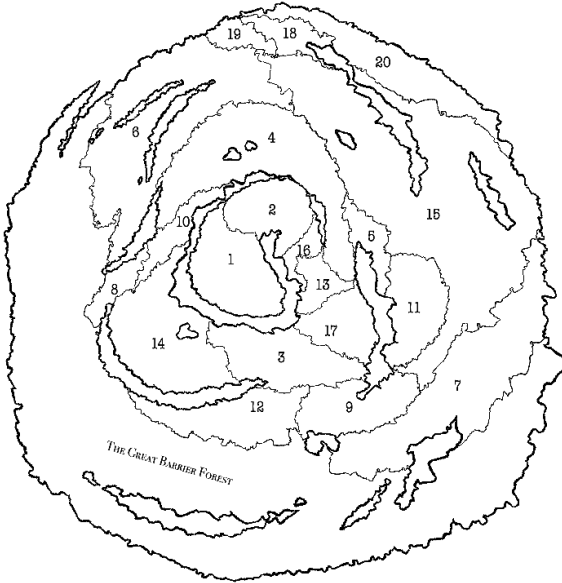
The Fantasy genre, often derided as superficial and escapist, is one of the most popular and enduring fiction genres worldwide. It is also thought-provoking, structurally complex, and relevant to contemporary society. But, despite the worldwide acclaim this genre receives, fantasy often feels stagnant. Stagnation is a common critique that is lobbied against the fantasy genre.

It is the belief that modern fantasy has entered a sort of feedback loop. A feedback loop that focuses on the same stories of Good vs. Evil, the same stories of magic, elves, the dark lord, and the orcs they must fight along the way. These elements have become the basic building blocks for the fantasy genre in general. This is coupled with the idea that, more often than not, the fantasy genre gets bad press for having “no literary value.” This is an assertion that, to most fantasy writers and readers, is untrue.

Fantasy literature is almost unrivaled in its



ability to transport the reader to different worlds of imagination, to inspire a little magic into the mundane everyday life, and to explore the best and the worst of the human character. Despite the genre’s popularity, people of color often find themselves inexistent within the pages of fantasy books and the screens of fantasy television or movies. Yet why is the current state of the fantasy genre such a cause



The content of the genre is easily influenced by location.

Photo Courtesy of Samantha Sainz-Valdes

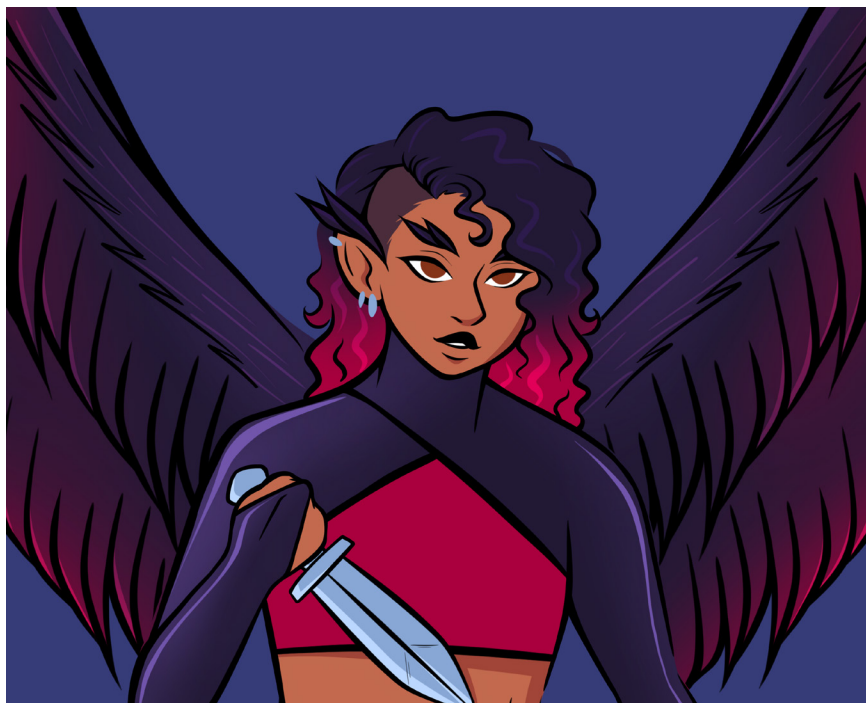
for concern? For many years fantasy was an expanding and ever-inventive genre, filled with novels whose imaginative breadth was staggering.

