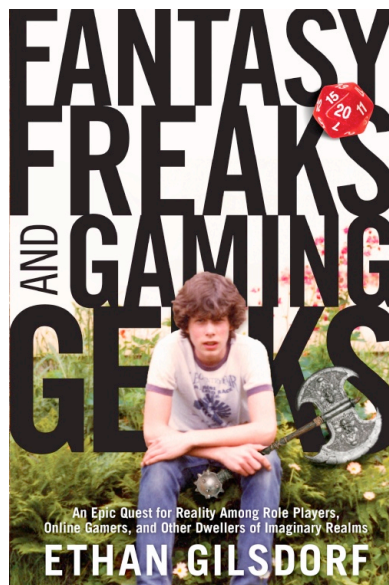




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For the electronic version of this press kit, plus author photos, book jacket art, and stills from the book, see: <http://www.ethangilsdorf.com/pressroom/>

"The hardest-working geek we know, Ethan Gilsdorf."—*The Boston Phoenix*
"Boston nerdlord writer Ethan Gilsdorf"—*The Quad*
"Somerville's resident d20 dorkwad"—*The Weekly Dig*



Author of *FANTASY FREAKS AND GAMING GEEKS: An Epic Quest for Reality Among Role Players, Online Gamers, and Other Dwellers of Imaginary Realms*

"Part personal odyssey, part medieval mid-life crisis, and part wide-ranging survey of all things freaky and geeky"—**Huffington Post**

"*Lord of the Rings* meets Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*"—**National Public Radio**

"For anyone who has ever spent time within imaginary realms, the book will speak volumes." —**Wired.com**

"Gandalf's got nothing on Ethan Gilsdorf, except for maybe the monster white beard. In his new book, *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks*, Gilsdorf . . . offers an epic quest for reality within a realm of magic." —**Boston Globe**

Representation

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About Ethan Gilsdorf: Biography

Ethan Gilsdorf is a journalist, memoirist, critic, poet, teacher and 17th level geek. He is the author of the award-winning travel memoir investigation *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks: An Epic Quest for Reality Among Role Players, Online Gamers, and Other Dwellers of Imaginary Realms*.

Based in Somerville, Massachusetts, Gilsdorf writes regularly for the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, Salon.com, BoingBoing.net, PsychologyToday.com, *Washington Post* and wired.com. He has published hundreds of articles, essays, op-eds and reviews on the arts, pop culture, gaming, geek culture and travel in dozens of other magazines, newspapers, websites and guidebooks worldwide. His fiction, poetry and essays have appeared in such literary magazines and journals as *Poetry*, *The Southern Review*, *The Quarterly*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *The North American Review*, and in several anthologies.

He is a core contributor to the blogs "GeekDad," "Geek Pride" on PsychologyToday.com, and Boston NPR affiliate WBUR's Cognoscenti blog. He is also a book and film critic for the *Boston Globe*, and is the film columnist for *Art New England*.

He and author Noble Smith geek out and wax nostalgic about D&D and other nerdy pop culture relics at *Dungeons & Dorkwards*. He is a lover of ELO and a hater of littering. Sometimes he wears a tunic and chainmail, or these grumpy pants.

As an expert on geek culture, Gilsdorf frequently appears on TV, radio and Internet media, including PBS Off Book, The Discovery Channel, The BBC, the French TV network Arte, and several nationally-syndicated National Public Radio and PBS TV programs, as well as in documentary films. He lectures at universities, schools, libraries, film festivals, gaming conventions and book festivals worldwide, and performs in bars and reading series. Also an award-winning poet, Gilsdorf is co-founder of *Grub Street's* Young Adult Writers Program (YAWP) and teaches creative writing and journalism workshops for adults at Grub Street, where he also serves on the Board of Directors. He received his BA from Hampshire College, and an MFA in Creative Writing from Louisiana State University.

To research various writing projects, Gilsdorf has interviewed Sir Ben Kingsley, Steve Carell, Viggo Mortensen, Andy Serkis, Seth Rogen, and Sister Helen Prejean, among other cultural figures. He has acted as an Hollywood extra, walked across Scotland, mountain biked the French Pyrenees, worn a tunic for two weeks while camping with 12,000 medieval reenactors, and (in his most challenging quest) successfully drank champagne with Kate Hudson.

Follow Ethan's adventures

at <http://www.ethangilsdorf.com> & <http://www.fantasyfreaksbook.com>;

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/fantasyfreaksbook>; **Twitter** @ethanfreak.

Ethan Gilsdorf | Publicity photos

Download these photos at: <http://www.ethangilsdorf.com/pressroom/>



[Photo: Meg Birnbaum]



[Photo: Meg Birnbaum]



[Photo: Meg Birnbaum]



[Photo: Peter Tannenbaum]

Ethan Gilsdorf: Areas of expertise

I can speak on the following topics:

- Gaming and gaming communities and behavior
- Dungeons & Dragons history and cultural impact
- Live-action role-playing
- J.R.R. Tolkien
- Fandom communities and fandom behavior
- Cinema and genre movies
- Fantasy and science fiction
- Creative writing
- Non fiction / memoir
- Public speaking
- Travel and travel writing
- French language

Ethan Gilsdorf: Events, Workshops and Speaking Engagements

I love to give talks and readings, slide presentations, moderate panels, teach creative writing and role-playing games, and inspire people to geek out.

