



Putting the “Genie” Into Genealogy

A local Ph.D. scales a phantasmal family tree

Heroes fans who miss the superpowered clan because of the Hollywood writers’ strike should follow the lead of Dr. Peter M. Coogan, who has an interest that rivals the NBC hit: exploring the lineage of classic adventure heroes.

Coogan’s odd hobby originated with a faux bio of Tarzan written by fantasist Philip José Farmer in 1972. “I discovered *Tarzan Alive* when I was about 12, and my response was ‘Huh! It’s real! Tarzan is real!’” the Fontbonne University writing specialist recalls. “That meant that the world was a much more romantic and interesting place than I had previously imagined.”

Farmer’s bio posits that a meteorite irradiated 11 Brits in 1795 near the hamlet of Wold Newton and, through mutation, created a community of superhumans, including Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes. That fictional clan has since become the focus of parascholarship—highbrow high jinks—to which Coogan has contributed in various ways.

Perhaps most significantly, his “Wold-Newtonry: Theory and Methodology for the Literary Archaeology of the Wold Newton Universe” opens the recent symposium *Myths for the Modern Age* and details ways of tracing the genealogy inspired by Farmer’s writings.

Despite his Wold Newton work, amusingly, Coogan confesses, “I don’t have a larger interest in genealogy.” Still, *Myths* mentions that his own great-grandfather served the Shadow, a top pulp-magazine crime fighter of the 1930s and ’40s. The reason: credentialing. “I inserted my family into the whole Wold Newton universe, and this is my explanation for where my sources are.

“The idea behind a Wold-Newtonry article is that someone comes away wondering if it’s true,” Coogan adds with a grin. Sometimes, of course, that idea reaches extremes: “Farmer told me that he got a call from an Olympic javelin thrower who wanted to be introduced to Tarzan so he could get tips—throwing tips.” —Bryan A. Hollerbach



Talk Mangani to Me

Also from Coogan: an embryonic dictionary of Mangani, the dialect of the apes in Edgar Rice Burroughs’ original Tarzan novels. “I started to notice that the language was a little bit more complex than it seemed,” Coogan says of the dictionary’s inspiration. “It wasn’t just these random syllables that he threw in.” For a Mangani take on Valentine’s Day, for example, practice these phrases:

“flower” ro “heart” thub “love” gree-ah

So, *ud, rota*, meanwhile, more or less means “eat, drink and be merry”—sage counsel, whether in Mangani or English. —B.A.H.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID TORRENCE

CELLING THEIR SOULS

Cellphone towers hide all over the place these days, in everything from fake chimneys to fake palm trees, fake cactuses to fake ... crosses? Yep—that last one’s coming soon to a church near you, via CIS Communications’ November proposal to conceal a U.S. Cellular tower inside a 95-foot cross at Way of Faith Christian Center in Alton.

The *Saved!*-style giant cross will provide a steady stream of revenue for the church, leading us to wonder: Why haven’t more civic institutions taken advantage of the burgeoning cell market? We can think of several local landmarks that could benefit from going wireless. —Margaret Bauer

- THE BROOKS CATSUP BOTTLE:** Electrifying our favorite kitschy water tower could put Collinsville’s World’s Largest Catsup Bottle Summerfest on solid financial footing for years to come.
- THE SAINT LOUIS ZOO’S SOUTH ENTRANCE TOWER:** Those three vertical letters (Z-O-O) spell B-A-R-S for phone-toting visitors and \$-\$\$ for endangered species.
- THE AIRWAY DRIVE-IN MAJORETTE:** Long a beacon unto our hearts, that sassy neon lass will be a beacon unto our phones.
- THE ARCH:** At 630 feet, the free-standing steel structure is the tallest for miles around—a natural gateway to better cell reception.