One acquainted with the genre need only think of authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien, George R.R. Martin, C. S. Lewis, Patrick Rothfuss, Jim Butcher, and Tomi Adeyemi. There are whole worlds, whole universes populated by fantastical creatures and peoples, which can open up to the reader. They form the solid backbone of the genre, a context against which new writers can frame themselves,

but sadly cannot be counted as part of the current genre scene.

There are still plenty of talented fantasy writers, but at the moment, the genre is bogged down in its own tropes and conventions.

Heroes, magic, quests, Dark Lords. These are the staples of the fantasy writer, but also their downfall. What can a writer of fantasy do? How can writers force this genre to evolve? To explore this idea, a general understanding of the Fantasy genre must be reached; once that's done, explorations on the genre's future can be observed.



Evolution of the genre can only be by trying something new.

Photo Courtesy of Samantha Sainz-Valdes

Before we can even begin with the evolution of fantasy, the genre must first be defined, or else the vastness of the topic makes meaningful discussion impossible. Many books, movies, and television shows contain elements of the fantastic, but that doesn't necessarily make them Fantasy stories.

For this discussion, the following definition suffices: a Fantasy tale tells a story or depicts events and adventures involving magic, alternate worlds, or both so that the story could not occur in the

“real world.” Fantasy differs from Science Fiction because a Science Fiction story depicts events the reader regards as possible — even if only in a distant future involving much more advanced technology. On the other hand, fantasy features impossible events: events dependent on something that doesn't exist in the real world (magic) or occurring in a fantastical otherworld. But despite the existence of impossible elements, a good Fantasy story has as much internal consistency and logic as stories set in the “real

world.” Three significant elements define fantasy in the minds of most readers: magic, alternate worlds, and low technology.

The first and most important feature of fantasy is magic. The existence and effects of magic almost define fantasy by themselves; only the lowest of Low Fantasy settings completely lack magic. Magic in fantasy ranges from minor and rare to commonplace and powerful.

In many cases, it consists of cast spells and evoked effects that characters can command (or have used against them). However, the fact that magic exists doesn’t necessarily mean it’s something protagonists can wield. In some fantasy worlds, magic is primarily an atmospheric element — a feature that may help or hinder the characters indirectly but over which they exert little control.

The second major defining aspect of fantasy is an alternate world. Most Fantasy stories take place in a world that superficially resembles Earth (it has mountains and seas; there’s a moon in the nighttime sky; people build cities, use swords, and ride horses) but also differs from



it in important ways. For one thing, magic usually exists, and with it, fantastic beasts (like griffins) and races (such as dwarves and elves). For another, the geography is unique and often flavorfully-named. For many Fantasy stories, the better realized the world — the more detailed and flavorful the author makes it, the more “dramatic resonance” it has — the better the tale. An alternate world doesn’t literally

have to be another world. It could instead be a past, future, secret, or hidden part of the “real” Earth — settings that are, in effect, “alternate” even though they’re not defined as a separate reality. This is a standard convention of Urban Fantasy, some historical fantasies, and settings like Jack Vance’s “Dying Earth” which takes place on Earth so many eons from now that it’s not recognizable as the same world.

Lastly, and least importantly, most Fantasy stories feature low technology, similar to that possessed by medieval-era civilizations on Earth. Characters in Fantasy novels can’t call each other on the phone, don’t have indoor plumbing, and lack modern medicine. They wield swords, not guns; they ride on horses, not in cars; they have to use muscle power instead of engines and electricity.