I've fought (badly) with foam swords in public. I'm not afraid to wear my chain mail and tunic. I've taught 25 newbies how to play Dungeons & Dragons in one evening.

I've taught high schoolers and senior citizens how to write poems and memoirs and opeds. I've taught 25 newbies how to play Dungeons & Dragons in one evening. I've inspired people to feel better about their geekiness.

I've appeared at conventions like Pax East, Gen Con and DragonCon; read at book festivals in Atlanta, Brooklyn and Boston; spoken at universities like Harvard, MIT, Notre Dame, Bryn Mawr and LSU; and appeared at dozens of bookstores, book groups, high schools, libraries, and other venues.

If your bookstore, library, book group, writer's festival, college/university, high school, club, game shop, convention, bar, cafe, mother, etc. would like to book me to give a talk, slide-lecture, organize a discussion, teaching a writing class, or have moderate a panel or Q&A, I am a hired gun looking for a microphone to speak into and some dice to roll.

Here are some of the events I can happily bring to your lecture hall or dungeon. Custom topics and talks also possible.

Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks: The Lecture:

An overview of my award-winning book, with a reading, and (if you want) slide-lecture that encapsulates my journey into fantasy and gaming subcultures (D&D, Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, World of Warcraft, medieval re-enactors), what explains the appeal of these fantasy worlds, and my own journey to accept my inner geek.

How Dungeons & Dragons Saved My Life:

An inspiring talk about my personal history playing D&D and other role-playing games, and how they influenced me, changed my life, and helped me become a creative, socialized, and (mostly) full-adjusted human being I am today. With images from my personal gaming collection and the history of role-playing games.

I've Always Wanted to Play D&D, But: A Three-Hour Fantasy Role-Playing Game Experience:

Using a quick-start method and simplified version of the rules, I've developed a 3 to 5 hour D&D-like experience that even non-nerds can understand. In one session, you and your pals can play characters, go on an adventure, solve problems and defeat evil in your unique way, help tell a memorable story -- and have a great time. Doritos and Mountain Dew can be arranged.

Writing Workshops:

Teen Writing Adventure (three-hour or day-long writing classes for kids); Adult Writing Bootcamps (same thing for adults: fiction, nonfiction, poetry); How to Be a Freelance Writer (Tips, strategies and craft basics for writing articles, essays and op-ed for publication)

Personal Coaching and Manuscript Editing:

I have more than 15 years experience as a freelance writer and teacher of writing. I'm available for editing, consulting, and coaching (and butt kicking), and to help guide and provide feedback for anyone out there working in nonfiction, essay, op-ed, personal essay, memoir, poetry and fiction. I also consult on book promotion.

More Praise for:

FANTASY FREAKS AND GAMING GEEKS

Named a **Must-Read Book** by the **Massachusetts Book Awards**

"Journalist and 'avowed, out-of-the-closet geek' Ethan Gilsdorf embraces his love of J.R.R. Tolkien, Dungeons & Dragons and all things fantasy, embarking on a quest to discover what motivates those who devote significant portions of their lives to what many others dismiss as escapist fantasies. The book is also a journey of self-discovery.... engaging, occasionally poignant and emotional." —**Boston Globe**

"Books about escapism and gaming too often swerve into cautionary tale territory. Negative and holier-than-thou, they tend to lecture at length about the drawbacks to such pastimes and ignore the benefits of escapism. Thankfully, Gilsdorf's book is different. It tells the story of Gilsdorf's own journey back into the fantasy fold and his analysis of why we all seek out alternative realities. He spends time with SCAdians, LARPerS and MMORPGers alike, and he does it with respect and poignancy...."—

Wired.com

"Ethan Gilsdorf's quest for himself leads through the fantasy world of millions of gamers in a breathless adventure/quest/memoir that is uniquely contemporary. This is at once a primer on the world of gaming, a self-help manual, and a wistful meditation on the passing of real time in a (nearly) virtual world." —**Andrei Codrescu, NPR commentator** and author of *The Posthuman Dada Guide*

"What does it mean to be a geek? . . . Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks tackles that question with strength and dexterity. . . . part personal odyssey, part medieval mid-life crisis, and part wide-ranging survey of all things freaky and geeky ... playful ... funny and poignant ... It's a fun ride and it poses a question that goes to the very heart of fantasy, namely: What does the urge to become someone else tell us about ourselves?" —**Huffington Post**

"This is a delightful book—more fun than being a Dungeon Master to a group of high-level mages and thieves." —**A.J. Jacobs, New York Times bestselling author** of *The Know-It-All* and *The Year of Living Biblically*

"Intensely personal yet universally appealing, Gilsdorf's work speaks to the geek in all of us. Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks, with its exploration of an emerging marginalized culture, rolls a natural 20." —**TheOneRing.net**