Of course, a few Fantasy stories diverge from this rule. The most common exception is Urban Fantasy, which by definition takes place in a “modern” world of automobiles and television. Urban Fantasy games that push into the near future may even feature technology that’s more advanced than what’s

currently available on Earth. The second is settings where magic has replaced technology. Rather than making guns that work with gunpowder, the inhabitants of these settings have enchanted pistols that fire through pure magic.

While these basic building blocks of fantasy are still utilized today. To reach a new era for this beloved genre, writers must become comfortable remixing these typical genre staples. With the act of remixing, many unique stories can be easily made. Breaking free of reusing the same tropes over and over can lead to great strides within the genre.

Ultimately although the majority of the fantasy genre is currently undergoing a period of stagnation, there is hope. Suppose exciting and talented authors are willing to break free from the staid chains of tradition and liberally reinvent the genre for a new audience while keeping die-hard fans’ content. In that case, there is still a chance that the fantasy genre can continue to inspire and excite readers for decades to come.

COMING
MARCH 2023

REC



ULTRA VIOLET Ch.2

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ENTERTAINMENT STEW

The World of Vala
Sun & Moon



ENTERTAINMENT STEW

Forced into an engagement that would unite their people against an external threat. Two heroes would go on to create one of the most powerful nations in the World of Vala, Luloba.

The love between Queen Santana Samoon-Atlas and her husband, King Remus Samoon-Atlas, is held as the pinnacle of romance. Many folks within the World of Vala believe they know the story of how these heroes' love came about. But the collection of short stories you are about to read aims to highlight the truth in the rumor and establish For these two, the love they shared was everything.

Read an Excerpt from this fantascial collection of short stories. Found only at Entertainmentstew.com



Meeting at Dawn

Year 10027, Month of Warcry

Santana stared at the lump that was Remus. What is he still doing in bed? She wondered as her eyes drifted to the clock: 6:00 A.M. Yeah, he should have been up at least three hours ago. So why is he still in bed? Was he sick? She snorted. Remus never got sick, banged up, but never sick.

Santana went back to staring at him. What if it's not Remus? She thought as her eyes scanned his lumpy form. She saw the rumpled dark gray hair and his bare chest's dark skin.

“Quit staring at me.”

Santana “eeped” as he cracked one eye open to look

at her.

“Gezz, do you have to scare me like that?” she grumbled, pulling the cover higher up.

“Only because you were staring at me like I was a piece of chocolate,” he smirked.

Santana pursed her lips together. “Why are you still in bed?” she asked suspiciously.

“I was trying to get some sleep, but it’s impossible when I can feel your eyes roaming over my body and your energy signature spiking.” He glared at her.

“Sorry,” she said sheepishly.

He grunted and rolled over, turning away from her. “Why aren’t you already up?”

Santana smiled and scooted closer to him. “Because I don’t want to go to work today.”

Remus looked over his shoulder.

“I have a meeting with Councilmen Anderson,” she explained, making a gagging sound.

“He’s still bothering you?” he asked in disbelief. He had been sure threatening bodily harm would dissuade the man from chasing after Santana, but apparently not.

Santana felt his back tense. Placing her hand on

his back, she felt his muscles twitch underneath. “Not as zealously as before, but he’s still making his intentions clear. I just don’t feel up to dealing with him today.”

Remus cursed, and Santana wrapped her arms around him. “Don’t go,” he said, offering a simple solution.

“It sets a bad example to the rest of my staff,” she sighed.

He snorted, thinking of all the times she’d skipped because she wanted some adventure or didn’t feel like going. Santana smacked him on the arm, resulting in a low growl from Remus.

“I’m serious. I have to go.” She didn’t move.

“Then why aren’t you getting up?” He didn’t move either.

“I am!” she insisted, clutching him tighter.

“Just have your sister call in sick for you,”

“That only works when you’re in school. Not when you’re an adult.”

“Then why do we still live with the infuriating woman?”

“Spoken like a true husband who doesn’t like his sister-in-law,” she snorted. “Besides, do you really

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SCOOBY-DOO AND ALIENS TOO



In space no one can hear your *ZDINKS*

COMING SOON

want to move out? You'd have to cook and clean."

Remus didn't say anything. Santana chuckled and pressed her cheek against his shoulder blades. "Thought so," she mumbled. Both stayed silent, comfortable in their positions.

"Remus?" she called out softly in case he was asleep. He needed rest, constantly pushing himself, and even when he did sleep, it was never for long. The slightest movement always woke him.

"What?" was his soft reply.

"Hold me, please?" Remus lifted his head to look at her over his shoulder. She pouted, and he sighed heavily before rolling over and letting her settle into his arms. It must have been the timid way she asked that made him give in so easily. He could feel her hot breath on his neck as strands of her hair teased his fingers. Letting his head fall, he laid his cheek on top of her head and took a deep breath.

Santana's fingers made lazy circles on his bulging biceps. His arm felt warm and hard ...yet soft under her fingers.

"Thought you were getting up?" he asked after a slight period.

"Just a few more minutes," she sighed happily. "We haven't done this in months...why is that?"

Remus shrugged. "Too tired, passing schedules, not

enough time. Take your pick.”

She drummed her fingertips on his arm in thought. “I’m not going to work today,” she announced, closing her eyes.

“What will you tell them tomorrow?” he asked.

“I’ll just say the king wouldn’t let me up.” She grinned.

“I won’t, will I?” He opened a lazy eye to look down at her. “Then we’d better change positions.” Remus quickly rolled over, trapping her beneath him.

“Humm, you’re right,” she purred, kissing his jaw. “This is much better.”

Remus lowered his body to hers, making her giggle. The door opened.

“Oh, I had no idea you two were still here,” Santana’s sister’s voice broke through the room. “Don’t mind me. Keep doing what you’re doing.” She placed the basket of clean clothes down on the floor and closed the door giggling.

Remus lowered his forehead to Santana’s and growled. “Why haven’t we kicked her out, again?”

Santana laughed as she wrapped her arms tighter around Remus.

Central Florida Comic Con 2023

Located in the RP Funding Center for it's 5th year, Central Florida Comic Con is a hometown favorite for the E-Stew Crew.



E-Stew took part in Press, Panels, & Merchandise at CFCC. Shout out to all that came out to see us!



Something in the Way...





Some Amazing Cosplays stole the show at CFCC 23



The E-Stew Crew can't wait to return to CFCC 2024.



This show featured many events and activities during the convention for attendees to take part in such as meeting their favorite celebrity guest, cosplayers, creators, attending guest panels, contests, and an amazing Merchant Area.

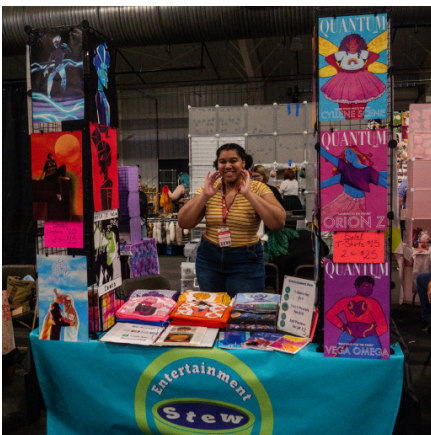


Brick City Anime Festival 2023

Located in Ocala at the World Equestrian Center Brick City
Anime Festival took place February 12th & 13th.



Big Shout Out to
some friends of
E-Stew the absolutely
amazing Emberworks,
ChunkieBunnie, and
Mojo97.



**Vera turns up the heat in
The World of Vala - Ties that Bind Season 2**



**Coming March 1st 2023 -
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