"Gilsdorf is an engaging and personable guide. Like many who will pick up his book, he's got one foot squarely in the real world, the other in the fantasy one. This is a journey well worth taking." —**Booklist**

"Considering that we are fantasy freaks, [Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks] feels right up our alley." —**Wizards of the Coast's D&D Insider**

"Witty, downright funny, poignant, honest and ... well, wistful. Anyone who has ever embraced 'escapism' will understand, and those who haven't taken that leap of imagination will want to after reading Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks.... Reading Ethan Gilsdorf's tale conjured my own Dungeons & Dragons and fantasy experiences, vividly, right down to finding some of my old character sheets in a 3-ring binder a decade and more after I had stopped using them." —**R.A. Salvatore, New York Times bestselling author** of forty novels, including The Dark Elf Trilogy, Paths of Darkness, The Hunter's Blades Trilogy, and The Cleric Quintet and lead storyteller, 38 Studios game company

"Gilsdorf rekindled his childhood fascination with Dungeons & Dragons as a launch point, and then proceeded to wander the country exploring MMOs, LARPs, and other non-acronym endeavors in order write his fascinating memoir/travel/geek-world exploration." —**The Onion A.V. Club**

"A fascinating book, Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks ... tackles some of popular assumptions about fans and gamers head on ... exploring the complex cultural practices [fans and gamers] have developed, explaining the ways that their fantasy lives become interconnected with their social lives and personal identity, and ultimately constructing a positive account of the value of "escapism" and popular entertainment. Gilsdorf is an engaging and thoughtful writer." --- **Henry Jenkins, author of Convergence Culture and Fans, Bloggers and Gamers**

"A fun, quirky and fresh perspective for those wanting to know more about the amazing world of gaming." —**David Brin, winner of the Nebula, Hugo, and Locus Awards**, and author of The Postman, Kiln People and The Transparent Society

"Where there is a story to be found, Gilsdorf found it, talking to fantasy enthusiasts from all walks of life... [A]nyone with even a passing interest in fantasy games should pick this up. Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks provides a unique and affectionate overview of fantasy gaming from the trenches." —**Realms of Fantasy**

"A readable and enlightening look at the gaming world, its various lore, arcana, and substrates, driven by the author's candor and insight into one manifestation of a human need to 'deny death and provide a vacation from everyday thought.'" —**Massachusetts Book Awards**

"This guy knows his fantasy and gaming cultures. Why? Because he has lived it. In Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks rather than mocking the world of the nerd he celebrates it. Bravo." —**City Pages (Minneapolis)**

"Master geek theater." —**The Times of Trenton**

"An orcs-and-all journey through geekdom, told with affection for every elf, wizard and Dungeon Master it meets along the way. Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks is for anyone who's ever been lured by the enchantment and secrets of faraway fantasy worlds; meticulously researched and lovingly told, the book gives a personal face to the cloak-swishing, wand-wielding, lightsaber-rattling gamer in us all." —**Melissa Anelli**, author of *Harry, A History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon*

"Ethan Gilsdorf looks critically at gaming and fantasy and finds out how wonderful they can be for bringing people together across wage, ability, and ethnic divides, or from disparate places around the world, for developing imagination and creativity, and all in the name of fun! Cogito Ergo Geek." —**The Tolkien Society**

**** (Four Stars) "This book is the magical doorway into the ultimate geek universe ultimately disarming and inviting ... [T]his cross-genre book is quite satisfying and thorough in its consideration of fantasy worlds and the creatures (and people) who inhabit them. Not just anyone could serve as our guide through this story—it takes someone like former D&D junkie, Ethan Gilsdorf, now age forty, to know how best to get at what matters for this culture." —**California Literary Review**

"In his book, Gilsdorf — who, perhaps wisely, hid his monster manual and graph paper in a closet when it came time for college, co-eds, and keg stands—simultaneously reconnects with his geeky past and takes stock of this brave new world in what amounts to an immersive role-playing travelogue to the planet's nerdiest places." —**Boston Phoenix**

"[Gilsdorf] has taken his love of all things nerdy to the next level with Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks." —**San Francisco Bay Guardian**

"Quite potent ... heartbreaking ... Emotionally affecting ..." —**Washington Monthly**

"Ethan Gilsdorf brings the same hunter's instinct to uncovering what makes gaming geeks tick, that he once brought to being totally sweet at D&D. Part memoir, part investigative cultural journalism, Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks is earnestly not just for nerds." —**The Portland Mercury**

"Gilsdorf manages to blend the best of cultural criticism, travel writing and memoir ... to provide some fascinating answers to his fantasy-driven questions." —**Iowa City Press-Citizen**

"Gilsdorf's guided tour through the gaming underworld is fascinating. ... what Fantasy Freaks does illustrate is that fantasy, in all its myriad incarnations, is always available to us, even if we only want to go as far as our comfortable armchairs. Gilsdorf does a fine job of reporting from the front lines. ... I found myself rooting for him by the end." —**The Rumpus**